



A newsletter for valued customers and friends of

ABERDEEN & ROCKFISH RAILROAD

Road of Personal Service

Fall 2009

8th Edition



Why rail?

Hauling freight by rail is cost efficient, environmentally friendly and good for the economy. Aberdeen & Rockfish Railroad Co. has been "green" since 1892. Call us today at 910-944-2341 to learn more about shipping with us and our interchange partners. We will meet your needs!!

Domtar Paper Company, a valuable customer



Domtar Paper Company LLC is a valuable Aberdeen & Rockfish Railroad Co. customer. A&R's Pee Dee River Railway has served the Bennettsville, S.C., paper mill since its inception.

Three hundred sixty-four days a year — excluding only Christmas Day — train crews bring in empty and loaded cars full of chemicals and recycled pulp, and they ship out paper, pulp and soap, a by-product.

Monthly, crews bring in and take out an average of more than 400 loaded cars between the paper mill and Domtar's Tatum Converting Center in Tatum, S.C. Trains are interchanged with CSXT in McColl, S.C., to be delivered throughout the country.

Barbara Leviner, traffic and scheduling manager, said Domtar depends on A&R for efficient, reliable service, which the company

continually delivers.

Each morning, Leviner and her colleague, Scott Herndon, e-mail or fax a switch list, which includes the car numbers they need. Crews pull the correct cars and bring them to the mill. The plant's productivity depends on their bringing in the correct cars with the chemicals needed that day.

"They're great," she said. "We've worked with the train crews for years and years. They get our cars in here when we need them. We depend on that daily switch. They do a good job for us."

Leviner appreciates the personal customer service she receives, from the train crews to Trainmaster Bob Hill and Agent Sara Hicks. She gives A&R her full recommendation to industries considering working with this top-notch short line railroad.

"We've been very pleased," she said. "I appreciate them."

Domtar's Bennettsville paper mill has about 325 employees. It produced its first paper in December 1990.

Bastarache loves her job

Confucius once said, "Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life."

Donna Bastarache, corporate secretary/treasurer, can relate. She found her dream job when she joined Aberdeen & Rockfish Railroad Co. seven years ago.

"This is the job I've always wanted with the railroad," she said. "I absolutely have loved working here."

Bastarache's railroad roots began in 1993 when she worked for the Columbus & Greenville Railway in Mississippi, which has since been sold to G&W Railroad. In 1999, she joined the New Brunswick Southern Railway.

She and her husband, Steve, a computer programmer, decided to look for jobs near her mother, who lived in the Southeastern U.S. She submitted her resume to Aberdeen & Rockfish Railroad Co., and former president Ed Lewis responded the next day.

Bastarache visited A&R in person, and both she and Lewis thought her credentials and experience would make her a perfect fit for the job. Everything happened so naturally, from selling her house in Canada quickly to Steve finding a job in the same area. The couple knew it was the right move.

"It was meant to be," she said. "Everything fell into place, just like clockwork."

Bastarache enjoys working for A&R, a company that values its employees and customers. She notes turnover is very low; the person she replaced worked for the company 38 years.

"The Blue family takes care of their employees," she said. "They go above and beyond."

Bastarache also prides herself on working for a company with a foundation rooted in excellent, personal customer service. The ultimate goal for her and all A&R employees is to keep their fine customers happy.

"Without the customers, there wouldn't be a railroad," she said. "Everyone here wants to do their very best at serving the customer to the best of their ability."

Be a part of promoting rail service expansion



GoRail, an education and advocacy association, is acutely focused on the expansion of rail service and related capacity.

The association promotes the public and environmental benefits of moving more freight by rail — greater fuel efficiency and less congestion, road construction and maintenance costs on

highways — compared to other modes of surface transportation.

Each and every individual will have a pronounced affect on future railroad policies.

GoRail welcomes the opportunity to join forces with retirees, railfans and present and past employees to help spread their message.

The association provides all those interested with a simple means to communicate with U.S. representatives and senators on critical policy issues and preserve balanced regulation by protecting the fundamental principles of the Staggers Rail Act of 1980.

GoRail, in conjunction with state and local government officials and community and business leaders, opposes policies harmful to freight railroads.

So, get involved and be active with GoRail. Sign up for free as a member at <http://www.gorail.org> or contact Laura McNichol, director, at 703-519-4740. GoRail also is available on Facebook and Twitter. Members can be engaged at whatever level they would like.

The association also provides railroad employees and retirees the latest railroad policy news updates, calls to actions, essay contest opportunities and letter-to-the-editor requests.

"We need and want you to be an even bigger part of our 25,000 membership," McNichol said.

RRB seminar gives tools to better help employees

Donna Bastarache, corporate secretary/treasurer, attended the Railroad Retirement Board's seventh National Rail Employer Training Seminar in Chicago.

The seminar was designed for employees who work in, or manage, areas of service, compensation and contributions reported to RRB and related areas.

Bastarache, who was the only representative from a short line railroad in the Southeast, enjoyed learning valuable information. Among topics she

particularly found useful were how to file employee health benefits and help them with retirement benefit questions online.

Before, she had to call the field office. Now, she can help employees calculate their retirement benefits based on certain scenarios. These online tools are part of RRB's efforts to go paperless.

"It was a very good seminar for me to attend to get more information so I can better help employees and retirees," Bastarache said.

A&R opens another door for Brooker

When one door closed, another opened for Mark Brooker, conductor/brakeman.

Brooker developed arthritis in his shoulders, hindering his ability to work on the ground. In order to keep a valuable employee, Aberdeen & Rockfish Railroad Co. will train him to become a locomotive engineer.

"If they didn't give me this opportunity, I'd be out of a job," he said. "I feel fortunate to be able to do something like this and continue working for the railroad."

Brooker joined A&R in January 1996. He appreciates the good pay and benefits the company has given him. He joins the ranks of the majority of employees who stay with A&R for the long haul.

"They're a good company to work for," he said. "They've always looked after us real well."

Brooker's prior experience operating heavy machinery, along with his experience as a conductor/brakeman, will help

him in his new role. He is excited to start a new career path and follow in the footsteps of his grandfather, who worked as an engineer in Pennsylvania.

"It's neat to think I'm doing something like my grandfather used to do," he said. "I look forward to it."

Brooker, who has had two surgeries on his right shoulder, will need to have both shoulders replaced. He plans on beginning locomotive engineer training in mid-October.

He is anxious to come back to A&R and provide excellent service to its customers. He will continue to work as safely and efficiently as possible to keep trains moving on the rails to their destinations. Whether switching cars or operating locomotives, he said A&R employees always strive toward this common goal.

When Brooker is not at work, he spends time with his wife, Gina, and daughter, Ashley. He hopes to get into wood-working as a hobby.

A&R industrial sites available

• Iron Horse Industrial Park

This site is now certified under the North Carolina Department of Commerce Site Certification Program.

Location: Aberdeen, N.C., at the intersection of NC 211 and SR 2077

Ownership: Aberdeen & Rockfish Railroad Co./Sandhills Area Land Trust

Site data: 153 acres, elevation 420 to 460 feet, not subject to flooding. Wooded (pine trees).

Cost: \$10,000 per acre; negotiable.

Industries on site: Eritech — manufacturer of lightening arresters and related products. Kolcraft — manufacturer of juvenile furniture.

Water supply: City of Aberdeen — 12-inch line

Electric power: Progress Energy

Natural gas: Piedmont Natural Gas — 4-inch line

Rail access: Served directly by Aberdeen & Rockfish Railroad with twice daily switching available. A&R connects with CSXT and Norfolk Southern. Competitive rates and routes are available.

Highway access: US 1 — two miles to the west; I-95 — 40 miles to the east.

• Hoke County Regional Industrial Park

This site is composed of Hoke County Regional Industrial Park sites 1 and 2, combined with additional property owned by the same owner. This site is now certified under the North Carolina Department of Commerce's Site Certification Program.

Location: Three miles southeast of Raeford and six miles southwest of Fayetteville, N.C., on Highway 20 in Hoke County.

Ownership: Z.V. Plate Corp. (optioned to Hoke County).

Site data: 1,366 acres, all owned by a single property owner; agricultural zoning; 225 to 230-foot range of elevation (MSL); not subject to flooding.

Boundaries: North: Property line; South: A&R Railroad and State Highway 20; East: A&R Railroad and Old Wire Road; West: Property line.

Water supply: Hoke County System — 8-inch or 12-inch line can be extended to the site at no cost.

Waste disposal: Hoke County System — nearest sewer line at Raeford city limits; line will be extended at no cost.

Electric power: Progress Energy and Lumbee River Coop.

Natural gas: Piedmont Natural Gas — 4-inch line just north of site.

Rail access: Served directly by Aberdeen & Rockfish Railroad with direct connections to CSXT and Norfolk Southern.

Other access: Highway access: I-95, 13 miles east via Highway 20; commercial air access: Fayetteville Airport, 20 miles northeast.

• Koppers Industries Inc.

Location: 1950 Koppers Blvd.

Ownership: Koppers Industries Inc.

Site data: 38 acres.

Cost: \$5,000 per acre; negotiable.

Rail access: Served directly by Aberdeen & Rockfish Railroad with twice daily switching available. A&R connects with CSXT and Norfolk Southern. Competitive rates and routes are available.

For additional information on these sites, please contact Garland Horton, president, or Paul Barnes, vice president marketing and sales, at 910-944-2341. You can also visit our Web site at <http://www.aberdeen-rockfish.com> to see maps, photos and proposed layouts.

ASLRRRA Southern region meeting in November

Mark your calendars for the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association's Southern region meeting.

The event is scheduled for Nov. 8-10 at the Bay Point Marriott Golf Resort & Spa, 4200 Marriott Drive in Panama City Beach, Fla. The phone number is 850-236-6000 or 800-644-2650 for reservations.

Note: Hotel arrangements are being finalized. For additional information, contact Kathy Cassidy at kcassidy@aslrra.org.

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A&R keeps it personal

Business is not just about numbers. It is about people who drive those numbers.

Aberdeen & Rockfish Railroad Co. values its employees and customers. It is a tradition that began when the company was founded by the late John Blue in 1892, and it continues with the Blue family today.

Michael Huggins has seen how this personal approach to business has benefitted the company and the communities in which A&R serves.

Huggins joined A&R as financial vice president in 1976, and promoted to executive vice president during his tenure. When he resigned in 1989 to open an accounting firm, he continued to do business with A&R.

Today, A&R is one of his most valued clients. He assists in a myriad of financial matters, including producing monthly financial statements, consulting the company on annual audits, and preparing tax returns.

Much has changed in three decades. During Huggins' earlier years with the company, A&R accumulated two branches of railroads — Pee Dee River Railway Corp., a 15-mile line between McColl and Marlboro, and the 5.6-mile long Dunn-Erwin Railroad. This brought about a new paper mill company, a \$400 million project at the time, as well as other industries.

"Revenues and capital expansion grew probably better than three-fold," he said.

Huggins admires A&R for giving back to the employees who have made it successful. From the medical benefits to retirement programs to year-end bonuses if the company is profitable, they take care of their own. Because of this, the company has had a very small turnover rate.

In addition, the board of directors takes the time to place key people in the right jobs, and A&R gives employees the opportunity to climb the ranks. Because of its prudent business practices, there have been no employee layoffs, despite a down economy.

"They are adjusting schedules to keep people working," Huggins said. "They make sure the operation is efficient and not bogged with costs they don't need."

Huggins said A&R has continually stayed in touch with their clientele, industry trends and financial markets, which will assure its continued success.

"They know the types of industries that will benefit the railroad and the community," he said. "A&R really keeps an ear to the track, so to speak, looking for opportunities for new manufacturing, new companies, new technologies that can create jobs once this economy starts to turn around. They want to be right there, and be a part of it."