FREIGHT RAIL PROJECT
North Coast Railroad Authority
Northern California

Freight train service will resume along 62-miles of the Northwestern Pacific (NWP) railway between Napa County and Windsor following a $60 million effort to repair the closed rail line. The revived freight service will reduce transportation costs for North Bay businesses and agricultural interests and lower diesel and greenhouse gas emissions along Highway 101.

THE CHALLENGE
In 1998, the North Coast Railroad Authority (NCRA) was charged with repairing and reopening The Southwest Pacific line, the first and only railroad in history shut down with an emergency order by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). An Environmental Consent Decree (ECD) mandated the agency investigate and remediate releases, bring the rail line into regulatory compliance, and develop plans and operating procedures to resume operations. Because the line was no longer operational, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) required an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to evaluate and mitigate potential impacts of the new project.

KLEINFELDER’S SOLUTION
To comply with the ECD, Kleinfelder completed a comprehensive regulatory review and environmental assessment of the entire rail line and developed a 5-year plan to investigate, remediate, and develop operation and management procedures to address hazardous substances along the railway. Hazardous waste compliance was achieved by successfully inventorying and removing more than 1,000 hazardous and petroleum waste containers from 12 former maintenance sites. Kleinfelder satisfied the NCRA Board, state agencies, and CEQA requirements by considering repair and resumption of operation as two independent entities, allowing repairs to occur while simultaneously analyzing the impacts in a full EIR. Also, since the southern segment of the line could be economically feasible on its own, Kleinfelder convinced the lead agency to defer impact analysis of the northern segment, taking years off EIR process.

CLIENT BENEFIT
Through successful interaction with regulatory agencies, the public, and the railroad operator, Kleinfelder helped its client satisfy compliance requirements and complete needed repairs to the NWP railway. By mobilizing personnel from over 19 offices, Kleinfelder met the project’s technical and regulatory challenges, resulting in the reopening of the southern 62 miles of track, compliance with the ECD, and lifting of the FRA emergency order.

“Kleinfelder took time to understand the mission of the NCRA- to restore commercial freight, passenger and excursion rail service. Its team became trusted advisors.”

Doug Christy, NCRA Executive Director

Kleinfelder is an employee-owned engineering, science, and architecture consulting firm providing solutions to meet our world’s complex infrastructure and natural resource challenges. Working as a team, our bright people will deliver the right solutions.