

environment during a system blowdown. Northwest has experienced such a release in the past. Without the system modifications performed to allow internal inspection, this cleaning operation can not be performed. For the Chehalis to Washougal section that was inspected in 1998, this cleaning recovered 1900 gallons of liquids.

For these reasons, OPS is satisfied that the proposed project will provide superior protection for people living near the Northwest pipeline system. Although the project is expected to provide environmental benefits, due to the minimal environmental impact associated with gas pipeline failures, these beneficial impacts are not expected to be significant.

#### *E.2 Environmental Impact of Project Denial*

If OPS denies this Demonstration Project, Northwest would be required to replace or requalify pipe in the six class location change segments. OPS has determined that the risk control programs and activities described in Section B.1 and B.2.2 will reduce risk more than replacing or requalifying pipe. Thus, if required to replace or requalify pipe, the level of environmental protection would be slightly less than with the proposed action.

Pipe replacement also introduces some adverse environmental impacts that are avoided with the proposed action. Pipe replacement involves excavation of the right-of-way to replace the pipe segment. This results in disturbance of the vegetation and wildlife in the immediate vicinity of the pipeline.

To illustrate the reduction in construction-related environmental impacts, Northwest estimates that replacement and requalification of the four class location change segments in the Chehalis to Washougal section would impact approximately 110 acres of vegetation.

Denial of this project would also result in a loss of access to information to OPS concerning the sources of risks along the Northwest pipeline, as well as information on stress corrosion cracking and geological hazards that would be useful in addressing these hazards on the nation's other pipeline systems.

#### **F. Environmental Justice Considerations**

In accordance with Executive Order 12898 (Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority and Low-Income Populations), OPS has considered the effects of the demonstration project on minority and low-income populations. As explained above, approval of this project is expected to result in improved safety and environmental protection compared to currently applicable regulations, along all sections of the Northwest gas pipeline transmission system. Residents near the facility will have a comparable or greater level of protection than they presently have, regardless of the residents' income level or minority status. Therefore, the proposed project does not have any disproportionately high or adverse health or environmental effects on any minority or low-income populations near the demonstration facility.

#### **G. Information Made Available to States, Local Governments, and Individuals**

OPS has made the following documents publicly available, and incorporates them by reference into this environmental assessment:

(1) "Demonstration Project Prospectus: Northwest Pipeline Corporation", October 1999, available by contacting Elizabeth M. Callsen at 202-366-4572. Purpose is to reach the public, local officials, and other stakeholders, and to solicit their input about the proposed project. Mailed to over 300 individuals, including Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPC) and other local safety officials, Regional Response Teams (RRT) representing other Federal agencies, state pipeline safety officials, conference attendees, and members of public interest groups.

(2) Northwest "Application and Work Plan for DOT-OPS Risk Management Demonstration Program", available in Docket No. RSPA-99-5611 at the Dockets Facility, U.S. Department of Transportation, Plaza 401, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590-0001, (202) 366-5046.

OPS has previously provided information to the public about the Northwest project and has requested public comment, using many different sources. OPS aired four electronic broadcasts (June 5, 1997; September 17, 1997; December 4, 1997; and March 1998.) reporting on demonstration project proposals (the last three of which provided specific information on Northwest's proposal). Two earlier **Federal Register** notices (62 FR 40135; July 25, 1997, and 62 FR 53052; October 10, 1997) informed the public that Northwest was interested in participating in the Demonstration Program, provided general information about technical issues and risk control alternatives to be explored, and identified the geographic areas the demonstration project would traverse.

Since August 1997, OPS has used an internet-accessible data system called the Pipeline Risk Management Information System (PRIMIS) to collect, update, and exchange information about all demonstration candidates, including Northwest (PRIMIS can be accessed from the OPS website at <http://ops.dot.gov>).

At a November 19, 1997, public meeting OPS hosted in Houston, TX, Northwest officials presented a summary of the proposed demonstration project and answered questions from meeting attendees. (Portions of this meeting were broadcast on December 4, 1997, and March 1998.)

#### **H. Listing of the Agencies and Persons Consulted, Including Any Consultants**

##### *Persons/Agencies Directly Involved in Project Evaluation*

Stacey Gerard, OPS/U.S. Department of Transportation  
Tom Fortner, OPS/U.S. Department of Transportation  
Ed Ondak, OPS/U.S. Department of Transportation  
Bruce Hansen, OPS/U.S. Department of Transportation  
Linda Daugherty, OPS/U.S. Department of Transportation  
Chris Hoidal, OPS/U.S. Department of Transportation/Western Region

Zack Barrett, OPS/U.S. Department of Transportation/Western Region  
Joe Robertson, OPS/U.S. Department of Transportation/Western Region  
Kent Evans, Utah Department of Commerce  
Dennis Lloyd, Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission  
Robert Brown, Cyclo Corporation (consultant)  
Jim Quilliam, Cyclo Corporation (consultant)  
Jim vonHerrmann, Cyclo Corporation (consultant)

##### *Persons/Agencies Receiving Briefings/Project Prospectus/Requests for Comment*

Regional Response Team (RRT), Regions 8 and 10, representing the Environmental Protection Agency; the Coast Guard; the U.S. Departments of Interior (including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), Commerce (including National Marine Fisheries Service), Justice, Transportation, Agriculture, Defense, State, Energy, Labor; Health and Human Services; the Nuclear Regulatory Commission; the General Services Administration; and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

#### **I. Conclusion**

Based on the above-described analysis of the proposed demonstration project, OPS has determined that there are no significant impacts associated with this action.

[FR Doc. 99-30906 Filed 12-1-99; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 4910-60-P**

## **DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

### **Saint Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation Advisory Board; Notice of Meeting**

Pursuant to Section 10(a)(2) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (Public Law 92-463; 5 U.S.C. App. I) notice is hereby given of a meeting of the Advisory Board of the Saint Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation (SLSDC), to be held at 9:00 a.m. on Friday, December 3, 1999, at the Hotel Intercontinental, 360 Rue St. Antoine, Montreal, Quebec, Canada. The agenda for this meeting will be as follows: Opening Remarks; Consideration of Minutes of Past Meeting; Review of Programs; New Business; and Closing Remarks.

Attendance at meeting is open to the interested public but limited to the space available. With the approval of the Administrator, members of the public may present oral statements at the meeting. Persons wishing further information should contact not later than December 2, 1999, Marc C. Owen, Advisory Board Liaison, Saint Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation, 400 Seventh Street, SW, Washington, DC 20590; 202-366-6823.

Any member of the public may present a written statement to the Advisory Board at any time.

Issued at Washington, DC on November 29, 1999.

**Marc C. Owen,**

*Advisory Board Liaison.*

[FR Doc. 99-31273 Filed 11-29-99; 4:15 pm]

BILLING CODE 4910-61-P

## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

### Surface Transportation Board

[STB Finance Docket No. 33826]

#### **North Carolina Ports Railway Commission d/b/a Beaufort & Morehead Railway—Acquisition and Operation Exemption—Beaufort & Morehead Railway, Inc.**

North Carolina Ports Railway Commission d/b/a Beaufort & Morehead Railway (NCPRC), a state agency which is a non-operating railroad, has filed a verified notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1150.41 to acquire the railroad franchise and business of Beaufort & Morehead Railway, Inc. (BMRI), an entity it already controls. BMRI will assign its lease of a line<sup>1</sup> of railroad extending from milepost 0.0 to milepost 0.87, a distance of .87 miles in Carteret County, NC, to NCPRC. BMRI will cease being a railroad, and NCPRC will become the operator of the line.

The transaction is scheduled to be consummated on or after November 26, 1999.

If the verified notice contains false or misleading information, the exemption is void *ab initio*. Petitions to reopen the proceeding to revoke the exemption under 49 U.S.C. 10502(d) may be filed at any time. The filing of a petition to revoke will not automatically stay the transaction.

An original and 10 copies of all pleadings, referring to STB Finance Docket No. 33826, must be filed with the Surface Transportation Board, Office of the Secretary, Case Control Unit, 1925 K Street, NW, Washington, DC 20423-0001. In addition, a copy of each pleading must be served on Fritz R. Kahn, Esq., 1100 New York Avenue, NW Suite 750 West, Washington, DC 20036.

Board decisions and notices are available on our website at "WWW.STB.DOT.GOV."

Decided: November 24, 1999.

<sup>1</sup> See *Beaufort & Morehead Railway, Inc.—Lease and Operation Exemption—Beaufort & Morehead Railroad Company*, Finance Docket No. 31833 (ICC served Feb. 21, 1991).

By the Board, David M. Konschnik,  
Director, Office of Proceedings.

*Vernon A. Williams,*

*Secretary.*

[FR Doc. 99-31173 Filed 12-1-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4915-00-P

## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

### Surface Transportation Board

[STB Docket No. AB-391 (Sub-No. 7X)]

#### **Red River Valley & Western Railroad Company—Abandonment Exemption—in McLean, Sheridan and Wells Counties, ND**

Red River Valley & Western Railroad Company (RRVW) has filed a notice of exemption under 49 CFR part 1152 subpart F—*Exempt Abandonments* to abandon approximately 56.34 miles of rail line from milepost 29.16 west of Bowdon and to milepost 85.5, at the end of the track, west of Turtle Lake, in McLean, Sheridan and Wells Counties, ND. The line traverses United States Postal Service Zip Codes 58575, 58559, 58463, 58444 and 58451.

RRVW has certified that: (1) No local traffic has moved over the line for at least 2 years; (2) there is no overhead traffic moving over the line; (3) no formal complaint filed by a user of rail service on the line (or by a state or local government entity acting on behalf of such user) regarding cessation of service over the line either is pending with the Surface Transportation Board (Board) or with any U.S. District Court or has been decided in favor of complainant within the 2-year period; and (4) the requirements at 49 CFR 1105.7 (environmental reports), 49 CFR 1105.8 (historic reports), 49 CFR 1105.11 (transmittal letter), 49 CFR 1105.12 (newspaper publication), and 49 CFR 1152.50(d)(1) (notice to governmental agencies) have been met.

As a condition to this exemption, any employee adversely affected by the abandonment shall be protected under *Oregon Short Line R. Co.—Abandonment—Goshen*, 360 I.C.C. 91 (1979). To address whether this condition adequately protects affected employees, a petition for partial revocation under 49 U.S.C. 10502(d) must be filed. Provided no formal expression of intent to file an offer of financial assistance (OFA) has been received, this exemption will be effective on January 1, 2000, unless stayed pending reconsideration. Petitions to stay that do not involve

environmental issues,<sup>1</sup> formal expressions of intent to file an OFA under 49 CFR 1152.27(c)(2),<sup>2</sup> and trail use/rail banking requests under 49 CFR 1152.29 must be filed by December 13, 1999. Petitions to reopen or requests for public use conditions under 49 CFR 1152.28 must be filed by December 22, 1999 with: Surface Transportation Board, Office of the Secretary, Case Control Unit, 1925 K Street, NW, Washington, DC 20423.

A copy of any petition filed with the Board should be sent to applicant's representative: Rose-Michele Weinryb, Esq., Weiner, Brodsky, Sidman & Kider, P.C., 1350 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 800, Washington, DC 20005-4797.

If the verified notice contains false or misleading information, the exemption is void *ab initio*.

RRVW has filed an environmental report which addresses the abandonment's effects, if any, on the environment and historic resources. The Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) will issue an environmental assessment (EA) by December 7, 1999. Interested persons may obtain a copy of the EA by writing to SEA (Room 500, Surface Transportation Board, Washington, DC 20423) or by calling SEA, at (202) 565-1545. Comments on environmental and historic preservation matters must be filed within 15 days after the EA becomes available to the public.

Environmental, historic preservation, public use, or trail use/rail banking conditions will be imposed, where appropriate, in a subsequent decision.

Pursuant to the provisions of 49 CFR 1152.29(e)(2), RRVW shall file a notice of consummation with the Board to signify that it has exercised the authority granted and fully abandoned the line. If consummation has not been effected by RRVW's filing of a notice of consummation by December 2, 2000, and there are no legal or regulatory barriers to consummation, the authority to abandon will automatically expire.

Board decisions and notices are available on our website at "WWW.STB.DOT.GOV."

Decided: November 22, 1999.

<sup>1</sup> The Board will grant a stay if an informed decision on environmental issues (whether raised by a party or by the Board's Section of Environmental Analysis in its independent investigation) cannot be made before the exemption's effective date. See *Exemption of Out-of-Service Rail Lines*, 5 I.C.C.2d 377 (1989). Any request for a stay should be filed as soon as possible so that the Board may take appropriate action before the exemption's effective date.

<sup>2</sup> Each offer of financial assistance must be accompanied by the filing fee, which currently is set at \$1000. See 49 CFR 1002.2(f)(25).