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Akiachak  
Akiak  
Alakanuk  
Andreafsky  
Aniak  
Atnautluak  
Bethel  
Bill Moore's Sl.  
Cheformak  
Chevak  
Chuathbaluk  
Chuloonawick  
Crooked Creek  
Eek  
Emmonak  
Georgetown  
Goodnews Bay  
Hamilton  
Hooper Bay  
Lower Kalskag  
Upper Kalskag  
Kasigluk  
Kipnuk  
Kongiganak  
Kotlik  
Kwethluk  
Kwigillingok  
Lime Village  
Marshall  
Mekoryuk  
Mtn. Village  
Napaimiut  
Napakiak  
Napaskiak  
Newtok  
Nightmute  
Numakutyaq  
Nunam Iqua  
Nunapitchuk  
Ohogarmiut  
Oscarville  
Paimiut  
Pilot Station  
Pitka's Point  
Platinum  
Quinhagak  
Red Devil  
Russian Mission  
Scammon Bay  
Sleetmute  
St. Mary's  
Stony River  
Tuluksak  
Tuntutuliak  
Tununak  
Umkumiut

RECEIVED

JAN 14 2013

January 14, 2012

Don Kuhle  
Regulatory Division  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
P.O. Box 6898  
Joint Base Elmendorf/Richardson, AK 99506-0898

RE: DONLIN GOLD PROJECT EIS, BETHEL SCOPING MEETING

USACE and Cooperating Agencies:

AVCP is the non-profit, regional consortium of fifty-six Tribal governments throughout the Yukon-Kuskowkim Delta region of southwestern Alaska. Our geographic region coincides with that of Calista Corporation, the ANCSA for-profit regional corporation that is directly involved in the proposed Donlin Creek Mine project. Both AVCP and Calista Corporation serve the same communities in the region and want to ensure the well-being of our Native people and subsistence way of life. To this end, AVCP must balance the often conflicting priorities of protecting the subsistence way of life, encouraging economic development, promoting community infrastructure and diversification, and also being vigilant environmental stewards.

Though AVCP must be responsive to our member Tribes, we cannot speak for each independent Tribal government. Each community has its own unique concerns and strong opinions about the proposed Donlin Creek Mine and extractive industries in general. The USACE needs to initiate and facilitate direct consultation with each individual Tribal government throughout the scoping process and development of the Draft EIS.

The proposed Donlin Creek Mine, if approved, will be arguably the largest industrial project ever undertaken in the Y-K Delta region. The mine and all of its facilities will cover an area of approximately 25.5 square miles and the waste rock facility alone will be 3.6 square miles! It is nearly impossible for the average person not directly involved in large-scale extractive industries to envision the scope of the proposed project. Therefore, it is unrealistic to expect the average person to have an informed opinion about the potential environmental impacts of the project over many decades. Most of us will rely on the lead and cooperating federal and state agencies developing the EIS to conduct sufficient analysis and oversight insuring that the mine, if permitted to operate, will not endanger the natural and human environment. With this in mind, AVCP would like to outline several general concerns that should receive additional, independent analysis:

1. Acid Rock Drainage (ARD)

- a. Need for more research on hazardous waste rock material. This should include characteristic, amounts, potential amounts of releases.

Acid Rock Drainage is a significant issue with mining. From reviewing available background analysis (*Integrated Waste Management Waste Rock Management Plan, Plan of Operations Volume III B Donlin Gold Project June 2012*) it is not possible to determine what types of acid rock drainage could occur from this mining effort. This document states that there were 700 widely spaced core samples selected from 162 drill holes. There is no discussion to determine that the samples were randomly drawn or how these 700 core samples were selected. Nor were there any discussions of the weight or length of the core samples. There is no discussion of where these 162 drill holes were located in relationship to the mining project or whether any part of the 700 core samples used came from all the drill holes or from a random sample of drill holes. It is difficult to accept this as a representative sample of the existing materials that will end up in the waste rock facility.

The report goes on to further analyze the potential of acid rock drainage. It takes 2640 pounds of drill core samples and places them in 4 barrels to determine acid drainage. It also takes 1200 pounds of drill core, mills it and creates a barrel test of 200, 400, and 600 pounds. This is determined to be a sample of the waste rock. This represents some 4000 pounds of waste rock to evaluate a total of 3.5 billion tons of waste rock (calculated from the projected proportion of waste rock for each ton of milled ore per day over the life of the mine). It would be like selecting 4 people and suggesting they represent all the people on the planet. The potential danger of ARD is easily highlighted. For instance, arsenic concentrations in some of the deposits approach 1 mg/kg. If, as the EPA standard suggests, 5 parts per billion is the maximum acceptable amount, these deposits could pose a significant threat.

- b. The effort to identify hazards to the environment should match the efforts to identify gold deposits.

We suspect that 162 cores (the sample universe for characterizing waste rock) is a small proportion of the total number of cores drilled at Donlin Creek to characterize ore bodies that would be travelling to the mill. The same effort and analysis should be undertaken to characterize hazardous materials as is undertaken to characterize profitable materials. A contractor hired and paid for by Donlin Gold is not the same as an independent review and analysis. Independent characterization of the chemistry of potential waste rock is necessary.

## 2. Groundwater Consumption, Water Draw Downs and Effects on Rivers and Streams.

- a. Amount of ground water required.

The mine will need a tremendous amount of water; in fact, available water is a limiting factor of production. The necessary water will be pumped from the existing aquifer.

- b. Effects on the hydrology in the region.

We are concerned that pumping substantial groundwater will adversely affect the surface water and will alter the hydrology substantially enough to destroy the rivers and streams within the local watershed.

## 3. Barge Traffic, Erosion and Spills.

- a. Amount of barge traffic and potential spills

Though there is now a proposed natural gas pipeline to provide power to the mine, this has not substantially reduced the proposed barge traffic on the Kuskokwim River. The threat of fuel spills clearly increases with the substantial increase in traffic and quantity of fuel moving up the river. Additionally, it is hard to imagine increased traffic not adversely affecting subsistence fishing and the quality of life along the Kuskokwim.

- b. Shoreline erosion from wave action and impacts on villages.

Sustained barge speeds, water volumes and wakes need to be modeled accurately to assure that shoreline erosion will not be more severe. This is particularly important with the natural increase of shoreline erosion due to global warming and the loss of permafrost.

#### 4. Air Pollution

- a. Air permit dealing with both releases and emission

There should be separate analyses of releases and emissions.

- b. Downwind exposure.

A complete analysis should be done to model the amounts of emissions that would be released and potential plumes created down gradient of the emission site. This should be incorporated into the permit.

#### 5. Cyanide Exposure, Spills and Contamination

- a. Amounts to be used, spills and containment.

There should be acknowledgement of any federal, state or tribal ordinances related to cyanide, beyond the recognition and assurance that the mine will follow the international standards set for cyanide and gold mining.

#### 6. Future Liable Parties for the Mine

- a. In a hundred years is the land owner the responsible party?

We are concerned that bonds alone are not sufficient protection for disasters in the future. Responsible parties should be clearly outlined to avoid the public absorbing the burden in years to come.

- b. Should the mining company dissolve who is the responsible party?

In the United States, the landowner is usually responsible for what they allow to happen on their property. In the case of Donlin Creek, Calista Corporation and The Kuskokwim Corporation are the owners of the surface and the subsurface estate. Would they also be left holding the liability? The EIS should provide a legal review of liable parties should environmental problems develop either during the operation of the mine or after the mine is closed. This is especially important to us, since the landowners are ANCSA corporations and the stockholders are our Native people.

Sincerely,

Myron P. Naneng, Sr., President



Steven R. Street, Director

Department of Cultural and Environmental Sciences