



# Alaska Railroad Corporation *News Release*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Railroad continues round-the-clock flood repair work** ***UPDATE: Railroad estimates Wednesday track re-opening***

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — Alaska Railroad (ARRC) track repair crews continue working day and night to repair a major washout that has left 500 feet of the mainline track dangling just south of Gold Creek (ARRC Milepost 261, about 35 miles north of Talkeetna). Once the washout is repaired train traffic can resume north of Wasilla. Crews estimate repair will be completed by Wednesday.

The washed out track segment runs parallel to the Susitna River and is in a remote area accessible only by rail. Thirty-five railroad crew members are working in shifts around-the-clock to operate work trains with air-dump railcars hauling fill material, as well as heavy equipment (bulldozers and loaders). Crews are rebuilding the washed out track bed from both ends of the site.

The area of focus since Friday has been a 70-mile stretch of rail corridor between Willow and Gold Creek, where the track and several bridges have been impacted by high, fast water. Once the Gold Creek area washout is repaired, crews will turn their attention to the less severe water erosion that has occurred all along the line, from Seward to Nenana.

Freight trains normally scheduled to run between Anchorage and Fairbanks will not operate until damage to the track and bridges are repaired. Likewise, the regularly scheduled weekend Aurora winter passenger train was cancelled this weekend, and instead passengers were bused from Anchorage to Fairbanks on Saturday, and from Fairbanks to Anchorage today. The monthly Hurricane Turn flagstop train that travels between Anchorage and Talkeetna on the first Thursday of the month is still scheduled to operate October 4. For passenger rail service updates, please contact railroad reservation line at (907) 265-2494.

"As a key piece of the statewide supply chain network, we know that our customers and Alaska residents rely on the railroad's daily trains to transport food, fuel and other supplies from local ports to railbelt communities," said Chris Aadnesen, ARRC President/CEO. "And we know that Alaskans rely on our weekly passenger trains during the winter months. The needs of community stakeholders remain at the forefront of our thoughts as we manage our way through the restoration of rail service along the critical Anchorage-Fairbanks corridor."

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Given the forecast for continued rain, railroad officials continue to watch for any new high-water damage in Healy and Nenana, where the Nenana River is flooding, as well as along the southern end of the railroad. The rail corridor between Anchorage, Seward and Whittier remains open. Minor washouts have occurred in the Seward area in the last several days and have been repaired.

"Our people are doing a remarkable job to address daunting impacts to the railroad. Maintenance crews are hard-working, dedicated people, and they are focused on getting the job done as quickly and safely as possible," said Tom Brooks, ARRC Vice President of Engineering.

The railroad is beginning to tally costs related to 1) repairing weather-related damage to railroad infrastructure; 2) responding to operational interruptions; and 3) revenue lost due to suspended train operations. Since Tuesday, September 18, the railroad has been plagued with extreme weather problems that include high winds blowing debris onto the track, mudslides from water-logged soils, and floodwaters washing out the trackbed and bridge abutments. Cost estimates will be available later next week, and are expected to be substantial.

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Crews finish placing rip-rap at Sheep Creek to fortify railroad bridge abutment there.



Crews install a culvert under the track at ARRC MP 261 to divert the flood-formed water channel that caused the washout.



A track washout about 20 miles north of Seward is repaired with newly-installed culverts.

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