

# 1. PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

## 1.1 Introduction

On July 6, 2007, Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC or the Applicant) filed a petition with the Surface Transportation Board (STB or the Board)<sup>1</sup> pursuant to 49 United States Code (U.S.C.) 10502 for the authority to construct and operate approximately 80 miles of new rail line from North Pole, Alaska, to Delta Junction, Alaska (see Figure 1-1 for a map of the region). Referred to as the Northern Rail Extension (NRE), the proposed rail line would extend the Applicant's existing freight and passenger rail service to the region south of North Pole.

The rail extension would begin at the east end of the Chena River Overflow Bridge—north of Eielson Air Force Base (AFB)—and end at the southern side of Delta Junction. In addition to constructing the rail line, rail line operations would require construction of new structures, such as bridges, a passenger facility, communications towers, access roads for rail line construction and operations, and sidings.

The Board, pursuant to 49 U.S.C. 10901, is the agency responsible for granting authority for the construction and operation of new rail lines and associated facilities. Accordingly, the Board, through its Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA), is the lead agency responsible under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for preparing this Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to identify and evaluate the potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed action and alternatives.

The proposed action is the construction and operation of a rail extension from North Pole, Alaska, to Delta Junction, Alaska. The proposed action includes ARRC's preferred route for the proposed rail extension. The preferred route consists of several segments. For all but two of the segments, alternative route options are analyzed in detail in this EIS. For any of the alternatives, rail line operations would be the same; however, some construction features would be different.

In addition to ADNR, seven Federal agencies are cooperating agencies pursuant to Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations at 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1501.6. CEQ regulations emphasize agency cooperation early in the NEPA process and allow a lead agency (in this case, the Board) to request the assistance of other agencies with either jurisdiction by law or special expertise in matters relevant to preparing an EIS assessment. Table 1-1 lists each cooperating agency and describes its roles and responsibilities.

SEA and the cooperating agencies (collectively the Agencies) prepared this EIS<sup>2</sup> in accordance with NEPA, CEQ regulations, and the Board's environmental regulations (49 CFR 1105) to provide the Board, the cooperating agencies, other Federal, State of Alaska, and local agencies, Alaska Natives, and the public with clear and concise information on the potential environmental

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<sup>1</sup> The STB is a bipartisan, decisionally independent adjudicatory body, organizationally housed within the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT). The Board was established by the ICC [Interstate Commerce Commission] Termination Act of 1995 (49 U.S.C. 10101 *et seq.*; P.L. 104-88, December 29, 1995) to assume some (but not all) functions of the ICC, particularly those related to the regulation of freight rail lines. The STB has jurisdiction over rail line rate and service issues, and rail structuring transactions, such as new line construction, line sales, line abandonments, and rail line mergers.

<sup>2</sup> While much of the EIS generally refers only to SEA, the document reflects input from all eight cooperating agencies.

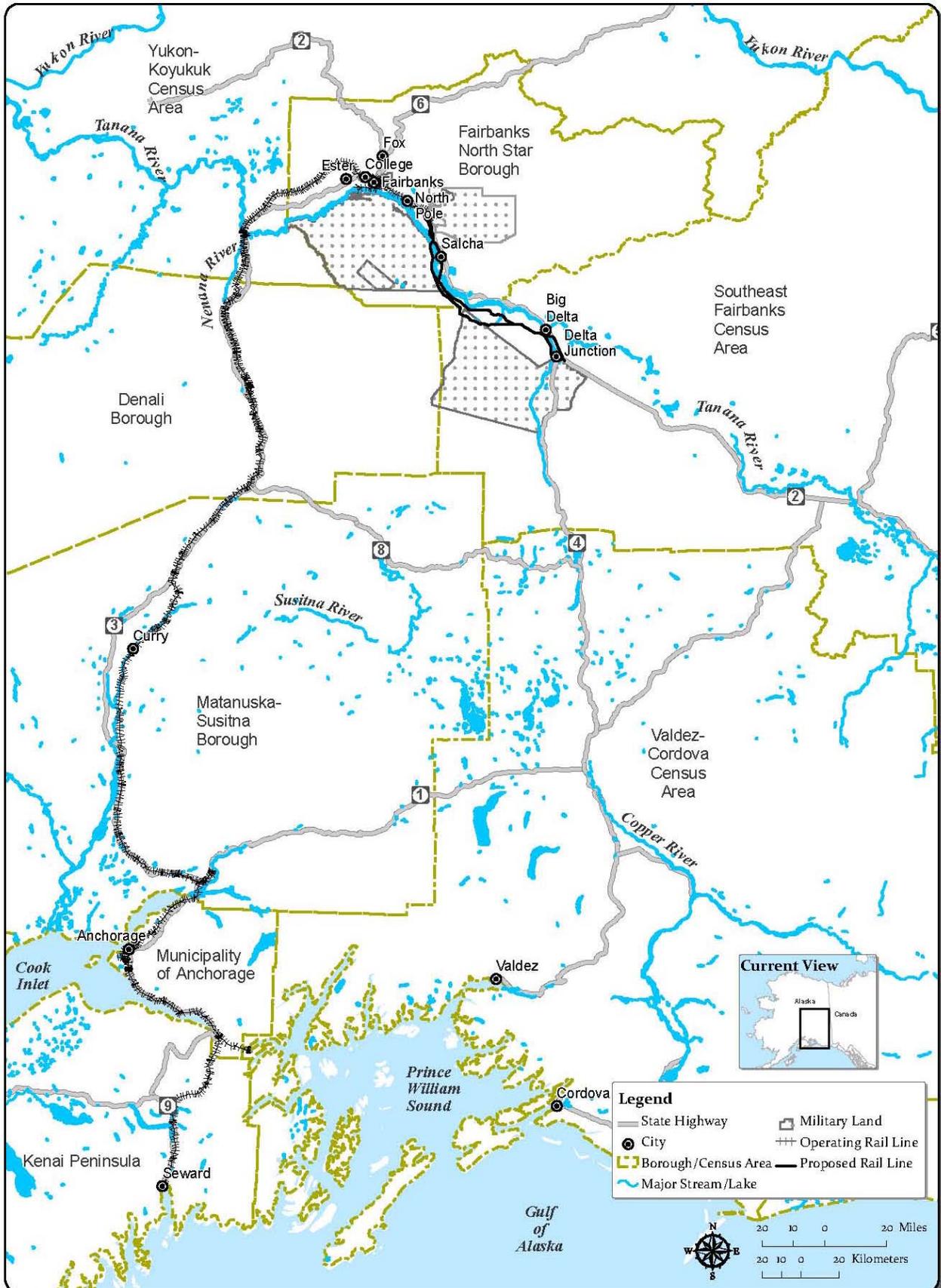


Figure 1-1 - Map of the Northern Rail Extension Region

**Table 1-1  
Cooperating Agency Involvement in the Northern Rail Extension**

U.S. Department of Defense Alaskan Command (ALCOM)	May grant the proposed rail line access across the Tanana Flats and Donnelly training areas on the west side of the Tanana River. May use the rail line or associated infrastructure to access these training areas.
Bureau of Land Management (BLM)	May approve or deny a right-of-way grant for the proposed rail line across BLM-managed lands, which include the Tanana Flats and Donnelly training areas.
Federal Transit Administration (FTA)	May provide funding for the purchase of equipment for the passenger component of the rail extension.
Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)	Administered funding for the EIS and preliminary engineering to construct the rail line.
U.S. Air Force 354 <sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing Command from Eielson AFB	May decide to grant a right-of-way crossing through a portion of Eielson AFB.
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)	May issue or deny a Section 404 Clean Water Act permit and/or a Section 10 Rivers and Harbors Act permit.
U.S. Coast Guard (USCG)	May issue bridge permits.
Alaska Department of Natural Resources (ADNR)	May convey land to ARRC for the purpose of the rail line.

impacts of the proposed action and alternatives, including the No-Action Alternative. Under the No-Action Alternative, ARRC would not construct an extension of the existing rail line or construct the dual-modal bridge over the Tanana River to transport commercial freight, military cargo and personnel, or passengers.

This EIS was also prepared in accordance with BLM H-1790-1—The National Environmental Policy Act Handbook, and the Department of the Interior’s manual guidance on NEPA (516 Department Manual [DM] 1-7); FRA’s NEPA guidance at 64 CFR 28545; FTA’s NEPA-implementing regulations at 49 CFR 622, Air Force Instruction 32-7061—Environmental Impact Analysis Process; USACE NEPA-implementing regulations at 33 CFR 230; USCG COMDTINST M16475.1D—NEPA-Implementing Procedures and Policy for Considering Environmental Impacts; and the Army’s NEPA implementing regulations at 32 CFR 651.

SEA is issuing the EIS for public review and comment. SEA will consider all comments received on the Draft EIS and respond to all substantive comments in a Final EIS. The Final EIS will include final recommended environmental mitigation conditions, as applicable. The Board will consider the entire environmental record, the Draft and Final EISs, all public and agency comments, and SEA’s environmental recommendations in making its final decision on the application to construct and operate the proposed NRE.

The Board will decide whether to approve, approve with conditions (which would include conditions designed to mitigate impacts on the environment), or deny the Applicant’s request for a license to construct and operate a new rail line to Delta Junction.<sup>3</sup> The cooperating agencies that will be issuing individual decisions concerning the proposed action intend to use information in the EIS for decisionmaking purposes.

<sup>3</sup> As established by the ICC Termination Act of 1995, the Board shall authorize construction and operation “unless the Board finds that such activities are inconsistent with the public convenience and necessity” (49 U.S.C. 10901; P.L. 104-88, December 29, 1995).

## 1.2 Purpose and Need

The Applicant has stated that the purpose of the project is to provide freight and passenger rail service to the region south of North Pole, Alaska. The Applicant has stated that the proposed NRE would provide an alternative to the Richardson Highway for commercial freight service for businesses, military, and communities in or near the rail line, including existing industries in the agricultural, mining, and petrochemical sectors in the Delta Junction region. At present, both the agricultural community and the mineral industries in this area receive their desired import materials indirectly. Such materials are first shipped by rail to or near Fairbanks, offloaded, and then transported by truck over Richardson Highway for approximately 90 miles to Delta Junction.

The Applicant has also stated that the proposed NRE would provide a transportation alternative to Richardson Highway for individuals traveling between Fairbanks and Delta Junction. At present, there are no public transportation opportunities between these two areas. According to ARRC, passenger service could also support area tourism and provide an opportunity for tourists to travel by rail beyond the existing Fairbanks terminal to a proposed passenger facility at Delta Junction.

The proposed NRE would also provide year-round access to the Tanana Flats and Donnelly training areas on the southwestern side of the Tanana River and west side of the Delta River. At present, U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force ground access to this area is limited to winter months by way of ice bridges. The construction of a combined road-rail bridge over the Tanana River for the rail line would provide U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force dependable year-round ground access to these training areas.

## 1.3 Agency Responsibilities

The EIS considers actions by the Board, BLM, FTA, FRA, ALCOM, USCG, USACE, the 354<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing, and ADNR. These agencies may be issuing decisions concerning the proposed action and alternatives and could use this Draft EIS for the disclosure and analysis of potential environmental impacts related to those decisions, as required by NEPA. Additional Federal agencies have review of and oversight responsibilities for the EIS and other components of the environmental review process. These agencies and their responsibilities are briefly discussed below.

### 1.3.1 Lead Agency

#### Surface Transportation Board

The Board, pursuant to 49 U.S.C. 10901, is the agency responsible for granting authority for the construction of new rail line facilities and their subsequent operation and maintenance. Accordingly, the Board, through SEA, is the lead agency responsible for preparation of the EIS.

### 1.3.2 Cooperating Agencies

#### Bureau of Land Management

BLM administers Federal land in the project area and has authority under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (43 U.S.C. 1701 *et seq.*) to issue a linear right-of-way grant for the proposed NRE to pass through those federally managed lands. The Applicant would need to

apply to BLM for a right-of-way grant to authorize the land needed to construct the rail line and ancillary facilities. For Federal lands managed by BLM but withdrawn for military use, BLM would consult with ALCOM as part of process of considering whether to issue a right-of-way grant. Rights-of-way may also be required to build any access roads, construction camps, and borrow areas that are located on BLM-administered land. BLM intends to use this EIS to fulfill its NEPA requirements in its consideration of any right-of-way application under 43 CFR Part 2800.

### **Federal Railroad Administration**

FRA administers rail line assistance programs and consolidates government support of rail transportation activities. FRA is administering grant funding to ARRC for preliminary engineering and environmental analysis for the proposed NRE. FRA develops and enforces rail line safety regulations and would enforce these regulations on ARRC's proposed rail line.

### **Federal Transit Administration**

FTA provides financial assistance to develop new public passenger or transit systems and improve, maintain, and operate existing services. ARRC intends to apply for FTA grant funds to purchase equipment for the passenger component of the proposed rail line. FTA ensures that public transit systems follow Federal mandates, statutory procedures, and administrative and safety requirements. FTA intends to use this EIS to fulfill its NEPA requirements associated with a potential decision to fund equipment purchases and maintenance of the rail line for passenger rail service.

### **U.S. Air Force, 354<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing Command, Eielson Air Force Base**

The proposed rail line would pass through Eielson AFB. The 354<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing is a cooperating agency in the preparation of this EIS to represent the interests of the U.S. Air Force and to provide its expertise on issues concerning the potential use of its property. If the Board were to grant authority for the Applicant to construct one of the Eielson alternative segments, the Applicant would need permission from Eielson AFB (see Section 2.2.2, Alternatives Eliminated by SEA from Detailed Study, for more detail). The 354<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing intends to use this EIS to fulfill its NEPA requirements associated with any decision to grant permission for the Applicant to construct one of the Eielson alternative segments.

### **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**

USACE, under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act of 1977 (91 Statute 1566; Public Law 95-576), has jurisdiction over activities that result in the discharge of dredge or fill material into waters of the United States, including lakes, rivers, streams, oxbows, ponds, and wetlands. Activities that affect these systems require a Section 404 permit from USACE. Construction of the proposed rail line extension would impact waters of the United States and; therefore, the Applicant would have to obtain a Section 404 permit prior to commencing project construction.

In addition, USACE is responsible for activities that may affect navigable waters of the United States, pursuant to Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 (33 U.S.C. 401 *et seq.*). Section 10 requires any entity proposing to perform work or place a structure in a navigable water to obtain a Section 10 permit from USACE prior to commencing the activity. Construction proposed rail line extension would involve crossing navigable waters of the United States; therefore, the Applicant would have to obtain a Section 10 permit prior to commencing project construction. USACE intends to use this EIS to fulfill its NEPA requirements associated

with permit evaluation under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act.

### **U.S. Coast Guard**

The USCG, under Section 9 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 (33 U.S.C. 401 *et seq.*), the General Bridge Act of 1946, as amended (60 Statute 847; 33 U.S.C. 525, *et seq.*), and the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 (80 Statutes 931–950; Public Law 89–670; 49 U.S.C. 1651–1659), has authority for approval of bridges over navigable waters of the United States. The USCG has a responsibility to assess the navigational and environmental impacts of the construction, maintenance, and operation of the proposed bridges associated with the NRE. This assessment will form a component of the USCG review of whether to issue bridge permits under Section 9 of the Rivers and Harbors Act. USCG intends to use this EIS to fulfill its NEPA requirements associated with any decision to grant bridge permits.

### **U.S. Department of Defense, Alaskan Command**

ALCOM is a sub-unified command of the U.S. Pacific Command and is made up of military forces from the U.S. Air Force, U.S. Army, and U.S. Navy. Among other missions, ALCOM is charged with conducting joint training for the rapid deployment of combat forces. ALCOM is a cooperating agency in the preparation of this EIS because of its interest and expertise in the large military training areas that would be affected by the project, including the Tanana Flats and Donnelly Training Areas. Specifically, the proposed rail line would pass through one or both of the training areas. Therefore, ARRC's proposed project has the potential to result in direct or indirect impacts on military training and other activities. Any alternative segment located on military training areas would also require ALCOM service component concurrence. ARRC has indicated that it would pursue the U.S. military as a customer of the proposed rail line, specifically for the potential movement of troops and equipment to and from the Tanana Flats and Donnelly training areas. In conjunction with the rail line, ARRC is also proposing to construct a dual-modal bridge over the Tanana River. This would provide the military road access in addition to rail access to the training areas. Road access over the dual-modal bridge would be coordinated by a Memorandum of Agreement between ARRC and ALCOM, with physical access facilitated by the Fort Wainwright Range Control office.

### **Alaska Department of Natural Resources**

For lands under state ownership, ADNDR would consult with ARRC and potentially affected parties to determine whether the location of the proposed rail line would minimize adverse effects on existing and potential rights-of-way and land uses associated with the location, construction, and operation of a gas pipeline in a manner that is in the best interest of the state, pursuant to Alaska Statute (AS) 42.40.460, Extension of the Alaska Railroad (2005). If it is determined that the location of the proposed rail line would be in the best interest of the state, ADNDR would cooperate with ARRC to identify, to the extent practicable, potential crossings for economic development and public access along the land reserved for the rail line. ADNDR intends to use this EIS to fulfill its statutory review requirements in its consideration of any rail line identified by ARRC on state-owned land.

Using information from the EIS and other sources, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Habitat (ADF&G) could determine whether and under what conditions to issue Fish Habitat Permits for work within ordinary high water of fishbearing waterbodies.<sup>4</sup>

### **Other State Agencies**

A number of other state agencies, including the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities and the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation would also have permitting authorities that affect the proposed action and would likely use information from this Draft EIS during their reviews.

### **1.3.3 Other Federal Agencies**

#### **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)**

USEPA has broad oversight and implementing responsibility for many Federal environmental laws, including the:

- Clean Air Act (CAA);
- Clean Water Act (CWA);
- Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA);
- Superfund Amendment and Reauthorization Act (SARA);
- Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA); and
- Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA).

USEPA also provides guidance on compliance with certain Executive Orders (EOs), including EO 12898 on Environmental Justice, EO 11990 on the Protection of Wetlands, and EO 11988 on Floodplain Management. Under Section 309 of the CAA (42 U.S.C. 7609), USEPA reviews and comments on the environmental impacts of major Federal actions for which an EIS is prepared under NEPA. The USEPA's Office of Federal Activities, which is responsible for reviewing EISs, evaluates and comments on the quality of analysis in the EIS and the extent of the proposal's impact on the environment. USEPA also announces the availability of any Draft EIS for public comment in the *Federal Register*. SEA will consider USEPA's evaluations and comments on this Draft EIS in the Final EIS.

#### **Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP)**

The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), administered by the ACHP, requires Federal agencies to consider the effects of their actions on historic and cultural resources. Under the NHPA, the STB consults with the appropriate State Historic Preservation Officer and the ACHP. For the proposed action and alternatives, the STB has consulted with the State Historic Preservation Officer at the Alaska Office of History and Archaeology, a part of ADNR. The ACHP is an independent Federal agency created under the authority of NHPA. It is responsible for advocating consideration of historic values in agency decisionmaking, issuing regulations to implement Section 106 of the NHPA, and reviewing Federal programs and policies to further historic preservation. SEA is providing the Draft EIS to ACHP and the Alaska Office of History and Archaeology for review.

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<sup>4</sup> Alaska Executive Order 114 transferred the duties, authorities, functions, and personnel of the ADNR Office of Habitat Management and Permitting to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Habitat (ADF&G), effective July 1, 2008. This organization, now part of ADF&G Division of Habitat, will continue to participate with ADNR as a cooperating agency.

ACHP is also responsible for ensuring that projects are in compliance with other requirements concerning historic and cultural resources. These include the Archaeological Resource Protection Act, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, American Indian Religious Freedom Act, and Executive Orders requiring consultation with Native American Tribes.

### **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)**

USFWS is the Federal agency with primary expertise in fish, wildlife, and natural resources issues. USFWS is responsible for implementation of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and, through its field offices, for consulting with other Federal agencies on potential impacts on threatened and endangered species.

Under Section 7 of the ESA, USFWS is responsible for the review of Federal agency actions and potential impacts on threatened and endangered species. The USFWS may issue a determination, in the form of a biological opinion, that details projected impacts on threatened and endangered species in the area of a proposed agency action. The STB is responsible for initiation of Section 7 consultation with the USFWS. SEA will provide the Draft EIS to the USFWS for review. There are no threatened or endangered species in the project area. However, migrating birds, waterfowl, and raptors use the Tanana River Valley. These species are managed by the USFWS under the purview of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.

### **National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)**

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act requires Federal agencies to consult with the NMFS on Federal actions that could adversely affect Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) (50 CFR 600.905-930). The Act requires coordination between the STB and the NMFS in achieving EFH protection, conservation, and enhancement. The NMFS has requested an assessment of the potential effect of the NRE on EFH in the area of the proposed action and alternatives. SEA has prepared a Finding and EFH Assessment (see Appendix G) relative to the proposed action and alternatives and determined that the chum salmon, coho salmon, and Chinook salmon fisheries are protected within the project area as EFH. SEA is providing the Draft EIS to NMFS for review.

## **1.4 Scoping and Public Involvement**

### **1.4.1 Scoping Notice and Public Meetings**

On November 1, 2005, SEA published the Notice of Intent to Prepare an EIS, Draft Scope of Study, Notice of Scoping Meetings, and Request for Comments in the *Federal Register* (70 FR 65976). SEA prepared and distributed a newsletter that introduced the NRE; announced SEA's intent to prepare an EIS; requested comments; and gave notice of three public scoping meetings to over 400 citizens, elected officials, Federal, State of Alaska, and local agencies, tribal organizations, and other potentially interested organizations. The distribution encompassed the communities surrounding the proposed action and alternatives and groups outside the project area that may have an interest in the project. SEA also posted meeting notices in public locations (e.g., post offices, grocery stores, and restaurants) in the project area and initiated a toll-free project hotline. SEA placed notices of the scoping meetings in several newspapers, including the *Fairbanks Daily News Miner* and the *Anchorage Daily News*.

Public scoping meetings were held in North Pole, Delta Junction, and Anchorage on December 6, 7, and 8, 2005, respectively. SEA used a workshop format to allow attendees to provide comments to and ask questions of SEA. Approximately 80 people attended the scoping meetings including citizens, representatives of organizations, elected officials, and officials from Federal, state, and local agencies. Some attendees submitted comment sheets during the meetings and SEA received additional scoping comment forms and letters by mail. The scoping comment period closed on January 13, 2006.

SEA also held agency scoping meetings in Fairbanks and Anchorage on December 6 and 9, 2005, respectively. Federal and state agency representatives, including cooperating agency representatives participated in these meetings.

SEA considered the agency and public input to the scoping process and on April 3, 2008, issued the final scope of study for the EIS (73 FR 18323). SEA placed the final scope of study on the STB web site, and mailed it to approximately 700 individuals, agencies, and other interested parties on SEA's project mailing list.

As part of the environmental review process to date, SEA has conducted broad public outreach activities to inform the public about the proposed action and to facilitate public participation. SEA consulted with and will continue to consult with Federal, state, and local agencies, tribal organizations, affected communities, and all interested parties to gather and disseminate information about the proposal.

#### **1.4.2 Tribal and Government-to-Government Consultation**

SEA consulted with federally recognized tribes and other tribal organizations throughout the preparation of the EIS. Prior to the issuance of the Notice of Intent to Prepare an EIS, SEA informed tribal organizations of the proposed NRE and requested comments on the project. SEA also prepared a Government-to-Government Consultation and Coordination Plan, which listed the federally recognized tribes, tribal groups, and Alaska Native Regional Corporations included in SEA's consultation efforts (see Table 1-2). The plan describes the objectives and approach to the consultation process and provided an opportunity for the recipients to indicate how they wanted to participate further in the government-to-government coordination for the proposed NRE.

After mailing the government-to-government plan and following up with phone calls, SEA received nine questionnaires from federally recognized tribes, tribal groups, and Alaska Native Regional Corporations. Of these nine questionnaires, three organizations had no interest in the project and indicated that further consultation would not be required. Six organizations requested to continue to receive project information by mail and to participate in the public involvement process. The Tanana Chiefs Conference requested a meeting with the STB.

The SEA met with the Tanana Chiefs Conference in November 2006 and continues to brief the Tanana Chiefs Conference on the results of cultural and archeological fieldwork and findings.

### **1.5 EIS Organization and Format**

This EIS is organized in a manner consistent with NEPA and CEQ regulations at 40 CFR 1502.10. It is intended to provide clear and concise information on the proposed action and alternatives to agency decisionmakers and the public. The EIS describes the proposed action and alternatives, existing environmental conditions, and potential environmental impacts associated

with the proposed action and alternatives. Chapters and specific topics within each chapter are outlined in the Table of Contents to aid the reader in locating areas of interest. Tables and figures are listed numerically by the chapter and section in which they appear. Appendices are denoted with alphabetic characters and are ordered alphabetically at the end of the Draft EIS.

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**Table 1-2  
Federally Recognized Tribes, Tribal Groups, and Alaska Native Regional  
Corporations Contacted for the NRE EIS Government-to-Government  
Consultation and Coordination Plan**

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Native Village of Cantwell  
Cheesh-Na Tribe (formally the Native Village of Chistochina)  
Circle Native Community  
Dot Lake Village Council  
Native Village of Eagle  
Healy Lake Village (Tribal Council)  
Manley Hot Springs Village  
Mentasta Traditional Council Office  
Native Village of Minto  
Nenana Native Association (Nenana Native Council)  
Northway Village (Tribal Council)  
Rampart Village  
Native Village of Stevens  
Native Village of Tanacross (Tanacross Village Council)  
Native Village of Tanana  
Native Village of Tetlin (Tetline Village Council)  
Alaska Federation of Natives  
Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments  
Tanana Chiefs Conference  
Tok Native Association  
Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council  
Ahtna, Inc.  
Doyon Limited

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## 1.6 Request for Comments on the Draft EIS

The public and any interested parties are encouraged to submit written comments on all aspects of this Draft EIS. SEA will consider all such comments in preparing the Final EIS, which will include responses to all substantive comments, SEA's final conclusions on potential impacts, and SEA's final recommendations. All comments on the Draft EIS must be submitted within the published comment period, which will close 45 days after the Notice of Availability of the Draft EIS is published in the *Federal Register*. When submitting comments on the Draft EIS, the STB encourages commenters to be as specific as possible and substantiate concerns and recommendations.

Please mail written comments on the Draft EIS to the address below.

David Navecky  
STB Finance Docket No. 34658  
Surface Transportation Board  
395 E Street, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20423-0001

Due to delays in the delivery of mail currently being experienced by Federal agencies in Washington, DC, SEA encourages that comments be submitted by email. Comments submitted by email will be given the same weight as mailed comments; therefore, persons submitting comments by email do not have to also send comments by mail. Environmental comments may be filed electronically on the Board's web site at [www.stb.dot.gov](http://www.stb.dot.gov) by clicking on the "E-FILING" link.

**Please refer to STB Finance Docket No. 34658 in all correspondence addressed to the Board, including e-filings.**

Further information about the project can be obtained by calling SEA's toll-free number at 1-800-359-5142 (telecommunications device [TDD] for the hearing impaired is 1-800-877-8339).

This Draft EIS is also available on the Board's web site at [www.stb.dot.gov](http://www.stb.dot.gov).

## **1.7 Public Meetings**

In addition to receiving written comments on the Draft EIS, SEA will host public meetings. SEA will involve the cooperating agencies in the planning and conduct of the public meetings.<sup>5</sup> At each meeting, SEA will give a brief presentation and interested parties may then make oral comments. SEA will have a transcriber present at each meeting to record the oral comments. Written comments may also be submitted at the meetings. Meeting locations, dates, and times are as follows:

- Pike's Waterfront Lodge, 1850 Hoselton Road, Fairbanks, Alaska, 5 to 8 PM, Monday, January 12, 2009
- City Council Chambers, 125 Snowman Lane, North Pole, Alaska, 5 to 8 PM, Tuesday, January 13, 2009
- Salcha Senior Center, 6062 Johnson Road, Salcha, Alaska, 5 to 8 PM, Wednesday, January 14, 2009
- Jarvis West Building, Milepost 1420.5 Alaska Highway, Delta Junction, Alaska, 5 to 8 PM, Thursday, January 15, 2009

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<sup>5</sup> ADNR will be present at STB's public meetings for the proposed NRE, to hear comments about the project, and in particular, how the proposed location of the project may affect public access to state lands along and adjacent to the proposed transportation corridor. ADNR will provide additional opportunities for potentially affected parties to comment on its process for meeting the obligations under AS 42.40.460. For additional information, please contact ADNR Division of Mining, Land and Water at 907-451-2740.