



Alaska Railroad Corporation *News Release*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Alaska Railroad/UAF Conduct Research Project

ANCHORAGE, Alaska – The Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) and the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) are conducting an herbicide research project to gather data regarding the migration and retention of specific herbicides in the Alaskan soil. The research will take place on four test plots totaling 4.28 acres located on ARRC operational land between Portage and Seward. An additional site will be located on UAF property.

The Railroad study is part of a multi-year research project by the Alaska University Transportation Center (AUTC). Researchers from the UAF Water and Environmental Research Center will evaluate a series of groundwater and soil samples to measure herbicide persistence and dissipation under Alaskan climate and environmental conditions. The herbicides to be studied are Oust Extra and AquaMaster.

This research is in direct response to public requests for more information about specific herbicide persistence in Alaska's complex environment. ARRC and UAF want to better understand how products approved for use by EPA and DEC will behave in our Alaskan environment, especially near water bodies. This research is designed to answer these important questions.

“We have been doing these types of research projects for a number of years,” said Dr. David Barnes, chair of the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at UAF. “This will be the first time we have worked with the Alaska Railroad on such a project. A multi-year approach to this study will provide current and useful data for everyone to see how these particular herbicides react and migrate in the Alaskan environment.”

The Alaska Railroad has tried to control vegetation along its track with non-chemical methods including mechanical brush-cutting, manual labor, steam and burning since 1983. Despite these efforts, the growth rate and location of vegetation along 500 miles of track has resulted in past fines from the Federal Railroad Administration, the railroad's federal regulatory agency.

“Persistent vegetation on and around our track continues to present a recognized safety risk,” said ARRC President and CEO, Pat Gamble, “and we are simply unable to keep up with it during 20 hours of summer daylight. We firmly believe a mix of mechanical and chemical vegetation control methods as part of an integrated program is the most effective way to deal with this menace.

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We are confident this joint research project will provide the Railroad, UAF and Alaskans with solid scientific evidence to make safe decisions that can result in an effective integrated vegetation management program inside the railroad track right-of-way and other operating areas.”

The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation has reviewed this project and determines it complies with Alaska Law 18 AAC 90.510. If you have questions about the pesticides being tested or their effects, you may contact Karin Hendrickson with the pesticide control program at 907-376-1856 or by e-mail at karin.hendrickson@alaska.gov.

For questions regarding UAF’s research you can contact Dr. David Barnes at 907-474-7241 or at dave.barnes@uaf.edu.

The Alaska Railroad has posted information concerning the research project which can found on our website at <http://www.akrr.com/arrc327.html>.