



# News Release

---

DATE: Aug. 23, 2019  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Tim Sullivan, 265-2357, cell 223-7372  
or Stephenie Wheeler, 265-2671, cell 382-3327

## **UPDATE: Fire and ice threats warrant continued monitoring and modified rail service for near future**

*Railroad responds to glacial forces to the south and wildfire in the middle*

ANCHORAGE, Alaska – The Alaska Railroad (ARRC) expects modified train service to continue at least through the weekend, as ARRC monitors fire and ice forces that threaten railroad infrastructure. A waterlogged environment on the south end is preventing daily *Coastal Classic* and chartered passenger trains from traversing the last 30 miles to Seward. As a work-around, passengers are boarding motor coaches to travel between Moose Pass and Seward. Meanwhile, near the middle of ARRC's route, the McKinley Fire is still burning on either side of the tracks about a dozen miles north of Willow. Trains are moving more slowly between ARRC Mileposts 199 to 207 (Kashwitna River to Goose Creek).

### **Saturated South End, Moose Pass to Seward**

Snow River continues to rise due to glacial activity in the area. While the track has not yet flooded and the rail bridge at ARRC MP 15.2 is intact, high water has saturated and softened the ground, making the track bed unsafe for train traffic. The situation stems from the Snow Glacier-fed lake that periodically clogs with ice jams that then break loose, pouring more water into Snow River. Known by the Finnish term *jökulhlaup*, the glacier lake outburst flood phenomena occurs roughly every two years.

Snow River is expected to crest by Friday evening, after which, water levels should subside over the following 24-36 hours. If the track is flooded or damaged, track maintenance crews are standing by to make repairs as soon as the water recedes. Normal trains operations could resume by early next week.

### **Fire in the Middle, Kashwitna area**

Alaska Railroad tracks run through the McKinley Fire that ignited Aug. 17, and continues to burn north of Willow. On Aug. 19, ARRC cancelled *Denali Star* and other passenger train services between Anchorage and Fairbanks. ARRC restored train service Aug. 21, with slowed speeds through the fire area. Railroad maintenance crews are on site, keeping the tracks clear of debris. Along the right-of-way, crews are also taking down trees at risk of falling, and assisting fire-fighters with operations that involve rail infrastructure.

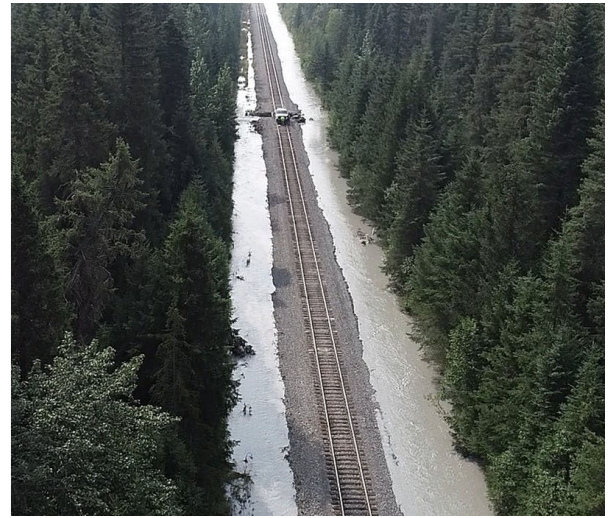
- more -

## Status of Fire and Ice Impacts on Railroad Train Service

Aug. 23, 2019

Page 2 of 2

The railroad will continue to monitor the area, ensure safe travel, and support the fire response effort. Slower train speeds through the fire area will likely continue into next week.



*The Alaska Railroad bridge (ARRC MP 15.2) over Snow River, where water levels are rising.*



*Railroad tracks run through the McKinley Fire burning in an area between Willow and Talkeetna. Railroad crews are assisting, by clearing trees along the right-of-way that have fallen, or are at risk of falling, on the tracks.*

- end -

The ARRC is an Equal Opportunity Corporation. If you need special assistance (including language) in order to participate in any ARRC service, program, or activity, please contact the Alaska Railroad Corporation; P.O. Box 107500; Anchorage, AK 99510; Attention: Legal Department, [zappasj@akrr.com](mailto:zappasj@akrr.com), (907) 265-2461; via Alaska Relay Service for hearing impaired - dial 7 11 anywhere inside Alaska, OR dial toll-free from anywhere outside the state 1-800-770-8255 (voice); 1-800 770-8973 (TTY). Upon request, printed materials can be made available in alternate formats.