

but not required that 10 copies be submitted.

All comments received before the close of business on the closing date indicated above will be considered, and will be available for examination in the docket at the above address both before and after that date. To the extent possible, comments filed after the closing date will also be considered. Notice of final action on the petition will be published in the Federal Register pursuant to the authority indicated below.

Authority: 49 U.S.C. 30141(a)(1)(A) and (b)(1); 49 CFR 593.8; delegations of authority at 49 CFR 1.50 and 501.8.

Issued on: January 21, 1997.

Marilynne Jacobs,

Director, Office of Vehicle Safety Compliance.

[FR Doc. 97-1839 Filed 1-24-97; 8:45 am]

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### Surface Transportation Board

[STB Docket No. AB-290 (Sub-No. 188X)]

#### Norfolk and Western Railway Company; Abandonment Exemption; Between Edgefield and Escambia Junction, SC

Norfolk and Western Railway Company (NW) has filed a notice of exemption under 49 CFR Part 1152 Subpart F—*Exempt Abandonments* to abandon its 1.5-mile line of railroad between milepost AB-0.0 at Edgefield and milepost AB-1.5 at Escambia Junction, SC.

NW has certified that: (1) No local traffic has moved over the line for at least 2 years; (2) there is no overhead traffic on the line; (3) no formal complaint filed by a user of rail service on the line (or by a state or local government entity acting on behalf of such user) regarding cessation of service over the line either is pending with the Surface Transportation Board (Board) or with any U.S. District Court or has been decided in favor of complainant within the 2-year period; and (4) the requirements at 49 CFR 1105.7 (environmental reports), 49 CFR 1105.8 (historic reports), 49 CFR 1105.11 (transmittal letter), 49 CFR 1105.12 (newspaper publication), and 49 CFR 1152.50(d)(1) (notice to governmental agencies) have been met.

As a condition to this exemption, any employee adversely affected by the abandonment shall be protected under *Oregon Short Line R. Co.—Abandonment—Goshen*, 360 I.C.C. 91 (1979). To address whether this condition adequately protects affected employees, a petition for partial

revocation under 49 U.S.C. 10502(d) must be filed.

Provided no formal expression of intent to file an offer of financial assistance (OFA) has been received, this exemption will be effective on February 26, 1997, unless stayed pending reconsideration. Petitions to stay that do not involve environmental issues,<sup>1</sup> formal expressions of intent to file an OFA under 49 CFR 1152.27(c)(2), and trail use/rail banking requests under 49 CFR 1152.29<sup>2</sup> must be filed by February 6, 1997. Petitions to reopen or requests for public use conditions under 49 CFR 1152.28 must be filed by February 18, 1997, with: Office of the Secretary, Case Control Branch, Surface Transportation Board, 1201 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20423.

A copy of any petition filed with the Board should be sent to applicant's representative: James R. Paschall, General Attorney, Norfolk Southern Corporation, Three Commercial Place, Norfolk, VA 23510.

If the verified notice contains false or misleading information, the exemption is void *ab initio*.

NW has filed an environmental report which addresses the abandonment's effects, if any, on the environment and historic resources. The Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) will issue an environmental assessment (EA) by January 31, 1997. Interested persons may obtain a copy of the EA by writing to SEA (Room 3219, Surface Transportation Board, Washington, DC 20423) or by calling Elaine Kaiser, Chief of SEA, at (202) 927-6248. Comments on environmental and historic preservation matters must be filed within 15 days after the EA becomes available to the public.

Environmental, historic preservation, public use, or trail use/rail banking conditions will be imposed, where appropriate, in a subsequent decision.

Decided: January 21, 1997.

By the Board, David M. Konschnik,  
Director, Office of Proceedings.

Vernon A. Williams,

Secretary.

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<sup>1</sup>The Board will grant a stay if an informed decision on environmental issues (whether raised by a party or by the Board's Section of Environmental Analysis in its independent investigation) cannot be made before the exemption's effective date. See *Exemption of Out-of-Service Rail Lines*, 5 I.C.C.2d 377 (1989). Any request for a stay should be filed as soon as possible so that the Board may take appropriate action before the exemption's effective date.

<sup>2</sup>The Board will accept late-filed trail use requests as long as the abandonment has not been consummated and the abandoning railroad is willing to negotiate an agreement.

## DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

### Customs Service

#### Non-ABI Processing of Refunds Under the Generalized System of Preferences

AGENCY: Customs Service, Treasury.

ACTION: General notice.

**SUMMARY:** This document gives notice that Customs has completed the Automated Broker Interface (ABI) processing of certain retroactively-eligible Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) duty refund claims—for the period July 31, 1995, through September 30, 1996—and advises those ABI filers that did not receive a duty refund to contact in writing the port director of the port where the GSP-eligible goods were entered or withdrawn.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** January 27, 1997.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** *For general operational aspects:* John Pierce, Office of Trade Agreements, (202-927-1249).

*For information on specific refunds:* The Customs port office where the subject merchandise was entered or withdrawn.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

##### Background

The Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) is a renewable, preferential trade program that allows the products of many developing countries to enter the United States free of duty. On July 31, 1995, continued authority for the GSP program lapsed, and it was not until August 20, 1996, that the entry of eligible merchandise under provisions of the GSP was again authorized until May 31, 1997, pursuant to provisions contained in the GSP Renewal Act of 1996 (the 1996 Act, Pub.L. 104-188, 110 Stat. 1755, at 110 Stat. 1917). The 1996 Act contained certain retroactive applications for the processing of articles entered after July 31, 1995, and before October 1, 1996; such entries were to be liquidated or reliquidated and the deposit of estimated duties refunded with interest, provided that a request for liquidation or reliquidation was filed with Customs by February 16, 1997, *i.e.*, within 180 days after the date of the 1996 Act's enactment, that contained sufficient information to enable Customs to locate the entry or to reconstruct the entry if it cannot be located. See, Federal Register notice of Friday, September 20, 1996 (61 FR 49528).

In anticipation of the 1995 lapse of authority for continued GSP processing of eligible merchandise, Customs

published a general notice in the Federal Register on Wednesday, July 5, 1995 (60 FR 35103), which advised that estimated duties would have to be deposited on imported merchandise which was entered, or withdrawn from warehouse, for consumption after July 31, 1995. Since it was expected that the GSP would be renewed with retroactive effect, Customs developed a mechanism to facilitate refunds: it was explained that filers who file entry summaries through the Automated Broker Interface (ABI) could automatically request a refund of the duty deposited by using the Special Program Indicator (SPI) for the GSP (the letter "A") on the entry summary documentation. Such ABI filers were advised that if they followed these procedures, they would not have to request a refund in writing if the GSP were to be renewed with retroactive effect.

Entries subject to the above procedure were liquidated with refunds plus interest on October 4th, 18th, and 25th and November 1st of 1996 and checks were issued. Lists of those entries that were filed in accordance with the published procedures, but which were not processed on one of the dates indicted above, were sent to each port for issuance of refunds.

#### Outstanding Claims

Filers who followed the published ABI procedures should have received their refunds. Such persons who have not yet received their refunds should write a letter to the port director of the port where the goods were entered or withdrawn. The letter may cover either single entry summaries or all entry summaries filed by an individual filer at a single port and should include the following information:

(1) A request for a refund as provided for in the 1996 Act;

(2) The entry numbers and line items for which refunds need to be issued; and

(3) The amount to be refunded for each line item and the total amount owed for all entries.

This procedure should also be used by anyone who did not request an automatic refund in accordance with the GSP program procedure published in the Federal Register on July 5, 1995. All requests must be filed on or before February 16, 1997.

Approved: January 22, 1997.

Audrey Adams,

*Acting Assistant Commissioner, Office of Field Operations.*

[FR Doc. 97-1893 Filed 1-24-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4820-02-P

## DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

### Persian Gulf Expert Scientific Committee; Meeting

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), in accordance with Pub. L. 92-463, gives notice that a meeting of the VA Persian Gulf Expert Scientific Committee will be held on:

Monday, February 3, 1997, at 8:30 a.m.–5 p.m.

Tuesday, February 4, 1997, at 8:30 a.m.–noon

The location of the meeting will be 810 Vermont Avenue, NW., Washington, DC, Room 230.

The Committee's objectives are to advise the Under Secretary for Health about medical findings affecting Persian Gulf era veterans.

At this meeting the Committee will review all aspects of patient care and medical diagnoses and will provide professional consultation as needed. The Committee may advise on other

areas involving research and development, veterans benefits and/or training aspects for patients and staff.

All portions of the meeting will be open to the public except from 4 p.m. until 5 p.m. on February 3 and from 11 a.m. to 12 noon on February 4, 1997. During these executive sessions, discussions and recommendations will deal with medical records of specific patients and individually identifiable patient medical histories. The disclosure of this information would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy. Closure of this portion of the meeting is in accordance with subsection 10(d) of Pub. L. 92-463, as amended by Pub. L. 94-409, and as cited in 5 U.S.C. 552b(c)(6).

The agenda for February 3 will begin with an update on recent events, followed by responses from Committee members. The first day's agenda will also cover reports on activities of the Persian Gulf Registry Program, a report on the Presidential Advisory Committee Report, Stress Issues Among Persian Gulf veterans and Toxicological Considerations in the Persian Gulf.

On February 4 the Committee will hear reports on the Persian Gulf Study in Iowa as well as the report of a study on Exposures and Symptomatology Among Select Persian Gulf Veterans.

Additional information concerning these meetings may be obtained from the Executive Secretary, Office of Public Health & Environmental Hazards, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20420.

Dated: January 16, 1997.

By direction of the Secretary.

Heyward Bannister,

*Committee Management Officer.*

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