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**SURFACE
TRANSPORTATION BOARD**

June 7, 2002

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**SURFACE
TRANSPORTATION BOARD**

MONTANA RAIL LINK, INC.
101 INTERNATIONAL WAY
POST OFFICE BOX 16390
MISSOULA, MONTANA 59808-6390
(406) 523-1500



Surface Transportation Board
Office of the Secretary
1925 K Street N.W., Suite 840
Washington, D.C. 20423-0001

Subject: Request to Abandon Track near Polson, Montana
Montana Rail Link, Inc. - Docket No. AB575 - Sub 1 X
ICC Termination Act, 49 U.S.C. 10502
(Exception to Abandonment Process)

As the result of three years of discussion and study, Montana Rail Link, Inc. (MRL) has reached agreement with the State of Montana, Lake County, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Nation, and the City of Polson, Montana to pursue a project requiring the abandonment of 4.35 miles of branch line railroad track.

As part of a proposed Federal Aid Project to widen US Highway 93 Between Evaro and Polson, Montana, the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) approached MRL with the need to relocate portions of its branch line track. MRL classifies this 33.4-mile long line, which originates in Dixon, Montana and terminates in Polson, Montana, as its 11th Subdivision. The portions of track requiring relocation are located within five miles of the end of track in Polson, Montana. Preliminary estimates indicated that the cost of relocating those portions of track in conflict with the highway expansion would cost in excess of \$750,000. Given this large cost, the idea of abandoning 4.35 miles of track along with MRL's Polson rail yard was proposed. This idea became more attractive as all groups began to seriously consider the present effectiveness of the railroad facilities in and around Polson, Montana.

The existing Polson rail yard is located in the center of the City of Polson near schools, churches, and parks and is accessed exclusively by residential streets. Rail shipments into and out of Polson have been sporadic for at least twenty years. Given the existing rail yard's access limitations and location, it's highly unlikely that any firm desiring rail service would find this yard attractive for any new industrial venture. The idea of abandoning the track into Polson, when combined with the concept of creating a new, more user friendly rail yard on the outskirts of Polson quickly gathered support and momentum.

After an exhaustive search, two parcels of property were identified as being suitable for railroad facilities to replace the existing Polson rail yard. One parcel was owned by Lake County and is being developed as a location for a new county owned and managed garbage transfer station. By locating its new "Wye Track" on this county property, MRL would have to ability to serve the new transfer station while maintaining its ability to turn locomotive consists. Another parcel of property, currently used for agricultural purposes, was identified which would be suitable for a new loading dock and additional railroad spur tracks. This parcel has excellent highway access and is not near any sensitive developments such as schools, subdivisions or public open space. Placing a railroad dock and "team tracks" on this parcel would allow MRL to promote these new facilities as a very desirable location to site industrial rail customers.

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Surface Transportation Board
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Page 2

After extensive negotiations, MRL and MDT reached an understanding that called for MDT to fund construction of the new railroad facilities in exchange for MRL's right of way between the new railroad yard and the City of Polson. With this understanding, MRL felt it prudent to commission an Environmental Report for this proposal, which would include a public comment process. Though not required as a condition of 49 U.S.C. 10502, this report was deemed of to be of value in analyzing the costs and benefits of the project. A Final Copy of the completed report is enclosed for your review. Development of the Environmental Report allowed both MRL and MDT to gain an appreciation of the governmental, tribal, and public support which existed for this project.

The enclosed Environmental Report gives a much more detailed review of the project and should help answer any questions you may have. If you have any questions or desire additional information, please feel free to contact MRL's Public Works Engineer, Steven Werner, at (406) 523-1551 or at the address listed above.

The letters of support from the Governor of the Montana, the Chairman of the Tribal Council of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, the City of Polson, the Lake County Planning Department, and the documented public support, all which can be found in the Environmental Report, clearly indicate a high level of local support for this project.

I want to stress that it's important to realize the organizations mentioned in the last paragraph, along with Montana Rail Link, do not view this abandonment as an elimination of service to the residents of Lake County and more specifically to the City of Polson. Instead the project is considered to be a way of providing better service and more user friendly facilities to existing and potential railroad customers in the Polson area.

Your exempting of this abandonment from closer regulatory scrutiny will allow the residents of Lake County to realize the benefits associated with this project in a timely and even accelerated process.

Sincerely,



Daniel K. Watts
President
Montana Rail Link, Inc.

tjm

enclosure

pc Dewey Lonnes - MDT
 Dick Weaver - Skillings Connolly

C-3866....State Highway/Polson Yard Relocation



MONTANA RAIL LINK, INC.
101 INTERNATIONAL WAY
POST OFFICE BOX 16390
MISSOULA, MONTANA 59808-6390
(406) 523-1500

June 24, 2002

Surface Transportation Board
Office of the Secretary
1923 K Street N.W., Suite 840
Washington, D.C. 20423-001

Subject: **Supplement** to Docket No. AB575-Sub 1
Original filing June 7, 2002
Montana Rail Link request to abandon track
near Polson, Montana

In response to recommendations made by Joe Dettmar of your office, Montana Rail Link (MRL) has developed the following information on past rail shipments into and from Polson, Montana.

Enclosed is a copy of Table 2, taken from the Final Environmental Report that was included with our filing of June 7, 2002. This table shows the history of rail shipments on the track to be abandoned through year 2001. From January 1, 2002 through June 14, 2002 the following additional shipments were recorded:

1/1/02 to 6/14/02 Polson Ready Mix has loaded 24 cars of decorative rock
1/1/02 to 6/14/02 American Stone has loaded 10 cars of decorative rock
1/1/02 to 6/14/02 Western Building Centers has unloaded 1 car of lumber

On June 17, 2002, MRL sent the three current rail customers certified letters notifying them of our filing of June 7, 2002 and informing them of their right to comment to your office. Copies of the letters and the certificates of delivery are enclosed. The assets and business of Woody's, a retail lumberyard and building supply store in Polson, shown in Table 2 as being a client, were purchased in 2001 by Western Building Centers. Cashe Commodities also shown on Table 2, was an agricultural brokerage firm that has no physical presence in Polson. MRL has no current address or contact information for Cashe Commodities.

SW/C-75....State Highway Project/Polson Yard Relocation

A Washington Company

None of the three current shippers shown in Table 2 have any permanent facilities with track access in Polson. In the case of American Stone and Polson Ready Mix, the decorative stone is trucked from their pits into Polson for loading by a portable auger, which has been setup in the existing yard. Western Building Centers (formerly Woody's) is located approximately one block from the end of the current track. They presently transload building supplies and lumber from rail cars spotted in the nearby Polson yard onto forklifts, trucks, and trailers for final movement into their facility.

All three shippers will have the option of continuing this type of transloading at the new rail yard being proposed near Caffery Road (see site map on page 5 of Final Environmental Report). In fact the haul distance to the Caffery Road rail yard for both Polson Ready Mix and American Stone will be much less than they must now travel to load rail cars in the current yard (approximately ½ mile compared to the present four miles). The haul for Western Building Centers will be longer to the Caffery Road rail yard when compared to the haul from the current Polson yard (4.5 miles compared to the present one block). Our plan to install a loading dock at the new Caffery Road yard should make it somewhat easier for Western Building Centers to unload rail cars, but an argument that the new yard will be less convenient could be made by this firm.

The MRL Final Environmental Report includes the details of a public process, including public announcement, public meeting and opportunity to comment by mail and web site. No comments were received from any of the three customers mentioned above.

Mr. Dettmar also requested that a statement of profitability be provided for the track to be abandoned. Assuming, as we are, that Polson Ready Mix and American Stone will take advantage of the new Caffery Road rail yard with its inherent benefits to their business, the only possible loss in rail business could be to lose Western Building Centers as a customer. MRL plans to do everything possible to retain Western Building Centers as a customer at the new Caffery Road rail yard, but losing their rail shipments is certainly a possibility. Given their average yearly shipments of 5 cars of inbound building materials at an average gross revenue of \$650, losing Western Building Centers as a rail customer in Polson would represent a loss in gross revenue of \$3,250 to MRL.

Surface Transportation Board
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Page 3

Our records indicate that the yearly maintenance costs for the 30.4 mile long branch line from Dixon to Polson average \$120,860. Proportioning the 4.35 mile long section of this proposed abandonment against the cost for the entire line results in the following summary:

Potential yearly <u>gross</u> revenue loss to MRL	-\$3,250.00
Approximate yearly savings in maintenance expenditures	<u>\$17,290.00</u>
Net savings available to MRL by abandonment	\$14,040.00

Again, I should stress the profitability analysis is not the reason MRL has initiated the request for abandonment. The real goal is to develop a new rail yard on the outskirts of Polson that can better meet the needs of future customers, while assisting the State of Montana in its plans to widen the nearby primary highway.

I hope this helps further explain the project and possible impacts of the track abandonment as first presented in our June 7th filing and accompanying documents. Please feel free to contact me at (406) 523-1551 if you have additional requests or questions.

Sincerely,



Steven Werner
Public Works Engineer

tjm

Enclosures

SW/C-75....State Highway Project/Polson Yard Relocation

2. TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

The abandonment would eliminate eleven road crossings (seven public crossings and four private crossings) and potentially decrease truck traffic. There will be no new vehicle crossings as a result of this action.

There is no anticipated increase in truck traffic as a result of this change. MRL hopes to attract new customers as a result of the new turn-around facility. This conversion of truck to rail freight would effectively reduce truck traffic on the highway. Since the closure of the lumber yard in Polson, this section of track has only received minimal use. Please refer to table below for recent shipments.

Table 2. Past Shipments - Milepost 29 to Milepost 33

Year	Client	Number of Shipments	Commodity Shipped
1994	NW Building Materials	10	Building supplies
1994	Polson Ready Mix	9	Decorative stone and landscape rock
1994	Woody's	9	Building supplies
1995	Cashe Commodities	1	Cottonseed oil
1995	Polson Ready Mix	4	Decorative stone and landscape rock
1995	Woody's	13	Building supplies
1996	Polson Ready Mix	9	Decorative stone and landscape rock
1996	Woody's	8	Building supplies
1997	Polson Ready Mix	3	Decorative stone and landscape rock
1997	Woody's	1	Building supplies
1998	Polson Ready Mix	58	Decorative stone and landscape rock
1999	Polson Ready Mix	21	Decorative stone and landscape rock
2000	Polson Ready Mix	29	Decorative stone and landscape rock
2001	American Stone	28	Decorative stone and landscape rock
2001	Polson Ready Mix	37	Decorative stone and landscape rock
2001	Woody's	4	Building supplies
Eight Year Total		244	

SENDER: COMPLETE THIS SECTION

Complete items 1, 2, and 3. Also complete item 4 if Restricted Delivery is desired. Print your name and address on the reverse so that we can return the card to you. Attach this card to the back of the mailpiece, or on the front if space permits.

Article Addressed to:

2. Can tel hold McAuley
American State LP
PO Box 1812
Polson MT 59860

Article Number (Copy from service label)
7099 3220 0001 7502 5743

Form 3811, July 1999

Domestic Return Receipt

10295-00-000-0952

COMPLETE THIS SECTION ON DELIVERY

A. Received by (Please Print Clearly) B. Date of Delivery

C. Signature

X John M. Huggert

D. Is delivery address different from item 1? ☐ Yes ☒ No
If YES, enter delivery address below:

Service Type
☒ Certified Mail ☐ Express Mail
☐ Registered ☐ Return Receipt for Merchandise
☐ Insured Mail ☐ C.O.D.
4. Restricted Delivery? (Extra Fee) ☐ Yes ☒ No

SENDER: COMPLETE THIS SECTION

Complete items 1, 2, and 3. Also complete item 4 if Restricted Delivery is desired. Print your name and address on the reverse so that we can return the card to you. Attach this card to the back of the mailpiece, or on the front if space permits.

Article Addressed to:

MR. DALE OTTUM
ESTER BUILDING CENTER
251 STREET E
POLSON MT 59860

Article Number (Copy from service label)
7099 3220 0001 7502 5750

Form 3811, July 1999

Domestic Return Receipt

10295-00-000-0952

COMPLETE THIS SECTION ON DELIVERY

A. Received by (Please Print Clearly) B. Date of Delivery

C. Signature

X Dale Ottum

D. Is delivery address different from item 1? ☐ Yes ☒ No
If YES, enter delivery address below:

Service Type
☒ Certified Mail ☐ Express Mail
☐ Registered ☐ Return Receipt for Merchandise
☐ Insured Mail ☐ C.O.D.
4. Restricted Delivery? (Extra Fee) ☐ Yes ☒ No

SENDER: COMPLETE THIS SECTION

Complete items 1, 2, and 3. Also complete item 4 if Restricted Delivery is desired. Print your name and address on the reverse so that we can return the card to you. Attach this card to the back of the mailpiece, or on the front if space permits.

Article Addressed to:

Butch Woodford
Polson Ready Mix
57093 US Hwy 93
Polson MT 59860

Article Number (Copy from service label)
7099 3220 0001 7502 5726

Form 3811, July 1999

Domestic Return Receipt

10295-00-000-0952

COMPLETE THIS SECTION ON DELIVERY

A. Received by (Please Print Clearly) B. Date of Delivery

C. Signature

X Butch Woodford

D. Is delivery address different from item 1? ☐ Yes ☒ No
If YES, enter delivery address below:

Service Type
☒ Certified Mail ☐ Express Mail
☐ Registered ☐ Return Receipt for Merchandise
☐ Insured Mail ☐ C.O.D.
4. Restricted Delivery? (Extra Fee) ☐ Yes ☒ No



MONTANA RAIL LINK, INC.
101 INTERNATIONAL WAY
POST OFFICE BOX 18390
MISSOULA, MONTANA 59808-6390
(406) 523-1500

June 17, 2002

Ms. Cantel Wold-McCauley, Assistant Director
American Stone LTD
P.O. Box 1212
Polson, Montana 59860

Subject: Request to Abandon Track near Polson, Montana
filed by Montana Rail Link, Inc. on June 7, 2002
with the Surface Transportation Board

On June 7, 2002, Montana Rail Link, Inc. (MRL) filed a request with the Surface Transportation Board in Washington D.C. (STB) to abandon 4.35 miles of railroad track beginning at a point south of Polson, near Caffery Road, to the end of the present track in Polson. This request includes removal of the present rail yard in Polson. As part of this project a new rail yard facility with unloading dock and tracks is to be constructed just south of Caffery Road for use by any past or potential future rail customer in the Polson service area.

Enclosed is a copy of the request filed by MRL. Also included is a copy of the "Final Environmental Report" as referenced in the filing. The Final Environmental Report gives specific details on this proposal and includes a Site Map (page 5 of the report) showing the track to be abandoned and a sketch of the new yard facilities.

The Final Environmental Report includes a record of rail shipments since 1994 on the track to be abandoned (see page 9 of the report). As a listed rail user, or successor in interest to a former user, you are very much encouraged to supply comments to the STB.

Please direct any comments you have on this filing to:

Surface Transportation Board
Office of the Secretary
1925 K Street N.W., Suite 840
Washington, D.C. 20423-0001

SW/C-74....State Highway Project/Polson Yard Relocation

A Washington Company

Ms. Cantel Wold-McCauley, Assistant Director
June 17, 2002
Page 2

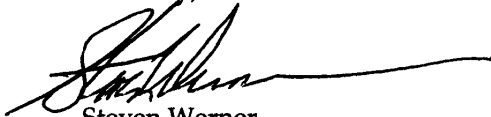
The STB has assigned a tracking number of AB575-Sub 1 to this filing. It would be beneficial to include this number in any correspondence you plan on supplying to the STB.

If you have any general questions on the scope of the project, any of the details included in the filing, or in the Final Environmental Report please contact me at (406) 523-1551 or you may write to me at the following address:

Steven Werner
Public Works Engineer
Montana Rail Link, Inc.
P.O. Box 16390
Missoula, MT 59808-6390

We are hoping to receive regulatory approval from the STB before the end of summer. The deadline for supplying comments is determined by the STB. You may contact Joe Dettmar at (202) 565-1609 at the STB for clarification of any deadlines that may apply to your comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steven Werner', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Steven Werner
Public Works Engineer

tjm

Enclosure

SW/C-74....State Highway Project/Polson Yard Relocation



MONTANA RAIL LINK, INC.
101 INTERNATIONAL WAY
POST OFFICE BOX 16380
MISSOULA, MONTANA 59806-6380
(406) 523-1500

June 17, 2002

Butch Woolard
Polson Ready Mix
57093 US Highway 93
Polson, Montana 59860

Subject: Request to Abandon Track near Polson, Montana
filed by Montana Rail Link, Inc. on June 7, 2002
with the Surface Transportation Board

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SW/C-74....State Highway Project/Polson Yard Relocation

A *Washington Company*

Butch Woolard
June 17, 2002
Page 2

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Sincerely,



Steven Werner
Public Works Engineer

tjm

Enclosure

SW/C-74....State Highway Project/Polson Yard Relocation



June 17, 2002

MONTANA RAIL LINK, INC.
101 INTERNATIONAL WAY
POST OFFICE BOX 16390
MISSOULA, MONTANA 59808-6390
(406) 523-1500

Mr. Dave Ottun
Western Building Center
905 1 Street E
Polson, Montana 59860

Subject: Request to Abandon Track near Polson, Montana
filed by Montana Rail Link, Inc. on June 7, 2002
with the Surface Transportation Board

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SW/C-74....State Highway Project/Polson Yard Relocation

A Washington Company

Mr. Dave Ottun
June 17, 2002
Page 2

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Public Works Engineer
Montana Rail Link, Inc.
P.O. Box 16390
Missoula, MT 59808-6390

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Steven Werner
Public Works Engineer

tjm

Enclosure

SW/C-74....State Highway Project/Polson Yard Relocation

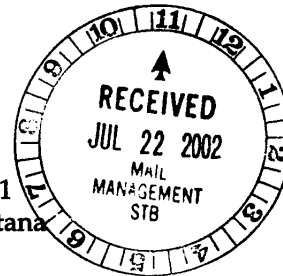


July 15, 2002

MONTANA RAIL LINK, INC.
101 INTERNATIONAL WAY
POST OFFICE BOX 16390
MISSOULA, MONTANA 59808-6390
(406) 523-1500

Surface Transportation Board
Office of the Secretary
1925 K Street NW, Suite 840
Washington, DC 20423-0001

Subject: Montana Rail Link, Inc. – Docket No. AB575-Sub 1
Proposed Track Abandonment near Polson, Montana
Supplement to filing of June 7, 2002



As required by 49 CFR 1152.50, Montana Rail Link sent notification of its filing of petition for individual exemption to the following agencies:

The Montana Public Service Commission
The Department of Defense – Military Traffic Management Command
The National Park Service
The U.S. Department of Agriculture – Chief of the Forest Service

Copies of these notifications are attached.

I am also including a check for \$2,000.00 which when added to our check of \$2,700.00 supplied with our June 7th petition filing, should satisfy your current fee requirement of \$4,700.00 for this type of petition.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact me at (406) 523-1551.

Sincerely,

Steven Werner
Public Works Engineer

tjm

enclosure

SW/C-77....State Highway – Polson Yard Relocation

A Washington Company



July 3, 2002

MONTANA RAIL LINK, INC.
101 INTERNATIONAL WAY
POST OFFICE BOX 16390
MISSOULA, MONTANA 59808-6390
(406) 523-1500

Wayne W. Budt, Administrator
Transportation Division
Montana Public Service Commission
P.O. Box 202601
Helena, MT 59620-2601



Subject: Surface Transportation Docket No. AB575-Sub 1
Abandonment of Track near Polson, Montana

Montana Rail Link has filed a request with the Surface Transportation Board for an individual exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10903 for the abandonment of a segment of its track near Polson, Montana.

The proposed abandonment includes 4.35 miles of track between Milepost (MP) 29.05 and Milepost (MP) 33.40 on Montana Rail Link's 11th Branch Line Subdivision and includes rail yard facilities in Polson, Montana. This track is located within United States Postal Zip Code 59860 and within the boundaries of Lake County and/or the City of Polson which are political subdivisions of the State of Montana.

As provided in 49 CFR 1152.50, Montana Rail Link has researched its right-of-way maps, records and files for this track and finds that;

Based on information in our possession, the line does not contain federally granted rights-of-way. Any documentation in the railroad's possession will be made available promptly to those requesting it.

If you have any questions on this proposal or wish additional documentation on the railroad's right-of-way please contact me by telephone at (406) 523-1551, email at swerner@montanarail.com, or at the address as shown above.

Sincerely,

Steven Werner
Public Works Engineer

SW/C-76.....State Highway/Polson Yard Relocation



July 3, 2002

MONTANA RAIL LINK, INC.
101 INTERNATIONAL WAY
POST OFFICE BOX 16390
MISSOULA, MONTANA 59808-6390
(406) 523-1500

JA (Colonel Offman) – Room 12N67
Department of Defense
Military Traffic Management Command
Transportation Engineering Agency – Railroads for National Defense Program
200 Stovall Street
Alexandria, VA 22332-5000

Subject: Surface Transportation Docket No. AB575-Sub 1
Abandonment of Track near Polson, Montana



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Sincerely,

Steven Werner
Public Works Engineer

SW/C-76....State Highway/Polson Yard Relocation



July 3, 2002

MONTANA RAIL LINK, INC.
101 INTERNATIONAL WAY
POST OFFICE BOX 18390
MISSOULA, MONTANA 59808-6390
(406) 523-1500

Recreational Resources Assistance Division
National Park Service
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Subject: Surface Transportation Docket No. AB575-Sub 1
Abandonment of Track near Polson, Montana



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Sincerely,

Steven Werner
Public Works Engineer

SW/C-76....State Highway/Polson Yard Relocation



July 3, 2002

MONTANA RAIL LINK, INC.
101 INTERNATIONAL WAY
POST OFFICE BOX 18390
MISSOULA, MONTANA 59808-8390
(406) 523-1500

Office of the Chief of the Forest Service
USDA Forest Service
P.O. Box 96090
Washington, DC 20090-6090

Subject: Surface Transportation Docket No. AB575-Sub 1
Abandonment of Track near Polson, Montana



Montana Rail Link has filed a request with the Surface Transportation Board for an individual exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10903 for the abandonment of a segment of its track near Polson, Montana.

The proposed abandonment includes 4.35 miles of track between Milepost (MP) 29.05 and Milepost (MP) 33.40 on Montana Rail Link's 11th Branch Line Subdivision and includes rail yard facilities in Polson, Montana. This track is located within **United States Postal Zip Code 59860** and within the boundaries of Lake County and/or the City of Polson which are political subdivisions of the State of Montana.

As provided in 49 CFR 1152.50, Montana Rail Link has researched its right-of-way maps, records and files for this track and finds that;

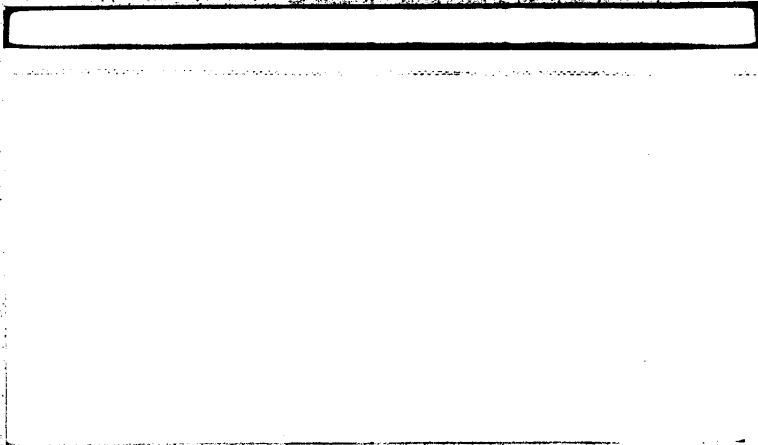
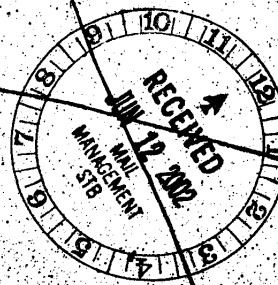
Based on information in our possession, the line does not contain federally granted rights-of-way. Any documentation in the railroad's possession will be made available promptly to those requesting it.

If you have any questions on this proposal or wish additional documentation on the railroad's right-of-way please contact me by telephone at (406) 523-1551, email at swerner@montanarail.com, or at the address as shown above.

Sincerely,

Steven Werner
Public Works Engineer

SW/C-76....State Highway/Polson Yard Relocation



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Ecosystem Research Group

121 Hickory St., P.O. Box 8214, Missoula, MT 59807

Telephone: (406) 721-9420 Fax: (406) 721-9421

**FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT FOR
ABANDONMENT OF MONTANA RAIL LINK LINE
MILEPOST 29.05 TO MILEPOST 33.40**

Polson, Lake County, MT

May 2002

Prepared for:

**Montana Rail Link
Missoula, MT**

Submitted to:

**Section of Environmental Analysis
Surface Transportation Board
Washington, D.C.**

Prepared by:

**Ecosystem Research Group
Missoula, MT**



Ecosystem Research Group

121 Hickory St., P.O. Box 8214, Missoula, MT 59807, Telephone: (406) 721-9420 Fax: (406) 543-3436 e-mail: erg@ecosystemrg.com

MEMORANDUM

To: Environmental Report recipients and interested parties

From: Ecosystem Research Group, Inc.

Date: May 29, 2002

Re: MRL Line Abandonment Project

Enclosed is the *Final Environmental Report for Abandonment of Montana Rail Link Line (Milepost 29.05 to Milepost 33.40) Polson, Lake County, MT*. The report incorporates stakeholder comment from a Polson meeting held on April 16, 2002, a complete public process report, and updated maps in the Appendices.

Public comment overwhelmingly favored Alternative 3, the proposed abandonment of a portion of track and the creation of a spur line at the Lake County landfill and a new loading facility and storage track at Caffrey Lane. Montana Governor Judy Martz's letter of approval has been included in the report, and all regulatory agencies having given concurrence.

Thank you for taking the time to review this document and participating in this process.

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APPENDIX C	Public Process Report
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The US Highway 93 Evaro to Polson re-alignment project encroaches into current Montana Rail Link (MRL) right-of-way (ROW) near Polson. This encroachment results in the need for a railroad realignment or some other modification of the railroad line into Polson. There are several possible action alternatives for MRL: No action (Alternative 1), Move the existing rail line laterally to an adjacent area (Alternative 2), Abandon the existing line and construct new facilities (Alternative 3), and Acquire a completely new railroad ROW and construct a new line into Polson (Alternative 4). MRL proposes Alternative 3, the abandonment of an approximately 4.5 mile long segment of rail line from Caffrey Road northward into their Polson yard at 7th Street East. This proposed project would include the construction of a new loading dock and storage track just south of Caffrey Road and a spur line at the Lake County landfill. The project will consist of removing all existing rails, crossings and ties. All ties, rails and structures associated with this project will be taken away from the site. The railroad bed will be left intact. The track that is scheduled to be abandoned traditionally transported forest products, aggregate, and building materials. Currently, the train transports these materials on a limited basis. The proposed abandonment will not affect current operations or management practices.

The proposed project is in concurrence with existing Lake County and City of Polson land use plans, and will not have any detrimental effect on prime agricultural lands. The ROW proposed for abandonment would be suitable for alternative public use such as a Rails-to-Trails project. The proposed project will have no effect on transportation of energy resources, transportation of recycled commodities, energy efficiency, or significant diversions from freight to motor carriage. Air quality will not be significantly impacted by increases in rail, rail yard, and truck traffic, and the project will comply with Clean Air Act standards. Noise levels during construction should never exceed those produced by regular use or maintenance of the track. The proposed project will not adversely affect public health and safety, the transportation of hazardous materials, or existing hazardous waste sites. Governor Judy Martz supports the proposed abandonment and construction of new facilities (Alternative 3).

The biological assessments conducted for the Highway 93 Realignment Environmental Impact Statement resulted in "Not Likely to Adversely Affect" (NLAA) calls for Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed species. The project area for the proposed abandonment contains no streams, critical habitat, or threatened and endangered species occurrences. Therefore, the proposed action will have no effect on listed threatened and endangered species. There are no listed critical habitats, or parks, refuges, and forests in the project area vicinity. The proposed abandonment will not be inconsistent with any applicable water quality standards. No water features will be crossed or otherwise impacted in a manner which would require a Section 404 permit. USEPA comments on this project made no mention of the need for any § 402 permits.

The proposed mitigation for this project is MRL's general practice of complying with all federal, state, and local environmental laws and regulations. There will be no impacts on essential public services. If the reuse of the abandoned track results in the construction of a pedestrian/bicycle trail, this would be a beneficial societal impact. No negative economic impacts will occur, as the proposed project does not reduce the number of jobs in the area.

MRL has secured the services of Ecosystem Research Group (ERG) of Missoula, Montana to assess alternatives, conduct public meetings to gather information and comment, solicit and integrate relevant agency comment, and synthesize findings and conclusions. Additionally, a field review was conducted in March 2002, and photographs were taken of the proposed project area. A public open house was held April 16, 2002 in Polson. The comments resulting from this meeting are presented in Appendix C, Public Process Report.

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**MRL LINE ABANDONMENT PROJECT
FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT**

Alternative	MRL Interest	MDT Interest	Public Interest
3. Abandon existing line with construction of new facilities	positive impacts; MRL will have better shipping facilities	slightly positive impacts; will be approximately equal cost, should minimize construction problems and delays	positive impacts; could improve development potential in city also has positive impacts if "rails to trails" implemented
4. Acquire Entirely new RR ROW and construct new line into Polson	negative impacts for MRL; not justifiable for current and projected shipping needs	negative impacts; this option would be very expensive and would require a new RR under adverse condemnation	negative impacts to public; increased noise in residential areas, new crossings and expense to taxpayers

2. TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

The abandonment would eliminate eleven road crossings (seven public crossings and four private crossings) and potentially decrease truck traffic. There will be no new vehicle crossings as a result of this action.

There is no anticipated increase in truck traffic as a result of this change. MRL hopes to attract new customers as a result of the new turn-around facility. This conversion of truck to rail freight would effectively reduce truck traffic on the highway. Since the closure of the lumber yard in Polson, this section of track has only received minimal use. Please refer to table below for recent shipments.

Table 2. Past Shipments - Milepost 29 to Milepost 33

Year	Client	Number of Shipments	Commodity Shipped
1994	NW Building Materials	10	Building supplies
1994	Polson Ready Mix	9	Decorative stone and landscape rock
1994	Woody's	9	Building supplies
1995	Cashe Commodities	1	Cottonseed oil
1995	Polson Ready Mix	4	Decorative stone and landscape rock
1995	Woody's	13	Building supplies
1996	Polson Ready Mix	9	Decorative stone and landscape rock
1996	Woody's	8	Building supplies
1997	Polson Ready Mix	3	Decorative stone and landscape rock
1997	Woody's	1	Building supplies
1998	Polson Ready Mix	58	Decorative stone and landscape rock
1999	Polson Ready Mix	21	Decorative stone and landscape rock
2000	Polson Ready Mix	29	Decorative stone and landscape rock
2001	American Stone	28	Decorative stone and landscape rock
2001	Polson Ready Mix	37	Decorative stone and landscape rock
2001	Woody's	4	Building supplies
Eight Year Total		244	

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4. ENERGY

4.1 TRANSPORTATION OF ENERGY RESOURCES

MRL has no knowledge of undeveloped energy resources (i.e. oil, natural gas, coal, uranium) in the vicinity of this line, and the line has not been used in the transport of energy resources in recent memory. Therefore, this action will have no effect on transportation of energy resources.

4.2 TRANSPORTATION OF RECYCLED COMMODITIES

Movement or recovery of recyclable commodities will not be adversely affected by this abandonment as the line has not been used to carry recyclable commodities in recent memory. It is expected, however, that ties and rails removed from this line will be reused or recycled (scrapped) to the greatest extent possible.

4.3 ENERGY EFFICIENCY

The approximately four-mile-long abandonment in and of itself should result in no significant increase or decrease in energy efficiency. Because the line is used so infrequently, any increased efficiency gained by the line's use is offset by the inefficiency of maintaining a line used so rarely.

It is noteworthy that abandonment of the MRL line will allow a realignment of Highway 93 which would be more efficient and safer than can be achieved if the MRL line remains in place. The following excerpt is from page 6 of the April 30, 2001 *Draft Re-evaluation Of Final Environmental Impact Statement And Section 4(f) Evaluation Approved 6/17/96, F 5-1 (9) 6, U.S. Highway 93, Evaro - Polson, Missoula and Lake Counties, Montana*:

In the event MRL should discontinue its railroad operations to its northern terminus, an additional proposal was investigated that would reduce the need for the extensive system of retaining walls and provide a much improved curvilinear alignment that would require the use of more than [sic] the original 1800' of railroad.

4.4 FREIGHT DIVERSION TO MOTOR CARRIAGE

The proposed abandonment would cause only small diversions, if any at all, from rail to motor carriage. The amount of diversion would be, at the most, a small fraction of 1,000 rail carloads a year or a small fraction of an average of 50 rail carloads per mile per year for any part of the affected line.

5. AIR

5.1 INCREASES IN RAIL, RAIL YARD, AND TRUCK TRAFFIC

The proposed abandonment will not result in increased emissions from any of the following:

- An increase in rail traffic of at least 100% (measured in gross ton miles annually) or an increase of at least eight trains a day on any segment of the line affected by the proposed abandonment, or
- An increase in rail yard activity of at least 100% (measured by carload activity), or
- An average increase in truck traffic of more than 10% of the average daily traffic or 50 vehicles a day on any effected road segment.

5.2 CLEAN AIR ACT

The proposed action is in a Class I area under the Clean Air Act (the Flathead Indian Reservation). The portion of the proposed abandonment which is within the city limits of Polson is within a nonattainment area for PM10 (the City of Polson). A nonattainment area is an USEPA designation for an airshed that does not meet Clean Air Act standards for human health. However, none of the following will be a result of the project:

- An increase in rail traffic of at least 50% (measured in gross ton miles annually) or an increase of at least three trains a day on any segment of rail line, or
- An increase in rail yard activity of at least 20% (measured by carload activity), or
- An average increase in truck traffic of more than 10% of the average daily traffic or 50 vehicles a day on a given road segment.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) has expressed concern about fugitive dust emissions during the construction phase of the project, but has also written that the use of standard construction dust suppression measures should be adequate to mitigate dust emissions. Therefore, as an air quality mitigation during construction, MRL will implement standard dust suppression measures, spraying water or dust suppression chemicals as needed to minimize fugitive dust emissions from the project area.

It should also be noted that the ballast underlying the track and ties is crushed gravel, probably from one of the several gravel pits adjacent to the line. This material is primarily argillite, a hard mudstone found throughout the Flathead Valley. The crushed gravel on the surface ranges from about one-half to two inches. Because of the size and nature of the ballast material, dust emissions, particularly in the PM10 size range, should not be difficult to suppress. Most of the project, except perhaps the rail yard within the Polson city limits, is on a terminal moraine of the same material.

5.3 TRANSPORTATION OF OZONE DEPLETING MATERIALS

This action will have no effect on the transportation of ozone depleting materials because the line has not been used for the transportation of these materials in recent years, if ever.

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Milepost Interval	Facility Name	Potential Contaminant	Likelihood That ROW Has Been Affected	Remarks
57.1-57.2	Polson Ready-Mix Concrete 57093 US 93 South	Petroleum hydrocarbons, solvents, waste oil	Low	Equipment maintenance performed at site. ROW does not include site.
57.8	Automobile wreck and gasoline spill. Bottom of Polson Hill	Petroleum hydrocarbons	Low	Most of spill recovered.
58.2	Mechanics Mall 58116 US 93 South	Solvents, waste oil	Moderate	Automotive maintenance performed at site. Soil staining evident but not on ROW.
58.4-58.7	Pack River Lumber Company 58719 US 93 South	Petroleum hydrocarbons, solvents, waste oil	Low	Documented release from UST, and equipment maintenance performed on premises. ROW does not include site.
58.4	Asphalt oil spill Lumber company driveway	Petroleum hydrocarbons	Moderate	Most of oil spilled on lumber company driveway and highway ROW. Bentonite chips spread to absorb spill.
59.0	Tradewinds Realty (formerly Gulf Oil gas station) Junction US 93 & 35	Petroleum hydrocarbons	High	ROW through area currently occupied by USTs.
59.05	ReMax Realty (formerly Gulf Oil gas station) Junction US 93 & 35	Petroleum hydrocarbons, solvents, waste oil	High	Fill port visible in concrete. ROW within 20 feet of tanks.

Source: DOT & MDT, 1998

The new yard will be located on what was previously the Mangles property. A Phase I Site Assessment for that property located south of Polson states (Envirocon, 2002):

The objective of this assessment was to assess, from existing and readily available sources, the potential presence of recognized environmental conditions. No records of past releases or spills of hazardous materials associated with site activities were located. No evidence of hazardous materials disposal or releases was observed at the property.

8. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

In order to determine if the proposed project is likely to adversely affect endangered or threatened species or areas designated as critical habitat, ERG contacted the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (MFWP), Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT), and Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP). In addition, information was obtained from the Biological Assessment, Supplemental Biological Assessment (Herrera, 2001) and the USFWS Biological Opinion for the US 93 Reconstruction Evaro to Polson project. The MRL abandonment project falls within the geographical area covered by these assessments.

8.1 SPECIES EFFECTED BY ACTION

According to the USFWS list of threatened and endangered species that may occur in the vicinity of the US Highway 93 Evaro to Polson highway reconstruction project (February 2001) there are six listed species that may, but are unlikely to, occur near the abandonment project area. Of the six listed species, three are wildlife, one is fish, and two are vegetative species.

This abandonment project is a short-term project in an existing disturbed ROW. There are no streams, critical habitat, or threatened and endangered species occurrences in the vicinity of the project area. Therefore the proposed action will not likely affect listed threatened and endangered species. The following table summarizes the species, their status as of the date of the USFWS report (February 2001), and the effects of the proposed action.

Table 4. Listed Species That May Occur in the Project Area and Effects of Proposed Action

Bald eagle (<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>)	Threatened	No effect
Grizzly bear (<i>Ursus arctos horribilis</i>)	Threatened	No effect
Canada lynx (<i>Lynx canadensis</i>)	Threatened	No effect
Bull trout (<i>Salvelinus confluentus</i>)	Threatened	No effect
Gray wolf (<i>Canis lupus</i>)	Endangered	No effect
Water howellia (<i>Howellia aquatilis</i>)	Threatened	No effect
Spalding's catchfly (<i>Silene spaldingii</i>)	Proposed as Threatened	No effect

The "No effect" calls for this project are consistent with the biological assessments referenced above.

8.2 CRITICAL HABITAT EFFECTED BY ACTION

According to the USFWS, CSKT, and MNHP there are no critical habitats listed in the project vicinity. This project is located in a highly disturbed existing ROW. Therefore, there will be no effect to critical habitat as a result of this project.

8.3 PARKS, REFUGES AND FORESTS

The MFWP and CSKT were contacted regarding the presence of parks, refuges and forests in the vicinity of the project (see agency letters in Appendix B). There are no state or federal parks located in the vicinity of the rail line proposed for abandonment. Therefore, this abandonment project will not adversely affect any parks, refuges or forests. According to the CSKT (Hovenkotter, 2002), there are no tribal parks or refuges within the proposed abandonment project area. The proposed project could help supplement existing parks with the development of a Rails-to-Trails system.

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As noted above, no wetlands or non-wetland riparian areas were observed in or adjacent to the project area during a site investigation. The project area is not within any floodplains (the lowest point in the project area is the rail yard in Polson, which is at 2920 feet, 27 feet above flood stage at Kerr Dam). No water features will be crossed or otherwise impacted in a manner which would require a Section 404 permit.

9.3 SECTION 402 OF CLEAN WATER ACT

The CSKT were contacted with regards to compliance with Section 402 of the Clean Water Act. In a letter dated April 4, 2000, they advised that Tribal staff reviewed the existing railroad line and they have concluded that there are Flathead Reservation wetlands and waters located within or adjacent to the railroad ROW that are likely subject to Tribal regulatory jurisdiction. According to their Tribal regulatory staff, there are wetlands and waters located close in proximity to where the railroad line intersects with 7th Avenue East in Polson.

MRL and ERG will work closely with the Shorelines Protection Office regarding a specific delineation of Tribal jurisdiction for the anticipated abandonment actions. ERG and MRL do not anticipate that the activities associated with abandonment will physically impact or alter these wetlands or waters. Therefore, a Tribal regulatory permit would not be required.

10. PROPOSED MITIGATION

All salvage operations will be in accordance with MRL's general practice of complying with all federal, state and local laws and with regulations pertaining to the environment, including, but not limited to land use, noise, air quality, water quality, and endangered species. Construction best management practices will be used to minimize construction-related impacts to resources.

11. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR RAIL CONSTRUCTION

11.1 PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION

The proposed abandonment includes moving the current loading facilities to a new location. MRL proposes to construct a new dock and storage track on commercial property adjacent to their existing track located at the corner of Caffrey Road and US Highway 93. In addition, a Y track to turn locomotives around is proposed at the Lake County landfill. It is necessary to construct this Y track at the land fill because there is not enough room at the proposed new yard location to turn the locomotives around. (See Map and Site Plan - Page 5).

11.2 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

11.2.1 Alternative 1. No Action

MRL considered the no action alternative. However, as a result of the US Highway 93 Realignment project, this alternative was dismissed. The Montana Department of Transportation will acquire MRL's existing ROW, thus cutting off service to the existing loading dock and yard.

11.2.2 Alternative 2. Move a Portion of the Existing Rail Line Laterally to Adjacent Area

MRL considered moving their line to accommodate the new highway and continuing the use of their existing yard. This alternative would require the acquisition of new ROW and construction of new line.

11.2.3 Alternative 3. Abandon Existing Line and Construct New Facilities

This is the preferred alternative. MRL proposes to abandon their rail line from Caffrey Road to 7th Street East in Polson. This alternative requires approval from the Surface Transportation Board and the removal of rails and ties. In addition, a new yard and turnaround site would have to be constructed. This alternative would move the existing yard from an urban setting to a more appropriate industrial location.

11.2.4 Alternative 4. Acquire Entirely New Railroad ROW and Construct New Line into Polson

This alternative would be to secure new ROW for the railroad and construct a new line into the Polson yard. This would require substantial work to secure ROW and permits to complete the new construction but would eliminate the need to construct a new yard at Caffrey Lane. This project would not be economically feasible given the current shipments.

11.3 CONSTRUCTION PLANS

MRL plans to construct a storage track and new dock adjacent to their existing track at the corner of Caffrey Road and US Highway 93. The storage track would have a storage capacity of 32 cars. Please see attached drawing.

11.3.1 Effect on Human Environment

The construction of the new yard and Y track will have less impact on the human environment than the current location. The new yard will be located at an industrial site in a sparsely populated area of the county, as opposed the current urban location. A discussion of effects on current land use, air, noise and safety can be found in Sections 3,5,6, and 7.

11.3.2 Labor Force Requirements

There will be no additional labor requirements as a result of this abandonment and new construction.

11.3.3 Location of Borrow Pits

During their construction of the new rail yard MRL will utilize established commercial pits in the vicinity of the project.

11.3.4 Earthwork Estimates

An approximate estimate of the grading to be done as part of construction of the new rail yard is 65,000 yards of material.

11.4 ANTICIPATED RAIL OPERATIONS

A complete discussion of anticipated rail operations can be found in Section 2, Transportation System.

11.5 IMPACTS TO ENERGY, NOISE AND AIR

The impacts to energy, noise, and air are discussed in detail in Sections 4, 5 and 6 of this Environmental Report.

11.6 IMPACTS ON ESSENTIAL PUBLIC SERVICES

No additional public services will be needed as a result of construction of the dock, storage track, and Y track. Therefore, there will be no impacts on essential public services. The adjoining properties are commercial, highway right-of-way (ROW) and agricultural. The property will be accessed from a public road, and will result in a small increase in traffic on Caffrey Road.

11.7 SOCIETAL IMPACTS

The proposed project would have some positive societal impacts. The train yard is currently in the downtown area of Polson, and the proposed project would remove this operation to a more appropriate industrial area. Further, if the reuse of the abandoned track results in the construction of a pedestrian/bicycle trail, this would be a beneficial societal impact. No negative economic impacts will occur, as the proposed project does not reduce the number of jobs in the area.

12. REFERENCES

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STB (Surface Transportation Board). 2001. Guide to Environmental Rules 49 CFR 1105. Internet. July 17.

USFWS. 2001. Biological Opinion from the Reconstruction of US Highway 93 From Evaro to Polson, in Missoula and Lake counties, Montana (Project F5-1(9)(6)). 87 pp.

APPENDIX A

PUBLIC AND AGENCY NOTICE OF PROJECT

MAY 2002

ECOSYSTEM RESEARCH GROUP



Ecosystem Research Group

121 Hickory St., P.O. Box 8214, Missoula, MT 59807, Telephone: (406) 721-9420 Fax: (406) 543-3436 e-mail: erg@ecosystemrg.com

March 15, 2002

Joe Hovenkotter
Staff Attorney
Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes
P. O. Box 278
51383 Highway 93
Pablo, MT 59855

Re: Montana Rail Link Railroad Abandonment Project

Dear Mr. Hovenkotter:

As I advised on the phone, our firm has been contracted by Montana Rail Link (MRL) to complete an environmental report on the proposed abandonment of a section of their line. MRL plans to file an exemption to abandon their line from approximately Caffrey Lane to Polson (see attached map). The project will consist of removing the existing rails and ties and leaving the road bed in tact. All culverts will also be left in tact.

As part of the environmental report we need to know the following:

1. Will the proposed abandonment affect any 100-year floodplain?
2. Will any Shoreline Protection & Aquatic Land Conservation permits be required?
3. Are there any environmental concerns the tribe may have with regards to this project and if so, what are they and suggested mitigation.
4. Are there any parks or recreation areas adjacent to the project that may be affected?
5. Suggested alternative uses for the abandoned route.

We appreciate your participation and input in this project. A response to the above request by April 10th would be greatly appreciated.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to give me a call.

Sincerely,

Sady Babcock
Project Manager

Enclosure

cc. Steve Werner, MRL



Ecosystem Research Group

121 Hickory St., P.O. Box 8214, Missoula, MT 59807, Telephone: (406) 721-9420 Fax: (406) 543-3436 e-mail: erg@ecosystemrg.com

March 15, 2002

Tom Reid
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
1520 East Sixth Ave
Helena, MT 59620

Re: Montana Rail Link Railroad Abandonment Project

Dear Mr. Reid:

Our firm has been contracted by Montana Rail Link (MRL) to complete an environmental report on the proposed abandonment of a section of their line. MRL plans to file an exemption to abandon their line from approximately Caffrey Lane to Polson (see attached map). The project will consist of removing the existing rails and ties and leaving the road bed in tact.

As part of the environmental report we need to know whether or not this action will be consistent, with Federal, State or local water quality standards. Also, please state whether or not a stormwater discharge permit or short-term water quality standard (318 authorization) is required as a result of this abandonment.

No work will take place in any live water and all culverts will be left in tact. All work will be completed from the railroad bed with salvage material being moved off site.

We appreciate your input on this project. A response to the above request by April 15th would be greatly appreciated.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to give me a call.

Sincerely,

Sady Babcock
Project Manager

Enclosure

cc. Steve Werner, MRL



Ecosystem Research Group

121 Hickory St., P.O. Box 8214, Missoula, MT 59807, Telephone: (406) 721-9420 Fax: (406) 543-3436 e-mail: erg@ecosystemrg.com

March 15, 2002

Alan Steinle
U.S. Corp of Engineers
10 West 15th Street, Suite 220
Helena, MT 59626

Re: Montana Rail Link Railroad Abandonment Project

Dear Mr. Steinle:

Our firm has been contracted by Montana Rail Link (MRL) to complete an environmental report on the proposed abandonment of a section of their line. MRL plans to file an exemption to abandon their line from approximately Caffrey Lane to Polson (see attached map). The project will consist of removing the existing rails and ties and leaving the road bed in tact.

As part of the environmental report we need to know whether or not Section 404 or 402 permits are required as a result of the proposed abandonment. The proposed abandonment will not result in any discharge or placement of dredged or fill material into water. All salvage material will be shipped off site. All culverts will be left in tact.

We appreciate your input on this project. A response to the above request by April 15th would be greatly appreciated.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to give me a call.

Sincerely,

Sady Babcock
Project Manager

Enclosure

cc. Steve Werner, MRL



Ecosystem Research Group

121 Hickory St., P.O. Box 8214, Missoula, MT 59807, Telephone: (406) 721-9420 Fax: (406) 543-3436 e-mail: erg@ecosystemrg.com

March 15, 2002

Betsy Wahl
EPA Montana Operations Office
Federal Office Building
10 West 15th Street, Suite 3200
Helena, MT 59626

Re: Montana Rail Link Railroad Abandonment Project

Dear Ms Wahl:

Our firm has been contracted by Montana Rail Link (MRL) to complete an environmental report on the proposed abandonment of a section of their line. MRL plans to file an exemption to abandon their line from approximately Caffrey Lane to Polson (see attached map). The project will consist of removing the existing rails and ties and leaving the road bed in tact. The road bed will be graded after the track and ties are removed.

As part of the environmental report we need to know whether or not this action will be consistent with Federal Clear Air Act standards. Also, are their any permits required for this type of project.

We appreciate your input on this project. A response to the above request by April 15th would be greatly appreciated.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to give me a call.

Sincerely,

Sady Babcock
Project Manager

Enclosure

cc. Steve Werner, MRL



Ecosystem Research Group

121 Hickory St., P.O. Box 8214, Missoula, MT 59807, Telephone: (406) 721-9420 Fax: (406) 543-3436 e-mail: erg@ecosystemrg.com

March 15, 2002

Bob Walker
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks
1420 East Sixth Avenue
Helena, MT 59620-0701

Re: Montana Rail Link Railroad Abandonment Project

Dear Mr. Walker:

Our firm has been contracted by Montana Rail Link (MRL) to complete an environmental report on the proposed abandonment of a section of their line. MRL plans to file an exemption to abandon their line from approximately Caffrey Lane to Polson (see attached map). The project will consist of removing the existing rails and ties and leaving the road bed in tact.

As part of the environmental report we need to know whether or not the abandoned right-of-way is suitable for alternative public use such as a recreational trail and if so, why. In addition, are there any state or federal parks or recreational areas located in the vicinity of the line?

We appreciate your input on this project. A response to the above request by April 15th would be greatly appreciated.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to give me a call.

Sincerely,

Sady Babcock
Project Manager

Enclosure

cc. Steve Werner, MRL



Ecosystem Research Group

121 Hickory St., P.O. Box 8214, Missoula, MT 59807, Telephone: (406) 721-9420 Fax: (406) 543-3436 e-mail: erg@ecosystemrg.com

March 15, 2002

Heidi Youmans
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks
1420 East Sixth Avenue
Helena, MT 59620-0701

Re: Montana Rail Link Railroad Abandonment Project

Dear Ms. Youmans:

Our firm has been contracted by Montana Rail Link (MRL) to complete an environmental report on the proposed abandonment of a section of their line. MRL plans to file an exemption to abandon their line from approximately Caffrey Lane to Polson (see attached map). The project will consist of removing the existing rails and ties and leaving the road bed in tact.

As part of the environmental report we need to know whether or not there are any state endangered or threatened species, wildlife sanctuaries or refuges or areas of designated critical habitat adjacent or near the line and if so, what effects the proposed action may have.

We appreciate your input on this project. A response to the above request by April 15th would be greatly appreciated.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to give me a call.

Sincerely,

Sady Babcock
Project Manager

Enclosure

cc. Steve Werner, MRL



Ecosystem Research Group

121 Hickory St., P.O. Box 8214, Missoula, MT 59807, Telephone: (406) 721-9420 Fax: (406) 543-3436 e-mail: erg@ecosystemrg.com

March 15, 2002

Carlos Rodriques
Natural Resources Conservation Service
45358 Highway 93
Ronan, MT 59864-9678

Re: Montana Rail Link Railroad Abandonment Project

Dear Carlos:

Our firm has been contracted by Montana Rail Link (MRL) to complete an environmental report on the proposed abandonment of a section of their line. MRL plans to file an exemption to abandon their line from approximately Caffrey Lane to Polson (see attached map). The project will consist of removing the existing rails and ties and leaving the road bed in tact. A new dock will be constructed south of Caffrey road at the new track end.

As part of the environmental report we need to know whether or not the proposed abandonment will have any effect on prime farmland.

We appreciate your input on this project. A response to the above request by April 15th would be greatly appreciated.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to give me a call.

Sincerely,

Sady Babcock
Project Manager

Enclosure

cc. Steve Werner, MRL

APPENDIX B
WRITTEN AGENCY COMMENT

05/08/02 08:45

406 523 1529

MECH/ENG DEPT

002

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

STATE OF MONTANA

JUDY MARTZ
GOVERNOR



STATE CAPITOL
PO Box 200001
HELENA, MONTANA 59620-0001

May 2, 2002

Mr. Dan Watts
Montana Rail Link
101 International Way
Missoula, MT 59802

Dear Dan:

I am writing this letter of support for Montana Rail Link's plans to abandon a section of track near Polson, Montana. This project is in concurrence with Lake County and the City of Polson's land use plans and will not have any detrimental effect on prime agricultural lands. After abandonment, this section of track could be used as part of a trail system. This proposal will abandon track now running through residential areas and near a school. New facilities will be built in a more appropriate section out of town.

After consulting with the Montana Department of Transportation, I concur that this abandonment is appropriate.

If you have any questions, concerns or comments, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Judy Martz".

JUDY MARTZ
Governor



P.O. Box 201800 • 1515 East Sixth Avenue • Helena, MT 59620-1800 • fax 406.444.0581 • tel 406.444.3009 • <http://nris.state.mt.us>

March 15, 2002

Gibson Hartwell
Ecosystem Research Group
P.O. Box 8214
Missoula, Montana 59807

Dear Gibson,

I am writing in response to your request for information on species of concern in the vicinity of the Montana Rail Link, Polson, T22N, R29W, Sections 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 23, 24, 25 and 26. We checked our databases for information in this general area and have enclosed 10 species of concern reports, organized by township, range and section, and one map.

Please keep in mind the following when using and interpreting the enclosed information and maps:

- (1) These materials are the result of a search of our database for species of concern and communities that comprise high-quality wetlands, that occur in an area defined by the requested township, range and section with an additional one-mile buffer surrounding the requested area. This is done to provide you with a more inclusive set of records and to capture records that may be immediately adjacent to the requested area.
- (2) In the report, the term "precision" reflects the quality of the location information. S (second) precision is used when the location of the collection/observation is known within a three-second radius (approximately 10 acres); M (minute) precision is used when the location of the collection /observation is known within a one minute radius (approximately 1.5 miles); and G (general) precision is used when the location of the record/collection is known within a 5 mile radius or to a place name only. Some species locations outside the selection area have imprecisely-known locations and may actually occur within the selection area.
- (3) Location information for animals represents occupied breeding habitat; location information for plants represents known occurrences of plant species, and, like animals, has an implied range that may not be fully conveyed by the mapped data. Most locations are depicted as points, but some, especially those that cover large area, are depicted as polygons on the map. The approximate boundaries of these polygons are color-coded to help differentiate vertebrate classes and plants.
- (4) This report may include sensitive data, and is not intended for general distribution, publication or for use outside of your agency. In particular, public release of specific location information may jeopardize the welfare of threatened, endangered, or sensitive species or communities.
- (5) The accompanying map(s) display management status, which may differ from ownership. Also, this report may include data from privately owned lands, and approval by the landowner is advisable if specific location information is considered for distribution. Features shown on this map do not imply public access to any lands.
- (6) Additional biological data for the search area(s) may be available from other sources. We suggest you contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for any additional information on threatened and endangered species (406-449-5225). Also, significant gaps exist in the Heritage Program's fisheries data, and we suggest you contact the Montana Rivers Information System for information related to your area of interest (406-444-3345).

Electronic access to the Montana Natural Heritage Program is available at URL
<http://nris.state.mt.us/mtnhp/>

(7) The results of a data search by the Montana Natural Heritage Program reflect the current status of our data collection efforts. These results are not intended as a final statement on sensitive species within a given area, or as a substitute for on-site surveys, which may be required for environmental assessments.

I hope the enclosed information is helpful to you. Please feel free to contact me at (406)-444-2817 or via my e-mail address, below, should you have any questions or require additional information.

Sincerely,



Martin P. Miller, Data Assistant
Montana Natural Heritage Program
martinm@state.mt.us)

Electronic access to the Montana Natural Heritage Program is available at URL
<http://nris.state.mt.us/mtnhp/>

due to a lack of agreement, be resumed. The letter specifically requests that intermodal transportation possibilities be incorporated into the design discussions in order to take advantage of local assets and to provide for alternative ways to travel in and around Polson. The potentially abandoned railroad track could provide residents and visitors with both a utilitarian and recreational means to get into and around Polson in a manner that eases traffic problems and contributes to overall wellbeing.

Lake County and the City of Polson cooperatively adopted the Polson Master Plan in 1993 to guide development in and around Polson. The Master Plan has a number of goals and strategies that relate to this potential pathway, including developing bicycle trails in the vicinity of Flathead Lake, providing for safe pedestrian movement throughout the area, and providing for the development of the railyard as a mixed use area. A pedestrian and bicycle facility that begins and ends at the rail facility would eventually contribute to its redevelopment due to the amount of exposure the area will receive.

Additionally, at public meetings around Lake County in our effort to update the 1988 General Plan, I have repeatedly heard calls for non-motorized transportation corridors that allow people to get out of their cars and exercise in a safe environment. A pathway that is separated from a road and provides linkage between commercial, recreational and residential areas would be such an environment that I believe would get a great deal of use and would be an asset to the Polson community.

In conclusion, the potential railway abandonment and conversion project is in accordance with Lake County's planning efforts. I understand that you are in the evaluation and planning phase of this project at present. If you would like some local assistance or want to discuss any of these points in greater detail, please feel free to call, write or stop by.

Sincerely,



Dave DeGrandpre
Director



City of Polson • P.O. Box 238 • Polson, Montana 59860-0238 • Telephone 406-883-8200 • Fax 406-883-8238

March 19, 2002

Gibson Hartwell
Ecosystem Research Group
P.O. Box 8214
Missoula, MT. 59807

Dear Gibson,

MRL's proposal to abandon approximately 4.5 miles of track in the City of Polson would generally comply with our current Master Plan policy statements. The proposed abandonment and construction of a trail system would compliment the following policy statements:

1. Develop a Pedestrian and Bicycle Trail Linking Points of Public Access to Flathead Lake.
2. Exploit the Potential of the Railyard
3. Adopt an Urban Renewal Plan for the Railyard
4. Provide for Safe Pedestrian Movement

I have attached pertinent sections of the Master Plan that further address the above policies or goals.

A proposed trail within the existing railway R/O/W would link the central core of Polson with recreational opportunities on the lake, residential areas immediately adjacent and commercial/retail areas.

The abandonment would also achieve the goal of providing safe pedestrian movement or an alternative to US 93 pedestrian movement within the existing highway alignment.

Finally, the abandonment would allow for the further transition of the "Railyard" from the existing Commercial/Industrial uses to a mixed use zoning classification addressed in the Master Plan and further defined in the Polson Urban Renewal Plan. Thus, encouraging reinvestment and development of the area currently considered a "brownfield" with a condition of blight.

As mentioned on the phone, the existing R/R alignment has also been proposed as an alternative for US Highway 93 realignment. Although not consider in detail, the City has requested MDT to include it in a detailed feasibility study of all alternatives and present such findings to the governing body for review. The official letter requesting such a study is being developed to submit to MDT in the near future.

I light of the above mentioned policy statements for the Polson Master Plan, I feel that the proposed abandonment would be a positive contribution to the community if it were to be maintained as a pedestrian/bike trail. It would be very important to have the trail completed as early as possible from the date of abandonment. Otherwise, the property could become a blighted area or eyesore to the community.

If I can be of further assistance or you need more information please feel free to call me at 883-8214.

Respectfully,


Monte Sipe



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

1400 South 19th
Bozeman, MT 59718

March 26, 2002

Sady Babcock,
Ecosystem Research Group
121 Hickory St.
PO Box 8214
Missoula, MT 59807

Dear Sady,

I have reviewed the proposed Montana Rail Link line abandonment plan and would not anticipate any impacts to listed threatened or endangered species.

If you have any additional questions or need further information please contact me.

Sincerely,

Arnold R. Dood
Endangered Species Coordinator



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 8, MONTANA OFFICE
FEDERAL BUILDING, 10 W. 15th STREET, SUITE 3200
HELENA, MONTANA 59626

Ref: 8MO

March 25, 2002

Sady Babcock, Project Manager
Ecosystem Research Group
P. O. Box 8214
Missoula, MT 59807

Dear Ms. Babcock:

I received your letter dated March 15, 2002, requesting information on Clean Air Act requirements for abandonment of a section of Montana Rail Link line. There would not be any air quality permits required by EPA for this project on the Flathead Indian Reservation. However, I would like to request that Montana Rail Link utilize good construction management techniques to minimize the creation and entrainment of fugitive dust during the construction operations. If you have any additional questions regarding the Clean Air Act, please feel free to contact me at (406) 457-5013.

Additionally, I forwarded your request to the hazardous waste and water personnel in our office, and their comments are outlined below:

- The railroad ties may be a hazardous waste.
 - The ties should be characterized to determine concentrations of pentachlorophenol or arsenic prior to disposal - *Landscape/house - BFI -*
 - Regardless of the concentration of pentachlorophenol or arsenic, the ties are not considered safe for home heating and should not be given away. Additionally, the ties should not be open burned.
- ✓ Montana Rail Link should apply to both the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and the Army Corps of Engineers to determine whether or not the project will have regulated impacts on water bodies.

If you have any questions regarding hazardous waste characterization or the hazardous waste rules, please call Susan Zazzali at (406) 457-5019. For questions regarding impacts to water, please call Barb Burkland at (406) 457-5009.

Sincerely,

Betsy Wahl

Betsy Wahl
Environmental Protection Specialist

cc Clayton Matt, Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Nation
Barb Burkland, EPA Montana Office
Susan Zazzali, EPA Montana Office



Printed on Recycled Paper



U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

HELENA REGULATORY OFFICE
10 WEST 15TH STREET, SUITE 2200
HELENA, MONTANA 59626

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

April 1, 2002

Helena Regulatory Office
Phone (406) 441-1375 Fax (406) 441-1380

**RE: Railroad Track Abandonment-Lake County
Corps File No. 200290139**

Sady Babcock
Ecosystem Research Group ERG
P.O. Box 8214
Missoula, Montana 59807

Dear Ms. Babcock:

We have reviewed your letter requesting if a Section 404 permit would be required for the removal of track with the abandonment of the Montana Rail Link (MRL) railroad line from Caffery Lane to Polson in Lake County, Montana.

Under the authority of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, Department of the Army permits are required for the discharge of fill material into waters of the United States. Waters of the United States include the area below the ordinary high water mark of stream channels and lakes or ponds connected to the tributary system, and wetlands adjacent to these waters.

Based on the information provided that no fill material will be placed either temporarily or permanently in a water or wetland of the United States, no Department of the Army permit is required for this project. However, this does not eliminate the requirement to obtain other applicable federal, state, tribal and local permits.

In the area of your proposed work, Section 402 permits are administered by the Tribal Water Quality Program Manager, The Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes, P.O. Box 278, Pablo, MT 59855.

If you have any questions, please call Bob McNerney of this office at (406) 441-1375, and reference File No. 200190139.

Sincerely,

Allan Steinle
Montana Program Manager



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

MONTANA FIELD OFFICE
100 N. PARK, SUITE 320
HELENA, MONTANA 59601
PHONE (406) 449-5225, FAX (406) 449-5339

29 Informal

April 8, 2002

Sady Babcock
System Research Group
21 Hickory St.
Box 8214
Soulas, MT 59807

Ms. Sady:

This is in response to your request received on March 25, 2002, requesting information on endangered species in the vicinity of the Montana Rail Link Abandonment Project. Below is the current list of federally listed threatened (T) and endangered (E) species that may be present within the vicinity of Polson in Lake County, Montana.

We are providing this information to assist you in determining possible impacts of species of federal concern. Should there be future federal agency involvement with this project (through funding, permitting, licensing, or other authorization), then the involved agency will be required to assure its responsibilities under Section 7 (a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act 1973, as amended, (Act), are met.

Endangered Species

Expected Occurrence

Grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*)(T)

resident/transient

Wolves (*Canis lupus*)(E)

resident/transient

Bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)(T)

resident/transient/wintering

Brook trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*)(T)

migratory/resident

Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*)(T)

resident/transient

Water Howellia (*Howellia aquatilis*)(T)

present in wetlands

Spalding's Campion (*Silene spaldingii*)(T)

present in open grasslands with rough fescue or bluebunch wheatgrass

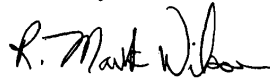
Candidate Species

Slender Moonwort (*Botrychium lineare*)(C)

present in meadows of coniferous forests

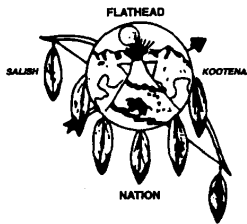
If you have any additional questions in regards to threatened and endangered species or the habitat requirements of these species please contact us by mail at the address above or call Leslie Kubin (406) 758-6881. Your interest and cooperation in meeting our joint responsibilities under the Act are appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "R. Mark Wilson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "R." and last name "Wilson" clearly distinguishable.

R. Mark Wilson,
Montana Field Supervisor

Copy to: Kalispell suboffice



Joseph E. Dupuis - Executive Secretary
Vern L. Clairmont - Executive Treasurer
Leon Bourdon - Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE CONFEDERATED SALISH AND KOOTENAI TRIBES
OF THE FLATHEAD NATION**

P.O. Box 278
Pablo, Montana 59855
(406) 675-2700
FAX (406) 275-2806
E-mail: csktcouncil@ronan.net



TRIBAL COUNCIL MEMBERS:

D. Fred Matt - Chairman
Jami Hamel - Vice Chair
Carole J. Lankford - Secretary
Lloyd D. Irvine - Treasurer
Joel A. Clairmont
Margaret Goode
S. Kevin Howlett
Mary Lefthand
Elmer "Sonny" Morigeau
Ron Trahan

April 4, 2002

**Ms. Sady Babcock
Ecosystem Research Group
P.O. Box 8214
Missoula, MT 59807**

Dear Ms. Babcock:

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes have received your letter dated March 15, 2002 in which you give notice of Montana Rail Link's ("MRL") proposed abandonment of a section of their railroad line located in and around Polson, Montana. The Tribal staff has completed its review of your letter and the five specific issues you raise therein. The Tribes respond as follows:

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes support MRL's proposal. The Tribal Council first formalized this support in the Memorandum of Agreement for the US93 Evaro to Polson Project ("US93 MOA"), dated December 20, 2000. In that document, the Tribes made a joint commitment with the Federal Highway Administration ("FHWA") and the Montana Department of Transportation ("MDT") to explore the potential for constructing a bicycle/pedestrian trail on the existing MRL rail line. The Tribes have reaffirmed this commitment by continuing to work with FHWA, MDT, and MRL since entering into the US93 MOA toward acquisition of the MRL line for subsequent design and construction of a bicycle/pedestrian trail. The Tribes see MRL's proposal to abandon the rail line as one necessary step in that process.

The first specific issue you raise was whether the proposed abandonment would affect any 100-year floodplain. Tribal staff do not foresee any affects from the proposed abandonment on the 100-year floodplain.

The second specific issue you raise is whether Tribal Shoreline Protection or Aquatic Lands Conservation permits will be required to complete the abandonment action. Tribal regulatory staff have reviewed the existing railroad line. They have concluded that there are Flathead Reservation wetlands and waters located within or adjacent to the railroad right of way that are likely subject to Tribal regulatory jurisdiction. These wetlands and waters are located close in proximity to the where the railroad line intersects with Seventh Avenue East in Polson.

If abandonment activities undertaken to remove existing rails and ties would require physical impact or alteration to these wetlands or waters, then a Tribal regulatory permit is required. If, however, such abandonment activities will be wholly contained on the existing road prism underlying the railroad track, with no impacts to abutting wetlands, then no such permit is required. Please contact Lloyd Jackson at the Tribes' Shorelines Protection Office with any questions you may have regarding a more specific delineation of Tribal jurisdiction for your anticipated abandonment actions. Mr. Jackson can be contacted at 406.675.2700 ext. 1222.

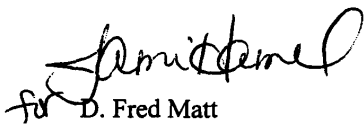
The third specific issue you raise regards Tribal environmental concerns. The Tribes' want MRL to utilize health and safety protocols during abandonment activities to assure that there will be no release of creosote or other hazardous or deleterious materials to the environment from the removed railroad rails and ties. The Tribes also want MRL to exercise best management practices before, during, and after the abandonment action to avoid and minimize potential erosion and sedimentation.

The fourth specific issue you raise is a query of whether there are any parks/recreation areas adjacent to the project that may be affected. There are no Tribal parks/recreation areas in the vicinity of the project that may be affected. With regard to county/municipal parks or recreation areas, the Tribes are not fully informed of where those are located, so do not have a fully informed response. The Tribal staff, however, is not aware of any county/municipal parks or recreation areas in the vicinity of the project that may be affected.

The fifth specific issue you raise is a solicitation of what the Tribes suggest as an alternative use for the abandoned route. The Tribes continue to advocate converting the abandoned railroad route into a bicycle/pedestrian trail.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on MRL's proposed action. As stated above, the Tribes support MRL's proposal. If there are other actions that the Tribes might take in support of this proposal, please contact Joe Hovenkotter, Tribal Attorney, at 406.675.2700 ext. 1169.

Sincerely,


for D. Fred Matt
Chairman - Tribal Council

cc: Steve Werner, MRL
Dale Paulson, FHWA
Joel Marshik, MDT
Loran Frazier, MDT
Randy Ingram, City of Polson
Mike Hutchin, Lake County

**APPENDIX C
PUBLIC PROCESS REPORT**

INTRODUCTION

The scheduled realignment of Highway 93 south of Polson, Montana requires the roadway to be moved into current Montana Rail Link (MRL) right-of-way (ROW) due to the narrowness of the combined highway/railroad ROW. Therefore, MRL is proposing to abandon an approximately 4.5 mile long segment of rail line from Caffrey Road northward into their Polson yard at 7th Street East. This proposed project would include the construction of a new loading dock and storage track just south of Caffrey Road and a Y track at the Lake County landfill.

On April 16, 2002, Ecosystem Research Group (ERG) conducted a public open house in Polson on behalf of MRL to explain the proposed project to stakeholders and interested parties. The open house was also designed to answer any questions stakeholders may have and to gather public comment on the proposed project. Representatives from MRL and the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) were also present to answer questions.

As a supplement to the public open house, ERG set up a project web site to take comments on the proposed project with links available through the MRL web site. This *Public Process Report* summarizes the information and comments gathered at the open house and through the web site, and is presented to the Surface Transportation Board as part of the abandonment process.

PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY AND RESULTS

Sady Babcock and Gregory Kennett of ERG facilitated the public meeting with assistance from Steve Werner of MRL and Dewey Lonnes of the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT). Each stakeholder in attendance was asked to register and was then given an individual presentation of the proposed abandonment project. Maps, photos and information were mounted on boards to assist in introducing the project. An executive summary, comment forms, and small maps were available for individuals to take with them. Participants were encouraged to complete the comment forms and return them to ERG before leaving the open house.

Thirty-two people attended the public open house. There was a wide representation of interests; attendees included private landowners adjacent to the proposed project, county commissioners, city and county planners, the Polson mayor, high schools students and a Salish & Kootenai Tribal representative.

The major concern of attendees was the future use of the abandoned line. Dewey Lonnes of MDT, the state agency that will acquire the railroad ROW, mentioned MDT's interest in conversion of the abandoned line to a trail system. A letter from Loran Frazier, District Administrator of MDT, supported Mr. Lonnes statement that MDT's intentions were to use the ROW for alternate forms of transportation, primarily bicycles and pedestrians.

Adjacent landowners also expressed concern regarding the current leases and easements they hold with MRL. According to Dewey Lonnes, all leases and easements will be negotiated on behalf of MDT by the firm of Skillings-Connolly. MRL will not deny access; however, the leases and easements may be modified for safety reasons (Lonnes, 2002).

ERG and MRL provided a 21 day comment period following the open house. The following is a list of the questions asked on the comment form and a summary of responses. This data includes all responses received at the open house as well as the three responses submitted electronically through ERG's web site.

1. What is your opinion of the proposed abandonment of the railroad right-of-way from Caffrey Road north into Polson at 7th Street East?

Number of Responses	Response
1	I believe that it is in the best interest of all concerned and vote for the abandonment. This will provide the opportunity to utilize the rail ROW for any of several greater benefits. Principally for highway improvements and Rails-to-Trails recreation opportunities. New utilization of the ROW would provide a social and economic opportunity of a consequence that would far outweigh the existing use/benefit.
1	I would like to see the railroad remain where it is.
1	I think that it is an excellent idea, particularly as it will help reduce the cost of the Highway 93 Realignment.
1	I agree. It is used very little except for a place to turn around. A "Y" south of Caffrey Road would be better in time saved as well as cost.
1	In these modern times it will benefit the aesthetics of the area.
1	Good and bad. Good if the abandoned line is used for Rails to Trails. Bad because it makes a public transit line less likely to happen.
1	If it is used for a recreation pathway I think that it is a great idea.
1	It appears to be an overdue issue. Let's get it done.
1	OK to abandon railroad.
1	In favor.
1	I favor the abandonment of the railroad ROW from Caffrey Road north into Polson.
1	Great! Long over due.

While several of the respondees have concerns over the abandonment, the majority clearly is in favor of the proposed line abandonment from Caffrey Road northward into MRL's Polson yard. Further, the possibility of a Rails-to-Trails conversion of the ROW appears to have strong public support.

2. Do you have any concerns regarding the abandonment of this rail line?

Number of Responses	Response
6	No.
1	Yes, I hope for a well planned and thoughtful alternative use of this real estate.
1	Would it be difficult to reinstate a ROW for rail traffic in the future should MRL or a possible new owner decide to run freight or passenger service again?
1	Only that the MRL rail yard near 7 th St. will not be forgotten and abandoned.
1	Would like to see the historic memorabilia donated to the Miracle of America Museum, i.e. switches, whistlestop signs, mileage signs, and about 400 ft of track, ties, plates, and spikes for use with the museum trains.
1	Yes, I'd like to see Polson to Missoula people transport.
1	I would hope that the priority is to help widen the road rather than waste money on another unused (limited use) walking path.
1	The only access to our home is a road leased from MRL. Would the 50ft and 75ft strip of ROW revert to the adjacent property owners? If the rails to trails project is approved, there should be a fence or other barrier constructed to keep traffic off out property. Also our water line runs under the highway and railroad to the water main east of 4B's restaurant.

Six stakeholders replied that they had no concerns regarding the abandonment of this rail line, while seven responses had some concerns. Two concerns are directly related to the cessation of rail service in the area, but only indirectly relate to the abandonment of the line segment in question. These responses (regarding future railroad ROW reinstatement, and passenger transport) are therefore only tangentially related to the proposed abandonment project. Two comments, expressing concern about a positive alternative use of the ROW, and approving of the highway widening, are not really concerns about the abandonment project per se. Two further comments would like to see this former rail line segment to be commemorated in some way, while a final comment was regarding access to a home on a road leased from MRL. Regarding the latter point, please see the synopsis of the meeting above that addresses ROW renegotiation with MDT.

3. What would be the most appropriate use of the right-of-way if it is abandoned?

Number of Responses	Response
1	A portion should be utilized for highway improvement. Other portions used for alternative modes of transportation such as hiking, biking, and walking, signage with appropriate information and scenic lookouts, and appropriate facilities on both ends of the route to facilitate public access with parking and intermodal facilities such as restrooms, picnic and rest areas.
1	Use it for a bike/foot path with the option to reopen rail service at a later date.
1	Later development of the rail yard, possibly for residential use. Also for Highway 93, as shown.

**MRL LINE ABANDONMENT PROJECT
PUBLIC PROCESS RESULTS**

Number of Responses	Response
1	I believe the best use would be for the city of Polson to construct a bike/walkway out to at least the golf course. I believe that many people, who now need a place to walk along the highway away from the fumes and danger from motor vehicles, would use it. It would require very little expense for upkeep for the city once it was completed.
1	Highway 93 four lane expansion should be first priority with a bike/walking trail as second.
3	Rails-to-Trails for biking and walking.
1	Highway 93 rebuild.
1	Divert Hillcrest Dr. onto railroad ROW and have it intersect Highway 93 at Bayshore intersection. Make railroad ROW a street rather than a walkway.
1	Complete abandonment or Rails-to-Trails.
1	Hopefully this will act as a main bike/walking path through the community and will connect with other spurs or loops. This will need good planning and follow-up.

The overwhelming majority of stakeholder responses were in favor of Rails-to-Trails conversion of the ROW if it is abandoned. A few respondents would like to see Highway 93's expansion prioritized by MDT ahead of any alternative transportation project. One response was in favor of converting the railroad ROW into a road for vehicles, and one would like to see the option of railroad ROW reinstatement. However, Rail-to-Trails emerged as the favorite scenario for possible future uses of the ROW proposed for abandonment.

4. Do you have any concerns regarding the proposed new yard at Caffrey Lane?

Number of Responses	Response
8	No.
1	No. It looks minimal.
1	Construction of adequate fences to shield the view from Highway 93 and from Caffrey Lane. This does not want to become an eyesore.
1	It would be appreciated if berms, landscaping, and other techniques were used to make the facility more discreet.
1	Good choice.

Ten stakeholder responses showed no concern or objection to the proposed new yard at Caffrey Lane. Two respondents would like to see the facility designed or shielded in a way that does not decrease the visual qualities of the area.

5. Do you have any concerns about the proposed spur line at the Lake County landfill?

Number of Responses	Response
6	No
1	No. I think it is a great idea.
1	Good choice.
1	I am confused about where this proposed spur line goes. Does it go to existing Lake County Landfill or to a new transfer station? In any event, I would like to see Lake County transport refuse by rail vs. truck to Missoula, reducing cost and motor vehicle traffic on Highway 93.
1	Sounds like a good idea if they intend to haul more of Montana's trash to the Missoula landfill.
1	It is hoped that Lake County , etc. will shield the view of the transfer station.
1	I hope that it is large enough to accommodate future needs.

Eight stakeholders had no concerns about the proposed spur line at the Lake County Landfill. Two of them expressed enthusiasm and support over this proposed location. Two further concerns approved of the proposed spur line if it is to be used as a way to transport garbage to the Missoula landfill from Lake County. Two final concerns addressed the accommodation of future needs and the impact on the visual characteristics of the area. Overall, stakeholders are overwhelmingly in favor of the proposed spur line at the Lake County landfill.

In summary, it is clear that the stakeholders are in support of the abandonment project and the construction of the spur line. There is strong support that the abandoned ROW be converted to a bicycle/pedestrian trail system.



Ecosystem Research Group

121 Hickory St., P.O. Box 8214, Missoula, MT 59807, Telephone: (406) 721-9420 Fax: (406) 543-3436 e-mail: erg@ecosystemrg.com

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 5, 2002

For More Information: Sady Babcock, Ecosystem Research Group, 406-721-9420

MONTANA RAIL LINK, RAILROAD ABANDONMENT PROJECT - OPEN HOUSE

As a part of the proposed US Highway 93 realignment project, Montana Rail Link (MRL) is proposing to abandon approximately 4.5 miles of track from Caffrey Road northward into their Polson yard at 7th Street East. In addition to the abandonment, a new train yard with a loading dock and storage track are being proposed just south of Caffrey Road and a spur line is proposed at the Lake County landfill.

The public is invited to attend an open house scheduled for Tuesday, April 16th from 4:30 to 8:00 p.m. at the Polson City Library. The open house will provide information on the proposed project and give participants an opportunity to comment on the proposed changes and future uses of the abandoned track. All persons interested in this project are encouraged to stop by the library on the 16th.



Ecosystem Research Group

121 Hickory St., P.O. Box 8214, Missoula, MT 59807, Telephone: (406) 721-9420 Fax: (406) 543-3436 e-mail: erg@ecosystemrg.com

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 5, 2002

For More Information: Sady Babock, Ecosystem Research Group, 406-721-9420

As a part of the proposed US Highway 93 realignment project, Montana Rail Link (MRL) is proposing to abandon approximately 4.5 miles of track from Caffrey Road northward into their Polson yard at 7th Street East. In addition to the abandonment, a new train yard with a loading dock and storage track are being proposed just south of Caffrey Road and a spur line is proposed at the Lake County landfill.

The public is invited to attend an open house scheduled for Tuesday, April 16th from 4:30 to 8:00 p.m. at the Polson City Library. The open house will provide information on the proposed project and give participants an opportunity to comment on the proposed changes and future uses of the abandoned track. All persons interested in this project are encouraged to stop by the library on the 16th.



Ecosystem Research Group

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April 5th, 2002

Mark Nelson
Lake County Solid Waste District
Lake County Courthouse
106 4th Avenue East
Polson, MT 59860

Re: Montana Rail Link Line Abandonment Project
Polson, MT

Dear Mr. Nelson:

As part of the US Highway 93 realignment project, Montana Rail Link (MRL) is proposing the abandonment of approximately 4.3 miles track from Caffrey Road to Polson at 7th Street East. In addition to the abandonment, a new train yard with a loading dock and storage track are being proposed just south of Caffrey Road and a spur line to turn locomotives around is proposed at the Lake County landfill. An open house for the public is being held to provide information on the proposed project and give participants an opportunity to comment on the proposed changes and future uses of the abandoned track.

In accordance with regulations of the Federal Surface Transportation Board, MRL is addressing potential environmental impacts of abandonment of the rail line. MRL has secured the services of Ecosystem Research Group of Missoula to prepare an environmental report on the abandonment project.

A public open house will be held Tuesday April 16th from 4:30 to 8:00 pm at the Polson City Library to answer questions and take public comments on the abandonment and future use of the railroad bed. Your attendance is requested for any input or questions you may have in this process. The following will be presented at the open house:

- Alternative uses for the abandoned rail bed
- Detailed maps of the proposed abandonment
- Proposed construction of new turnaround and loading dock.

We hope to see you on the 16th. Please feel free to contact myself or Greg Kennett at anytime should you have questions or input regarding this project.

Sincerely,

Sady Babcock
Project Manager



Ecosystem Research Group

Hickory St., P.O. Box 8214, Missoula, MT 59807, Telephone: (406) 721-9420 Fax: (406) 543-3436 e-mail: erg@ecosystemrg.com

April 5th, 2002

Heidi Youmans
MT Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks
P. O. Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701

Re: Montana Rail Link Line Abandonment Project
Polson, MT

Dear Ms. Youmans:

As part of the US Highway 93 realignment project, Montana Rail Link (MRL) is proposing the abandonment of approximately 4.3 miles track from Caffrey Road to Polson at 7th Street East. In addition to the abandonment, a new train yard with a loading dock and storage track are being proposed just south of Caffrey Road and a spur line to turn locomotives around is proposed at the Lake County landfill. An open house for the public is being held to provide information on the proposed project and give participants an opportunity to comment on the proposed changes and future uses of the abandoned track.

In accordance with regulations of the Federal Surface Transportation Board, MRL is addressing potential environmental impacts of abandonment of the rail line. MRL has secured the services of Ecosystem Research Group of Missoula to prepare an environmental report on the abandonment project.

A public open house will be held Tuesday April 16th from 4:30 to 8:00 pm at the Polson City Library to answer questions and take public comments on the abandonment and future use of the railroad bed. Your attendance is requested for any input or questions you may have in this process. The following will be presented at the open house:

- Alternative uses for the abandoned rail bed
- Detailed maps of the proposed abandonment
- Proposed construction of new turnaround and loading dock.

We hope to see you on the 16th. Please feel free to contact myself or Greg Kennett at anytime should you have questions or input regarding this project.

Sincerely,

Sady Babcock
Project Manager



Ecosystem Research Group

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April 5th, 2002

Joe Hovenkotter
Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes
P.O. Box 278, 51383 Hwy. 93
Pablo, MT
59855

Re: Montana Rail Link Line Abandonment Project
Polson, MT

Dear Mr. Hovenkotter:

As part of the US Highway 93 realignment project, Montana Rail Link (MRL) is proposing the abandonment of approximately 4.3 miles track from Caffrey Road to Polson at 7th Street East. In addition to the abandonment, a new train yard with a loading dock and storage track are being proposed just south of Caffrey Road and a spur line to turn locomotives around is proposed at the Lake County landfill. An open house for the public is being held to provide information on the proposed project and give participants an opportunity to comment on the proposed changes and future uses of the abandoned track.

In accordance with regulations of the Federal Surface Transportation Board, MRL is addressing potential environmental impacts of abandonment of the rail line. MRL has secured the services of Ecosystem Research Group of Missoula to prepare an environmental report on the abandonment project.

A public open house will be held Tuesday April 16th from 4:30 to 8:00 pm at the Polson City Library to answer questions and take public comments on the abandonment and future use of the railroad bed. Your attendance is requested for any input or questions you may have in this process. The following will be presented at the open house:

- Alternative uses for the abandoned rail bed
- Detailed maps of the proposed abandonment
- Proposed construction of new turnaround and loading dock.

We hope to see you on the 16th. Please feel free to contact myself or Greg Kennett at anytime should you have questions or input regarding this project.

Sincerely,

Sady Babcock

Sady Babcock
Project Manager



Ecosystem Research Group

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April 5th, 2002

Mark Wilson
U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service
100 N. Park
Helena, MT 59601

Re: Montana Rail Link Line Abandonment Project
Polson, MT

Dear Mr. Wilson:

As part of the US Highway 93 realignment project, Montana Rail Link (MRL) is proposing the abandonment of approximately 4.3 miles track from Caffrey Road to Polson at 7th Street East. In addition to the abandonment, a new train yard with a loading dock and storage track are being proposed just south of Caffrey Road and a spur line to turn locomotives around is proposed at the Lake County landfill. An open house for the public is being held to provide information on the proposed project and give participants an opportunity to comment on the proposed changes and future uses of the abandoned track.

In accordance with regulations of the Federal Surface Transportation Board, MRL is addressing potential environmental impacts of abandonment of the rail line. MRL has secured the services of Ecosystem Research Group of Missoula to prepare an environmental report on the abandonment project.

A public open house will be held Tuesday April 16th from 4:30 to 8:00 pm at the Polson City Library to answer questions and take public comments on the abandonment and future use of the railroad bed. Your attendance is requested for any input or questions you may have in this process. The following will be presented at the open house:

- Alternative uses for the abandoned rail bed
- Detailed maps of the proposed abandonment
- Proposed construction of new turnaround and loading dock.

We hope to see you on the 16th. Please feel free to contact myself or Greg Kennett at anytime should you have questions or input regarding this project.

Sincerely,

Sady Babcock

Sady Babcock
Project Manager



Ecosystem Research Group

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April 5th, 2002

Alan Steinle
U. S. Corp of Engineers
10 West 15th Street, Suite 220
Helena, MT 59626

Re: Montana Rail Link Line Abandonment Project
Polson, MT

Dear Mr. Steinle:

As part of the US Highway 93 realignment project, Montana Rail Link (MRL) is proposing the abandonment of approximately 4.3 miles track from Caffrey Road to Polson at 7th Street East. In addition to the abandonment, a new train yard with a loading dock and storage track are being proposed just south of Caffrey Road and a spur line to turn locomotives around is proposed at the Lake County landfill. An open house for the public is being held to provide information on the proposed project and give participants an opportunity to comment on the proposed changes and future uses of the abandoned track.

In accordance with regulations of the Federal Surface Transportation Board, MRL is addressing potential environmental impacts of abandonment of the rail line. MRL has secured the services of Ecosystem Research Group of Missoula to prepare an environmental report on the abandonment project.

A public open house will be held Tuesday April 16th from 4:30 to 8:00 pm at the Polson City Library to answer questions and take public comments on the abandonment and future use of the railroad bed. Your attendance is requested for any input or questions you may have in this process. The following will be presented at the open house:

- Alternative uses for the abandoned rail bed
- Detailed maps of the proposed abandonment
- Proposed construction of new turnaround and loading dock.

We hope to see you on the 16th. Please feel free to contact myself or Greg Kennett at anytime should you have questions or input regarding this project.

Sincerely,

Sady Babcock
Project Manager



Ecosystem Research Group

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April 5th, 2002

Bob McCauley
American Stone, Ltd
P.O. Box 1212
Polson, MT
59860

Re: Montana Rail Link Line Abandonment Project
Polson, MT

Dear Mr. McCauley:

As part of the US Highway 93 realignment project, Montana Rail Link (MRL) is proposing the abandonment of approximately 4.3 miles track from Caffrey Road to Polson at 7th Street East. In addition to the abandonment, a new train yard with a loading dock and storage track are being proposed just south of Caffrey Road and a spur line to turn locomotives around is proposed at the Lake County landfill. An open house for the public is being held to provide information on the proposed project and give participants an opportunity to comment on the proposed changes and future uses of the abandoned track.

In accordance with regulations of the Federal Surface Transportation Board, MRL is addressing potential environmental impacts of abandonment of the rail line. MRL has secured the services of Ecosystem Research Group of Missoula to prepare an environmental report on the abandonment project.

A public open house will be held Tuesday April 16th from 4:30 to 8:00 pm at the Polson City Library to answer questions and take public comments on the abandonment and future use of the railroad bed. Your attendance is requested for any input or questions you may have in this process. The following will be presented at the open house:

- Alternative uses for the abandoned rail bed
- Detailed maps of the proposed abandonment
- Proposed construction of new turnaround and loading dock.

We hope to see you on the 16th. Please feel free to contact myself or Greg Kennett at anytime should you have questions or input regarding this project.

Sincerely,

Sady Babcock

Sady Babcock
Project Manager

Ecosystem Research Group

Missoula, MT 59807, Telephone: (406) 721-9420 Fax: (406) 543-3436 e-mail: erg@ecosystemrg.com

tion Agency
West 15th St.

k Line Abandonment Project

Highway 93 realignment project, Montana Rail Link (MRL) is proposing the abandonment of 1.5 miles track from Caffrey Road to Polson at 7th Street East. In addition to the train yard with a loading dock and storage track are being proposed just south of Caffrey to turn locomotives around is proposed at the Lake County landfill. An open house for the project to provide information on the proposed project and give participants an opportunity to discuss proposed changes and future uses of the abandoned track.

In consultation with the Federal Surface Transportation Board, MRL is addressing potential impacts of abandonment of the rail line. MRL has secured the services of Ecosystem Research Group to prepare an environmental report on the abandonment project.

An open house will be held Tuesday April 16th from 4:30 to 8:00 pm at the Polson City Library and take public comments on the abandonment and future use of the railroad bed. We request for any input or questions you may have in this process. The following are the topics for the open house:

Impacts for the abandoned rail bed
Location of the proposed abandonment
Construction of new turnaround and loading dock.

On the 16th. Please feel free to contact myself or Greg Kennett at anytime should you have any questions regarding this project.



Ecosystem Research Group

121 Hickory St., P.O. Box 8214, Missoula, MT 59807, Telephone: (406) 721-9420 Fax: (406) 543-3436 e-mail: erg@ecosystemrg.com

April 5th, 2002

Barb Burkland
Environmental Protection Agency
Federal Building, 10 W. 15th St.
Suite 3200
Helena, MT
59626

Re: Montana Rail Link Line Abandonment Project
Polson, MT

Dear Ms. Burkland:

As part of the US Highway 93 realignment project, Montana Rail Link (MRL) is proposing the abandonment of approximately 4.3 miles track from Caffrey Road to Polson at 7th Street East. In addition to the abandonment, a new train yard with a loading dock and storage track are being proposed just south of Caffrey Road and a spur line to turn locomotives around is proposed at the Lake County landfill. An open house for the public is being held to provide information on the proposed project and give participants an opportunity to comment on the proposed changes and future uses of the abandoned track.

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We hope to see you on the 16th. Please feel free to contact myself or Greg Kennett at anytime should you have questions or input regarding this project.

Sincerely,

Sady Babcock

Sady Babcock
Project Manager



Ecosystem Research Group

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April 5th, 2002

Dave Ottman
Woody's Big Sky Supply
905 1st Street East
Polson, MT
59860

Re: Montana Rail Link Line Abandonment Project
Polson, MT

Dear Mr. Ottman:

As part of the US Highway 93 realignment project, Montana Rail Link (MRL) is proposing the abandonment of approximately 4.3 miles track from Caffrey Road to Polson at 7th Street East. In addition to the abandonment, a new train yard with a loading dock and storage track are being proposed just south of Caffrey Road and a spur line to turn locomotives around is proposed at the Lake County landfill. An open house for the public is being held to provide information on the proposed project and give participants an opportunity to comment on the proposed changes and future uses of the abandoned track.

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We hope to see you on the 16th. Please feel free to contact myself or Greg Kennett at anytime should you have questions or input regarding this project.

Sincerely,

Sady Babcock
Project Manager



Ecosystem Research Group

21 Hickory St., P.O. Box 8214, Missoula, MT 59807, Telephone: (406) 721-9420 Fax: (406) 543-3436 e-mail: erg@ecosystemrg.com

April 5th, 2002

Butch Woolard
Polson Ready Mix
57093 Highway 93
Polson, MT
59860

Re: Montana Rail Link Line Abandonment Project
Polson, MT

Dear Mr. Woolard:

As part of the US Highway 93 realignment project, Montana Rail Link (MRL) is proposing the abandonment of approximately 4.3 miles track from Caffrey Road to Polson at 7th Street East. In addition to the abandonment, a new train yard with a loading dock and storage track are being proposed just south of Caffrey Road and a spur line to turn locomotives around is proposed at the Lake County landfill. An open house for the public is being held to provide information on the proposed project and give participants an opportunity to comment on the proposed changes and future uses of the abandoned track.

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Sincerely,

Sady Babcock

Sady Babcock
Project Manager



Ecosystem Research Group

121 Hickory St., P.O. Box 8214, Missoula, MT 59807, Telephone: (406) 721-9420 Fax: (406) 543-3436 e-mail: erg@ecosystemrg.com

April 5th, 2002

Dave DeGrandpre
Lake County Planning Department
106 4th Avenue East
Polson, MT
59860

Re: Montana Rail Link Line Abandonment Project
Polson, MT

Dear Mr. DeGrandpre:

As part of the US Highway 93 realignment project, Montana Rail Link (MRL) is proposing the abandonment of approximately 4.3 miles track from Caffrey Road to Polson at 7th Street East. In addition to the abandonment, a new train yard with a loading dock and storage track are being proposed just south of Caffrey Road and a spur line to turn locomotives around is proposed at the Lake County landfill. An open house for the public is being held to provide information on the proposed project and give participants an opportunity to comment on the proposed changes and future uses of the abandoned track.

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Sincerely,

Sady Babcock

Sady Babcock
Project Manager



Ecosystem Research Group

121 Hickory St., P.O. Box 8214, Missoula, MT 59807, Telephone: (406) 721-9420 Fax: (406) 543-3436 e-mail: erg@ecosystemrg.com

April 5th, 2002

Daily Interlake
P.O. Box 7610
Kalispell, MT
59904

Re: Montana Rail Link Line Abandonment Project
Polson, MT

Dear Editor:

As part of the US Highway 93 realignment project, Montana Rail Link (MRL) is proposing the abandonment of approximately 4.3 miles track from Caffrey Road to Polson at 7th Street East. In addition to the abandonment, a new train yard with a loading dock and storage track are being proposed just south of Caffrey Road and a spur line to turn locomotives around is proposed at the Lake County landfill. An open house for the public is being held to provide information on the proposed project and give participants an opportunity to comment on the proposed changes and future uses of the abandoned track.

In accordance with regulations of the Federal Surface Transportation Board, MRL is addressing potential environmental impacts of abandonment of the rail line. MRL has secured the services of Ecosystem Research Group of Missoula to prepare an environmental report on the abandonment project.

A public open house will be held Tuesday April 16th from 4:30 to 8:00 pm at the Polson City Library to answer questions and take public comments on the abandonment and future use of the railroad bed. Your attendance is requested for any input or questions you may have in this process. The following will be presented at the open house:

- Alternative uses for the abandoned rail bed
- Detailed maps of the proposed abandonment
- Proposed construction of new turnaround and loading dock.

We hope to see you on the 16th. Please feel free to contact myself or Greg Kennett at anytime should you have questions or input regarding this project.

Sincerely,

Sady Babcock

Sady Babcock
Project Manager



Ecosystem Research Group

121 Hickory St., P.O. Box 8214, Missoula, MT 59807, Telephone: (406) 721-9420 Fax: (406) 543-3436 e-mail: erg@ecosystemrg.com

April 5th, 2002

Monte Sipe
City of Polson
P.O. Box 238
Polson, MT
59860

Re: Montana Rail Link Line Abandonment Project
Polson, MT

Dear Mr. Sipe:

As part of the US Highway 93 realignment project, Montana Rail Link (MRL) is proposing the abandonment of approximately 4.3 miles track from Caffrey Road to Polson at 7th Street East. In addition to the abandonment, a new train yard with a loading dock and storage track are being proposed just south of Caffrey Road and a spur line to turn locomotives around is proposed at the Lake County landfill. An open house for the public is being held to provide information on the proposed project and give participants an opportunity to comment on the proposed changes and future uses of the abandoned track.

In accordance with regulations of the Federal Surface Transportation Board, MRL is addressing potential environmental impacts of abandonment of the rail line. MRL has secured the services of Ecosystem Research Group of Missoula to prepare an environmental report on the abandonment project.

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- Proposed construction of new turnaround and loading dock.

We hope to see you on the 16th. Please feel free to contact myself or Greg Kennett at anytime should you have questions or input regarding this project.

Sincerely,

Sady Babcock

Sady Babcock
Project Manager



Ecosystem Research Group

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April 5th, 2002

Gerald Smith
Skillings-Connolly
5016 Lacey Blvd. S.E.
Lacey, WA
98503

Re: Montana Rail Link Line Abandonment Project
Polson, MT

Dear Mr. Smith:

As part of the US Highway 93 realignment project, Montana Rail Link (MRL) is proposing the abandonment of approximately 4.3 miles track from Caffrey Road to Polson at 7th Street East. In addition to the abandonment, a new train yard with a loading dock and storage track are being proposed just south of Caffrey Road and a spur line to turn locomotives around is proposed at the Lake County landfill. An open house for the public is being held to provide information on the proposed project and give participants an opportunity to comment on the proposed changes and future uses of the abandoned track.

In accordance with regulations of the Federal Surface Transportation Board, MRL is addressing potential environmental impacts of abandonment of the rail line. MRL has secured the services of Ecosystem Research Group of Missoula to prepare an environmental report on the abandonment project.

A public open house will be held Tuesday April 16th from 4:30 to 8:00 pm at the Polson City Library to answer questions and take public comments on the abandonment and future use of the railroad bed. Your attendance is requested for any input or questions you may have in this process. The following will be presented at the open house:

- Alternative uses for the abandoned rail bed
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- Proposed construction of new turnaround and loading dock.

We hope to see you on the 16th. Please feel free to contact myself or Greg Kennett at anytime should you have questions or input regarding this project.

Sincerely,

Sady Babcock

Sady Babcock
Project Manager



Ecosystem Research Group

121 Hickory St., P.O. Box 8214, Missoula, MT 59807, Telephone: (406) 721-9420 Fax: (406) 543-3436 e-mail: erg@ecosystemrg.com

April 5th, 2002

Richard Weaver
Skillings-Connolly, Inc.
450 Labella Lane
Big Arm, MT
59910

Re: Montana Rail Link Line Abandonment Project
Polson, MT

Dear Mr. Weaver:

As part of the US Highway 93 realignment project, Montana Rail Link (MRL) is proposing the abandonment of approximately 4.3 miles track from Caffrey Road to Polson at 7th Street East. In addition to the abandonment, a new train yard with a loading dock and storage track are being proposed just south of Caffrey Road and a spur line to turn locomotives around is proposed at the Lake County landfill. An open house for the public is being held to provide information on the proposed project and give participants an opportunity to comment on the proposed changes and future uses of the abandoned track.

In accordance with regulations of the Federal Surface Transportation Board, MRL is addressing potential environmental impacts of abandonment of the rail line. MRL has secured the services of Ecosystem Research Group of Missoula to prepare an environmental report on the abandonment project.

A public open house will be held Tuesday April 16th from 4:30 to 8:00 pm at the Polson City Library to answer questions and take public comments on the abandonment and future use of the railroad bed. Your attendance is requested for any input or questions you may have in this process. The following will be presented at the open house:

- Alternative uses for the abandoned rail bed
- Detailed maps of the proposed abandonment
- Proposed construction of new turnaround and loading dock.

We hope to see you on the 16th. Please feel free to contact myself or Greg Kennett at anytime should you have questions or input regarding this project.

Sincerely,

Sady Babcock

Sady Babcock
Project Manager



Ecosystem Research Group

121 Hickory St., P.O. Box 8214, Missoula, MT 59807, Telephone: (406) 721-9420 Fax: (406) 543-3436 e-mail: erg@ecosystemrg.com

April 5th, 2002

Dewey Lonnes
Montana DOT
2701 Prospect Ave
P.O. Box 201001
Helena, MT
59620

Re: Montana Rail Link Line Abandonment Project
Polson, MT

Dear Mr. Lonnes:

As part of the US Highway 93 realignment project, Montana Rail Link (MRL) is proposing the abandonment of approximately 4.3 miles track from Caffrey Road to Polson at 7th Street East. In addition to the abandonment, a new train yard with a loading dock and storage track are being proposed just south of Caffrey Road and a spur line to turn locomotives around is proposed at the Lake County landfill. An open house for the public is being held to provide information on the proposed project and give participants an opportunity to comment on the proposed changes and future uses of the abandoned track.

In accordance with regulations of the Federal Surface Transportation Board, MRL is addressing potential environmental impacts of abandonment of the rail line. MRL has secured the services of Ecosystem Research Group of Missoula to prepare an environmental report on the abandonment project.

A public open house will be held Tuesday April 16th from 4:30 to 8:00 pm at the Polson City Library to answer questions and take public comments on the abandonment and future use of the railroad bed. Your attendance is requested for any input or questions you may have in this process. The following will be presented at the open house:

- Alternative uses for the abandoned rail bed
- Detailed maps of the proposed abandonment
- Proposed construction of new turnaround and loading dock.

We hope to see you on the 16th. Please feel free to contact myself or Greg Kennett at anytime should you have questions or input regarding this project.

Sincerely,

Sady Babcock

Sady Babcock
Project Manager



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April 5th, 2002

Carlos Rodriques
Natural Resources Conservation Service
45358 Highway 93
Ronan, MT
59864

Re: Montana Rail Link Line Abandonment Project
Polson, MT

Dear Mr. Rodriques:

As part of the US Highway 93 realignment project, Montana Rail Link (MRL) is proposing the abandonment of approximately 4.3 miles track from Caffrey Road to Polson at 7th Street East. In addition to the abandonment, a new train yard with a loading dock and storage track are being proposed just south of Caffrey Road and a spur line to turn locomotives around is proposed at the Lake County landfill. An open house for the public is being held to provide information on the proposed project and give participants an opportunity to comment on the proposed changes and future uses of the abandoned track.

In accordance with regulations of the Federal Surface Transportation Board, MRL is addressing potential environmental impacts of abandonment of the rail line. MRL has secured the services of Ecosystem Research Group of Missoula to prepare an environmental report on the abandonment project.

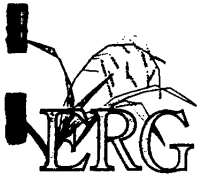
A public open house will be held Tuesday April 16th from 4:30 to 8:00 pm at the Polson City Library to answer questions and take public comments on the abandonment and future use of the railroad bed. Your attendance is requested for any input or questions you may have in this process. The following will be presented at the open house:

- Alternative uses for the abandoned rail bed
- Detailed maps of the proposed abandonment
- Proposed construction of new turnaround and loading dock.

We hope to see you on the 16th. Please feel free to contact myself or Greg Kennett at anytime should you have questions or input regarding this project.

Sincerely,

Sady Babcock
Sady Babcock
Project Manager



Ecosystem Research Group

121 Hickory St., P.O. Box 8214, Missoula, MT 59807, Telephone: (406) 721-9420 Fax: (406) 543-3436 e-mail: erg@ecosystemrg.com

April 5th, 2002

Lake County Commissioners
106 4th Ave. East
Polson, MT
59860

Re: Montana Rail Link Line Abandonment Project
Polson, MT

Dear Commissioners:

As part of the US Highway 93 realignment project, Montana Rail Link (MRL) is proposing the abandonment of approximately 4.3 miles track from Caffrey Road to Polson at 7th Street East. In addition to the abandonment, a new train yard with a loading dock and storage track are being proposed just south of Caffrey Road and a spur line to turn locomotives around is proposed at the Lake County landfill. An open house for the public is being held to provide information on the proposed project and give participants an opportunity to comment on the proposed changes and future uses of the abandoned track.

In accordance with regulations of the Federal Surface Transportation Board, MRL is addressing potential environmental impacts of abandonment of the rail line. MRL has secured the services of Ecosystem Research Group of Missoula to prepare an environmental report on the abandonment project.

A public open house will be held Tuesday April 16th from 4:30 to 8:00 pm at the Polson City Library to answer questions and take public comments on the abandonment and future use of the railroad bed. Your attendance is requested for any input or questions you may have in this process. The following will be presented at the open house:

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We hope to see you on the 16th. Please feel free to contact myself or Greg Kennett at anytime should you have questions or input regarding this project.

Sincerely,

Sady Babcock
Project Manager



Ecosystem Research Group

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April 5th, 2002

Susan Zazzali
Environmental Protection Agency
Federal Building, 10 W. 15th St.
Suite 3200
Helena, MT
59626

Re: Montana Rail Link Line Abandonment Project
Polson, MT

Dear Ms. Zazzali:

As part of the US Highway 93 realignment project, Montana Rail Link (MRL) is proposing the abandonment of approximately 4.3 miles track from Caffrey Road to Polson at 7th Street East. In addition to the abandonment, a new train yard with a loading dock and storage track are being proposed just south of Caffrey Road and a spur line to turn locomotives around is proposed at the Lake County landfill. An open house for the public is being held to provide information on the proposed project and give participants an opportunity to comment on the proposed changes and future uses of the abandoned track.

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Sincerely,

Sady Babcock

Sady Babcock
Project Manager



Ecosystem Research Group

1 Hickory St., P.O. Box 8214, Missoula, MT 59807, Telephone: (406) 721-9420 Fax: (406) 543-3436 e-mail: erg@ecosystemrg.com

April 5th, 2002

Tom Reid
Water Protection Bureau
P. O. Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620-0901

Re: Montana Rail Link Line Abandonment Project
Polson, MT

Dear Mr. Reid:

As part of the US Highway 93 realignment project, Montana Rail Link (MRL) is proposing the abandonment of approximately 4.3 miles track from Caffrey Road to Polson at 7th Street East. In addition to the abandonment, a new train yard with a loading dock and storage track are being proposed just south of Caffrey Road and a spur line to turn locomotives around is proposed at the Lake County landfill. An open house for the public is being held to provide information on the proposed project and give participants an opportunity to comment on the proposed changes and future uses of the abandoned track.

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We hope to see you on the 16th. Please feel free to contact myself or Greg Kennett at anytime should you have questions or input regarding this project.

Sincerely,

Sady Babcock
Project Manager



Ecosystem Research Group

121 Hickory St., P.O. Box 8214, Missoula, MT 59807, Telephone: (406) 721-9420 Fax: (406) 543-3436 e-mail: erg@ecosystemrg.com

April 5th, 2002

Bob Walker
MT. Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks
P. O. Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701

Re: Montana Rail Link Line Abandonment Project
Polson, MT

Dear Mr. Walker:

As part of the US Highway 93 realignment project, Montana Rail Link (MRL) is proposing the abandonment of approximately 4.3 miles track from Caffrey Road to Polson at 7th Street East. In addition to the abandonment, a new train yard with a loading dock and storage track are being proposed just south of Caffrey Road and a spur line to turn locomotives around is proposed at the Lake County landfill. An open house for the public is being held to provide information on the proposed project and give participants an opportunity to comment on the proposed changes and future uses of the abandoned track.

In accordance with regulations of the Federal Surface Transportation Board, MRL is addressing potential environmental impacts of abandonment of the rail line. MRL has secured the services of Ecosystem Research Group of Missoula to prepare an environmental report on the abandonment project.

A public open house will be held Tuesday April 16th from 4:30 to 8:00 pm at the Polson City Library to answer questions and take public comments on the abandonment and future use of the railroad bed. Your attendance is requested for any input or questions you may have in this process. The following will be presented at the open house:

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We hope to see you on the 16th. Please feel free to contact myself or Greg Kennett at anytime should you have questions or input regarding this project.

Sincerely,

Sady Babcock
Project Manager



Ecosystem Research Group

St., P.O. Box 8214, Missoula, MT 59807, Telephone: (406) 721-9420 Fax: (406) 543-3436 e-mail: erg@ecosystemrg.com

April 5th, 2002

Art Morton
Morton's Bjork Distributing
P.O. Box 100
Polson, MT

Montana Rail Link Line Abandonment Project
Polson, MT

Dear Mr. Morton:

Part of the US Highway 93 realignment project, Montana Rail Link (MRL) is proposing the abandonment of approximately 4.3 miles track from Caffrey Road to Polson at 7th Street East. In addition to the abandonment, a new train yard with a loading dock and storage track are being proposed just south of Caffrey Road and a spur line to turn locomotives around is proposed at the Lake County landfill. An open house for the public is being held to provide information on the proposed project and give participants an opportunity to comment on the proposed changes and future uses of the abandoned track.

In accordance with regulations of the Federal Surface Transportation Board, MRL is addressing potential environmental impacts of abandonment of the rail line. MRL has secured the services of Ecosystem Research Group of Missoula to prepare an environmental report on the abandonment project.

A public open house will be held Tuesday April 16th from 4:30 to 8:00 pm at the Polson City Library. Please answer questions and take public comments on the abandonment and future use of the railroad bed. Your attendance is requested for any input or questions you may have in this process. The following will be presented at the open house:

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- Detailed maps of the proposed abandonment
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We hope to see you on the 16th. Please feel free to contact myself or Greg Kennett at anytime should you have questions or input regarding this project.

Sincerely,

Gady Babcock

Gady Babcock
Project Manager

Ecosystem Research Group

Box 8214, Missoula, MT 59807, Telephone: (406) 721-9420 Fax: (406) 543-3436 e-mail: erg@ecosystemrg.com

02

ergy, Inc.

Road
59601

Rail Link Line Abandonment Project
MT

US Highway 93 realignment project, Montana Rail Link (MRL) is proposing the abandonment of 4.3 miles track from Caffrey Road to Polson at 7th Street East. In addition to the new train yard with a loading dock and storage track are being proposed just south of Caffrey Road. A new line to turn locomotives around is proposed at the Lake County landfill. An open house for the project is being held to provide information on the proposed project and give participants an opportunity to comment on the proposed changes and future uses of the abandoned track.

In accordance with regulations of the Federal Surface Transportation Board, MRL is addressing potential environmental impacts of abandonment of the rail line. MRL has secured the services of Ecosystem Research Group to prepare an environmental report on the abandonment project.

An open house will be held Tuesday April 16th from 4:30 to 8:00 pm at the Polson City Library. Please come and make suggestions and take public comments on the abandonment and future use of the railroad bed. Your input is requested for any input or questions you may have in this process. The following items will be presented at the open house:

- Alternative uses for the abandoned rail bed
- Detailed maps of the proposed abandonment
- Proposed construction of new turnaround and loading dock.

We will see you on the 16th. Please feel free to contact myself or Greg Kennett at anytime should you have any questions or input regarding this project.

Babeock

ger

APPENDIX D
**CERTIFICATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL
REPORT DISTRIBUTION**

MAY 2002

ECOSYSTEM RESEARCH GROUP

Tom Reid
Water Protection Bureau
P.O. Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620

Susan Zazzali
Environmental Protection Agency
Federal Building, 10 West 15th St.
Suite 3200
Helena, MT 59626

Carlos Rodriques
Natural Resources Conservation
Service
45358 Highway 93
Ronan, MT 59864-9678

Bob Walker
MT Department of Fish, Wildlife &
Parks
P.O. Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701

Lake County Commissioners
106 4th Ave. East
Polson, MT 59860

Heidi Youmans
MT Department of Fish, Wildlife &
Parks
P.O. Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701

Dave DeGrandpre
Lake County Planning Department
106 4th Avenue East
Polson, MT 59860

Alan Steinle
U.S. Corp of Engineers
10 West 15th, Suite 220
Helena, MT 59626

Dewey Lonnes
MT DOT
2701 Prospect Ave.
P.O. Box 201001
Helena, MT 59620-1001

Mark Wilson
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
100 N. Park
Helena, MT 59601

Richard Weaver
Skillings-Connolly, Inc.
450 Labella Lane
Big Arm, MT 59910

Betsy Wahl
Environmental Protection Agency
Federal Building, 10 West 15th St.
Suite 3200
Helena, MT 59626

Joe Hovenkotter
Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes
P.O. Box 278, 51383 Hwy 93
Pablo, MT 59855

Steve Werner
Montana Rail Link
101 International Way
Missoula, MT 59801

Mark Nelson
Lake County Solid Waste District/
Lake County Courthouse
106 4th Ave. East
Polson, MT 59860

Barb Burkland
Environmental Protection Agency
Federal Building, 10 West 15th St.
Suite 3200
Helena, MT 59626

Randy Ingram, Mayor
City of Polson
P.O. Box 238
Polson, MT 59860