

ID # 21425

SERVICE DATE - MARCH 6, 1997

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD  
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

## ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NO. AB-167 (SUB-NO. 1174X)

CONSOLIDATED RAIL CORPORATION  
--ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION--IN CRAWFORD COUNTY, PA

### 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 known as the Meadville Branch (also known as the Dad's Dog Food Company Lead). The line is located between milepost 0.00, at a connection with the Mead Industrial Track, and the end of the line at milepost 1.25, a distance of 1.25 miles, in the City of Meadville, Crawford County, Pennsylvania. 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

The Crawford County Development Corporation (CCC) has expressed an interest in acquiring and operating the line for use as a private siding to serve industrial parks owned by CCC. The line serves one customer, Dad's Dog Food Company, Inc., and this customer supports the abandonment and acquisition by CCC. There are two bridges on the line which are 50 years old or older, however, the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Officer has written that the proposed abandonment will not effect historic properties. Conrail contemplates only the removal of the rail, track material and cross ties, with no clearing, grading or alteration of the topography. No dredging or discharge of dredge or fill materials into navigable waters will be involved, according to Conrail.

### 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 verified the record in this proceeding. Responses to the railroad's request for comments thus far have indicated the need for one mitigation condition, set forth below.

### **CONDITION**

In response to comments submitted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, **we recommend that the following condition be placed on any decision granting abandonment authority:**

**If salvage operations are to be undertaken, Conrail shall consult with the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources to determine if permits will be required for (a) disposal of waste materials from salvage operations and (b) removal of bridges and culverts. Similarly, Conrail shall consult with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and the Crawford County Conservation District to determine which measures, if any, must be taken to comply with regulations covering disposal of track ballast and the prevention of erosion and entry of sediment into waterways.**

### **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

Conrail states it is unaware of an alternative public use for which the right-of-way is suitable. However, if a public use request is made, such 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) 927-6184, 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 2215, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Harold McNulty, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-167 (Sub No. 1174X) in all correspondence addressed to the Board.** If you have questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Mr. McNulty at (202) 927-6217.

Date made available to the public: February 28, 1997.

**Comment due date: March 31, 1997.**

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

Vernon A. Williams  
Secretary