



Alaska Railroad Corporation *News Release*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Railroad may re-open north-end track Tuesday ***UPDATE: Washout repair going better than expected***

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — Alaska Railroad (ARRC) track repair crews have made better-than-expected progress in repairing 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). Barring additional flood damage, crews estimate repair will be completed by Tuesday afternoon or evening, allowing train traffic to resume north of Wasilla.

This section of washed out track runs parallel to the Susitna River and is accessible only by rail. Thirty-five railroad crew members are working double-shifts around-the-clock to rebuild the track bed using large rocks and fill material hauled in from both sides of the site. Equipment involves bulldozers, excavators, and two work trains.

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 past weekend, and instead passengers were bused from Anchorage to Fairbanks on Saturday, and from Fairbanks to Anchorage on Sunday. We expect the Aurora winter train to operate on schedule September 29-30. 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.

Given the forecast for continued rain, railroad officials continue to watch for any new flood 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.

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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 this week, and are expected to be substantial.

– end –



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



Crews make good progress on the large washout at MP 261, filling the gap with an estimated 20,000 cubic yards of material.



Flooding on the south end of the track causes several small washouts, including this one about 20 miles north of Seward.



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

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: Alaska Railroad Corporation; Attention: Legal Department; P.O. Box 107500; Anchorage, AK 99510; or by email at: zappasi@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.