

## **NORTH COAST RAILROAD AUTHORITY**

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## **NWP RAIL REPAIRS SUBSTANTIALLY COMPLETE**

PRESS RELEASE – Ukiah – October 22, 2009

North Coast Railroad Authority (NCRA) Chairman, Allan Hemphill today announced that \$40 million in repairs to 62 miles of the Northwestern Pacific (NWP) railway between Napa County and Windsor have been completed.

He said Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) inspection of the repairs to trackway, crossing signals, and bridges between Windsor in Sonoma County and the national rail interchange (Lombard), located North of American Canyon in Napa County, will take up to 90 days.

Hemphill said the NCRA's contract rail operator, the Northwestern Pacific Company (NWP Co.), expects to be operational on this 62 mile stretch of the NWP line no later than March of next year.

“The return of freight service to the NWP line will take trucks off of 101, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and reduce transportation costs for North Bay businesses and agricultural interests,” said Hemphill.

He said one immediate beneficiary of freight train service will be Marin and Sonoma dairymen who are suffering from escalating costs of feed grains that must be trucked in from the Central Valley.

“The delivery of livestock feed by rail will substantially reduce transportation costs and provide an immediate life line for Marin and Sonoma County dairymen and ranchers,” said Hemphill.

Other commodities expected to be moved on the line in the first year of service include wood products, building materials, cases of wine, and other general merchandize. Hemphill said the NWP Co. estimates operations of 3 roundtrip trains per week in 2010, increasing to 3 roundtrips per day in 2011 and beyond.

Train service was stopped by the FRA in 1998 due to safety concerns. The California Transportation Commission (CTC) released about \$40 million in state funds to repair 62 miles of track from Lombard to Windsor in 2006. NCRA started work in 2007 to repair 55 crossing signals, replace 50,000 crossties and 23,000 tons of ballast, shore-up levees in Schellville, and repair 43 rail bridges between Windsor and the train connection with the Union Pacific (Lombard) located North of American Canyon. A lawsuit by the City of Novato objecting to the repairs delayed work for 14 months. The lawsuit was finally settled and work resumed in November 2008.

Hemphill said that the FRA will begin inspection of the track in November. He said that before freight operations can begin, the FRA must lift the emergency order that stopped train service in 1998. He said the NCRA must also certify a \$2.5 million Environmental Impact Report (EIR) originally issued last March. The draft EIR will be reissued in November, with the goal of final adoption in January or February 2010. The EIR, which is required under the California Environmental Quality Act, evaluates the impacts of train operations on the Russian River Division, defined as Lombard to Willits.

“Trains are good for the environment, good energy policy, and good for the local economy,” said Hemphill.

“Impacts from the return of train service are overwhelmingly positive. One rail car will remove 4 trucks from 101, and 1 gallon of diesel will move one ton of freight over 400 miles,” he said

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*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.*

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