

#E1-1420
RGS



March 2, 2005

Surface Transportation Board
Case Control Unit
Washington, DC 20423
Attention: Rini Ghosh
STB Docket No. FD 34284

Received
3/8/05

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ROBERT L. COOK
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

RE: Amended comments regarding fence height
Draft EIS for Southwest Gulf Railroad Company construction and
operation of a seven mile line of railroad in Medina County, Texas.

Dear Ms. Ghosh:

I was contacted by Thomas Ransdell, Vulcan Materials Company, on February 28, 2005 regarding comments Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) provided to the Surface Transportation Board in a letter dated January 10, 2005 following a review of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) prepared to identify the impacts associated with the construction and operation of a seven mile line of railroad in Medina County, Texas. Based on information contained within the DEIS, TPWD recommended a wildlife exclusion fence, at least nine feet high, to prevent potential wildlife mortality caused by wildlife wandering onto the railroad tracks. Mr. Ransdell provided additional information that has resulted in TPWD amending that original recommendation.

Specifically, Mr. Ransdell has indicated that trains would be traveling at or less than 30 miles per hour (MPH). The Department concurs that the species of wildlife that would have been kept off the tracks by a nine foot tall fence (*i.e.*, deer) would under normal circumstances be able to avoid a train moving ≤ 30 MPH. Therefore, TPWD agree that a fence of standard height (approximately four feet) commonly used to contain livestock, would be suitable in the present project. A fence of this height would prevent livestock from wandering onto the tracks, yet allow deer to continue to move through the area as they can easily jump a four foot high fence.

TPWD does maintain the original recommendation that at least the bottom half of the fence should consist of fine mesh wire to prevent small animals (*e.g.*, Texas tortoise, a state-listed threatened species) from accessing and possibly becoming stranded on the tracks. It may be more cost effective for the entire fence to be constructed with a single mesh wire or woven wire with openings that are 1x1, 2x2, or 2x4 inches in size.

Also, as mentioned in the original response letter, project plans should incorporate wildlife crossings (under bridges or through culverts) wherever possible along the



Take a kid
hunting or fishing

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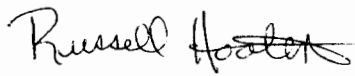
Visit a state park
or historic site

Ms. Ghosh
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proposed route. TPWD understands that these design features will be fully developed as project planning continues.

I appreciate your coordination on this project. If you have any questions regarding our amended comments, please contact me at (361) 825-3240.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Russell Hooten". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Russell" being more prominent than the last name "Hooten".

Russell Hooten
Wildlife Habitat Assessment Program
Wildlife Division

/rh

cc: Thomas Ransdell, Vulcan Materials Company