University Research Project on Use of Chemical Weed Control

PROJECT FACTS

Project Scope

The Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) is working with the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) to include some test sites on ARRC property with UAF's other ongoing herbicide research. The purpose is to collect scientific data to evaluate the use of two herbicides – AquaMaster and Oust Extra – as part of an integrated vegetation management program for the Alaska Railroad. This information will help the ARRC select the safest methods possible to control vegetation along the tracks.

UAF's Alaska University Transportation Center (AUTC) is particularly well-suited to conduct the research as the recognized expert on transportation safety and herbicide behavior within transportation corridors in Alaska. AUTC has conducted similar studies for ADOT/PF over the past few years.

The research will take place on four plots of ARRC property in South-central Alaska. Two sites include wells to monitor the presence and movement of the chemicals. The fourth site will be used to observe weed control performance. AUTC will also conduct testing on a fifth site on UAF property.

Benefits

- The UAF research will compliment other studies done evaluating herbicide behavior in Alaska.
- ARRC will obtain valuable information to answer questions raised about the safety of herbicide use along the rail bed.

Project Status

- The research project is expected to last at least 2 years.
- The research project is starting in August 2008. Five plots have been selected, four of which are located on Alaska Railroad land, either along the right-of-way or in other operating areas.
- Two patches approximately 16 feet by 200 feet (one in the ARRC Seward Yard, the other near ARRC Milepost 25,) will have both Aquamaster and Oust Extra applied and multiple wells and lysimeters will be installed on each site, to monitor migration and degredation of the products.
- Two sites, approximately 16 feet by one mile (near ARRC Milepost 39 and ARRC Milepost 45,) will have only Aquamaster applied and no test wells. This plot will be used primarily to observe weed control performance. None of the four test sites on ARRC land encompass open water bodies.
- There will also be tests done on a fifth site in the Fairbanks area on UAF property.
- The project is a multi-year effort expected to last at least two years.

Project Cost

- $200,000 with $100,000 funded by ARRC and the remainder by an AUTC grant.

Weeds cover the track in many locations along the railroad.

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