



United States Department of the Interior

National Park Service

Midwest Region
601 Riverfront Drive
Omaha, Nebraska 68102-4226



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Mr. Vernon A. Williams, Secretary
Surface Transportation Board
1925 K Street, NW.
Washington, D.C. 20006

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Dear Mr. Williams:

The National Park Service (NPS) has reviewed a submission from James R. Paschall, Senior General Attorney for Norfolk Southern Corporation, dated October 20 requesting an exemption for the abandonment in Kalamazoo, Michigan (STB Docket No. AB-290[Sub. No. 284X]). We note the proposed abandonment would involve the removal of the rail bridge over the Kalamazoo River in Kalamazoo County, Michigan.

This particular segment of the Kalamazoo River is listed on the Nationwide Rivers Inventory (NRI). The NRI is a register of rivers that may be eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System. These rivers were included on the NRI based on the degree to which they are free-flowing, the degree to which the rivers and their corridors are undeveloped, and the outstanding natural and cultural characteristics of the rivers and their immediate environments. Section 5(d) of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act requires that:

In all planning for the use and development of water and related land resources, consideration shall be given by all Federal Agencies involved to potential national wild, scenic and recreational river areas.

In partial fulfillment of the section 5(d) requirements, the NPS compiles and maintains the NRI Web site at <http://www.nps.gov/nrcr/programs/rtca/nri/index.html>. The intent of the NRI is to provide information to assist Agencies in making balanced decisions regarding the use of the nation's river resources. A Presidential executive order and subsequent guidance issued by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) require that each Federal Agency, as part of its normal planning and environmental review processes, take care to avoid or mitigate adverse effects on rivers identified in the NRI. Further, all Agencies are required to consult with the NPS prior to taking actions that could effectively foreclose wild, scenic, or recreational status for rivers on the inventory. The CEQ guidance for interagency consultation may be found at the CEQ Web site <http://www.eh.doe.gov/nepa/tools/guidance/Guidance-PDFs/iii-3-3.pdf>.

Two portions of the Kalamazoo River are listed on the NRI; the Lower Kalamazoo portion all in Allegan County is listed both on the NRI and as a State Natural River by the State of Michigan. The upper portion of the Kalamazoo River, a 112 mile-long stretch from the Allegan dam to Marshall, including the area of the abandonment, was nominated to the NRI in 1982. It was nominated based on its outstandingly remarkable recreational values. A long southern Michigan stream with several dams and portages, the Kalamazoo flows through heavily farmed and hardwood forest areas, though the banks are generally



wooded. This portion is a good all around recreational stream receiving considerable floating and fishing use. Also found along its banks are several city and county parks because it flows through the city of Battle Creek and Kalamazoo. Though not currently listed, the upper portion of the river was under study by the State for the State Natural Rivers System.

At this time, we do not believe the proposal for removing the rail bridge across the river in Kalamazoo has the obvious potential to adversely affect the free-flowing or natural condition of the Kalamazoo River. However, the descriptions of the preliminary alternatives do not describe how the bridge will be removed or address the potential impacts to the riverbed. We are interested in knowing how the existing bed and banks of the river will be restored.

The NPS has a continuing interest in working with the Surface Transportation Board to ensure that impacts to resources of concern to the NPS are adequately addressed. If you have questions or issues concerning the NRI and rivers in general, please contact Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinator Sue Jennings, National Park Service, Midwest Regional Office, 601 Riverfront Drive, Omaha, Nebraska 68102, telephone 402-661-1848.

Sincerely,


Ernest Quintana
Regional Director

cc:

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