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State of Wisconsin \ DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

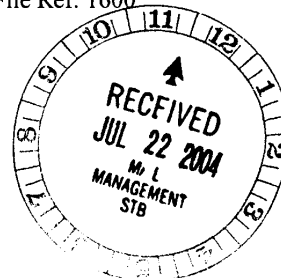
Jim Doyle, Governor
Scott Hassett, Secretary
Gloria L. McCutcheon, Regional Director

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June 30, 2004

Mr. Vernon A. Williams
Secretary
Surface Transportation Board
Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) - Docket AB-303 (Sub-No. 27)
1925 K Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20423-0001

File Ref: 1600



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Office of Proceedings

JUL 23 2004

Dear Mr. Williams:

Part of
Public Record

I am writing to provide Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (Department) comments on the proposed Wisconsin Central Ltd. (WCL) Abandonment in Ozaukee, Sheboygan, and Manitowoc Counties, Wisconsin, Surface Transportation Board Docket No. AB-303 (Sub.No. 27). Subject to Surface Transportation Board, Wisconsin Department of Transportation, Ozaukee County and other local government approval regarding their preferred use of the railroad corridor, the corridor could be acquired under the Federal "Rails-to-Trails" Act, allowing the corridor to be used for recreational purposes while preserving it for possible future transportation use.

There are natural communities; state special concern crustaceans and plants; state-threatened birds, fish, and plants; and state endangered fish present in the WCL corridor area. The Kiel Marsh Wildlife Area, LaBudde Creek Fishing Area, and Waldo Wildlife Area are important habitat areas near the WCL in Sheboygan County. Wetlands present along the project route in Manitowoc, Ozaukee, and Sheboygan Counties are also important for habitat. Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission Planning Report No. 42 *A Regional Natural Areas and Critical Species Habitat Protection and Management Plan for Southeastern Wisconsin* identifies Natural Areas, Critical Species Habitat, and Environmental Corridors near the WCL in Ozaukee County.

The Department's State Trails Plan and the Northeast and Southeast Region Trails Plan have identified the WCL corridor as a candidate to become a future State Trail segment. A recreational trail located on the WCL abandonment could connect with The Ice Age National Scenic Trail near Lime Kiln Road north of Elkhart Lake, and the Sheboygan County Old Plank Trail near STH 23 in Plymouth. Such a trail would provide several communities with access to fishing, recreation and wildlife areas, and environmental corridors. The Department is available to meet with interested parties to scope and develop a local community supported project.

Please contact Mike Thompson, Environmental Analysis Supervisor if you have any questions or would like more specific information. Mr. Thompson can be reached by phone at (414) 263-8648.

Sincerely,



Gloria McCutcheon, P.E.
Regional Director

Cc:

Mr. Michael J. Barron, Jr., Counsel, Legal Department, Canadian National/Illinois Central
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Mr. Allyn J. Lepeska, Wisconsin Department of Transportation, 4802 Sheboygan Ave 115B Madison, WI
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Ron Kazmierczak – Northeast Region

Dick Steffes – Bureau of Facilities and Lands

Philip C. Evenson AICP, Executive Director, Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission,
P.O. Box 1607, Waukesha, WI 53187-1607

Ms. Shannon Haydin, Director of Planning, Sheboygan Co., Administration Bldg., 3rd Floor - Rm. 335,
508 New York Ave, Sheboygan, WI 53081

Mike Demske, Director of Manitowoc County Planning and Park Commission, Manitowoc County Office
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Andy Holschbach, Ozaukee County Planning, Resources & Land Management Department,
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Mike Thompson – Southeast Region