
IDAHO PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

Case No. GNW-R-04-1

June 8, 2004

Contact: Gene Fadness (208) 334-0339

Web site: www.puc.state.id.us

Commission to hold rail abandonment hearing

BOISE – The Idaho Public Utilities Commission will conduct a public hearing in Orofino later this month regarding Great Northwest Railroad's request to abandon a 31-mile stretch of railway in north-central Idaho.

Great Northwest intends to file a petition with the federal Surface Transportation Board to abandon the Jaype branch line in Clearwater County. The line follows Orofino Creek from Orofino to Jaype. Great Northwest is the successor to the Camas Prairie Railroad.

The Surface Transportation Board, a division of the U.S. Department of Transportation, is authorized to grant or deny rail abandonments. However, Idaho Code 62-424 requires the commission to schedule a public hearing to determine 1) whether the abandonment adversely affects the area served, 2) whether it impairs access of Idaho shippers to vital goods and markets and 3) whether the rail line still has potential for profitability. If the commission finds these factors to be true, it may choose to represent the state in the Surface Transportation Board's abandonment proceeding.

Great Northwest is applying for an exemption that would allow the line to be abandoned within 30 days. A railroad can file for an exemption from a longer process if it can certify that no rail traffic has moved on the line in two years and there are no outstanding complaints about the lack of rail service on the line.

The commission hearing is scheduled for June 28 at 1 p.m. at the Clearwater National Forest Supervisor's Office, 12730 Highway 12 in Orofino. The purpose of the hearing is to obtain public testimony from railroad shippers, local government leaders and other interested persons who wish to testify.

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