



SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

Washington, DC 20423

Office Environmental Analysis

March 22, 2017

Kathryn Kusske Floyd
Venable LLP
575 7th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20004

Re: Docket No. FD 35095, Alaska Railroad Corporation - Construction and Operation
Exemption - A Rail Line Extension to Port MacKenzie, Alaska: Comments on
Quarterly Report for the Fourth Quarter of 2016

Dear Ms. Floyd:

In its November 17, 2011 decision granting the Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) the authority to construct and operate the Port MacKenzie rail line extension, the Board imposed 100 mitigation measures on the project. Mitigation Measure #98 requires ARRC to submit quarterly reports to the Board's Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) on the progress of, implementation of, and compliance with the Board-imposed mitigation measures. On February 1, 2017, ARRC submitted a report for the quarter ending December 31, 2016.

OEA has reviewed the quarterly report for October 1, 2016 through December 31, 2016 and our comments are attached. OEA requests that these comments be addressed in the next quarterly report.

If you have any questions, please contact Dave Navecky, OEA's Project Manager, at 202-245-0294.

Sincerely,

Victoria Rutson
Director
Office of Environmental Analysis

cc: Jay Johnson, Venable LLP

ATTACHMENT
Docket No. FD 35095
Port MacKenzie Rail Line Extension

I. OEA Comments on Previous Quarterly Reports - Not Addressed

Not applicable.

II. OEA Comments on Quarterly Report for October 1, 2016 through December 31, 2016

Schedule (page 2) – please ensure consistency between the bulleted information under each segment and the attached construction status map. Some segments state ‘embankment construction complete’ and others state ‘construction complete’. Please clarify if there is a difference in these two statements.

Mitigation Measures #2, #24, #53, #70, #80 (pages 4, 10, 16, 19, 20) – these measures have nearly the same response, but three state that the “SWPPP for Segments 4 and 5 will remain open until final stabilization is obtained, which is anticipated in 2016.” Two of the measures do not include the ‘*which is anticipated in 2016*’ part of the sentence. Please confirm whether final stabilization for Segments 4 and 5 was achieved in 2016 or if the SWPPP is still open.

Mitigation Measure #28 (page 10) – please confirm that inspections of culverts and bridges occur semi-annually along all segments regardless of SWPPP inspections and ongoing construction management activities. At some point SWPPP inspections and construction management activities would come to an end. However, ARRC inspections must still occur during the life of the project, as stated by the Corps of Engineers in Special Condition No. 3 of the project’s Section 404 permit (see Mitigation Measure #13).

Mitigation Measure #40 (page 12) – the status comment on this measure states that communication towers will be constructed in accordance with the measure. One communication tower has already been erected per the construction status map. Please confirm the USFWS guidelines on tower citing, marking, and guy lines were used in the design and construction of this tower.

Mitigation Measure #49 (page 15) – In 2016, did ARRC contact ADF&G on potential den sites? Clearing for Segment 2 commenced in December 2016.

Mitigation Measure #84A (page 22) – the response to this comment has been the same since the 2013 Q2 report. Based on the Final EIS, officially recognized trails would be affected by Segments 1, 3, 4, and 5. Now that construction of these segments’ embankments has been complete for at least over a year, what is the status of the final report and trail realignment maps, and Mat-Su Borough’s work with underlying land owners on preserving trail access?