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## **LAW CENTER REQUESTS DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY TO INVESTIGATE ACTIONS INVOLVING HISTORIC BOONVILLE BRIDGE**

Great Rivers Environmental Law Center today asked the Inspector General of the Department of Homeland Security to investigate the Coast Guard's actions involving the historic Boonville Railroad Bridge at Boonville, Missouri. It appears the Coast Guard acted to remove references to the Boonville Bridge from an application for construction of a new bridge to avoid the federal historic preservation law and the National Environmental Policy Act.

Documents show the Coast Guard persuaded Union Pacific to withdraw a pending bridge application and resubmit a new application scrubbed of any mention of using spans from the historic bridge. An email from Nicholas Mpras, Chief of the Coast Guard's Office of Bridge Administration, possessed the subject line "RE: Congressional Request for Information – Boonville Bridge, MO." Quoting from the Coast Guard email, "A permit to construct the new bridge can proceed immediately if the permit application is divorced from the old bridge. Last week I had a call from UPRR and they agreed to separate their proposal for a new bridge from the old bridge. D-8 St. Louis Bridge staff are fully on board." The Congressional request came from the office of Missouri congressman Kenny Hulshof.

The Boonville Bridge is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places and under federal law should be afforded special legal protections. Great Rivers believes that actions by the Coast Guard to delete references to the historic bridge were improper and in violation of the National Historic Preservation Act and the National Environmental Policy Act.

"A reading of the documents uncovered indicates that the federal agencies charged with enforcing certain laws colluded with a permit applicant to avoid complying with another federal law, the National Historic Preservation Act," said Jim Wilson, Chairman of the Board of Great Rivers Environmental Law Center. "In my time in government I don't recall seeing something like this. Today, Great Rivers formally requested that the Inspector General of the Department of Homeland Security investigate this matter fully for any irregularity that may be attached to the revised application submitted by Union Pacific. In the meantime, while the investigation

proceeds, any action under the permit which may have been improperly granted should be suspended. The public interest requires such delay under the circumstances.”

In the Boonville Bridge case, Great Rivers Environmental Law Center represents Pat Jones, the widow of Edward D. “Ted” Jones. Pat and Ted Jones paid for the Katy Trail and Boonville bridge contract. Great Rivers also represents Raye Reynolds, former Vice President of MKT railroad and signatory to the contract.

*Great Rivers is a nonprofit public interest environmental law firm in St. Louis that provides free legal services to those working to promote preservation of open space, clean energy, clean air and clean water. Its web address is: [www.greatriverslaw.org](http://www.greatriverslaw.org).*