


Northern Rail Extension 2011 Annual Report (STB Finance Docket No. 34658)

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1 attachment



2011 annual report.pdf

Dear Section 106 Consulting Party:

Attached is a copy of the 2011 Annual Report detailing the cultural resources work completed for the Northern Rail Extension Project this past year. Hard copies of the report are also being mailed to you.

The annual report discusses relevant tasks completed during the preceding year (2011); anticipated efforts in 2012 for historic property identification, evaluation, protection, or mitigation; the construction progress of the project and recommended amendments or changes that may be required for the project programmatic agreement (PA).

A conference will be held by staff of the Alaska Railroad Corporation in the latter part of July to discuss the cultural resources for the Northern Rail Extension Project. If you are unable to attend the conference in person, there will be a call-in number available for you to join the conference by phone. (I will be joining by phone).

I will be sending you another e-mail in the near future regarding proposed dates for the conference which will be held at the offices of HDR Alaska, Inc. in Anchorage, Alaska.

Please feel free to call me if you have any questions or concerns (202-245-0293). I will be acting as STB's point of contact for the cultural resources portion of the project.

Sincerely,

Catherine Glidden
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Northern Rail Extension Project

*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*

2011 Annual Report

Prepared for:
Alaska Railroad Corporation



HDR Alaska, Inc.
2525 C Street, Suite 305
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January 6, 2012

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 (2011); anticipated efforts in 2012 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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TRAINING

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACCP.....	Agency Consultation and Coordination Plan
ACHP.....	Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
ADNR.....	Alaska Department of Natural Resources
AHRS.....	Alaska Heritage Resources Database
ALCOM.....	U.S. Department of Defense, Alaskan Command
APE.....	Area of Potential Effect
ARRC.....	Alaska Railroad Corporation
BLM.....	Bureau of Land Management
CEMML.....	Center for Environmental Management of Military Lands
CFR.....	Code of Federal Regulations
CRSR.....	Cultural Resource Survey Report
EIS.....	Environmental Impact Statement
FRA.....	Federal Railroad Administration
GIS.....	Geographic Information System
GPS.....	Global Positional System
HDR.....	HDR Alaska, Inc.
ID Plan.....	Identification Plan
NEPA.....	National Environmental Policy Act
NHPA.....	National Historic Preservation Act
NLUR.....	Northern Land Use Research
NRE	Northern Rail Extension
NRHP.....	National Register of Historic Places
NTP.....	Notice to Proceed
OHA.....	Office of History and Archaeology
PA.....	Programmatic Agreement
PTC.....	Plan for Tribal Consultation
ROD.....	Record of Decision
SHPO.....	State Historic Preservation Officer
STB.....	Surface Transportation Board
USAG FWA.....	U.S. Army Garrison, Fort Wainwright, Alaska
USC.....	United States Code
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 (354th 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 (2011); anticipated efforts in 2012 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.

2011 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.

ARRC completed final design and permitting for Phase One of the project in July 2011. Construction contracts were signed in July 2011 and limited notice to proceed (NTP) and early work authorization for the NRE Project was issued on July 19, 2011. Full NTP for construction occurred on August 11, 2011 and a formal ground breaking ceremony was held in Salcha on September 28, 2011.

Construction activities in 2011 included:

- installation of ARRC and contractor project offices on-site, with plans to make operational Spring 2012
- land clearing on the East Bank of the Tanana River
- construction of access roads on the East Bank
- partial completion of the levee, approximately 2000 feet completed, with an additional 3000 feet partially completed
- coordination of bridge planning was well underway by the end of 2011 in preparation for bridge work to begin July 2012

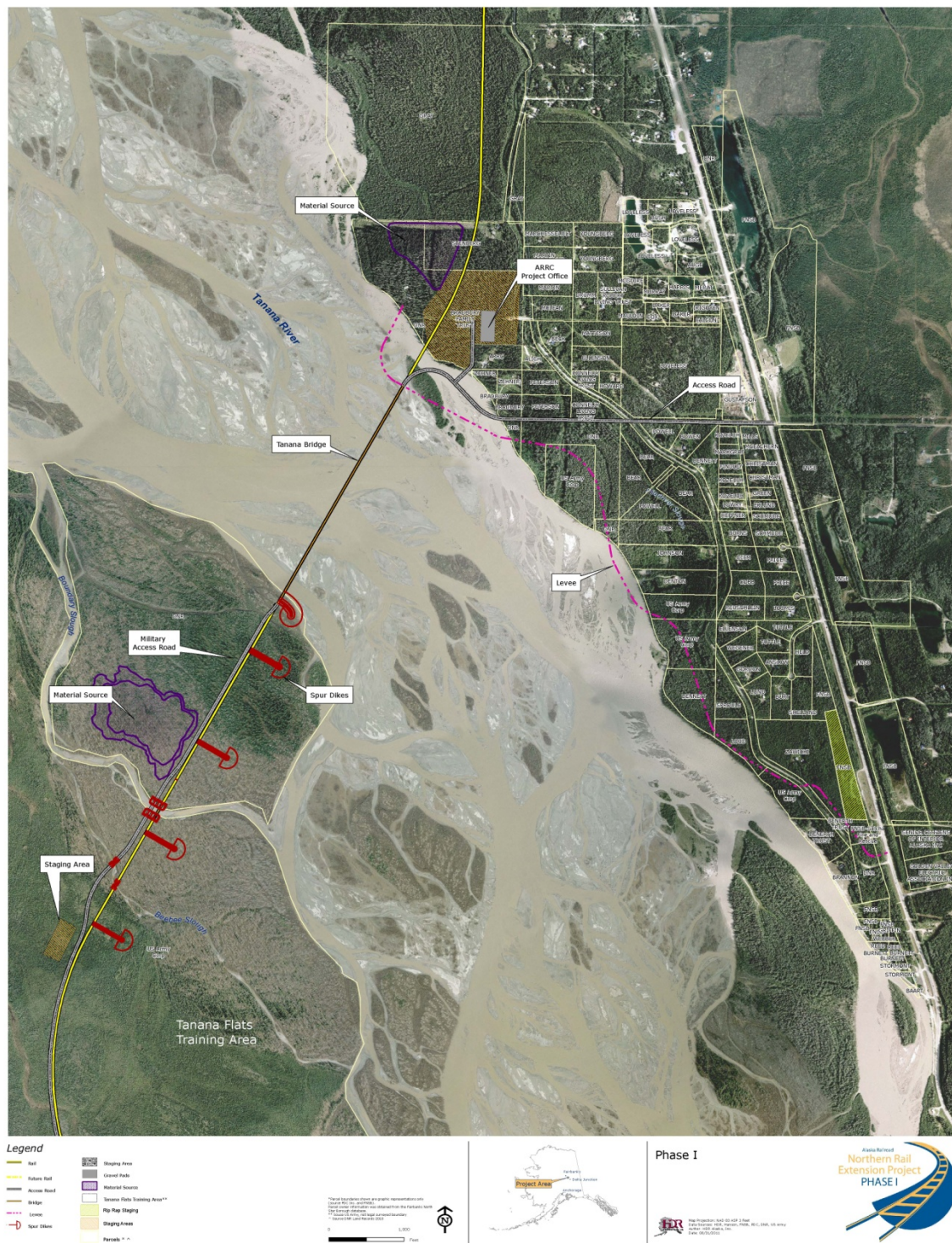


Figure 1. NRE Phase One Project Area

Historic Properties

Cultural Resources Survey Report

Based on adjustments made during final design, portions of the bridge and levee associated with Phase One were to be constructed outside the APE surveyed in 2006 and 2007. Consistent with the PA, ARRC consulted with STB (Lindamood [ARRC] to Rutson [STB], August 5, 2010) on proposed modifications to the APE and additional field survey work.

In October 2010, HDR Alaska, Inc. completed a literature review and archaeological field survey to determine if any additional cultural resources were located near or within the proposed Phase One modified APE. Field survey was designed to be compatible with previous investigations conducted in 2006-2007 for the NRE Project and followed the ID Plan in the PA. Field survey methods consisted of Type B Found Survey and Type A Helicopter-Supported Survey (ID Plan). Type B survey was employed in areas of high-moderate probability for containing cultural resources and consisted of pedestrian transects of the survey zone identified by ARRC, spaced 15 meters apart. Type A survey was utilized for areas with low probability to contain cultural resources and consisted of low-altitude, low-speed helicopter over-flights of the survey zone.

ARRC submitted a cultural resources survey report (CRSR) detailing the research and results of the Fall 2010 literature review and field survey to STB on May 25, 2011. No cultural resources were identified within the modified APE as a result of the literature review or field survey.

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.”

On behalf of ARRC, HDR prepared draft training curriculum. The curriculum was submitted on July 19, 2011 to: 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.; Dot Lake Native Corporation; Hungwitchin Corporation; Mendas Cha-ag Native Corporation; Northway Natives Incorporated; Tanacross Incorporated; Tetlin Native Corporation; STB; and SHPO. Comments were received from SHPO and STB, and incorporated into the final training curriculum.

The two and a half hour training was held at HDR's offices in Anchorage on August 17, 2011. The training was conducted on behalf of ARRC by HDR cultural resource specialists meeting the Secretary of Interior's Professional Qualifications as identified in the PA. Shina duVall, Review and Compliance Coordinator for the Alaska State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), also attended and presented during the training. 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 sixteen ARRC employees and contractors attended the training; a list of attendees is included in Appendix B.

Agency Consultation and Coordination Plan (ACCP)

To ensure consultation with the appropriate parties continued throughout the life of the NRE project, the PA stipulated finalization of an Agency Consultation and Coordination Plan (ACCP), as well as a Plan for Tribal Consultation (PTC), within one year of signing the ROD.

On behalf of ARRC, HDR prepared a draft ACCP which incorporated the PTC. Revisions to the ACCP clarify and elucidate PA consultation and reporting requirements and The ACCP elucidates PA consultation, reporting and review responsibilities for all PA signatories and concurring parties and identifies timelines and procedures for the varying levels of consultation. The ACCP also contains detailed contact information for all parties.

ARRC submitted the draft ACCP to STB on July 11, 2011. STB then coordinated reviews with SHPO and appropriate entities. Comments on the ACCP were provided to ARRC by SHPO and STB. Comments were resolved, and the ACCP was accepted by SHPO and STB as final on September 15, 2011. The ACCP was distributed on behalf of STB to all Section 106 consulting parties on October 28, 2011.

Inadvertent Discovery

On August 26, 2011, during staking of the centerline for an access road along the Tom Bear Trail, project engineers discovered the remains of a cabin, old vehicles, and a trash scatter. The cabin remains and associated features were located within five to 30 feet of the proposed road centerline and appeared to be historic in nature, warranting further evaluation. ARRC determined the remains constituted an inadvertent discovery, and, per the requirements of the PA, the inadvertent discovery procedures were put into effect immediately.

ARRC project manager Mark Peterburs notified all necessary parties identified in PA Attachment A.2, and it was determined in consultation with the SHPO and STB that the

discovery should be investigated by a professional archaeologist. Protection measures were put into place: a 20-meter buffer around the cabin remains and features was flagged and the contractor was officially notified that cultural resources had been identified and was directed to avoid the area until further notice.

On behalf of ARRC, HDR and Northern Land Use Research (NLUR) collaborated on investigation and evaluation of the find; NLUR conducted field survey while HDR staff conducted research to identify the historic context of the resource and evaluate the resource's significance and integrity for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The survey and research followed stipulations included in the PA (Stipulation IX. A and C, Attachment A.2 and Attachment D.)

NLUR conducted field investigation of the inadvertent discovery on September 1, 2011, completing a pedestrian survey of the area around the discovery and an intensive survey of the discovery site itself, including subsurface shovel testing. It was determined that the cabin site was likely at least 45 years of age, and the site was recorded with the Alaska Heritage Resources Survey (AHRS) as FAI-02118 (Tom Bear Trail Cabin). HDR conducted archival research for the discovery, contacted local property owners for any additional information, and evaluated FAI-02118 for eligibility for listing in the NRHP. HDR identified FAI-02118 as having historic significance for its association with homesteading in interior Alaska, but limited integrity to convey that significance. As a result of this evaluation, it was recommended that FAI-02118 is not eligible for listing in the NRHP.

ARRC submitted the site record and evaluation report and recommendations to STB on September 8, 2011. STB submitted a determination of eligibility based on ARRC's report to SHPO, and SHPO concurred with a finding of not eligible on September 16, 2011. Additionally, SHPO concurred with a finding that no historic properties would be affected by recommencement of construction activities in the vicinity of FAI-02118. Following receipt of concurrence, ARRC notified the contractor to resume construction in the area. The project did not experience any loss time or delay claims from the contractor relating to this situation.

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. In accordance with this stipulation, ARRC submitted the 2011 third quarter progress report to STB on October 28, 2011 and included the 2011 fourth quarter progress report as Appendix A in this report.

2012 PROJECT TASKS ANTICIPATED

Construction

Construction is expected to continue on Phase One through 2014. Planned activities for 2012 include:

- fully operational on-site ARRC and contractor project offices expected spring 2012
- bridge construction planning and coordination will continue through the first half of 2012 with causeway/temp bridge and permanent bridge beginning about mid-year
- continued levee construction, first half of 2012, from the Richardson Highway to the East Abutment of the Tanana River Bridge, nearly 10,000 feet in total, prior to beginning permanent bridge construction
- complete access Roadways and Rail approaches on the East Bank of the River
- complete Piledriver Slough Bridge on Tom Bear Trail, East Bank of the Tanana River

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 2012 and does not expect to complete CRSRs for additional phases in 2012.

In accordance with PA stipulation VIII, ARRC will continue to provide quarterly and annual reports to STB throughout 2012, and will conduct the annual cultural resources training for supervisory-level employees and contractors. ARRC expects to conduct the 2012 cultural resources training in February 2012, in coordination with pre-construction meetings and construction start-up scheduled for late-February 2012.

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 opportunity to assess the effectiveness of the PA. These included: design changes necessitating modifications to the APE and the identification of previously unsurveyed 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. Additionally, significant project modifications to the Phase One APE are not anticipated; thus, changes to the PA to accommodate such changes are not likely. Consequently, ARRC recommends no changes or amendments to the PA at this time.

APPENDIX A: PROGRESS REPORT, SEPTEMBER 2011 – DECEMBER 2011

MEMORANDUM

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

From: Mark Peterburs, Project Manager

Subject: Northern Rail Extension Project
Progress Report, September-December 2011

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 –September – December 2011

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

Historic Properties:

- Distributed finalized Agency Consultation and Coordination Plan (ACCP) to all PA parties
- Drafted Annual Report for ARRC to submit to STB by January 31, 2011.

Construction:

Continued construction on Phase I, Tanana River Bridge including:

- Materials laydown yard for bridge mostly completed
- Initial equipment maintenance area established
- Levee construction
- Borrow pit topsoil stripped
- Site office and staging area construction
- Bridge coordination meetings initiated for bridge planning in 2012

Milestones/Planned Activities – Next Reporting Period

- Coordinate with STB for Annual Meeting

- Update training curriculum as needed, coordinate and conduct 2012 contractor training in February
- Occupation of on-site office complex
- Bridge coordination meetings and other planning activities for bridge
- Jan 2012 ARRC Projects Open House in Fairbanks
- Spring 2012 NRE Public Meeting in Salcha

cc: Catherine Glidden, STB
Barbara Hotchkin, ARRC

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

**NRE Project Employee/Contractor Cultural Resources Training Attendees
8/17/2011**

Name	Employer	Email
Josh Gilbreath	Kiewit	josh.gilbreath@kiewit.com
Aaron Hunting	Kiewit	aaron.hunting@kiewit.com
Seth Anderson	Kiewit	seth.anderson@kiewit.com
John Brauchle	Kiewit	john.brauchle@kiewit.com
Mike Briggs	Kiewit	mike.briggs@kiewit.com
Greg Wells	Kiewit	greg.wells@kiewit.com
Tony Nelson	Kiewit	tony.nelson@kiewit.com
Rob Ramer	Kiewit	rob.ramer@kiewit.com
Gary Schubert	Kiewit	No email
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