



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 5
77 WEST JACKSON BOULEVARD
CHICAGO, IL 60604-3590

EI-1598

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Rec'd 7/19/05
ACN

JUL 07 2005

REPLY TO THE ATTENTION OF:

B-19J

Thomas F. McFarland, Esq.
208 South LaSalle Street – Suite 1890
Chicago, Illinois 60604-1112

Re: Comments on a draft Environmental and Historic Report for Proposed Rail Line Abandonment and Discontinuance of Service Exemption by BNSF Railway Company and Minnesota Commercial Railway Company - Ramsey County, Minnesota AB-6 (Sub-No. 429X) and AB-882 (Sub-No. 1X)

Dear Mr. McFarland:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has reviewed the above-mentioned draft Environmental and Historic Report (Report) notifying relevant parties that a petition for authority to abandon and discontinue service on 0.67 miles of rail line between Milepost No. 7.19 and Milepost No. 6.52 in Ramsey County, Minnesota will be filed with the Surface Transportation Board (STB) on or about July 11, 2005. Our comments in this letter are provided pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Council on Environmental Quality's NEPA Implementing Regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508), and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act.

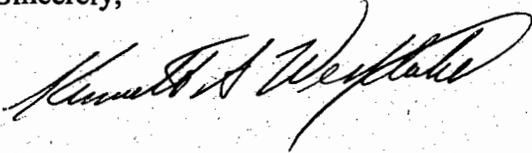
BNSF Railway Company and Minnesota Commercial Railway Company intend to abandon this section of rail line in conjunction with a county road realignment project. Track materials will be sold for salvage, crossties will be disposed of at a state-licensed disposal facility, ballast will remain in place, and the right-of-way (ROW) will be converted to a recreational trail.

We feel the following issue should be addressed in greater detail in the Report to be filed with the STB during July, 2005:

- Attached to the Report was a copy of the National Wetlands Inventory Map (NWI Map) covering the area of the subject rail line (Appendix 7). A small portion of a wetland in the northwest corner of the ROW is shown on the NWI Map. We feel salvage operations at this location should be discussed. In particular, we suggest removal of track materials should be accomplished using the ROW for access, along with existing public and private crossings. We recommend silt fencing be placed adjacent to the subject wetland prior to removal activities to provide proper erosion control. In addition, areas of disturbed soil should be restored to original grade and reseeded immediately with a native species mix of wetland plants approved by the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Long term benefits of this mitigation activity go beyond stormwater and soil protection to include development of habitat for wildlife, improved aesthetics for the future recreational trail, and decreased erosion.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this draft Report. Inclusion of the above information in the final Report would satisfy our concerns. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or Kathleen Kowal of my staff at (312) 353-5206.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Kenneth A. Westlake".

Kenneth A. Westlake, Chief
NEPA Implementation Section
Office of Science, Ecosystems, and Communities

cc: David Navecky, Surface Transportation Board