



# COMMUNITY

Alaska Railroad Corporation  
4th Quarter, 2011



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Alaska Railroad  
Ongoing Projects:

Northern Rail Extension  
and Tanana River Crossing

Fairbanks - North Pole  
Rail Relocation

North Pole Road/Rail  
Crossing Reduction

Positive Train Control

Port MacKenzie Rail Extension

Healy Canyon Safety and  
Reliability Improvements

Ship Creek Intermodal Center

Chugach Forest Whistle Stop

South Wasilla Rail Relocation

Bridge Improvements and  
Track Rehabilitation

Seward Coal Loading Facility  
Improvements

For updates or comments on  
these projects, visit the  
Alaska Railroad web site at  
[www.AlaskaRailroad.com](http://www.AlaskaRailroad.com)

## FEDS APPROVE PORT MACKENZIE RAIL

### Surface Transportation Board issues record of decision



On November 21, the federal Surface Transportation Board (STB) issued its decision to allow construction and operation of the Port MacKenzie Railroad Extension. This is an important step in clearing the way for construction to begin on a 32-mile link from the mainline of the Alaska Railroad near Houston to Port MacKenzie.

Project Sponsor Matanuska-Susitna Borough and the Alaska Railroad have jointly worked on the project since 2007. The STB released the final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on March 25, 2011, recommending the Mac East Variant (Mac Central) and Houston South as the preferred route.

The first construction bid opened in December 2011, and will construct five miles of rail embankment north of Port MacKenzie. A second construction bid for another six miles of rail embankment is planned for release in February 2012. To date, the borough has received about \$95 million from the State of Alaska in support of the project, including completion of the EIS and construction of a bulk commodities road loop at the port. Existing state funding will be used for the first two rail embankment segments. An additional \$180 million is needed to complete the project. The borough is requesting \$60 million in state appropriations for FY2013.



*The EIS identified a preferred route to Houston.*

“Once again Alaska’s Congressional Delegation had gone to bat to support infrastructure and transportation projects in the state,” said ARRC President & CEO Chris Aadnesen. “The Port MacKenzie Rail Extension project has benefitted greatly from the efforts of Senators Mark Begich and Lisa Murkowski and Congressman Don Young.” ●

# ARRC LAUNCHES 2012 PRINT SALES IN SEWARD

## Railroad organizes first print/poster sale-and-signing event in Seward

For the first time, an annual Alaska Railroad print / poster sale-and-signing event was held in Seward on December 2, as part of the community's holiday craft fair. The 2012 Alaska Railroad annual print/poster is the first to feature Seward.

Wasilla artist Taffina Katkus created the oil painting *Seward Solidarity*, which features a collage of Seward scenes. Katkus was on-hand to sign prints and posters at the Seward event, as well as at events held December 3 in Anchorage and December 10 in Fairbanks. Prints, posters and pins will remain on sale at the Anchorage

Historic Depot and the Fairbanks Depot, and may also be purchased online via the Alaska Railroad Gift Shop website at [AlaskaRailroadGiftShop.com](http://AlaskaRailroadGiftShop.com).

Renowned artist John Van Zyle produced the first official Alaska Railroad painting in 1979. Since then, the annual print/poster has evolved into a popular collector's item. More information about the Alaska Railroad's annual art print program, including history and images of prints from the recent past, are available on the Alaska Railroad Corporation web site — [www.AlaskaRailroad.com/Corporate](http://www.AlaskaRailroad.com/Corporate) — Click on COMMUNITY, then Annual Print Contest. ●



*Artist Taffina Katkus, left, and Seward City Council Member Christy Terry pose with a mounted 2012 print.*



*Artist Taffina Katkus signs a print for a Seward resident during the event held in conjunction with the Seward Holiday Craft Fair December 2.*

## RAILROAD SCHEDULES 2012 PROJECT OPEN HOUSES

The Alaska Railroad (ARRC) Program of Project (POP) Open House events are scheduled mid-January to mid-February 2012. Events give the public an opportunity to learn about, and comment on, capital improvements plans along the rail line. Fact sheets, display boards and project managers will be on-hand to answer questions.

The capital budget for the upcoming year totals \$55.4 million, with more than \$31 million allocated to track rehabilitation. Other notable projects funded include \$5 million to continue the federally mandated Positive Train Control initiative, \$4 million for vehicle and equipment purchases/overhauls, \$3 million for bridge work, and \$1.2 million for the continuing locomotive overhaul program.

Smaller, but no less important, projects encompass everything from construction of a section maintenance facility at Portage, to design and construction of a sewer line for Real Estate tenants, to replacing aging copier equipment. Get the details at the following open house events:

- **ANCHORAGE: 4:00 - 6:30pm, Tuesday, January 17**, at the Anchorage Historic Depot (411 W. 1st Avenue)
- **WASILLA: 4:00 - 6:30pm, Wednesday, January 18**, at Evangelo's Restaurant (Mile 40 Parks Highway)
- **FAIRBANKS: 4:00 - 6:30pm, Tuesday, January 17**, at the Fairbanks Depot (1745 Johansen Expressway)
- **SEWARD: 10:00am - 1:30pm, Friday, February 17**, at the Breeze Inn (303 N. Harbor Street). ●

# RAILROAD APPLIES FOR 3 NEW HERBICIDE PERMITS

Permits require 60-day comment periods and public hearings Jan. 31, Feb. 1, Feb. 2

The Alaska Railroad has applied for three new herbicide use permits from the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC). The permit process requires a 60-day public comment period (starting January 12, 2012) public hearings in three communities, and public notices published in local news media. Permit applications cover the following areas, and includes the following public hearings:

- **CLEAR - FAIRBANKS:** 60 miles of track, from Clear AFS to Fairbanks. Hearing 4:30-6:30pm, **January 31** in Fairbanks
- **PALMER - WASILLA:** 12 miles of track, including Palmer Branch and mainline from branch to Palmer-Wasilla Hwy. Hearing 4:30-6:30pm, **February 1** in Wasilla
- **GOLD CREEK - BROAD PASS:** 38 miles of track, from Gold Creek (34 mi. north of Talkeetna) to Broad Pass. Hearing 4:30-6:30pm, **February 2**, in Talkeetna

In each case, the permitted area is limited to the 16-foot wide track bed along the railroad right-of-way. If approved, permits would authorize the use of AquaMaster, a glyphosate-based herbicide that is approved for use on land and water, beginning as early as this summer.

Public comment must be received by ADEC no later than 4:00 p.m. March 12, 2012. Comments should be directed to: Rebecca Colvin, ADEC  
555 Cordova Street, Anchorage, AK 99501  
Rebecca.Colvin@alaska.gov.

For more information about the application and permit process, contact:

Karin Hendrickson, ADEC Pesticide Program  
1700 E. Bogard Road, #B103, Wasilla, AK 99654  
Karin.Hendrickson@alaska.gov. ●

# GUARD MEMBER/EMPLOYEE APPRECIATES SUPPORT

Guard member/ARRC employee nominates another ARRC employee for Patriot Award

Alaska Railroad, Safety & Training Manager Dwight West recently accepted a Patriot Award from the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR).

Hired in May, Alaska Railroad Track Laborer Phillip Corre nominated West to receive the honors. The *Patriot Award* is presented to employers (company, supervisors or co-workers) who demonstrate exceptional support of Guard and Reserve members in helping them to meet their military obligations.

"It's our policies that won the award," said West who noted that he was surprised to learn of the nomination. "During the New Hire Orientation, I recall Phillip was deeply concerned that he would lose his employment with the

ARRC if he responded to a deployment for training with the Guard. I enlightened him about the process and made a few calls to help him out."

"In my working career, especially as a young man, few employers went beyond the motions of making someone feel like a member of the team, or family, as we like to call it in

the railroad business," said West. "During our new hire process I stress that we are all in this together, coming to work here makes you a member of the "family". Welcoming a new hire to the family is one thing, if you don't treat them like family, it's nothing."

Corre is deploying to Afghanistan with the Guard near the end of the year. ●



*Dwight West, left, accepts the Patriot Award from ESGR representative Michael Buzinski, in early November.*

# RAILROAD HAS 2 EMERGENCY RESPONSE DRILLS

## Fuel spill drill and passenger train drill exercises emergency response plans, equipment

**T**he Alaska Railroad recently completed two emergency response exercises that employed the Incident Command System (ICS). Throughout the year, dozens of railroaders from every department train with regular lunch-and-learn sessions, ICS-coursework and table-top exercises that aim to prepare the railroad to respond to a bad situation. The culmination of this training comes annually with mandated drills that test the railroad's readiness.

On October 13, an oil spill drill kicked off in the early morning hours. The scenario involved a fuel train derailed on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson near Clunie Lake. Mandated by the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC), this annual drill involved a full deployment to test response to an on-water spill.

Three weeks later, the ICS team was again activated to manage a passenger train emergency drill. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) mandates this type of annual drill for railroads that carry passengers. The November 7 drill involved a passenger train with 100-plus passengers, and a scenario including injuries, cold weather and remote location operations, and coordination with local emergency responders. Fire departments from Anchorage, Girdwood and Whittier participated at the drill site located near the Anchorage Historic Depot on First Avenue. ●



*Anchorage firefighters tour a locomotive to gain perspective on potential response scenarios involving a passenger train.*



*Firefighters practice passenger egress from the window of a passenger railcar*

**Contact Corrections**

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