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SERVICE DATE - MARCH 26, 1999

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

STB Docket NO. AB-558X

**Doniphan, Kensett and Searcy Railway--Abandonment
Exemption--in Searcy, White County, AR**

BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, Doniphan, Kensett and Searcy Railway (DK&S) has filed a petition under 49 U.S.C. 10502 seeking exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10903 in to abandon and discontinue service over a 1.28-mile portion of its line of railroad known as the DK&S Branch extending from milepost 299.12 to the end of the line at milepost 300.40, in Searcy, White County, AR. 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

In its petition, DK&S states that there are three shippers on the line, Arkansas Wholesale Lumber (AWL), Frostyaire Frozen Foods (FFF) and Thompson Recycling Industries (TRI). DK&S states that the shippers will not be affected by loss of rail service and have already discontinued use of the Line. AWL has relocated its facility, FFF is using trucks as alternative transportation and TRI no longer receives shipments into its facility at Searcy. Primary commodities by the shippers on the are lumber, frozen poultry and scrap iron. DK&S states that there are no indications that future rail traffic will ever occur over the line.

The line is constructed with 90-pound rail and track material. The right-of-way is 50 feet in width with level topography. The surrounding area is urban. According to DK&S the line is composed of both reversionary and non-reversionary property.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

DK&S 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. DK&S served the environmental and historical reports on a number of appropriate Federal, state, and local agencies as required by the Surface Transportation Board's environmental rules at 49 CFR 1105.7(b). 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 Army Corps of Engineers (Vicksburg District and the Arkansas District); U.S. Fish and Wildlife; National Park Service; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Chief of the Forest Service; Arkansas Soil and Water Conservation Commission, Arkansas Historic Preservation Program and the National Geodetic Survey.

The Arkansas Soil and Water Conservation Commission (ASWCC) states that during salvage operations appropriate erosion practices must be taken and that the site revegetated upon completion of work. Therefore, we recommend that DK&S contact ASWCC prior to salvage operations.

The National Geodetic Survey (NGS) has identified one geodetic station marker (M 164) that may be affected by the proposed abandonment. NGS requests that it receive not less than 90 days' notification in advance of any salvage activities in order to plan for its relocation. We will recommend NGS's requests as a condition to any abandonment.

CONDITIONS

We recommend the following environmental conditions be placed on any decision granting abandonment authority:

- 1. DK&S shall consult with the Arkansas Soil and Water Conservation Commission prior to salvage operations.**
- 2. The National Geodetic Survey (NGS) has identified one geodetic station marker that may be affected by the proposed abandonment. Therefore, we recommend that DK&S consult with NGS at least 90 days prior to salvage activities in order to plan for its relocation.**

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, 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 this case, 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 not 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 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 responds to questions regarding interim trail use, public use, and other reuse alternatives. You may contact the Office of Public Services directly at (202) 565-1592, or mail inquiries to Surface Transportation Board, Office of Public Services, 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 Ann Newman, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-558X** in all correspondence addressed to the Board. If you have questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Ann Newman at (202) 565-1629.

Date made available to the public: March 26, 1999.

Comment due date: April 26, 1999.

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

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

Attachment

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