

#21-26275

Wood, Diana

From: Taub, Cynthia <CTaub@steptoe.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 21, 2017 2:55 PM
To: Sara Luduena; Wood, Diana; Casey Hanson; Justin Kockritz; Bill Martin
Cc: Coburn, David
Subject: RE: Southwest Gulf Railroad Company - update re HDR-AR-06 on the McGehee property

Hi Sara-

Yes, items 1 and 2 will still be carried out, and SGR will perform the vibration monitoring as long as the dwelling remains intact, even after the property changes hands.

SGR will undertake the HABS documentation for the dwelling as soon as possible, and we will report back.

I appreciate your prompt attention to this issue on a holiday week!

Happy Thanksgiving,

Cynthia

Cynthia L. Taub
ctaub@steptoe.com

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From: Sara Luduena [<mailto:Sara.Luduena@thc.texas.gov>]
Sent: Tuesday, November 21, 2017 2:35 PM
To: Taub, Cynthia; Wood, Diana; Casey Hanson; Justin Kockritz; Bill Martin
Cc: Coburn, David
Subject: RE: Southwest Gulf Railroad Company - update re HDR-AR-06 on the McGehee property

Hi Cynthia,

Thank you for getting back to me. I agree that the HABS documentation should be completed now. And while I would like to encourage SGR or the buyer to stabilize and rehabilitate this building because it is a contributing resource to the UQRHD, I don't believe we have a mechanism to require that in this case. According to the resolution plan, the four mitigation measures that I see are (1) HABS Level II-like documentation, (2) inclusion of information about this resource in the UQRHD context document, (3) vibration monitoring and (4) a structural assessment of the building(s). Items 1 and 2 will still be carried out, correct? As for number 4, the site visit in October by HDR has given us some information about the condition of the structure. And as far as the vibration monitoring goes, will SGR still do this? Without confirmation

from the buyer that the building will be demolished after it changes hands, I don't see any reason to abandon the vibration monitoring.

Thanks,
Sara

From: Taub, Cynthia [<mailto:CTaub@steptoe.com>]

Sent: Tuesday, November 21, 2017 11:28 AM

To: Sara Luduena <Sara.Luduena@thc.texas.gov>; Wood, Diana <Diana.Wood@stb.gov>; Casey Hanson <Casey.Hanson@thc.texas.gov>; Justin Kockritz <Justin.Kockritz@thc.texas.gov>; Bill Martin <Bill.Martin@thc.texas.gov>

Cc: Coburn, David <DCoburn@steptoe.com>

Subject: RE: Southwest Gulf Railroad Company - update re HDR-AR-06 on the McGehee property

Sara-

Thanks for the prompt response on this. In terms of your questions, SGR cannot disclose the identity of the purchaser due to a confidentiality agreement. However, we can tell you that the purchaser has plans to develop the site, and is anticipated to be a future customer of the railroad. SGR does not know any specifics regarding the purchaser's plans with regard to the HDR-AR-06 dwelling, and SGR is certainly not suggesting that the buyer should demolish the dwelling. However, SGR will have no control over the site once title passes, and given the development plans for the site, and the condition of the dwelling, it appears unlikely the building will be preserved. While the resolution plan contemplated stabilization, SGR does not believe stabilization can feasibly be pursued because the dwelling could collapse if stabilization is attempted. Even if stabilization were feasible, it would only make sense to undertake that work if there were a plan to preserve the building. However, even with stabilization, the building's condition suggests that long-term preservation is unlikely. Moreover, SGR has no reason to believe that the new owner will preserve the structure.

Given all of the above, we believe the best path forward is to complete the HABS documentation now, without performing the stabilization work and before the property changes hands.

I hope this helps address your questions. Let us know if you have any further questions.

Best,

Cynthia

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From: Sara Luduena [<mailto:Sara.Luduena@thc.texas.gov>]

Sent: Tuesday, November 21, 2017 9:50 AM

To: Wood, Diana; Casey Hanson; Justin Kockritz; Bill Martin
Cc: Coburn, David; Taub, Cynthia
Subject: RE: Southwest Gulf Railroad Company - update re HDR-AR-06 on the McGehee property

Hi Diana,

I am not opposed to the HABS documentation being done immediately, but I do have a couple of questions. If the property is being sold, who is purchasing it and why is it being demolished? It is unfortunate that the stabilization recommendations in the report from October are not being followed. I understand that the condition of this structure is poor, but it is a contributing resource to the UQRHD and I would hope that demolition would be a last resort.

Thanks,
Sara

From: Wood, Diana [<mailto:Diana.Wood@stb.gov>]
Sent: Tuesday, November 21, 2017 5:54 AM
To: Sara Luduena <Sara.Luduena@thc.texas.gov>; Casey Hanson <Casey.Hanson@thc.texas.gov>; Justin Kockritz <Justin.Kockritz@thc.texas.gov>; Bill Martin <Bill.Martin@thc.texas.gov>
Cc: Coburn, David <DCoburn@steptoe.com>; CTaub@steptoe.com
Subject: RE: Southwest Gulf Railroad Company - update re HDR-AR-06 on the McGehee property

Sara, Justin, Bill, Casey:

SGR has requested to conduct the HABS documentation on HDR-AR-06 now in lieu of stabilizing the structure, as it is to be sold and the structure demolished. They would like to get started on this ASAP, but have requested approval. As the real estate transaction will likely occur within the next 30 days, could one of you let me know today, this morning if possible, if you are in agreement, or otherwise have comments/suggestions with this approach.

Thanks much!
Diana
202-245-0302

From: Taub, Cynthia [<mailto:CTaub@steptoe.com>]
Sent: Monday, November 20, 2017 8:27 AM
To: Wood, Diana <Diana.Wood@stb.gov>
Cc: Coburn, David <DCoburn@steptoe.com>; Sara Luduena <Sara.Luduena@thc.texas.gov>; Casey Hanson <Casey.Hanson@thc.texas.gov>; Bill.Martin@thc.state.tx.us
Subject: RE: Southwest Gulf Railroad Company - update re HDR-AR-06 on the McGehee property

Hi Diana-

I'm sorry if the letter was unclear. We are concerned that performing any work on the structure could cause collapse given its fragile condition and the tree resting on the roof. Therefore, we are planning to prepare the HABS documentation now without performing the stabilization work, to ensure the documentation can be prepared before the dwelling deteriorates any further, as well as before the upcoming property sale. The documentation will be prepared from the exterior only, since it is not safe to enter the dwelling. However, given the open nature of the structure, interior views can be obtained from the outside.

I will give you a call today to discuss.

Thanks,

Cynthia

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From: Wood, Diana [<mailto:Diana.Wood@stb.gov>]
Sent: Monday, November 20, 2017 7:47 AM
To: Taub, Cynthia
Cc: Coburn, David; Sara Luduena; Casey Hanson; Bill.Martin@thc.state.tx.us
Subject: RE: Southwest Gulf Railroad Company - update re HDR-AR-06 on the McGehee property

Cynthia:

I'm confused by your letter. Will SGR be making the report's suggested stabilization recommendations prior to doing the HABS documentation?

Thanks
Diana

From: Wood, Diana
Sent: Sunday, November 19, 2017 8:12 PM
To: 'Taub, Cynthia' <CTaub@step toe.com>
Cc: Coburn, David <DCoburn@step toe.com>; Sara Luduena <Sara.Luduena@thc.texas.gov>; Casey Hanson <Casey.Hanson@thc.texas.gov>; Bill.Martin@thc.state.tx.us
Subject: RE: Southwest Gulf Railroad Company - update re HDR-AR-06 on the McGehee property

Thank you. THC and STB will be reviewing your plans and commenting within the next 30 days.

Diana Wood

From: Taub, Cynthia [<mailto:CTaub@step toe.com>]
Sent: Friday, November 17, 2017 4:10 PM
To: Wood, Diana <Diana.Wood@stb.gov>
Cc: Coburn, David <DCoburn@step toe.com>; Sara Luduena <Sara.Luduena@thc.texas.gov>; Casey Hanson <Casey.Hanson@thc.texas.gov>; Bill.Martin@thc.state.tx.us
Subject: Southwest Gulf Railroad Company - update re HDR-AR-06 on the McGehee property

Hi Diana-

Attached are a report and cover letter with an update on the stone German-Alsatian dwelling (HDR-AR-06) on the McGehee property (Parcel R8287). Let us know if you have any questions or wish to discuss.

Thanks,

Cynthia

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November 17, 2017

VIA E-MAIL

Ms. Diana Wood
Section of Environmental Analysis
Surface Transportation Board
1925 K Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20423

Re: STB Finance Docket No. 34284, Southwest Gulf Railroad Company

Dear Diana:

I am writing to update you on the mitigation measures for the stone German-Alsatian dwelling (HDR-AR-06) on the McGehee property (Parcel R8287), north of FM 2676. As you will recall, HDR-AR-06 is located within the boundary of the UQRHD, and the building has been determined eligible as a contributing resource to the UQRHD. SHPO concurred that the Project will have an adverse effect on HDR-AR-06. The Resolution Plan provides that in addition to the UQRHD exhibition and educational materials, mitigation strategies for HDR-AR-06 include HABS-like Level II documentation for the Alsatian structure and vibration monitoring. In addition, because of the poor condition of the Alsatian building, the Resolution Plan called for a structural assessment and preservation plan for the dwelling. HDR performed an initial assessment and determined that it is not safe to enter the building given its current condition. Please see the attached HRR field report, which documents the dead tree on the roof and other structural problems with the building. Given the condition of the dwelling, HDR found that significant stabilization work would be required before it would be safe for anyone to enter the building. There is also risk that attempting to perform stabilization work would itself lead to collapse or further damage to the structure.

Moreover, although SGR currently owns the property on which the dwelling sits, SGR intends to sell the property within 30 days. While the Resolution Plan contemplates the development of a preservation plan for the dwelling, the future preservation of the building will not be in SGR's control once title passes. Therefore, SGR intends to move forward with preparing the HABS documentation of the Alsatian structure as soon as possible, working from the exterior of the building only, to ensure that the HABS documentation can be completed before title passes and before the new property owner makes any changes that impact the dwelling. The HABS documentation will include all of the elements listed in the Resolution Plan, but will be done from the exterior only. Given the open nature of the

Ms. Diana Wood
November 17, 2017
Page 2



structure, interior views can be obtained from the exterior, as can be seen in the attached photographs. We will update you once the HABS documentation for this dwelling has been completed.

In the meantime, please let us know any questions regarding resource HDR-AR-06 on the McGehee property.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cyn L Taub".

Cynthia L. Taub
Attorney for Southwest Gulf Railroad Company

Attachment

cc: Bill Martin, THC
Casey Hanson, THC
Sara Luduena, THC

Field Report

Date: Wednesday, November 01, 2017

Project: SGRR Medina County

To: Ann Keen

From: Chad Zimmerman

Subject: Existing Structure Site Observation – HDR-AR-06

Description

Site Visit report in Medina County for an old farmhouse estimated to be built around 1870 (Photo 1). Weather at time of visit on Thursday, October 19, 2017, was approximately 78 degrees and partly cloudy. The purpose of the site visit was to do a visual inspection of the structural stability to determine if it is safe to go inside the structure to do Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) documentation due to the fact that a tree has fallen on top of the structure.

Observations

The roof system appeared to be traditional wood rafters with the purlins being made of dimensional lumber on the east end and sawn tree pieces on the west end. There appeared to be an old standing metal roof that wood shingles had been placed on top of. The trunk of a dead tree had fallen onto the roof of the structure and broken into two pieces. Both pieces were sitting on the west end of the roof on each side. It appeared that when the tree fell, it hit the chimney before hitting the roof (Photo 2). The roof was damaged as a result and is experiencing large deflections and distress from the weight of the tree (Photo 3). There was a localized puncture in the roof due to the tree striking the roof. (Photo 4). The west wall support at the header beams were not in stable condition at the time of the visit. On the north-west end the support of the header beam was not present (Photo 5) and it appeared that a column that was added was supporting the header along with the rafter beam. On the south end, the header was still somewhat supported by the stone wall (Photos 6 and 7). The support was not in stable condition and could give way at any point with movement of the building or vibration of the surrounding area. It appeared that sometime in the past, the building was modified to remove the north and south walls on the west end. During this removal, it appeared that they removed the tie beams (Photo 8), which provide stability for the roof system. The tie beams were still present on the north and south east side walls (Photo 9). These walls were in better condition and mostly intact. As a result of the tree and modifications to the existing structure, the roof ridge rafter connection was starting to open up at the west end (Photo 10). The first two rafters had separated and at the third, a gap was present. It is assumed that since the tie beams were removed, the ridge rafter connection is taking most of the load and connecting both side of the roof together.

Recommendations

The building condition at the time of the site visit is considered unstable and not recommended that anyone go in the building or conduct survey of the members due to the risk of localized collapse of the east wall and/or east roof of the building. It is not recommended that any jacking or removal of the trees should be done. It is thought that this would cause collapse. Although any modifications at this point could cause collapse, it is recommended that any modifications that could be done at this point would be to minimize the risk of collapse and keep the structure from moving any further than it already has to this point. It is recommended that the following items are performed in the order presented below in order to better stabilize the structure. It is recommended that steel straps be added to the first 4 rafters from the west end to prevent any future opening up of the ridge. It is also recommended that two 8X8 wood posts be added about 2 to 4 feet from the end of the west wall to support the north and south header beams. The posts should be embedded about 4 feet into the ground with concrete and connected with the header beam. Due to risk of vibration and the sensitive state of the structure, all connections should be made with screws and no nails shall be used. After the posts are installed, it is recommended that a tie beam be placed between the two columns to connect them together. See Figures 1 and 2 for recommended stabilization measures. Considering all recommendations have been followed, it is then acceptable for the HABS documentation to be completed.



PHOTO 1: OVERALL SITE

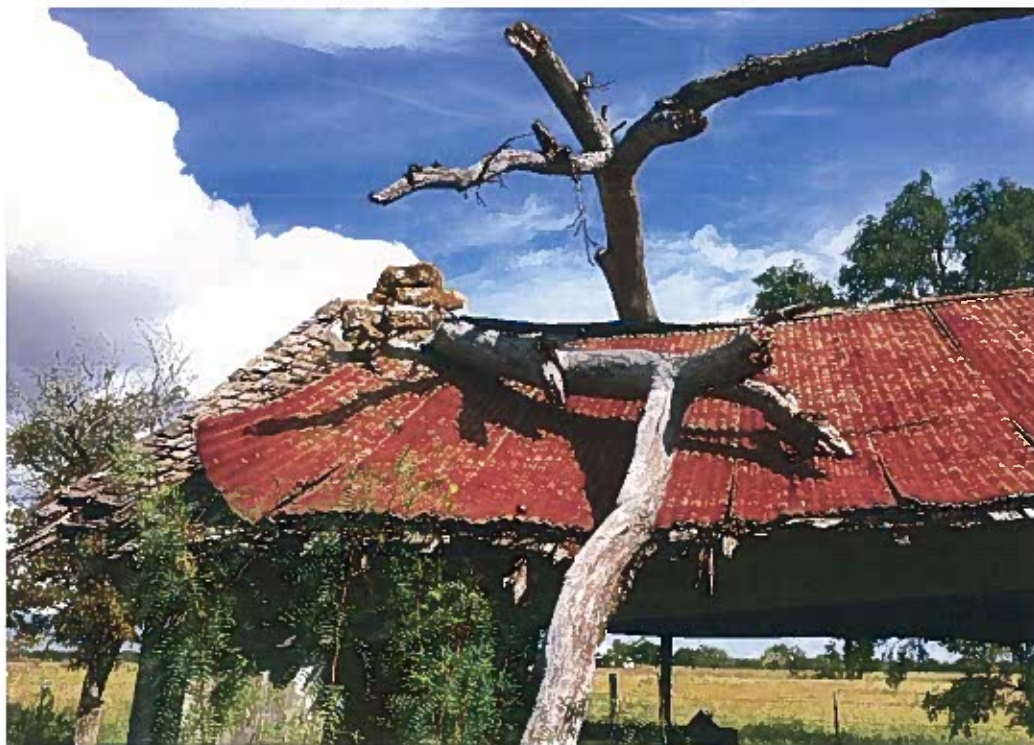


PHOTO 2: TREE TRUNK AND BRANCH ON TOP OF ROOF



PHOTO 3: TREE ON ROOF AND EXCESSIVE DEFLECTIONS AND DISTRESS



PHOTO 4: LOCALIZED PUNCTURE IN ROOF AT CENTER OF PICTURE



PHOTO 5: VIEW AT NORTH WEST END OF HEADER BEAM



PHOTO 6: VIEW OF SOUTH WEST END OF HEADER BEAM



PHOTO 7: VIEW OF OUTSIDE OF SOUTH WEST HEADER BEAM SITTING ON STONE



PHOTO 8: VIEW SHOWING REMOVED TIE BEAMS FOR RAFTER ON WEST SIDE



PHOTO 9: VIEW SHOWING TIE BEAM FOR RAFTER ON EAST SIDE



PHOTO 10: RAFTER BEAM STARTING TO OPENING UP AT THE ROOF RIDGE ON WEST END.

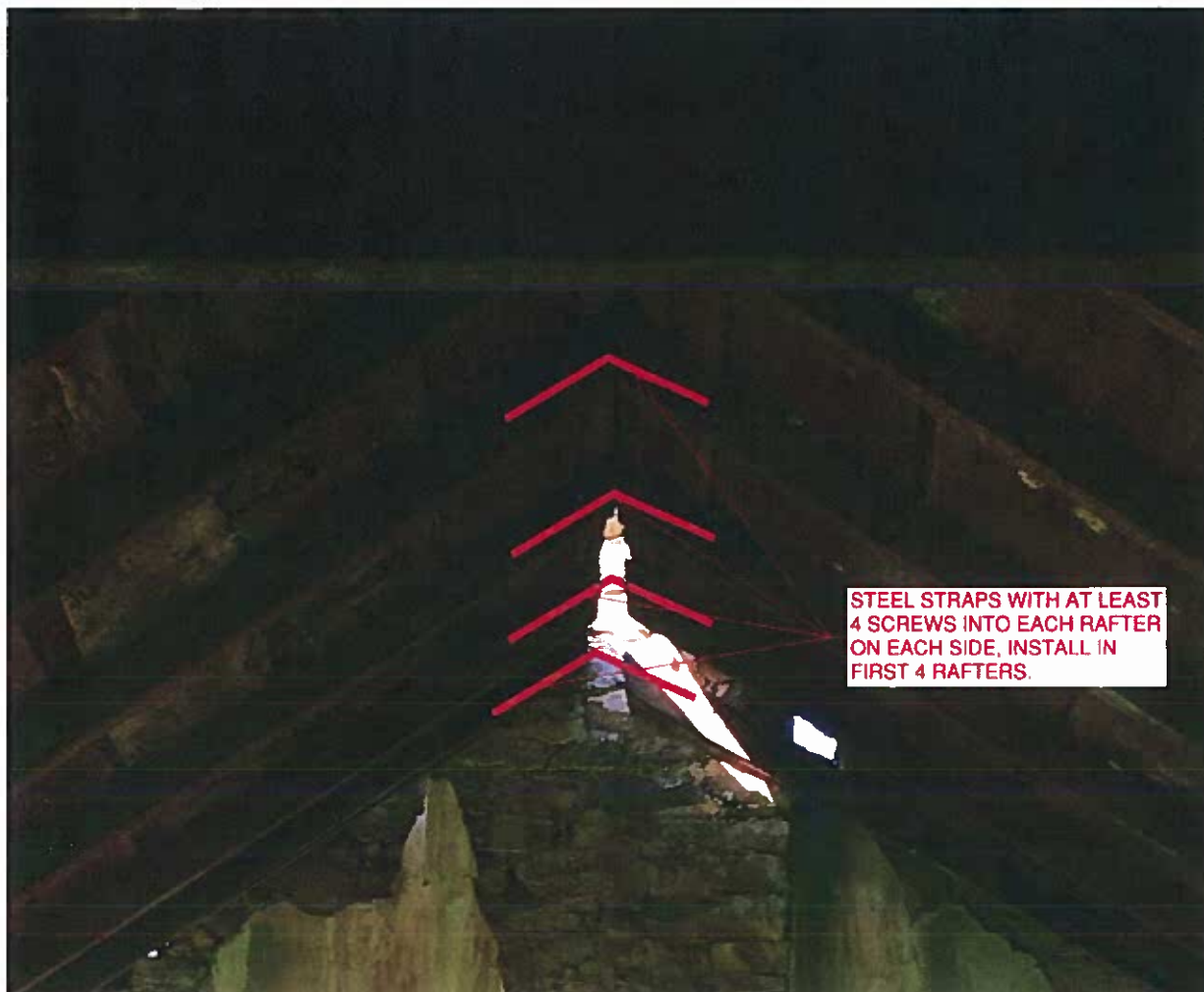


Figure 1: Rafter ridge modifications

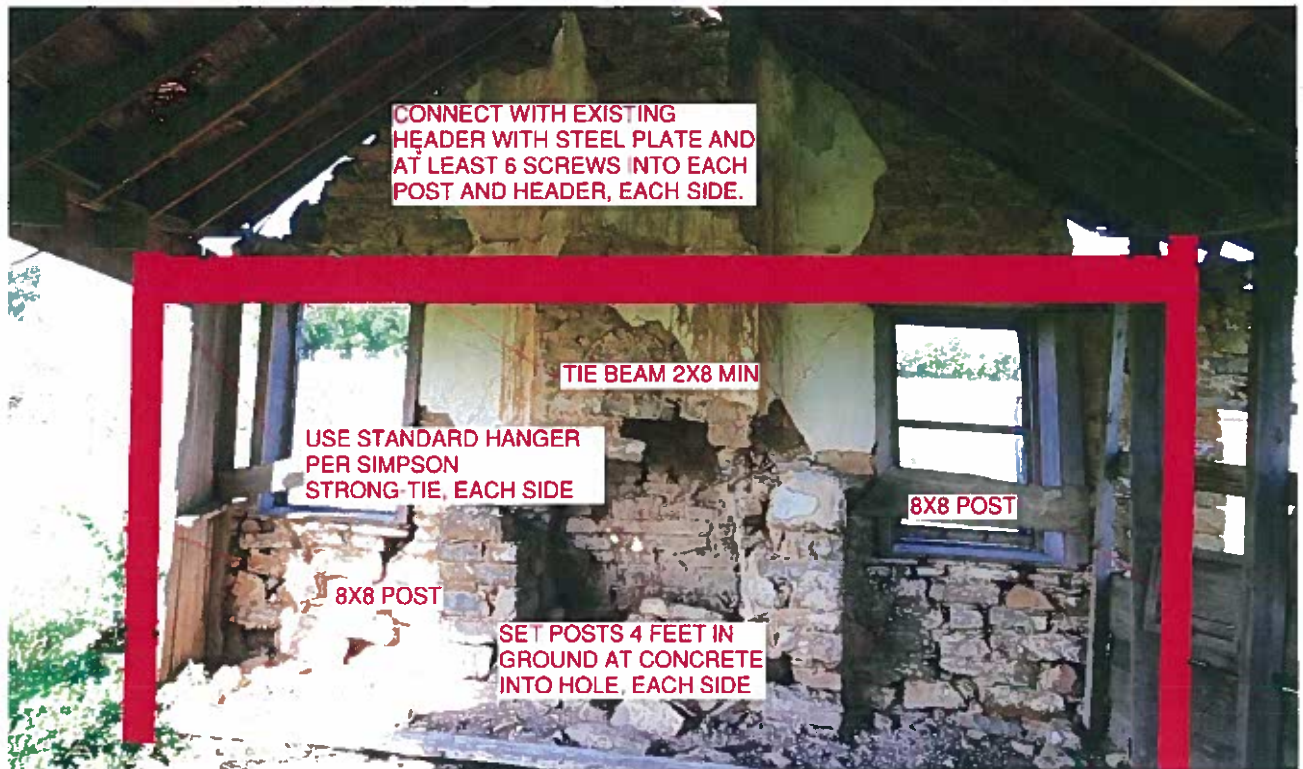


Figure 2: Posts and tie beam modifications