

Colombia's Pacific railroad returns

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Photo by Johan Beneke, Railroad Development Corp.

BUENAVENTURA, Colombia – Ferrocarril del Pacifico SAS, Colombia's Pacific railroad, is getting a new lease on life. Investors, including Pittsburgh-based **Railroad Development Corp.**, have put \$16 million into restarting operation on the isolated 96-mile coastal railroad between Buenaventura and Yumbo. Operations were suspended in November 2011.

The freight-only railroad currently has approximately 120 employees and eight operating locomotives. FP hopes to restore additional locomotives and rolling stock to operating condition soon to support any additional traffic opportunities that may arise. The railroad currently moves imports of cement, steel, and grain, and sugar exports.

In August, its first month of operation, FP expects to move 5,000 tons of cargo, and by December hopes to move 25,000 tons monthly. The railroad hopes to move more than 1 million tons a year within two years.

The railroad hopes to someday extend operations 185 miles further inland to La Felisa. Long-term plans include conversion from the Colombian standard 3-foot gauge to North American standard gauge and create a connection the Atlantic railroad network at Medellin.

In the last decade the railroad has had a number of alternating periods of operation and shutdown. The railroad was originally operated by the state and in 1999 private operator Tren de Occidente was formed and subsequently became insolvent. A second private sector operator, Ferrocarril del Oeste, was formed in 2008. The current operator was formed as part of the restructuring of that operation.