



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

MAR 31 2005

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REPLY TO THE ATTENTION OF:
B-19J

RECEIVED
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
2005 APR 12 A 3:45
OFFICE OF TRANSPORTATION

Michael J. Barron, Jr.
Counsel for Wisconsin Central Ltd.
17641 South Ashland Avenue
Homewood, Illinois 60430

Re: Wisconsin Central Ltd. Proposed Abandonment in Forest County, Wisconsin

Dear Mr. Barron:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) received a letter dated March 4, 2005 concerning a proposed abandonment of 4.62 miles of rail line located in Forest County, Wisconsin. 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.

Responding to the specific questions contained in your scoping letter, a Section 402 permit covering stormwater runoff from construction sites may be required; please consult with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) if construction activities are part of the proposed project. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is the agency responsible for administering Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. However, if designated wetlands are located adjacent to the rail line proposed for abandonment, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation is the appropriate agency with whom to discuss this issue. The U.S. EPA cannot comment on State and local water quality standards which may be applicable to this abandonment; the WDNR and local officials can address these questions. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service can assist your efforts to discern whether threatened or endangered species or critical habitat exist in the area of the proposed abandonment.

You can find environmental resource information on two U.S. EPA websites: (1) the Envirofacts Data Warehouse, <http://www.epa.gov/enviro/> and (2) Surf Your Watershed, <http://www.epa.gov/surf>. Please consider information from these sites when assessing your project's impact and completing the forthcoming Environmental and Historic Report (Report). Specifically, we request the Report also address: the ultimate disposition of rails and crossties, removal of all other waste or debris on the corridor, erosion control measures, and the possibility of converting the corridor to a trail.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment during the early stages of this project and look forward to reviewing the Environmental and Historic Report for this project. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or Kathleen Kowal of my staff at (312) 353-5206 or via e-mail at kowal.kathleen@epa.gov. Please address all future correspondence regarding rail line abandonment to my attention.

Sincerely,


Kenneth A. Westlake, Chief
NEPA Implementation Section

cc: David Navecky, Surface Transportation Board