

NORTH COAST RAILROAD AUTHORITY

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PRESS RELEASE – Ukiah – May 5, 2011

FRA LIFTS EO 21

North Coast Railroad Authority (NCRA) Chairman, Hal Wagenet, today announced that the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has given the green light to restart freight service on the historic Northwestern Pacific (NWP) rail line between Brazos Junction (Lombard) and Windsor.

In a published order signed by Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Administrator, Joseph C. Szabo, the FRA said it was partially lifting the Emergency Order (EO 21) that stopped all train service on the North Coast in 1998 following a series of El Nino storms. FRA's announcement permits freight service on a 62 mile stretch of railroad from Brazos Junction east to US 101, and extending north along US 101 through the cities of Novato, Petaluma, Cotati, Rohnert Park, Santa Rosa and Windsor.

“FRA's decision is great news. It makes it possible to restart train service from Napa to Windsor by mid-June” said Wagenet.

NCRA has invested over \$60 mil. since 2007 to repair 56 crossing signals, replace 50,000 crossties and 23,000 tons of ballast, shore-up levees in Schellville, repair 43 rail bridges, and 3 movable bridges that traverse the Napa and Petaluma rivers between Windsor and the train connection with the Union Pacific (Brazos Junction/Lombard) located south of Napa.

NCRA leases the track to a private short-haul rail operator, the NWP Co. According to NWP Co. president, John Williams, three round trip trains per week will haul feed grains, wood products, building materials, wine, and other general merchandise during the start-up phase between Napa and Windsor. He said he plans to continue repairing the line north to Willits as financing becomes available.

Wagenet said the NCRA is planning to certify a \$3 million Environmental Impact Report (EIR) in June that evaluates the impacts of train operations on the Russian River Division of the line between Brazos Junction and Willits. NCRA must also finalize agreements with SMART and the city of Novato prior to start-up of train operations.

“The impacts from the return of freight trains are overwhelmingly positive, said Wagenet.

“One freight car will remove 4 trucks from highway 101, and 1 gallon of diesel will move a ton of freight over 400 miles” he said.

“Freight trains boost the local economy, are good for the environment, and good energy policy,” said Wagenet.

In the published order dated May 4, FRA Administrator Szabo said the stretch of track from Brazos to Windsor “may open immediately to rail traffic.”

The North Coast Railroad Authority (NCRA) was formed in 1989 by the California Legislature under the North Coast Railroad Authority Act, Government Code Section 93000, et seq. The mission of the North Coast Railroad Authority is to provide a unified & revitalized rail infrastructure meeting the freight and passenger needs of the region; a first class service working in partnership with others to build and sustain the economy of the region.
