



# Northern Rail Extension Project

A project of the Alaska Railroad Corporation

EI-20120

January 23, 2013

**PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

**TEL 907.748.1767**

*E-mail: peterbursm@akrr.com*

Victoria Rutson, Director  
Surface Transportation Board  
Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA)  
395 E Street SW  
Washington, D.C. 20423-0001

Re: 2012 Annual Report for National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Programmatic Agreement, STB finance Docket 34658

Dear Ms. Rutson:

Enclosed please find the Alaska Railroad Corporation's (ARRC) 2012 Annual Report, as stipulated in the *Programmatic Agreement Among the Surface Transportation Board, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, Federal Railroad Administration, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Alaska State Office, U.S. Army Garrison Fort Wainwright, Alaska, and Alaska State Historic Preservation Officer Regarding the Alaska Railroad Corporation, Northern Rail Extension Between North Pole and Delta Junction, Alaska*. STB Finance Docket No. 34658.

The report identifies fieldwork activities for historic properties completed during 2012; relevant construction progress during 2012; anticipated work in 2013; and an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Agreement.

If you have any comments regarding the enclosed report, please contact me at the address above, or by email at [Peterbursm@akrr.com](mailto:Peterbursm@akrr.com).

Sincerely,

Mark Peterburs  
Project Director  
Northern Rail Extension

Enclosures:

*Northern Rail Extension Project, Programmatic Agreement (PA) 2012 Annual Report, HDR Alaska, Inc. January 2013*

cc:

Catherine Glidden, Environmental Protection Specialist, STB  
Barb Hotchkin, ARRC Environmental Program Manager







# **Northern Rail Extension Project**

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*Programmatic Agreement (PA) among the Surface Transportation Board, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, Federal Railroad Administration, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Alaska State Office, U.S. Army Garrison Fort Wainwright, Alaska, and Alaska State Historic Preservation Officer regarding the Alaska Railroad Corporation, Northern Rail Extension Between North Pole and Delta Junction, Alaska  
STB Finance Docket 34658*

## **2012 Annual Report**



Prepared for:  
Alaska Railroad Corporation



HDR Alaska, Inc.  
2525 C Street, Suite 305  
Anchorage, AK 99503

January 23, 2013

## **Executive Summary**

The Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) has begun construction of a bridge crossing of the Tanana River and associated levee as the first phase of the Northern Rail Extension Project (NRE Project). The Surface Transportation Board (STB) prepared an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the NRE Project in Accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and issued a Record of Decision (ROD) approving that project on January 6, 2010. The ROD included a Programmatic Agreement (PA) to address continued cultural resources management for the NRE Project pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA).

The following annual report is prepared in compliance with the PA and identifies: relevant tasks completed during the preceding year (2012); anticipated efforts in 2013 for historic property identification, evaluation, protection, or mitigation; the construction progress of the project and any known or expected changes to the project; and an evaluation of the effectiveness of the PA and recommended amendments or changes based on PA deficiencies or project modifications. The fourth quarter progress report is included as an attachment.

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## **ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

|               |                                             |
|---------------|---------------------------------------------|
| ACCP.....     | Agency Consultation and Coordination Plan   |
| ADNR.....     | Alaska Department of Natural Resources      |
| ALCOM.....    | U.S. Department of Defense, Alaskan Command |
| APE.....      | Area of Potential Effect                    |
| ARRC.....     | Alaska Railroad Corporation                 |
| BLM.....      | Bureau of Land Management                   |
| CRSR.....     | Cultural Resource Survey Report             |
| EIS.....      | Environmental Impact Statement              |
| FRA.....      | Federal Railroad Administration             |
| GIS.....      | Geographic Information System               |
| NEPA.....     | National Environmental Policy Act           |
| NHPA.....     | National Historic Preservation Act          |
| NRE .....     | Northern Rail Extension                     |
| PA.....       | Programmatic Agreement                      |
| ROD.....      | Record of Decision                          |
| SHPO.....     | State Historic Preservation Officer         |
| STB.....      | Surface Transportation Board                |
| USAG FWA..... | U.S. Army Garrison, Fort Wainwright, Alaska |
| USGS.....     | United States Geological Survey             |

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) plans to construct and operate a new 80-mile rail line, referred to as the Northern Rail Extension (NRE or the Undertaking), to provide reliable year-round freight and passenger service to the region south of North Pole, AK.

The NRE Project will begin at existing rail line located just south of the community of North Pole and be extended to the community of Delta Junction. The project consists of four general construction phases:

- Phase 1: Bridge, approach road, and levee associated with the crossing of the Tanana River near Salcha.
- Phase 2: Approximately 13 miles of rail from Fairbanks to the Tanana River crossing.
- Phase 3: Approximately 30 miles of rail from the west side of the Tanana River crossing to the Tanana Flats Training Area.
- Phase 4: Approximately 38 miles of rail between the Tanana Flats Training Area and Delta Junction.

The Surface Transportation Board (STB) on January 5, 2010, issued a decision that granted ARRC the authority to build the rail line in the preferred alternatives and connector segments subject to compliance with environmental mitigation measures.

To address historic resources and compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, a Programmatic Agreement (PA) was executed among the STB; Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP); Federal Railroad Administration (FRA); U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Alaska State Office (BLM); U.S. Army Garrison Fort Wainwright, Alaska (USAG FWA); and Alaska State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) for the project. These six parties constitute the “Signatories” to the PA. In addition to these Signatories, the U.S. Department of Defense, Alaskan Command (ALCOM), the U.S. Air Force, 354th Fighter Wing, Eielson Air Force Base (354<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing), and the ARRC are Invited Signatories to the PA. An additional 13 parties, including the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (ADNR) and 12 federally recognized Alaska Native Tribes, Native Corporations, and Native entities are Concurring Parties to the PA, including Healy Lake Village; Village of Dot Lake; Northway Village; Native Village of Tetlin; Native Village of Tanacross; Native Village of Eagle; Nenana Native Association; Native Village of Minto; Tanana Chiefs Conference; Doyon, Ltd.; Upper Tanana Inter-Tribal Coalition; and Tok Native Association.

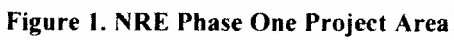
To ensure continued consultation and consideration of Historic Properties under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the PA stipulated a summary report be prepared by ARRC for submission to STB annually, for STB to distribute at least 45 days prior to the annual PA meeting. In accordance with the PA, the following report summarizes relevant NRE project tasks completed during the preceding year (2012);

anticipated efforts in 2013 for historic property identification, evaluation, protection, or mitigation; the construction progress of the project and any known or expected changes to the project; and an evaluation of the effectiveness of the PA and recommended amendments or changes based on PA deficiencies or project modifications.

## **2012 PROJECT TASKS COMPLETED**

### **Construction**

ARRC is focusing on construction of Northern Rail Extension, Phase One through the year 2014. The northeast terminus of the NRE Project Phase 1 Project Area (Figure 1) is located about ½ mile east of the Tanana River bank. In order to accommodate train or vehicle crossings on a single footprint, a 3,300 foot long bimodal bridge will be constructed. The Tanana River Bridge will include 20 main spans of 165 feet each. The Tanana River Bridge would cause a rise in surface water elevation of the Tanana River at certain river stages. Subsequently, a levee will also be constructed upstream roughly parallel to the course of the Tanana River on its northeast bank, and will be approximately 11,065 feet long, with widths varying between less than 50 feet to more than 250 feet wide. The legal description for Phase One of the project is within Sections 13 and 24, Township 4 South, Range 3 East, and Sections 19 and 30, Township 4 South, Range 4 East, Fairbanks C-1 quadrangle.

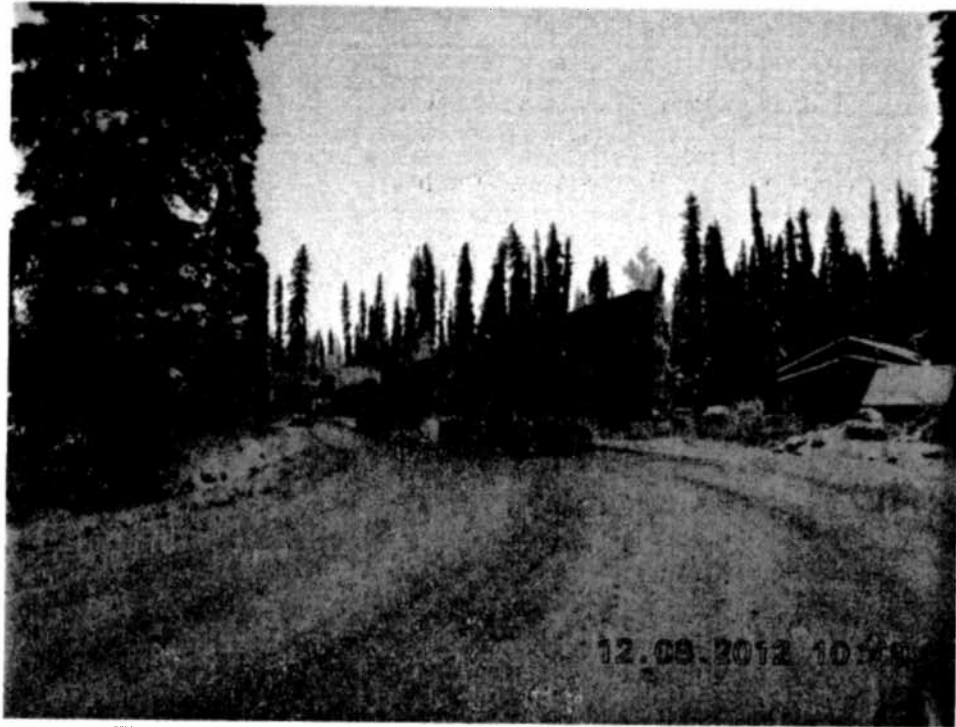


Construction activities in 2012 included:

- Substantial completion of North Bank levee
- Construction of causeway  $\frac{3}{4}$  across the river for bridge pier placement
- Pile-driving and cofferdam construction for nine piers, with construction of six piers complete
- Fabrication of girders for spans 1-15 (in China)
- Transport of girders from China to Valdez, then from Valdez to Salcha
- Bridge planning coordination meetings ongoing



**Figure 2. Pier 7: Lofting and Splicing Top Pile**



**Figure 3. Girder Arriving via Tom Bear Trail, December 8, 2012**



**Figure 4. Heating Column Cap Forms, November 16, 2012**



**Figure 5. Ready to Drive 72" Piling at Pier 15, November 10, 2012**



**Figure 6. Cofferdam Pile Cages Set, November 8, 2012**

## **Historic Properties**

### *Cultural Resources Training*

Under PA Stipulation XI.A, ARRC is to conduct cultural resource training for all supervisory-level employees and contractors annually, to “ensure that on-site supervisory-level employees and contractors are trained in procedures for identifying and reporting historic properties that may potentially be discovered during the course of the their work.”

Training curriculum was developed for the project in 2011 and reviewed to assess the need for revision in 2012. No substantial revisions were made for 2012. The 2012 training was held at the Northern Rail Extension project office in Salcha on August 6 and conducted on behalf of ARRC by an HDR cultural resources specialist meeting the Secretary of Interior’s Professional Qualifications as identified in the PA. The training consisted of a presentation detailing: laws and regulations that apply to cultural resources and human remains; the archaeology and history of the NRE project area; definitions and examples of cultural resources likely to be found in the NRE project area; and the procedures for inadvertent discovery or disturbance of cultural resources or human remains during construction. A total of 37 NRE project employees and contractors attended the training; a list of attendees is included in Appendix B.

### *Annual Meeting*

On behalf of STB, ARRC and HDR hosted an Annual Meeting in Anchorage on July 24, 2012. An invitation letter was sent to PA signatories, Tribes and other consulting parties, as identified in the Agency Consultation and Coordination Plan (ACCP), and follow-up invitation phone calls were placed by both Catherine Glidden at STB and Tracie Krauthoefer at HDR. Attendees at the meeting included ARRC Environmental Program Manager Barbara Hotchkin, SHPO Review and Compliance Coordinator Shina duVall, and HDR Cultural Resources Specialist Tracie Krauthoefer. ARRC NRE Project Manager Mark Peterburs and STB Environmental Protection Specialist Catherine Glidden participated by phone. Meeting minutes dated July 24, 2012 were distributed to meeting attendees on August 1, 2012.

### *Progress Reporting*

Under PA Stipulation VIII, upon commencement of construction, ARRC is to prepare and submit letter-format progress to STB within approximately 30 days of the end of each quarter. ARRC submitted the 2012 first, second and third quarter progress reports to STB accordingly; the 2012 fourth quarter progress report is attached as Appendix A in this report.

## **2013 PROJECT TASKS ANTICIPATED**

### **Construction**

Construction is expected to continue on Phase One through 2014. Planned activities for 2013 include: final completion of the north bank levee, substantial completion of the bridge structure and approach embankment, along with embankment protection on the south bank. Under the current schedule, with normal river conditions, the project construction could be substantially completed by the end of 2013. Final completion and final punch list items would be completed in 2014.

### **Historic Properties**

Phase One of the NRE project has already been determined to have no effect on historic properties and significant modifications to design and construction are not anticipated. Consequently no additional survey or identification is anticipated for Phase One of the NRE project.

As funding is acquired for the additional phases of the NRE project, cultural resource survey reports will be prepared and may include additional survey, identification and evaluation in compliance with the PA. However, ARRC will continue to focus on Phase One in 2013 and does not expect to complete CRSRs for additional phases in 2013.

In accordance with PA stipulation VIII, ARRC will continue to provide quarterly and annual reports to STB throughout 2013, and will conduct the annual cultural resources training for supervisory-level employees and contractors. ARRC expects to conduct the 2013 cultural resources training in summer 2013 in coordination with weekly-construction meetings and construction start-up scheduled for after spring river ice break up.

## **EVALUATION OF PROGRAMMATIC AGREEMENT**

During the course of Phase One activities in 2011, there were several occasions that afforded ARRC, STB, SHPO and PA signatories and consulting parties an opportunity to assess the effectiveness of the PA. These included: design changes necessitating modifications to the APE and the identification of previously un-surveyed areas of disturbance; PA reporting and training requirements; and an inadvertent discovery. No issues or deficiencies were identified as a result of implementation and use of the PA in these instances.

At the July 2012 Annual Meeting, the effectiveness of the PA was again addressed. It was noted that the PA is complicated, especially regarding consultation activities. However, the Agency Communication and Consultation Plan (ACCP) helps to simplify

use of the PA and, overall, it was agreed that the PA is working effectively. Consequently, ARRC recommends no changes or amendments to the PA at this time.

## **APPENDIX A: PROGRESS REPORT, OCTOBER 2012 – DECEMBER 2012**

### **MEMORANDUM**

To: Victoria Rutson, Chief,  
Office of Environmental Analysis  
Surface Transportation Board

From: Mark Peterburs, Project Manager

Subject: Northern Rail Extension Project  
Progress Report, October-December 2012

This progress report is submitted in accordance with the *Programmatic Agreement (PA) among the Surface Transportation Board, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, Federal Railroad Administration, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Alaska State Office, U.S. Army Garrison Fort Wainwright, Alaska, and Alaska State Historic Preservation Officer regarding the Alaska Railroad Corporation, Northern Rail Extension Between North Pole and Delta Junction, Alaska*, STB Finance Docket 34658, executed in December 2009. This is the second progress report prepared, covering the period from September 2011 through December 2011.

### **Project Progress –October – December 2012**

Key activities/milestones conducted during the reporting period are summarized below.

#### Historic Properties:

- No activities conducted

#### Construction:

Continued construction on Phase I, Tanana River Bridge including:

- Completion of girder fabrication in China
- Shipping and delivery of girders for bridge spans 1-15 (this will continue through June 2013)
- Completed pile-driving and cofferdam construction for nine bridge piers
- Completed overall construction of six bridge piers

#### Public Outreach:

- Held Holiday Open House for Salcha area residents on December 8, 2012

### **Milestones/Planned Activities – Next Reporting Period**

- Set girders
- Continue concrete placement and pier construction

*Northern Rail Extension Project, Alaska Railroad Corporation  
Programmatic Agreement 2012 Annual Report*

- Coordinate with STB for Annual Meeting
- Update training curriculum as needed, coordinate and conduct contractor training

cc: Catherine Glidden, STB  
Barbara Hotchkin, ARRC

**APPENDIX B: LIST OF ATTENDEES, EMPLOYEE AND CONTRACTOR  
TRAINING**

**NRE Project Employee/Contractor Cultural Resources Training Attendees  
8/6/2012**

| <b>Name</b>             | <b>Employer</b>       | <b>Email</b>                |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Rob Ramer</b>        | Kiewit                | rob.ramer@kiewit.com        |
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| <b>Kent Pollak</b>      | HDR                   | Kent.pollak@hdrinc.com      |
| <b>Jason Rein</b>       | HDR                   | jbrein@alaska.edu           |
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| <b>Nik Schriener</b>    | Kiewit                | Nik.schriener@kiewit.com    |
| <b>Jake Brockmoller</b> | Kiewit                | Jake.brockmoller@kiewit.com |

*Northern Rail Extension Project, Alaska Railroad Corporation  
Programmatic Agreement 2012 Annual Report*

| <b>Name</b>              | <b>Employer</b> | <b>Email</b>                 |
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| <b>Tyler Janssen</b>     | KIWC            | Don.kooch@kiewit.com         |
| <b>Justin O'Brien</b>    | Kiewit          | Justin.obrien@kiewit.com     |
| <b>Justin Schroeder</b>  | Kiewit          | Justin.schroeder@kiewit.com  |
| <b>Arlen Fisk</b>        | KIWC            | Arlen.fisk@kiewit.com        |
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