



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 30, 2010**

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### **DEC Issues pesticide permit to Alaska Railroad Corp.**

The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) today issued a permit to the Alaska Railroad Corp. to apply an herbicide to sections of its track where the railroad is concerned vegetation growth may be a serious threat to operations or safety. The areas of application are in the South portion of the track system from Bird to Seward, the spur to Whittier, and the Seward rail yard. The railroad is restricted to using Aquamaster, with the active ingredient glyphosate, and a surfactant, Agri-Dex.

DEC evaluated the railroad's permit application along with comments submitted by the public during the comment period. It found the proposed application would not cause an unreasonable adverse effect.

"The products DEC is authorizing the railroad to use have been widely studied and extensively used around the country," according to DEC's Director of Environmental Health Kristin Ryan. "We have test results showing glyphosate does not persist in the same areas where it will be applied under this permit."

Glyphosate is the active ingredient in Roundup and other products commonly used by homeowners to control unwanted vegetation. The University of Alaska Fairbanks performed a study last year on railroad property that found glyphosate was not mobile, breaks down quickly in soil, and is generally undetectable within two weeks of its application.

Glyphosate works by inhibiting an enzyme that is essential for photosynthesis. The application rate approved in this permit has been determined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to be safe for mammals and birds. Most consumer products that control weeds, such as Roundup, include ingredients that help it adhere to the targeted vegetation. Aquamaster does not so it must be added. The railroad will mix the glyphosate with Agri-Dex, a paraffin-based oil that will help the herbicide stick to the plant increasing its effectiveness so less is needed.

The EPA has approved Aquamaster for water application, but the railroad is not authorized by DEC to apply it to water or within 100 feet of any water body. All known water bodies will be flagged in advance. In addition, during application of the herbicide, the railroad is required to have an observer looking for any additional water bodies not previously flagged.

DEC will conduct inspections to assure compliance with the permit. The permit is valid for two years.