



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

1208-B Main Street
Daphne, Alabama 36526

IN REPLY REFER TO:

2011-TA-0475

FEB 02 2022



Ms. Danielle Gosselin
Acting Director, Office of Environmental Analysis
Surface Transportation Board
Washington, D.C. 20423

Re: Comments on Surface Transportation Board's Draft Environmental Assessment for Alabama & Florida Railway Company, Inc. Abandonment Exemption (Docket No. A 1073 Sub-No. 1X).

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Alabama Ecological Services Field Office (ALFO) has reviewed Surface Transportation Board's Draft Environmental Assessment and provides the following summary of comments previously provided and additional comments. Our comments are made in accordance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 (87 Stat. 884, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.).

In a letter dated July 21, 2011, our office reviewed an Environmental and Historical Report concerning the abandonment of approximately 42.9 miles of rail line by the Alabama & Florida Railway Co., Inc., approximately from milepost 581.3 at Andalusia, AL to milepost 624.2 at Geneva, AL. In that letter, we concluded that if bridges were left in place and no in-stream work would occur, then further consultation with our office would not be necessary.

In a letter dated December 1, 2021, our office provided additional comments on the abandonment of approximately 42.9 miles of rail line by the Alabama & Florida Railway Co., Inc., approximately from milepost 581.3 at Andalusia, AL to milepost 624.2 at Geneva, AL, and concluded that impacts to federally listed species would not be expected. Similar to our July 21, 2011 letter, this conclusion was based on the understanding that the project would not involve any in-stream work.

The Draft Environmental Assessment, received on January 3, 2022 stated: "because no land disturbance, salvage, instream work, or bridge/trestle removal is contemplated here, OEA [Office of Environmental Analysis] concludes that the proposed amendment would have no effect on any [federally listed] species, including the identified critical habitat." While the ESA gives federal action agencies the authority to make "No Effect" determinations without additional concurrence from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, we certainly appreciate you notifying us of your decision. As described, no further consultation is necessary for this project.

Thank you for the opportunity to provided comments. If you have questions, please contact Mr. Evan Collins at (251) 401-8250 or via email at evan_collins@fws.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "William J. Pearson".

William J. Pearson
Field Supervisor
Alabama Ecological Services Field Office