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SERVICE DATE - MARCH 7, 2003
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

STB Docket NO. AB-43 (Sub-No. 174X)

**Illinois Central Railroad Company—Abandonment Exemption--
in Randolph County, IL**

BACKGROUND

In the above entitled proceeding, Illinois Central Railroad Company (IC) 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 a 0.45-mile rail line referred to herein as “Baldwin Trackage” from milepost MM 602.55, just west of Baldwin to the current end of track at milepost MM 603.0, in Randolph County, IL.¹ 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 topography is generally flat, gently sloping to the east towards the Kaskaskia River. Baldwin Trackage crosses through farmlands at the western end, and through weekend/rural cabin-type residential areas at the eastern end. The right-of-way is generally 50 feet on either side of the center line of the track, or 100 feet. In its application IC states that there has been no traffic on the line during the past two years.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

IC 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. IC 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 [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: Illinois Department of Agriculture; Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs; Illinois Department of Natural Resources; Illinois Department of Transportation; Illinois Environmental Protection Agency; National Geodetic

¹ Baldwin trackage is the eastern remnant of IC’s former Sparta District which used to continue west and north to East St. Louis, IL.

Survey; National Park Service; Randolph County Board of Commissioners; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 5; U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service; USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service; and the Village of Baldwin.

The Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDA) has expressed several concerns regarding the right-of-way. The IDA specifically states that: (1) every effort should be made to ensure that the surface and/or subsurface drainage on adjacent agricultural land is not adversely affected by IC's abandonment; (2) weeds should be controlled on the abandoned right-of-way in the event the land is not sold or deeded to another party; and (3) any debris, including ballast, rails, ties, spikes, litter, etc should be completely removed from the right-of-way to prevent their dispersal onto adjacent farmland.² Accordingly, we will recommend a condition requiring IC to consult with the IDA prior to conducting salvage activities on the right-of-way.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has advised that the low area or draw that runs through the railroad bed on the west end is located in the 100 year floodplain. At that point, there is a very large culvert running under the railroad bed and tracks. If the abandonment is to only remove the rails and railroad ties, there would not be a negative impact on this area. If the bed is removed, then there could be possible impacts in the floodplain dealing with potential wetlands. Accordingly, we will recommend a condition requiring IC to consult with the NRCS prior to conducting salvage activities on the right-of-way.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Louis District (Corps) has indicated that if the abandonment requires discharge of dredge or fill material into waters, including wetland, a permit under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act will be required. Based on the Corps' comments, IC provided additional information to the Corps indicating that salvage activities will not involve the placement of dredge or fill material in waters. However, the Corps has not yet indicated whether a section 404 permit is needed. Therefore, we recommend that prior to engaging in any salvage activities IC consult with the Corps to determine if a Section 404 permit is needed.

HISTORIC REVIEW

IC submitted a historic report as required by the Surface Transportation Board's environmental rules [49 CFR 1105.8(a)]. IC served the report on Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (SHPO) pursuant to 4 CFR 1105.8(c). The SHPO has submitted comments stating that no historic properties listed in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) would be affected by the proposed abandonment. We have reviewed the report and the information provided by SHPO and concur with the SHPO's comments.

² IDA also states that if the adjacent land is agriculture land, IC should consider reclaiming the right-of-way for agriculture use and offering it for sale to adjacent landowners and/or deeding the land back to the owner of the parcel once comprised the right-of-way.

Pursuant to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's regulations for implementing the section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act at 36 CFR 800.4(d)(1) and 36 CFR 800.8, we have determined that the proposed abandonment will not affect historic properties listed in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register. The documentation for this finding, as specified at 36 CFR 800.11(d), consists of IC's historic report, all relevant correspondence, and this EA, which have been provided to the SHPO and made available to the public.

CONDITIONS

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

(1) Based on the comments of the Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDA), we recommend a condition be imposed requiring IC to consult with the IDA prior to salvage.

(2) Based on the comments of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), we recommend a condition be imposed requiring IC to consult with the NRCS prior to salvage.

(3) Based on the comments of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Louis District (Corps), we recommend a condition be imposed requiring IC to consult with Corps prior to salvage, to determine if permits are required under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.

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 the petition for 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, 1925 K St., N.W., 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, 1925 K. St., N.W., Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Ann Newman, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to STB Docket No. AB-43 (Sub-No. 174X) in all correspondence addressed to the Board.** If you have questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Ann Newman at (202) 565-1657, fax at (202) 565-9002, or e-mail at Ann.Newman@STB.dot.gov.

Date made available to the public: March 7, 2003.

Comment due date: March 24, 2003.

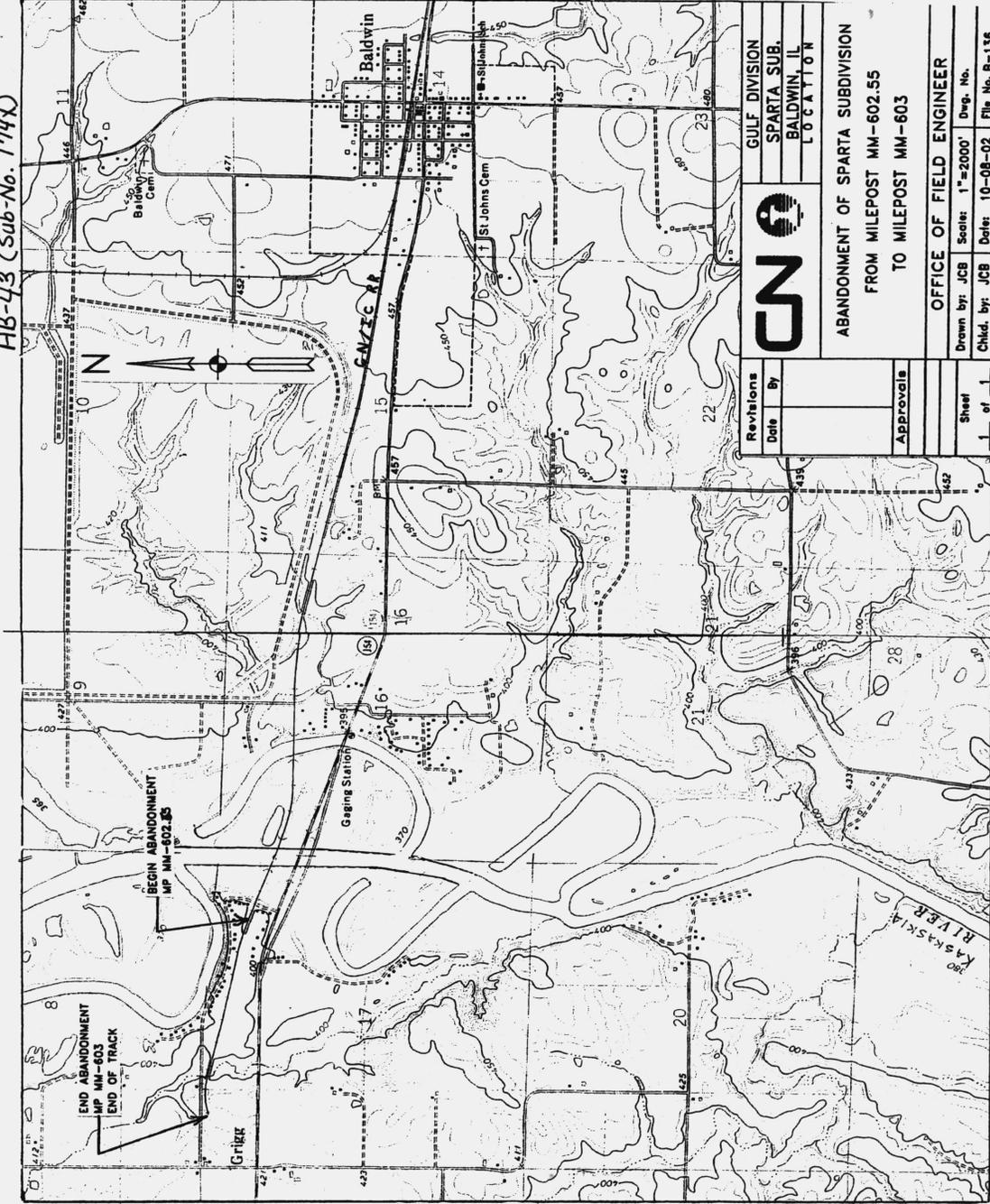
By the Surface Transportation Board, Victoria Rutson, Chief, Section of Environmental Analysis.

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

Attachment

ID # 33389

Attachment
AB-43 (Sub-No. 174X)



		GULF DIVISION	
		SPARTA SUB.	
BALDWIN, IL		LOCATION	
ABANDONMENT OF SPARTA SUBDIVISION FROM MILEPOST MM-602.55 TO MILEPOST MM-603			
OFFICE OF FIELD ENGINEER			
Drawn by: JCB		Scale: 1"=2000'	Dwg. No.
Chkd. by: JCB		Date: 10-08-02	File No. B-136
Revisions		Sheet	
Date	By	1 of 1	
Approvals			