

**ALASKA COMMUNITY ACTION ON TOXICS (ACAT)
NATIVE VILLAGE OF EKLUTNA
ALASKA SURVIVAL
COOK INLETKEEPER
DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE
PRINCE WILLIAM SOUNDKEEPER
ALASKA CENTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT
RESURRECTION BAY CONSERVATION ALLIANCE**

NEWS RELEASE

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ALASKANS CHALLENGE ALASKA RAILROAD HERBICIDE SPRAYING PERMIT
Native Village of Eklutna, Conservation and Health Organizations File for an Adjudicatory Hearing

(Anchorage, AK) -- Alaskans are challenging a permit that would allow the Alaska Railroad to spray herbicides along large sections of track for the first time in 26 years. Opposing an April 30 decision by the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to allow the Alaska Railroad to spray toxic herbicides along the railbelt from Seward to Indian, public interest law firm Trustees for Alaska filed a request for an adjudicatory hearing on behalf of the Native Village of Eklutna, Alaska Community Action on Toxics and six other community groups.

The Alaskans appealing the decision look forward to a reversal of DEC's decision and request a stay to prohibit the Railroad from applying the herbicides until completion of the legal proceedings. Citizens, public officials, Borough governments and municipalities have consistently opposed the railroad's proposed use of herbicides. Documents and photographic evidence conclusively demonstrate the Alaska Railroad failed to consider effects on numerous water bodies within zones they plan to spray.

Marc Lamoreaux, Land and Environment Director with the Native Village of Eklutna states: "The people of Eklutna depend on the harvest of berries, medicinal plants, fish and wildlife for our spiritual, cultural and physical sustenance. The Native Village of Eklutna opposes the use of herbicides along the Alaska Railroad and calls upon the Alaska Railroad Corporation to adopt a policy of prohibiting the use of herbicides and for the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation to deny permit requests for the application of herbicides by the Alaska Railroad Corporation."

"When you have such serious health threats to water quality, fish, wildlife, and human health, it makes sense to rely on proven safe alternatives rather than the use of harmful herbicides," said Pamela Miller, Executive Director of Alaska Community Action on Toxics. "Furthermore, recent scientific research demonstrates that the herbicide and its associated solvents and surfactants can cause serious human health effects including increased risk of birth defects and certain cancers."

Trustees for Alaska attorney Austin Williams said, "The Alaska Railroad and Department of Environmental Conservation failed to consider the effects of toxic herbicides on the water quality and salmon habitat of numerous vulnerable streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands, and other water bodies. Moreover, the herbicides threaten groundwater that serves as sources of drinking water for people who live along the railway." Resurrection Bay Conservation Alliance's Russ Maddox said, "After walking along the tracks from Seward to Moose Pass, I was amazed to see how many ponds, lakes, streams, and wetlands are within 100 feet of the tracks in areas the railroad intends to spray. We are concerned that many people gather berries, mushrooms, fish, and hunt along the railroad and are unaware of the risks—unnecessary risks to our health."

"The main problem is the attitude of the railroad that sees herbicide spraying as an easy and cheap way to get rid of unwanted vegetation. It is time for the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation and the Alaska Railroad to respect the longstanding opposition that Alaska citizens have for the use of herbicides and codify the use of safe, effective alternatives," said Jim Sykes who accesses his land along the railroad north of Talkeetna.

Additional contact information, a copy of the Request for an Adjudicatory Hearing (21 pp), or copy of the scientific literature review by Dr. Warren Porter will be provided upon request.