



# NEWS RELEASE

**U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS**

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## **Corps of Engineers issues permit for Northern Rail Extension, Phase 1**

ANCHORAGE – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers today issued a Department of the Army permit to the Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) to construct Phase 1 of the Northern Rail Extension project. Phase 1 consists of construction of a bridge, approach road, and levee associated with crossing the Tanana River near Salcha. Phase 1 would result in construction of 2.6 miles of the proposed 80-mile long project to construct a new rail line from Eielson Air Force base to Fort Greely.

Col. Reinhard Koenig, Alaska District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers commander found that there are no less environmentally damaging, practicable alternatives available to the ARRC for construction of Phase 1.

The Department of the Army permit is issued under authority of Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 which regulates the placement of structures and work in navigable waters of the United States and Section 404 of the Clean Water Act which regulates placing dredged or fill material in waters of the United States, including jurisdictional wetlands.

The Phase 1 project includes an access road and bridge over Piledriver Slough, a rail embankment and construction staging area, a material site, a 3,300-ft. long bridge across the Tanana River (a navigable river), an 11,042-ft. long levee along the east bank of the Tanana River; access road and rail embankment with two rail and two road bridges over Boundary and Beebee sloughs; spur dikes for rail embankment protection, and ancillary support facilities including a guard shack, gate, and utilities.

This phase of the project results in permanent filling of 6.20 acres of wetlands and the permanent filling of 26.4 acres and separation of 10.9 acres of the Tanana River from the main channel. Temporary impacts to waters and wetlands of 15.6 acres are not authorized under this permit until a Temporary Construction Plan for all proposed temporary construction impacts is approved by the Corps.

The permit requires compensatory mitigation, including in-lieu fees, for direct, indirect and secondary impacts to waters and wetlands. The permit includes special conditions to avoid and minimize potential adverse impacts and to compensate for unavoidable adverse impacts to the aquatic ecosystem and to ensure that the project would not be contrary to the public interest.

ARRC stated that the purpose of the entire Northern Rail Extension project is “to provide freight and passenger rail service to the region south of North Pole, including Tanana Flats and Donnelly Training Areas and the Delta Junction area”. ARRC stated a need to provide a safe, reliable, and efficient transportation alternative to the Richardson Highway for freight and passenger service and the need for reliable, year-round access to training areas used by the United States military.

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