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SERVICE DATE – LATE RELEASE FEBRUARY 17, 2015

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

DECISION

Docket No. AB 1122X

OUACHITA RAILROAD, INC.—ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION—  
IN UNION COUNTY, ARK., AND UNION PARISH, LA.

Decided: February 17, 2015

Ouachita Railroad, Inc. (Ouachita) filed a verified notice of exemption under 49 C.F.R. pt. 1152 subpart F—Exempt Abandonments to abandon an approximately 13.4-mile line of railroad between milepost 112, near Junction City, in Union County, Ark., and milepost 125.4, near Lillie, in Union Parish, La. (the Line). Notice of the exemption was served and published in the Federal Register on January 16, 2015 (80 Fed. Reg. 2,480). The exemption is scheduled to become effective on February 18, 2015.

The Board's Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) served an environmental assessment (EA) in this proceeding on January 23, 2015, recommending that two conditions be imposed on any decision granting abandonment authority. OEA noted that the Line passes through a 100-year floodplain. To ensure that the floodplain is not adversely affected, OEA recommended that, prior to the commencement of any salvage activities, Ouachita consult with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LDOTD) and the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission (ANRC) regarding potential impacts to the floodplain, and that Ouachita comply with the reasonable requirements of these state agencies.

In the EA, OEA also noted that the National Geodetic Survey (NGS) identified 13 geodetic survey marks in the area proposed for abandonment. Accordingly, OEA recommended that a condition be imposed requiring Ouachita to consult with NGS prior to conducting salvage activities in order to determine if any markers may be disturbed or destroyed by the proposed abandonment.

No comments to the EA were received by the February 2, 2015 due date. OEA issued a final EA on February 13, 2015, recommending that the conditions proposed in the EA be imposed upon any decision granting abandonment authority. In the final EA, OEA also recommends imposing two additional conditions requiring Ouachita to consult with the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) if it encounters any solid or hazardous wastes or contaminated soils or groundwater during the project, and to take necessary precautions to protect workers from these hazards should any arise, and to consult with Junction City Waterworks concerning wellhead protection areas. Accordingly, the Board will impose the two conditions recommended in the EA, as well as the two additional conditions recommended in the final EA.

Based on OEA's recommendation, the proposed abandonment, if implemented as conditioned, will not significantly affect either the quality of the human environment or the conservation of energy resources.

It is ordered:

1. This proceeding is reopened.

2. Upon reconsideration, the notice served and published in the Federal Register on January 16, 2015, exempting the abandonment of the line described above is subject to the conditions that Ouachita shall: (1)(a) prior to commencement of any salvage activities, consult with LDOTD and ANRC regarding potential impacts to the floodplain, and (b) comply with the reasonable requirements of LDOTD and ANRC; (2) consult with and notify NGS at least 90 days prior to conducting salvage activities that will disturb or destroy any geodetic survey markers; (3) consult with LDEQ if it encounters any solid or hazardous wastes or contaminated soils or groundwater during the project, and take necessary precautions to protect workers from these hazards should any arise; and (4) consult with Junction City Waterworks prior to commencing salvage operations.

3. This decision is effective on its service date.

By the Board, Rachel D. Campbell, Director, Office of Proceedings.