

**KFR CLOSURE?**  
**Boundary battling for rail line**  
**WEEKENDER STAFF**

March 27, 2009

Weekender  
188 North 1st Avenue  
Williams Lake, BC V2G 1Y8  
250-392-2331

Boundary business leaders and politicians are trying to keep one of the region's vital transportation links from running off the rails. After meeting earlier this year, stakeholders and local government officials are tackling the proposed derailment of the Kettle Falls International Railway (KFR), set to close in October.

One of the 250-kilometer long railway network's two lines runs from Kettle Falls, Washington to Grand Forks, before crossing the border again to reach San Foil, Washington. The KFR also operates a line from the Burlington Northern Santa Fe interchange at Chewelah, Washington to Columbia Gardens, east of Trail. The KFR services a number of major industrial players in the lumber and smelting sectors. Boundary businesses impacted by the pending closing of the rail line, including Pacific Abrasives, Interfor, and International Reload, have met with the Regional District of Kootenay Boundary, the City of Greenwood, and the City of Grand Forks to set a game plan for the next few months

Grace McGregor, regional director for Area C, says that the local government representatives want to be actively involved with the process to protect the railway. "This doesn't just affect Grand Forks," said McGregor, "this affects the whole Boundary. Every little piece of cake that's missing from the table matters. So it was good to see us all there working together to address this."

The KFR is owned by Denver, CO.-based transport giant OmniTrax, which operates 20 rail lines and ports, mostly in the U.S. The Boundary group discussed the direct impact of the closure on current business activities, the impact on the potential for economic development, and other pending problems should the rail line shut down. There was also a discussion on the possibility of doing a study to clearly identify what the impact of the closure will have on the community.

Craig Dohm of International Forest Products Ltd. (Interfor) is the lead for the industry group. "(The situation) involves two different railroads - Kettle Falls and Burlington Northern," says Dohm. "We are just trying to map out our next steps and have yet to finalize that."

The industry group says while the direct impact for the industries involved is hard to gauge, it's clear that without the railway there will be significant problems.