



ALASKA RAILROAD

Track & Yard Vegetation Management: Additional Compelling Reasons

Regulatory Compliance

- ARRC is out of compliance with regard to controlling vegetation, and has been subject to stiff FRA fines for several years. In April 2009, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), the federal regulatory agency that governs rail industry safety, issued its strongest warning yet to clear the tracks of vegetation or face more fines, speed restrictions and even track closure.

Invasive, Noxious Weeds

- The onset of invasive, noxious weeds costs many states millions of dollars each year, and causes the destruction of natural habitat and agricultural lands. The Alaska Railroad right-of-way can serve as a vector for the spread of some invasive weeds, if left unchecked.

Wildlife Impacts

- Overgrown vegetation along the track impedes efficient snow plowing on the track shoulders. Tender shoots of willow and other brush grow rapidly along the track. These situations attract animals onto the track, putting them in harm's way to be hit by a train.

Financial Burden

- The inability to effectively control vegetation burdens the railroad with substantial expense that could be avoided: additional ballast and track maintenance, premature wear on structures and equipment, dealing with derailment aftermath, and trying ineffective non-herbicide solutions. The cost of battling recurring weeds with non-chemical methods along 640+ miles of track decreases our ability to make needed improvements.
- The FRA recognizes that the uncontrollable vegetation situation has grown worse over the past few decades and fines are levied with increasing frequency. Over the previous 10 years (between 1997 and 2008), the FRA wrote 74 violations due to uncontrolled vegetation. In comparison, during the 2009 early summer season (May - July 2009) alone, FRA inspectors have written 123 violations with fines ranging from \$1,000 to \$10,000 each. The total is expected to reach several hundred thousand dollars by summer's end.



The Federal Railroad Administration has fined ARRC for non-compliance.



The ARRC right-of-way can provide a vector for the spread of invasive, noxious weeds.

