



Alaska Railroad Corporation *News Release*

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Alaska Railroad Applies for Weed Control Permit

ANCHORAGE, Alaska-The Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) has applied for an Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) permit to use chemical weed control on railroad operating lands, primarily the right-of-way, as part of an annual integrated vegetation management program.

Since 1983 the Alaska Railroad has repeatedly tried to control vegetation along its 600-miles of track with non-chemical methods including mechanical brush-cutting, manual labor, steam and burning. These alternative methods have not proved adequate because mechanical cutting does not address the problem with vegetation between the rails, to the ends of the ties, and especially root growth down within the rail bed itself.

“This is purely about safety for our employees, customers and residents along the railbelt,” said ARRC President and CEO, Pat Gamble, “and right now we are fighting a losing battle but have it within our power to remedy this huge problem in an environmentally compatible way. Considering our railroad carries half a million people and half of our freight carloads are hazardous material, we are compelled to address these deficiencies.”

Because of vegetation growth and resulting track conditions, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), the regulatory body that governs safety for the rail industry, has repeatedly fined the ARRC. The FRA has directed the ARRC to enhance its vegetation management program to address problems with the roadbed.

With safety as the dominant factor, a permit will allow the ARRC to:

- Comply with federal regulatory requirements to control vegetation on and within the rail bed
- Reduce the risk of derailment
- Help employees to avoid slip, trip and fall injuries
- Eliminate plants and roots that de-stabilize the track sub surface
- Remove brush that can fuel wild fires
- Maintain safe visual site lines at road/rail crossings

In addition to safety, a permit will also assist efforts to control the spread of noxious, invasive weeds propagating along the railbelt into South Central Alaska.

More information on the ARRC’s vegetation management program can be found at www.alaskarailroad.com.

ARRC is a self-sustaining, state-owned Corporation that operates without state subsidy, serving a number of rail belt communities from Seward to Fairbanks.