

28403

SERVICE DATE - NOVEMBER 28, 1997

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NO. AB-493 (SUB-NO. 1X)

TRACK TECH, INC.
ABANDONMENT AND DISCONTINUANCE BETWEEN
DENROCK AND LYNDON, ILLINOIS
IN WHITESIDE COUNTY, ILLINOIS

BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, the Track Tech, Inc. 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 railroad line located between Denrock, Illinois at milepost 25.25 and Lyndon, Illinois at milepost 28.35, a distance of 3.20 miles in Whiteside County, Illinois. 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

This line was formerly owned by the Burlington Northern Railroad Company (BN). BN had limited operations over the line. Track Tech purchased the line from BN in November of 1996. Track Tech has not operated over the line since acquiring it from BN. There is one shipper located on the line: Whiteside Farm Service. Traffic densities on the line average two cars per year. According to applicant, alternative transportation is available through other rail carriers and track companies operating in 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 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, and the Whiteside County Courthouse.

CONDITIONS

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has determined that 10 or the 11 soil types along the section of track between mileposts 25.15 to 28.35 are considered prime farmland. NRCS has also identified two small wetland areas located along the right-of-way. Therefore, **we recommend the following condition: Before conducting salvage activities on this line, Track Tech, Inc. shall consult with the NCRS in Morrison, Illinois to ensure that prime farmlands and wetland areas previously identified are not damaged.**

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, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Victoria Rutson, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-493 (Sub No. 1X) in all correspondence addressed to the Board.** If you

have questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Ms. Rutson at (202) 565-1545.

Date made available to the public: November 24, 1997.

Comment due date: December 23, 1997.

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

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

map to be scanned

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