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STATE OF IDAHO
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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1118 F Street • Lewiston, Idaho 83501-1930 • (208) 799-4370

IDAHO PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

Dirk Kempthorne, Governor
C. Stephen Allred, Director

June 29, 2004

Idaho Public Utilities Commission
P.O. Box 83720
Boise, Idaho 83720-0074

RE: Comments Docket No. AB-872, Great Northwest Railroad, Inc.
Abandonment Exemption, Clearwater County, Idaho

Dear Sir/Madam:

The Lewiston Regional Office of the Department of Environmental Quality has received a request from Ball Janik, LLP, Attorneys for Great Northwest Railroad, Inc. (GNR) to review the Environmental Report associated with the above Docket. The GNR requests that notification of any misleading, incorrect or missing information be provided to the Section of Environmental Analyses, Surface Transportation Board, 1925 K Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20423-0001.

We mentioned two concerns in our original comments dated April 20, 2004 that do not appear to have been incorporated into the environmental report. Specifically, the report states there are no known hazardous material waste sites or sites where known hazardous material spills have occurred. We suggest information be presented in the report that characterizes the hazard risk to water and the environment resulting from any wood preservation chemicals associated with the development, maintenance and operation of this rail line. The report also states GNR sees no need for mitigating actions. We suggest information be presented in the report that characterizes the risk of potential negative effects on water quality from un-maintained culverts and wood structures.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide further comment on this project. If you would like to discuss these comments or have any questions please contact me at (208) 799-4370.

Sincerely,
John Cardwell

John Cardwell
Regional Environmental Program Manager

JC/ba

cc: Ball Janik LLP, Attorneys, Great Northwest Railroad, Inc.
Kurt Fransen, Idaho Attorney General Office
Kerby M. Cole, DEQ/Lewiston Regional Office

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DARCY JAMES
Route 2 Box 404
Grangeville, ID 83530

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June 30, 2004
IDAHO PUBLIC
UTILITIES COMMISSION

Idaho Public Utilities Commission
P.O. Box 83720
Boise, ID 83720-0074

Commissioners,

Re: Case No. GNW-R-04-1

As a taxpayer and resident of North Central Idaho, I am writing in opposition to Great Northwest Railroad's petition to abandon the Jaype branch line in Clearwater County.

I attended the hearing in Orofino on June 28. Several witnesses showed that efforts to revive the economy of Clearwater County are in some measure dependent on access to rail shipping from the Pierce area. They asked for more time to bring planned projects to fruition. Needed new enterprises on the Weippe Prairie will be deprived of access to markets, and thus may not be established at all, if there is no railroad. The area served already finds itself in adverse circumstances, and removal of the rail access will only impair the efforts of the residents to recover. Finally, on the issue of profitability, it seems to me that the three months since Great Northwest took over the line are not a long enough period for them to demonstrate any claim. It seems that lack of maintenance and possibly a prohibitive fee structure may have contributed to recent inactivity on the line.

In the terrain of Clearwater County, rail transportation is far preferable to trucks for heavy freight. The roads, highways, and bridges between Pierce and transshipping points such as Lewiston, are not made for such traffic, and there is no easy or inexpensive way to upgrade them to that level. If we abandon the railroad, will we have to build it again in five years?

I urge you to join with the local leadership if our area and present the case against abandonment in the strongest terms to the Surface Transportation Board.

With thanks,

Darcy James

Darcy James