ALASKA RAILROAD

News Release

DATE: Nov. 16, 2026
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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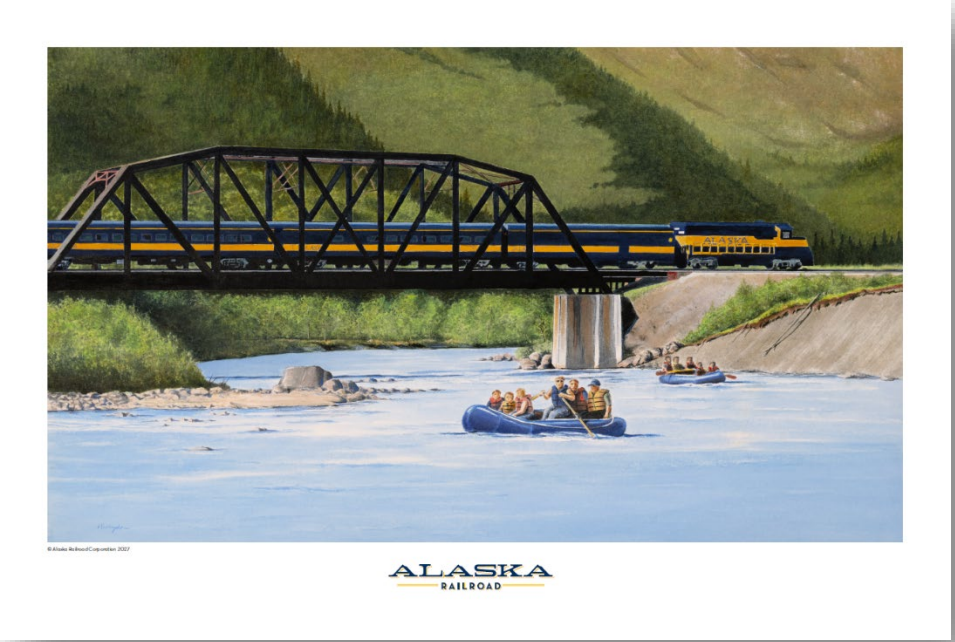
Alaska Railroad releases 2027 official print

"Spencer Glacier Rafting" captures a real Alaska adventure accessible via the Glacier Discovery Train

ANCHORAGE, Alaska – The Alaska Railroad reveals "Spencer Glacier Rafting," the official 2027 art print, created by Anchorage-based artist Robert "Bob" Thompson. The watercolor depicts a Spencer Glacier rafting experience Thompson knows firsthand, connecting the artwork to an adventure passengers can experience for themselves. The public can meet Thompson and purchase the new print or poster at signing events scheduled for Anchorage and Fairbanks in January 2027.



The Alaska Railroad art print program began in 1979 when renowned artist Jon Van Zyle was commissioned to create an art print for the railroad. Since then, the railroad has commissioned 48 works of original art as part of the program. Thompson is the latest artist to have his work featured as the annual print.

"There is something special about seeing an artist's brush strokes and knowing the work reflects a real place or experience," said Meghan Clemens, director of External Affairs at the Alaska Railroad. "Travel on our rails has that same pull: seeing places for yourself, connecting with others and coming home with memories of something real."

Thompson has lived in Alaska since 1967. His love for art, like his love of Alaska has been a part of him since childhood. He earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts in graphic design from Arizona State University in 1984 and has been involved in the arts ever since. He loves all things outdoors and considers Alaska home, as well as the source of his inspiration.

Bob was employed for 40 years as a graphic designer and commercial illustrator. During that time, he spent many of his evenings pursuing his career as a fine artist. As a watercolor artist, Bob has been primarily engaged in creating commissioned aviation art for businesses and individuals, which is grounded strongly in aviation's important role in Alaska's rich history. The complete story of Bob's aviation art career began 40 years ago.

As Bob explains it, "In 1986, our first son passed away from SIDS, while we were in the process of building first home. A close friend of ours was my project mentor, and as he had much more experience in the construction industry, I was constantly on the phone with him seeking advice. He was such a tremendous help to me during that difficult time that I wanted to do something for him to show my appreciation, but not exactly being wealthy, the best idea I had was to do a portrait of his airplane. His was my first aviation-related painting. He loved it so much that it inspired me to keep painting in that narrow niche, and I found success there."

While employed as a graphic designer at Porcaro Communications Bob managed, designed and produced all the advertising, marketing and public relations collateral materials for the Alaska Railroad Corporation for 11 years until 2014. During this time, he worked very closely with ARRC on the yearly art print contest, taking the winning art and putting together the materials such as the posters, prints, cards and pins.

Bob says, "I had always wanted to enter the yearly art print contest, and there were no restrictions for me to do that, but I held off, as it just didn't feel right that I was so close to the process."

Two years after retiring, he submitted his work to the annual contest, drawing inspiration from his opportunity to see the early development of the Spencer Glacier recreational area, saying "As it progressed from concept to reality, I was able to watch the development of the Spencer Glacier area as a recreational destination, in particular, the rafting excursions. And exactly 24 years ago on August 5, I had the great pleasure to go on the first exploratory raft trip with ARRC and Chugach Adventures, to choose the best route for this incredible experience."

"It's humbling and awe-inspiring to me the way this story has come full circle over the course of 24 years. The time I spent working with the Alaska Railroad gave me lasting memories and friendships that I would not trade for anything, and that is why I paint."

The public can meet artist Bob Thompson at two Alaska Railroad sign-and-sale events scheduled for January 2027:

- **ANCHORAGE**: Saturday, Jan. 9, 10 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. at the Anchorage Historic Depot (411 W. 1st Avenue, Anchorage)

- **FAIRBANKS**: Saturday, Jan. 16, 10 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. at the Fairbanks Depot (1031 Alaska Railroad Depot Road, Fairbanks)

The Alaska Railroad is a state-owned corporation providing year-round inter-city public rail transportation and freight service from Seward to Anchorage to Fairbanks. Moving over 500,000 passengers and 3.5 million tons of freight annually, safety is at the core of its operations.

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