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**SERVICE DATE – DECEMBER 30, 2004**

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD**

WASHINGTON, DC 20423

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

**STB DOCKET NO. AB-874 (Sub. No. 0X)**

**Sierra Northern Railway - Abandonment Exemption -  
in Yolo County, CA**

### **BACKGROUND**

In this proceeding, Sierra Northern Railway (Sierra) has filed a notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1152.50 seeking exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10903 for Sierra to abandon 9.27 miles of rail line in Yolo County, California. The rail line begins at milepost 90.5 in West Sacramento and extends in a southerly direction before ending just after Pumphouse Road. A map depicting the line in relationship to the area served is appended to the report. If the notice becomes effective, Sierra will be able to salvage track, ties, and other railroad appurtenances and to dispose of the right-of-way.

### **DESCRIPTION OF THE LINE**

Sierra acquired the rail line proposed for abandonment from Union Pacific in 1991 following an offer of financial assistance. Sierra states that there is now no demand for or prospect of rail service over the line, and that no traffic has originated, terminated, or moved overhead on this line segment for at least two years. Consequently, no rail traffic would be diverted to highway mode as a result of the abandonment.

According to Sierra, the rail line is located in a combination industrial, residential, and rural setting roughly paralleling the Sacramento River to the west. The line includes a circa 1918 wooden trestle bridge that crosses South River Road. The right-of-way is between approximately 80 and 100 feet wide, with some sections up to 120 feet wide.

Sierra believes the abandoned line may be suitable for alternative public use. Sierra has advised both the Yolo County Board of Supervisors and the Yolo County Planning & Public Works Department regarding the proposed project and the potential use of the line as a trail or for other recreational or public use.

Sierra states that it does not intend to appreciably remove or alter the contour of the roadbed underlying the rail line to be abandoned. The extent of disturbed areas will be kept to a minimum and limited to the right-of-way wherever possible. Sierra notes that all culverts and the bridge will remain in place. If possible, Sierra intends to recycle materials removed from the line for their reuse.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

Sierra 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. Sierra served the environmental report on a number of appropriate Federal, state, and local agencies as required by the Surface Transportation Board's (Board) environmental rules [49 CFR 1105.7(b)]. We have reviewed and investigated the record in this proceeding.

As salvage operations will be handled generally within the right-of-way, Sierra does not believe that any Federally listed threatened or endangered species that might be present would be adversely affected by the proposed abandonment. However, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has not provided input on the project's potential effects on any listed threatened or endangered species in the area. We therefore recommend a condition requiring that Sierra consult with the Sacramento Office of the Fish and Wildlife Service (Allison Arnold, 916-444-6628) prior to commencement of any salvage activities on this project and report back to SEA regarding the results of this consultation.

Sierra has indicated that the proposed abandonment would not adversely affect waters of the United States, including wetlands. Sierra is also not aware of any 100-year flood plains that would be impacted by the proposed action. We have included the appropriate offices of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Federal Emergency Management Agency on the service list for this proceeding to ensure that they receive a copy of this Environmental Assessment.

## **HISTORIC REVIEW**

Sierra submitted an historic report as required by the Surface Transportation Board's environmental rules [49 CFR 1105.8(a)]. Sierra served the report on the California Office of Historic Preservation (SHPO) pursuant to 49 CFR 1105.8 (c). The SHPO has not responded regarding the potential effect of the proposed project on historic properties listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register). Therefore, SEA will recommend a condition that Sierra will retain its interest in and take no steps to alter the historic integrity of all sites and structures on the right-of-way that are 50 years old or older until completion of the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act, 16 U.S.C. 470f.

SEA requested that Sierra send the environmental report for this proceeding to the Rumsey Indian Rancheria of Wintun Indians of California per 36 CFR 800.3(f)(2) to seek their input regarding any National Register eligible properties of traditional religious and cultural significance that may be affected by the proposed abandonment. The Federally recognized tribe has ancestral connections to the project area and may therefore have an interest in the project's potential impacts on any areas of tribal

interest. The tribe will be added to the service list for this proceeding and will receive a copy of this EA for their comment.

## **CONDITIONS**

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

1. The California Office of Historic Preservation (SHPO) has not completed its evaluation of the potential impact of this project on historic resources. Accordingly, Sierra Northern Railway shall retain its interest in and take no steps to alter the historic integrity of all sites and structures on the right-of-way that are 50 years old or older until completion of the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act, 16 U.S.C. 470f.
2. Sierra Northern Railway shall consult with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Sacramento Field Office (Allison Arnold, 916-414-6628) regarding impacts to Federally-listed threatened and endangered species that may occur in the vicinity of the line proposed for abandonment and report the results of the consultation to the Section of Environmental Analysis.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, we conclude that, as currently proposed, and if the recommended conditions are imposed, 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 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 Surface Transportation Board, Case Control Unit, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Catherine Glidden, who prepared this environmental assessment. Environmental comments may also be filed electronically on the Board's web site, [www.stb.dot.gov](http://www.stb.dot.gov) by clicking on the "E-FILING" link. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-874 (Sub No. 0X) in all correspondence, including e-filings, addressed to the Board.** If you have any questions regarding this environmental assessment, please contact Catherine Glidden, the environmental contact for this case, by phone at (202) 565-1542, fax at (202) 565-9000, or e-mail at [gliddenc@stb.dot.gov](mailto:gliddenc@stb.dot.gov)

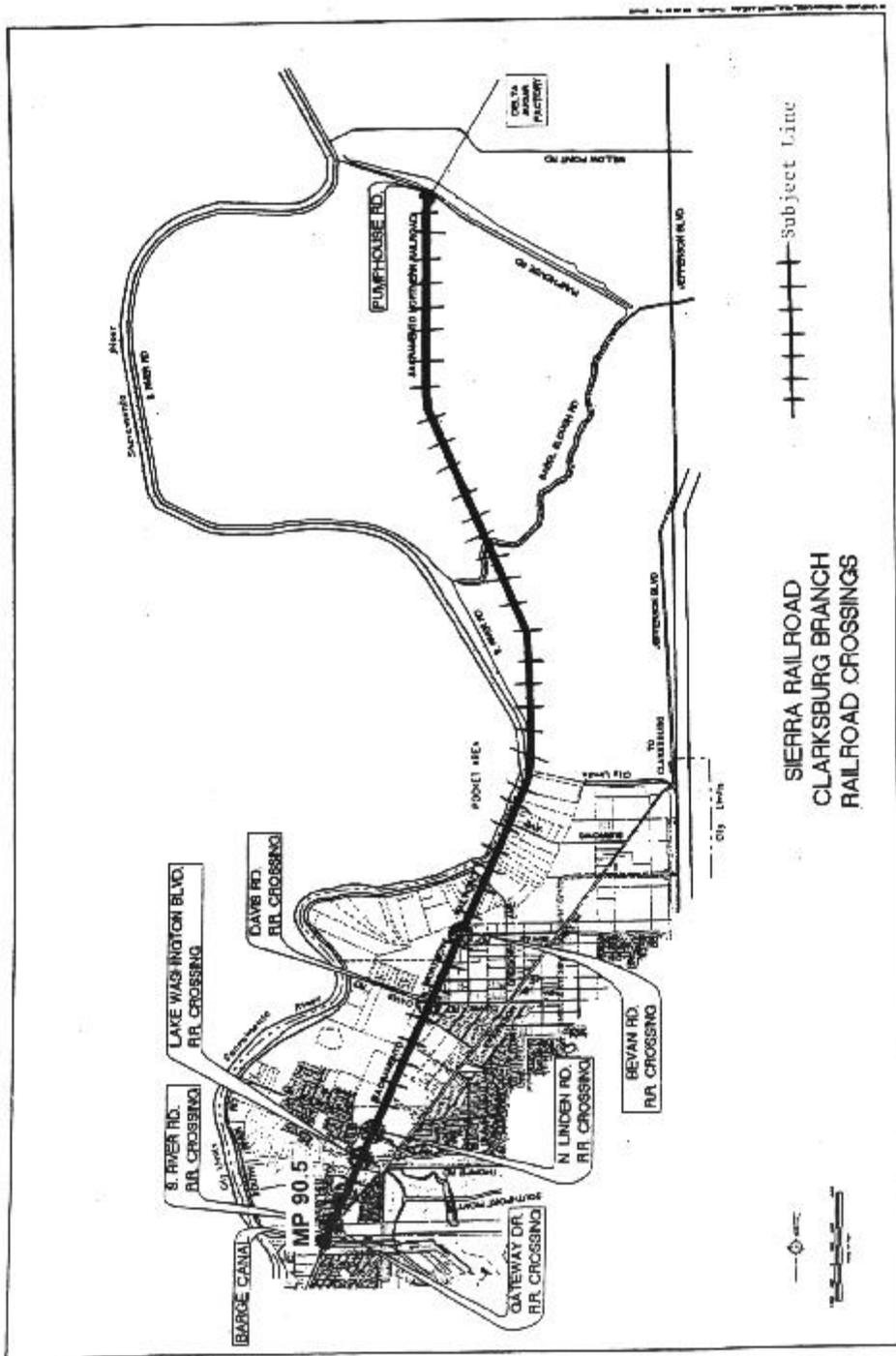
Date made available to the public: December 30, 2004.

Comment due date: **January 14, 2004 (15 days)**.

By the Board, Victoria Rutson, Chief, Section of Environmental Analysis.

Vernon A. Williams  
Secretary

Attachment



SIERRA RAILROAD  
CLARKSBURG BRANCH  
RAILROAD CROSSINGS