

Donlin Gold Project EIS

Informal meeting with Kuskokwim River Watershed Council Representatives
Bethel, BNC Conference Room
Tuesday, January 29, 2013

Attendance:

For Kuskokwim River Watershed Council (KWRC):

John Oscar	Martin Leonard
Pat Samson	

For the EIS Team:

Don Kuhle, Corps	Sarah Yoder, ADHSS
Jenny Blanchard, BLM	Taylor Brelsford, Moxie Alexie, URS
Tami Fordham, EPA	

This was an informal meeting, called while the scoping meeting team was weathered in.

Issues Raised:

This is a brief summary of issues and comments. A complete Scoping Report with meeting transcripts and detailed analysis of all comments will be issued in May 2013.

- We are concerned that Donlin has very little or inadequate data on water and air quality. A synoptic study is needed similar to the Yukon River.
- We are concerned about response time for accidents that barges may have. Village response capacities must be addressed. The KRWC held oil spill response training in Kalskag.
- There are a lot of concerns in the villages about the increased barge travel on the Kuskokwim River. Subsistence fishing in the summer will be disrupted.
- Don Kuhle noted that the KRWC can make people aware of your expertise and services but as a cooperating agency you have to be neutral.
- John Oscar commented that the KRWC has a broad outreach program, including social media. However, we [KRWC] have to be very careful since we are a cooperating agency. John noted it can be difficult to approach the villages and not be in favor or against the Donlin Gold Project.
- The KRWC is also working closely with the Upper Kuskokwim River communities in the vicinity of McGrath.
- What happens at the mine could affect all the way up and down the Kuskokwim River.
- KRWC is a cooperating agency, and as such have a huge role in helping prepare the EIS, which must use both local knowledge and western science. Outreach efforts by the cooperating agencies are important too.

- The KRWC mentioned that communication can be a problem, especially in translating the EIS process into Yup'ik. It is not just vocabulary, as things like the “grace period” between question and answer are very important in the cultural pattern. People seek to “use the least number of words with the most impact.” It would be good if Donlin would work with other organizations in the region, and with the Alaska Native Language Center to develop the specialized mining vocabulary. The KRWC offered to follow up with Donlin gold on this offer to help with vocabulary development.
- Since the Yupik language has many dialects, it can't be just one person translating.
- KRWC asked: What messages are we giving people in the region about how to comment or to have input to the EIS process? The EIS process should provide summary points to the Tribal Village Administrators on the EIS process.
- Radio would be the best way to communicate with the public on the Donlin Gold Project. KRWC recommended a radio show that lasts at least 2 hours; 1 hour in English and 1 hour in Yupik.
- KRWC and the agency representatives provided an overview of their experience and roles in the EIS project.
- What would it take to insure that any benefits of the project, such as income and employment, remained in the region, rather than seeing the village residents working folks move to Anchorage? Is it land available for houses in the villages? Adequate services like water and sewer?
- Families in the region are suffering from economic hardship now, and some families relocate hoping to lower their cost of living. It is very expensive to live in the smaller communities.
- In closing comments, the KRWC emphasized the importance of planning ahead for training so that local residents have an opportunity to work on the project. The training should include the blue collar trades, but also the white collar professions in science and engineering.