

EI- 16440
Rec'd 3/2/09



SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
Section of Environmental Analysis
**Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the
ALASKA RAILROAD CORPORATION'S
PROPOSED NORTHERN RAIL EXTENSION**

COMMENT FORM

Your input is an important element in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement phase of this project. To help us incorporate your views and suggestions, please provide your comments below and mail to the address preprinted on the back of this form. Please write legibly. You may attach additional sheets if necessary. Alternatively, you may submit your comments online at STB's Web site (<http://www.stb.dot.gov/>) by clicking on "E-Filing" and selecting "Environmental Comments."

Please include your name and address so that we can add you to our mailing list if you would like to receive subsequent information on the project. Thank you for taking the time to provide us with your comments.

The deadline for receiving comments is: February 2, 2009.

Full Name:	IVAR S. HALVARSON		
Address:	746 9th Avenue		
City, State, Zip :	Fairbanks, Alaska	99701	
Phone:	(907) 452-3791		
Email:	halvarson@qci.net		

What comments do you have about the Draft Environmental Impact Statement?

Please See Attached

The following are my comments about the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Alaska Railroads proposed line extension between Fairbanks and Fort Greely Alaska. First I would like to state that I'm not anti-development and that I believe a future rail route to the lower 48 states through Canada is a positive thing, and in the long run will serve the best interests of the State of Alaska, however I hope that it is completed with good intent and respect for property owners, public land users and fish and wildlife habitat along its route. In particular though, I am concerned with the route that has been proposed within Map Area 5 known as the "South Common Segment". My family and I are property owners on the Richardson Clearwater which is a very important recreational stream located less than a mile north of the proposed route. The Richardson Clearwater is an approximately 10 mile long spring fed stream that supports a diverse habitat for spanning Salmon, Arctic Grayling, Whitefish and Burbot, as well as Moose, Bears, Eagles, Peregrine falcons, an occasional Caribou and many of Alaska's fur barrier species. In addition to these year round critters, the Clearwater also is a cherished recreational area for over 25 families, some of whom live their retirement here May through September of each year. Because the Richardson Clearwater is a spring fed stream, its headwaters consist of a series of marshes and smaller streams that work as a natural filter and catch basin for the drainage. It is this area that appears will be most adversely affected by the proposed route. As proposed, the rail line will be laid right through this critical wetlands, and will span two of the primary streams that feed the Clearwater. Believe me when I say that having a train operating in such a critical area is at best undesirable, however the thought that a single mishap with a train carrying hazardous material that could quickly destroy this beautiful area is considered irresponsible and unacceptable to the private property owners in the area.

As a property owner in the area, and one that is proud to say spends up to 60 days a year recreating in a cabin I built for my

family, I have some strong concerns about the proximity of the proposed route, including the potential for the substantial noise and vibrations we may now experience as we try to enjoy the solitude that we have for many years worked for and relished. Thus I respectfully ask that the Surface Transportation Board consider mine and others' concerns with respect to the proposed railroad's location and its impact to the area. While the potential for noise, vibration, and accidental spills are inherent with railroads, the added impact from the construction and daily railroad operations could have an even larger effect on the geology of the area, and one that could significantly alter the fragile aquifer that feeds this beautiful spring fed clearwater stream. Moving the route as far away as possible from this recreational area, to uninhabited state or federally owned land is a reasonable request given the relatively level terrain encountered, and one that can only help mitigate the impact of a new rail line to the environment and property owners in the area.

In early January, I testified to the Transportation Board at a town meeting in North Pole that I would at a minimum, like to see the route follow the existing State Forestry logging road that runs along higher ground south of the Clearwater, which would keep it away from the critical wetlands that are the lifeline of our river. In retrospect I now feel that the line should be moved even further south in this segment to where it's located just within the north boundary of the military operating area. This realignment would help reduce noise, vibration, potential hazardous spills, and hopefully any effects on the aquifer that enables this wonderful, spring fed Richardson Clearwater to exist! In addition, its location within the military operating area would eliminate problems associated with illegal track crossings by outdoor users as the military land is already off limits to the public. Thank you for the opportunity to comment in this forum.

Sincerely,

Ivar S. Halvarson and family
Richardson Clearwater property owner,
Alaska

746 9th Avenue
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701