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Service Date- December 27, 1996

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NO. AB-167 (SUB-O-NO 1176 X)

CONSOLIDATED RAIL CORPORATION
-ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION -
IN WICOMICO COUNTY MARYLAND

BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, the Consolidated Rail Corporation (Conrail) 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 milepost 40.80 near Salisbury, Maryland, to the junction point with Conrail's Delmarva Secondary at railroad milepost 42.00 near Salisbury, Maryland, and its Mill Street Industrial Track extending from its connection with the Mardella Industrial Track, at milepost 0.00 near Salisbury, Maryland, to milepost 0.60 near Salisbury, Maryland, a distance of 1.80 miles in the City of Salisbury, Wicomico County, Maryland. 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

There are two existing customers on the line; the Salisbury Brick Company, Inc., and The Farmers & Planters Company. The principal commodities handled for the present users consist of brick and fertilizer materials. One potential shipper is identified as the Delmarva Chemical Manufacturing, Inc.. The projected new traffic consists of sodium bisulfate, a nonhazardous agriculture chemical moving in railroad-owned boxcars. Based on shipper estimates and actual historic traffic movements, and the projected new traffic of 4 cars per month, Forecast Year traffic levels have been projected to increase to 154 carloads. The line traverses flat terrain with a right-of way width varying from 30 to 66 feet. There are 9 public at grade crossings, one of which is equipped with automatic warning devices.

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 Maryland Department of the Environment, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District, and the Maryland Historical Trust.

CONDITIONS

We recommend that no environmental conditions be placed on any decision granting abandonment authority*

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 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 Assistance (OPA) responds to questions regarding interim trail use, public use, and other reuse alternatives. You may contact OPA directly at (202) 9276184, or

mail inquiries to Surface Transportation Board, Office of Public Assistance, Room 4412, 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 2221, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Scott Decker, who prepared this environmental assessment. Please refer to Docket No AB@167 (Sub No. 1176X) in all correspondence addressed to the Board. If you have questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Scott Decker at (202) 927-6396*

Date made available to the public: December 23, 1996
Comment due date: January 24, 1996*

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

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary