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SERVICE DATE - MAY 13, 1998

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD**  
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

## **ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

**NO. AB- 6 (SUB-NO. 379X)**

**Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railroad Company**  
**-- Abandonment Exemption --**  
**in Garfield and Logan Counties, OK**

### **BACKGROUND**

In this proceeding, the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railroad Company (BNSF) has filed a notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1152.50 seeking exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10903 in connection with the abandonment of its railroad line located between MP 73.60 near Fairmont and MP 116.40 near Guthrie, a distance of 42.80 miles in Garfield and Logan Counties, OK. A map depicting the rail line in relationship to the area served is appended to the report. If the notice becomes effective, the railroad will be able to salvage track, ties and other railroad appurtenances and to dispose of the right-of-way.

### **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 contacted 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 Natural Resources Conservation Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management, the Oklahoma Tourism and

Recreation Department, the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, the Oklahoma Natural Heritage Inventory, the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality, the Oklahoma Historical Society, the Logan and Garfield County Commissioners, and the Logan County Conservation District and Floodplain Management Board.

### **CONDITIONS**

Although the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation and the Oklahoma Natural Heritage Inventory identified the potential presence of the Bald Eagle and the Least Tern in the project area, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service indicated that there would no effect on any Federally listed threatened or endangered species.

The Logan County Conservation District and Floodplain Management Board indicated that if BNSF removes rails and ties during salvage activities, these materials, and the heavy equipment used to remove them, must not be stored within the boundaries of the 100-year floodplain.

**SEA recommends that the following condition be placed on any decision granting abandonment authority: While conducting salvage activities, BNSF shall not store rails, ties, or salvage equipment in the 100-year floodplain.**

### **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**

If abandonment and salvage of the rail line does take place, 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 exemption in the Federal Register. However, the Board will accept late-filed requests as long as it retains jurisdiction to do so. 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.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL COMMENTS**

If you wish to file comments regarding this environmental assessment, 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- 6 (Sub-No. 379X) in all correspondence addressed to the Board.** If you have questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Mike Dalton at (202) 565-1530.

Date made available to the public: May 11, 1998.

**Comment due date: May 26, 1998.**

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

Vernon A. Williams  
Secretary

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