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SERVICE DATE - MARCH 15, 1999

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423**

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NO. AB- 246 (SUB-NO. 2X)

**Yreka Western Railroad Company
--Abandonment Exemption --
In Siskiyou County, CA**

BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, the Yreka Western Railroad Company (YW) has filed a petition under 49 U.S.C. 10502 seeking exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10903 in connection with the abandonment of its whole railroad line located between MP 0.0 in Montague and MP 8.9 near Yreka, a distance of 8.9 miles in Siskiyou County, CA. A map depicting the rail line in relationship to the area served is appended to the report. If the exemption becomes effective, the railroad will be able to salvage track, ties and other railroad appurtenances, and to dispose of the right-of-way.

DESCRIPTION OF THE LINE

YW continues to serve only two forest products companies, Hi-Ridge Lumber Company and Timber Products Company, both with mills in Yreka. Two other infrequent shippers are also located on the line: Suburban Propane Company and Noranda Mines. These four companies tendered and received 1473 revenue carloads in 1997 and, through October 31, 1998, only 629 carloads. Passenger excursion operations are conducted during the summer tourist season. The few remaining shippers on the line have railroad service available to them just four miles away, at Montague, on the Central Oregon and Pacific Railroad. Yreka is located on Interstate 5 and a number of motor carriers serve the area.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The railroad has submitted an environmental report that concludes the quality of the human environment will not be affected significantly as a result of the abandonment or any post-abandonment activities, including salvage and disposition of the right-of-way. The railroad has served the environmental report on

a number of appropriate Federal, state, and local agencies as required by the Board's environmental rules at 49 CFR 1105.7(b). We have investigated the record in this proceeding. Also, we have consulted with appropriate agencies and individuals to verify the railroad's report and to obtain additional information and comments regarding the potential environmental effects of the proposed abandonment. Contacts have included the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the California Department of Parks and Recreation, State Historic Preservation Office, and Siskiyou County.

CONDITIONS

The California Department of Parks and Recreation, State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has not yet completed its evaluation of the potential impact of this project on historic resources. Accordingly, we recommend imposition of the following condition: **Yreka Western Railroad Company shall retain its interest in and take no steps to alter the historic integrity of all sites and structures on the right-of-way that are 50 years old or older, until completion of the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act, 16 U.S.C. 470f.**

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, and subject to the recommended condition, we conclude that, as currently proposed, abandonment of the line will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, the environmental impact statement process is unnecessary.

Alternatives to the proposed abandonment would include denial (and therefore no change in operations), discontinuance of service without abandonment, and continued operation by another operator. In any of these cases, the existing quality of the human environment and energy consumption should not be affected.

PUBLIC USE

Following abandonment and salvage of the rail line, the right-of-way may be suitable for other public use. A request containing the requisite four-part showing for imposition of a public use condition (49 CFR 1152.28) must be filed with the Board and served on the railroad within the time specified in the Federal Register notice.

TRAILS USE

A request for a notice of interim trail use (NITU) is due to the Board, with a copy to the railroad, within 10 days of

publication of the notice of the petition for exemption in the Federal Register. Nevertheless, the Board will accept late-filed requests as long as it retains jurisdiction to do so in a particular case. This request must comply with the Board's rules for use of rights-of-way as trails (49 CFR 1152.29).

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

The Board's Office of Public Services (OPS) responds to questions regarding interim trail use, public use, and other reuse alternatives. You may contact OPS directly at (202) 565-1592, or mail inquiries to Surface Transportation Board, Office of Public Services, Room 848, Washington, DC 20423.

COMMENTS

If you wish to file comments regarding this environmental assessment, you should send an **original and two copies** to Vernon A. Williams, Office of the Secretary, Room 711, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Mike Dalton, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-246 (Sub No. 2X) in all correspondence addressed to the Board.** If you have questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Mr. Dalton at (202) 565-1530.

Date made available to the public: March 15, 1999.

Comment due date: April 14, 1999.

By the Board, Elaine K. Kaiser, Chief, Section of Environmental Analysis.

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

***** MAP HAS TO BE SCANNED *****