

Willow Area ROW Fire and Public Safety Clearing

Project Scope

The Alaska Railroad (ARRC) is clearing a stretch of mainline right-of-way near Willow to reduce wildland fire risks and to enhance track safety for train operations and the public.

This project includes tree and brush removal along 7 miles of the 200-foot-wide ROW. Clearing occurs between the track centerline and the ROW boundary, which is typically 100 feet on both sides of the track.

Clearing is planned between ARRC Milepost (MP) 176 to MP 183. This is one of several track segments with a history of numerous track safety and wildland fire issues that are made worse by vegetation overgrowth.

Benefits

This project promotes ARRC's top core value – safety – by mitigating wildland fire threats, and improving line-of-sight. Benefits include:

- Creating an adequate fire break will halt, and help prevent the spread of, future wildland fires. Such prevention measures enhance the safety of adjacent communities and home/property owners.
- Providing cleared separation will help to prevent wildfires or falling trees from damaging railroad infrastructure and posing a risk to railroad operations and employees.
- Clearing overgrowth will improve sight distances for train crews and for members of the public who must cross the track.



Taken in February of 2020, this image shows clearing activity during the winter. Ash is still visible in the mulch debris due to the scorched and burned trees left standing after the 2019 McKinley fire.

Status

ROW clearing is a part of the Alaskas Railroad's regular track maintenance program.

Focused clearing along this Willow area stretch got underway during the August 2019 McKinley Fire that triggered road and rail traffic delays and caused significant damage. ARRC crews began clearing as an emergency measure to help protect railroad infrastructure from the advancing fire.

Since then, crews have continued to clean up downed, scorched and dead trees.

The work in spring 2020 involved preventive clearing to mitigate future fire damage and to improve track safety.

Funding

- The project is funded 100% by the Alaska Railroad.



The stretch of Alaska Railroad right-of-way near Willow shows the results of clearing work.

Project Area Map

