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Names

First Name: Philip and Dora
Title:
Address:
City: Nikolai
Zip:
Email: runkleinak@hotmail.com
Entity Type:

Last Name: Esai
Organization:
State: AK
Country:
Mailing List: False

Submission Information:

Submission ID: 108
Date Submitted: 3/28/2013
Submission Format: Email
File name:

Date Received: 3/28/2013
Venue:

Submission Text:

Comments:

[submitted to Corps via John Runkle]

Dear Mr. Kuhle,
I am submitting this comment on behalf of my father in law and mother in law , Philip and Dora Esai. They are respected elders of the village of Nikolai. They are unable to read or write sufficiently to submit a comment for themselves. They have asked me to assist them.

Their ages are 74 and 79 respectively. Both have lived their entire lives in and around Nikolai and the Alaska Range, specifically along the Khuchaynik Creek. Philip began hunting there with his uncle and grandfather at age 12. Dora has spent the last 47 years accompanying her husband Philip as he guides hunters commercially. Philip Esai is the first licensed Native Alaskan Registered Guide in the state of Alaska. His license number is 108. They both are gatherers of traditional medicine plants used by the Athabaskan people, several indigenous species of berries and the harvesting of caribou, moose, black and grizzly bear as well as dall sheep every year along the Khuchaynik Creek area of the Alaska Range. This is their way of life. They have an established camp and Philip holds a BLM lease issued in to him and his son in law John Runkle in 1987 for a commercial guide site. Philip also holds a Special Recreational Land Use Permit issued by the BLM in this same area.

They have a long established history of commercial, customary and subsistence use at the Khuchaynik Creek camp site. There are currently 8 buildings at the site.

The proposed Donlin Creek Mine gas pipeline would, if constructed as proposed, pass within 2 miles of their camp. It would involve the development of a large gravel pit next to a bluff where they traditionally sit and spot for game. the route is proposed to be 200 feet wide with a 50 foot wide graveled right of way that would be maintained for the 27-1/2 or more years of the mine life. Never before in the past history of mankind has any such undertaking been developed in this region. The Athabaskan people have inhabited this area for hundreds, even thousands of years. The Alaska Range is an unspoiled marvel of beautiful mountains and valleys and tundra flats where many species of game thrive together. There are very few locations in Alaska where can one find moose, caribou, black bear, grizzly bear, dall sheep, wolf, wolverine and many, many more smaller species of animals and birds co-existing. Philip and Dora both are strongly opposed to any development of a pipeline of any kind, period!! They ask what is there to be gained by such an intrusion upon this untouched land to justify the destructive potentials involved with a project of this type and magnitude? They say some big companies will make all the money taking the gold and there will be no benefit to their people at all. They are concerned about the future of the Alaska Range and the valley for their children, grand children and great grand children and future generations. Philip and Dora are especially upset that the Donlin Creek Mine did not have the respect or consideration to formally contact them regarding the direct and very real impact upon their commercial guiding camp and their customary subsistence way of life resulting from the construction of the pipeline. It is hard for them to believe that Donlin Creek Mine authorities were not aware of Philip and Dora's long established camp on the Khuchaynik Creek. It's been there for almost 50 years. When meetings hosted by Donlin Creek were held at Nikolai, Philip and Dora do not recall anyone telling the people that a "road" would be constructed to lay a pipeline. Or that huge gravel sites would be developed in the immediate area. Or that every creek they hunt along running down in between the Windy Fork and the Big River would have a gravel pit. No one said there would be pipe storage sites every 5 miles. Large 300 person man camps or huge runways constructed along the route. Especially located just 2 miles from the camp they have spent the last 47 years at each year. Philip and Dora are very concerned about the resulting impact both environmentally, commercially, and culturally for them and all the others that make their living and subsistence along the proposed route. They don't think it is okay to destroy a way of life here just to take gold out from somewhere else not near here for such a relatively short time period. Philip and Dora both think there will be a lot of people coming along the route after it is built and they do not want that to happen. They and others here have nothing to gain and much to lose. I have as best and closely as possible conveyed into words their heartfelt opinions here. But it runs much deeper than just these 2 Athabaskan elders. There seems to be a lack of information freely given about the development process. Unless a person reads a lot of material it is hard to find out and know about these issues. There are a lot of huge impacts associated with the construction of the pipeline.

This comment has been submitted for Philip and Dora Esai of Nikolai Alaska.

Comment # 1 Comment ID: 332

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Category: TWL -- Traditional Culture and Way of Life:

☒ Substantive ☐ Non-Substantive

Comment # 2 Comment ID: 333

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Category: PUB -- Public Involvement and Scoping:

☒ Substantive ☐ Non-Substantive

Comment # 3 Comment ID: 334

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Category: PUB -- Public Involvement and Scoping:

☒ Substantive ☐ Non-Substantive

Comment # 4 Comment ID: 335

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Category: TWL -- Traditional Culture and Way of Life:

☒ Substantive ☐ Non-Substantive

Comment # 5 Comment ID: 336

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Category: TRAN -- Transportation:

☒ Substantive ☐ Non-Substantive

Comment # 6 Comment ID: 337

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There seems to be a lack of information freely given about the development process. Unless a person reads a lot of material it is hard to find out and know about these issues.

Category: PUB -- Public Involvement and Scoping:

☒ Substantive ☐ Non-Substantive

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