



July 21, 2010

CHAMA, N.M. – Fire Investigator Sammy Anaya filed his initial report on the Lobato Trestle fire of June 23 last week. The most significant finding is really a non-finding – to wit, the fire is of undetermined origin. However, Anaya largely rules out the possibility of arson or vandalism.

“Access to the Lobato Trestle is by railroad only or on foot,” he wrote. “The Lobato Trestle is located in a somewhat remote area. No evidence of vehicles driving over the tall grass prior to fire department’s arrival.”

He goes on to note that the fire patrol that follows the train reported a total of six spot fires in the wake of the train’s passage that day, including one fairly close to the trestle. He noted that the log of the fire patrolman affirmed that there was a grass fire at the Lobato Trestle on May 22.

“I cannot rule out the train as being as not being a possible ignition source for this fire,” Anaya wrote. He went on to rule out lightning, and said there was no evidence of fireworks found at the scene. “The fire originated in the railroad ties, or the wooden walkway, or the barrier guards in or about the center of the bridge span. Investigation is open and ongoing.”

“So, not likely it was natural causes and not likely it was vandalism or fireworks. This could have originated from our own locomotive”, said Elmer Salazar, president and CEO of the C&TSRR Management Company. “This possibility has already been under study and will trigger a re-examination of the techniques and practices of our fire patrol, with special attention being standard procedure for flammable structures along the route.”

“In the meantime, we are poised to let a contract for the load study – the necessary prerequisite to making decisions about repair or replacement”, Salazar said.

The railroad is marking 40 years since its purchase by the states of New Mexico and Colorado, following abandonment of the line by its builder, the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad. Special events are planned for next month in recognition of the anniversary of the 64-mile line. Information on those events, tickets and schedules to ride the train may be obtained by calling 888-CUMBRES or visit www.cumbrestoltec.com.