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KARL MORELL

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November 9, 2009

E-File

Victoria Rutson
Chief
Section of Environmental Analysis
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20423

Re: STB Docket No. AB-570 (Sub-No. 3X), Palouse River & Coulee City
Railroad, Inc. – Abandonment Exemption – In Latah County, Idaho

Dear Ms. Rutson:

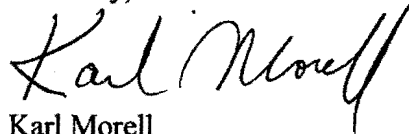
By decision served September 9, 2009, the Board reopened the above-referenced proceeding and imposed three conditions. The first two conditions require Palouse River & Coulee City Railroad, Inc. ("PRCC") to: (1) consult with and notify NGS at least 90 days prior to beginning salvage activities that will disturb or destroy any geodetic station markers; and (2) retain a botanist to conduct a survey of the project area and submit the results of that survey to SEA.

With respect to the first condition, PRCC retained a surveyor who determined that the identified markers were not on the PRCC right-of-way.

With respect to the second condition, attached please find the results of the Botanical Survey for Spalding's Catchfly conducted by Draba Consulting.

PRCC is still in the process of complying with the Board's third condition.

Sincerely,



Karl Morell

Enclosure

**Results of Botanical Survey for Spalding's Catchfly
in the Project Area Covered by Surface Transportation Board
Docket No. AB-570 (Sub-No. 3X)
Palouse River & Coulee City Railroad, Inc.
Abandonment Exemption in Latah County, ID**

Bertie J. Weddell, Ph.D.

Draba Consulting

1415 NW State Street

Pullman, WA 99163

October 22, 2009

1. Introduction

The Palouse River & Coulee City Railroad, Inc. (PRCC) has filed a verified notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1152 Subpart F—Exempt Abandonments—to abandon 2.98 miles of rail line in Moscow, ID. The Surface Transportation Board Decision (STB Docket No. AB-570 (Sub-No. 3X) states that that prior to the onset of salvage operations PRCC should retain a botanist to conduct a survey to determine if Spalding's catchfly, a federally-listed threatened plant, occurs in the project area. This document reports the result of that survey,

2. Methods

Dr. Bertie Weddell surveyed the subject property on September 30, 2009 to determine whether Spalding's catchfly was present. Specifically, the following segments of rail line (and associated right-of-way) were searched:

- Between Perimeter Drive and milepost 85.91, in Moscow, ID;
- Between milepost 86.11 and milepost 86.9, in Moscow; and
- Between milepost 85.5 and the end of the line at the intersection of A Street and Almon Street.

3. Findings

Spalding's catchfly was not found on the subject property.

No suitable habitat for Spalding's catchfly was found on the subject property. This species occurs in the Palouse Grasslands in west-central Idaho and southeastern Washington, the Channeled Scablands in eastern Washington, the Blue Mountain Basins in northeastern Oregon, the Canyon Grasslands of the Snake River and its tributaries in Washington and Idaho, and the Intermontane Valleys of northwestern Montana and southern British Columbia [Federal Register: October 12, 2007 (72 FR 58111-58112)]. In the Palouse and Canyon Grasslands and Channeled Scablands, it is virtually always found in association with the native bunchgrass Idaho fescue, as well as other native grasses (B. Weddell, personal observation).

Three habitats are present in the subject area:

- Stream banks with dense patches of reed canarygrass and other plants tolerant of moderately wet habitats, such as poison hemlock, broadleaf cattail, prickly lettuce, smooth brome, curly dock, and Canada thistle.
- Roadsides, trails, and tracks with plants characteristic of disturbed zones. Plants in this group that are common on the subject property include burning bush, cheatgrass, Canada thistle, smooth brome, prickly lettuce, Canadian horsetweed, ventenata, annual willow-herb, curly dock, tall oatgrass, field bindweed, yellow salsify, spotted knapweed, redstem stork's bill, puncturevine, prostrate knotweed, and common mullein.
- A rocky outcrop dominated by common snowberry, wild rose, and common chokecherry.

None of these habitats is likely to support populations of Spalding's catchfly, and a thorough search of each confirmed that Spalding's catchfly is not present in the project area.

4. Conclusion

Spalding's catchfly does not occur in the area of the proposed abandonment; therefore, no further action or consultation is necessary.

5. Scientific names of plant species

Common name	Scientific name
Annual willow-herb	<i>Epilobium brachycarpum</i>
Broadleaf cattail	<i>Typha latifolia</i>
Burningbush	<i>Bassia scoparia</i>
Canada thistle	<i>Cirsium arvense</i>
Canadian horsetweed	<i>Conyza canadensis</i>
Cheatgrass	<i>Bromus tectorum</i>
Common chokecherry	<i>Prunus virginiana</i>
Common mullein	<i>Verbascum thapsus</i>
Common snowberry	<i>Symphoricarpos albus</i>
Curly dock	<i>Rumex crispus</i>
Redstem stork's bill	<i>Erodium cicutarium</i>
Field bindweed	<i>Convolvulus arvensis</i>
Idaho fescue	<i>Festuca idahoensis</i>
Poison hemlock	<i>Conium maculatum</i>
Prickly lettuce	<i>Lactuca serriola</i>
Prostrate knotweed	<i>Polygonum aviculare</i>
Puncturevine	<i>Tribulus terrestris</i>
Reed canarygrass	<i>Phalaris arundinacea</i>
Smooth brome	<i>Bromus inermis</i>
Spalding's catchfly	<i>Silene spaldingii</i>
Spotted knapweed	<i>Centaurea repens</i>
Tall oatgrass	<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>
Ventenata (North Africa grass)	<i>Ventenata dubia</i>
Yellow salsify	<i>Tragopogon dubius</i>
Woods' rose	<i>Rosa woodsii</i>

6. Signature

Submitted by:

Bertie J. Weddell

Bertie J. Weddell, Ph.D.

Name

Principal, Draba Consulting

Title and affiliation

October 22, 2009

Date