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DONLIN GOLD PROJECT  
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT  
810(a) PUBLIC HEARING

CROOKED CREEK, ALASKA

Taken January 21, 2016  
Commencing at 8:20 p.m.

Volume I - Pages 1 - 30, inclusive

Taken at  
Crooked Creek Tribal Council Office  
Crooked Creek, Alaska

Reported by:  
Mary A. Vavrik, RMR

Page 2

1                                   A-P-P-E-A-R-A-N-C-E-S  
 2 For U.S. Bureau of Land Management:  
 3       Alan Bittner  
 4       Anchorage Field Office Manager  
 5       Bruce Seppi  
 6       Wildlife Biologist  
 7 Taken by:  
 8       Mary A. Vavrik, RMR  
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 18  
 19 BE IT KNOWN that the aforementioned proceedings were taken  
 20 at the time and place duly noted on the title page, before  
 21 Mary A. Vavrik, Registered Merit Reporter and Notary  
 22 Public within and for the State of Alaska.  
 23  
 24  
 25

Page 4

1 Bruce's analysis, his initial analysis and preliminary  
 2 findings on subsistence, and then to provide comment. And  
 3 we'd really like to hear from you on how you may think  
 4 this project beneficially affects subsistence or  
 5 negatively affects subsistence.  
 6     When providing comment, please come up to the -- we  
 7 will pass the mike around just like before. And state  
 8 your name and spell it for the record, and then we will  
 9 collect those comments on the record.  
 10    So with that, I'll turn it over to Bruce and his  
 11 analysis.  
 12                   **MR. BRUCE SEPPI:** Hi, everyone. As Alan  
 13 mentioned, I'm Bruce Seppi. I don't think I'm going to  
 14 use the microphone. If you can't hear me, just let me  
 15 know.  
 16    As Alan mentioned, I have been tasked with the job of  
 17 completing an analysis of subsistence impacts for the  
 18 proposed Donlin Gold mine as it's proposed in that draft  
 19 EIS. And through that process, I determined if a  
 20 significant restriction in subsistence uses and needs  
 21 resulted from any one of the alternatives discussed in  
 22 there. And there are six different alternatives and the  
 23 no-action alternative, and including the cumulative  
 24 effects of what's going on.  
 25    So through that process, these following factors I

Page 3

1                                   P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S  
 2                   **MR. ALAN BITTNER:** My name is Alan  
 3 Bittner, the field manager for the Anchorage field office  
 4 of the BLM, and with me is Bruce Seppi, the subsistence  
 5 biologist for our office.  
 6     Section 810(a) of the Alaska National Interest Lands  
 7 Conservation Act requires that an evaluation of  
 8 subsistence uses and needs be completed for any federal  
 9 determination to withdraw, reserve, lease, or otherwise  
 10 permit the use, occupancy or disposition of public lands.  
 11     Due to the proposed project affecting BLM-managed  
 12 public land, the BLM prepared a preliminary analysis of  
 13 subsistence impacts. The preliminary findings concluded  
 14 that the project may result in significant restrictions to  
 15 subsistence uses for certain communities.  
 16     At this time I'm officially opening a Section 810(a)  
 17 of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act  
 18 hearing related to the proposed Donlin Gold mine here in  
 19 the village of Crooked Creek.  
 20     Bruce Seppi will give an overview of his professional  
 21 analysis of potential effects of the proposed project.  
 22 This overview is about 15 minutes in length. And  
 23 following that brief overview, you will be given the  
 24 opportunity to provide comment for the record. This is  
 25 not a question-and-answer session, but one to listen to

Page 5

1 needed to consider for the evaluation. And that is, does  
 2 this proposed project cause a reduction in the  
 3 availability of subsistence resources caused by a decline  
 4 in the population or abundance of harvestable resources.  
 5 Does it affect your subsistence resources.  
 6     Or, two, does it reduce the availability of resources  
 7 used for subsistence purposes caused by a change in the  
 8 distribution in their migration patterns or where they  
 9 live and where they live their lives.  
 10    Or thirdly, does it cause a reduction or a change in  
 11 access to those resources, whether it's on the river or  
 12 out when you are hunting moose and things like that. So  
 13 it's about access. And that can include both physical and  
 14 legal barriers.  
 15    So Donlin submitted an application to BLM separately  
 16 for a right-of-way for the pipeline itself in July of 2012  
 17 and January of 2013. And of course, as we discussed  
 18 tonight, they are proposing to construct and operate a  
 19 315-mile pipeline. It's a buried natural gas pipeline  
 20 from Cook Inlet to out here on the Kuskokwim River. That  
 21 right-of-way on that 315 miles would cross 97 miles of BLM  
 22 land, lands that we manage. And those are lands north and  
 23 west of the Alaska Range, essentially right here in the  
 24 Kuskokwim River watershed.  
 25    That represents about 30 percent of the entire length

Page 6

1 of the pipeline. About 65 or 66 percent is on State lands  
 2 and about 3 or 4 percent is on ANCSA corporation lands.  
 3 And of course, that pipeline is part of an energy  
 4 infrastructure that's proposed to run the gold mine which  
 5 is, of course, ten miles near Crooked Creek.  
 6 In addition to the pipeline and the mine site, of  
 7 course, we talked about transportation infrastructure for  
 8 barge transportation on the Kuskokwim River. Two of those  
 9 alternatives that the Corps talked about earlier tonight  
 10 would affect the pipeline component, and those are  
 11 Alternative 3B, which would be a diesel pipeline instead  
 12 of a gas pipeline in that same right-of-way, and  
 13 Alternative 6A would be a different route that would go  
 14 through Rainy Pass and Dalzell Gorge, and that would  
 15 affect 46 miles of State lands.  
 16 So the project itself I evaluated in three different  
 17 components, and that's the mine site, the transportation  
 18 infrastructure, and the pipeline. And although the  
 19 permit Donlin Gold is dealing with BLM for an application  
 20 with BLM, and it focuses mainly -- or only on the pipeline  
 21 right-of-way, we have to do this analysis with the  
 22 National Environmental Policy Act or NEPA. And that's  
 23 what an EIS is. It's part of the NEPA process. And so  
 24 that process prevents us from splitting this up and only  
 25 looking at the pipeline and splitting it into smaller

Page 7

1 segments and reducing the amount of impacts.  
 2 So for that reason, when we review this thing, we  
 3 review the whole works. We look at the mine, we look at  
 4 the infrastructure, and we look at the pipeline all at  
 5 once, not just what's subject to BLM permitting.  
 6 So if I could, I'd like to just do a very quick  
 7 overview of each of those three components and clarify  
 8 what we're talking about because it's vague and there is a  
 9 lot to it. The proposed pipeline includes clearing a  
 10 right-of-way 150 feet long -- or 150 feet wide for all 315  
 11 miles; 12 air strips ranging from 3,500 feet to 5,000 foot  
 12 in length, nine of which would be brand-new. They would  
 13 have to be cleared out of the landscape there along that  
 14 right-of-way. Nine construction camps that would clear an  
 15 additional 233 acres; 65 cleared pipe storage areas, and  
 16 an estimated 70 gravel pits ranging from one to 50 acres  
 17 in size.  
 18 The pipeline itself from Cook Inlet over to this area  
 19 would cross seven watersheds and involve 396 stream  
 20 crossings, 77 of which are anadromous, meaning they are  
 21 fish-bearing and salmon-bearing streams.  
 22 For the mine itself, which we have talked about  
 23 tonight, that would involve a waste rock facility that  
 24 would fill in American Creek or the headwaters of American  
 25 Creek and involve 2,240 acres; a tailings storage facility

Page 8

1 which would fill in Anaconda Creek at the top of its  
 2 watershed and involve 2,050 acres; the tailings storage  
 3 facility which we have been talking about and a dam would  
 4 be behind a 464-foot high dam. And for the pit itself --  
 5 there is two pits, actually, during mining, and that's the  
 6 ACMA dam -- pit, rather, which would be about 1,800 feet  
 7 deep or dug that deep, and the Lewis pit, which would be  
 8 about 1,600 feet deep.  
 9 As this project is mined, the two pits would merge at  
 10 the surface into one pit. And that hole in the ground,  
 11 that pit, would be 2.2 miles long and about a mile wide,  
 12 just to get an idea of the size of the thing we are  
 13 talking about. And after it's mined out and the mine  
 14 closes, runoff from that tailings storage facility would  
 15 have to be pumped into the pit.  
 16 The pit lake is estimated, as we talked about  
 17 earlier, to take about 50 to 55 years to fill, and at that  
 18 point pumping would be required to keep it from  
 19 overflowing and going into Crooked Creek and the Kuskokwim  
 20 River. That pit water would very likely not meet water  
 21 quality standards and would need to be treated before it  
 22 could be released into the watershed into Crooked Creek.  
 23 So the proposal now is to construct the water  
 24 treatment plant 50 years after the mine closes, and water  
 25 from the pit lake would then have to be pumped and treated

Page 9

1 in that water treatment plant into perpetuity to prevent  
 2 untreated water from going into the creek, Crooked Creek  
 3 and the Kuskokwim River.  
 4 And finally, the transportation part of this includes  
 5 an expanded cargo port at Bethel. There is one now, but  
 6 they will expand it significantly. A new port at Jungjuk  
 7 Creek on the Kuskokwim River, and that port would include  
 8 a capability of storing 2.8 million gallons of diesel fuel  
 9 right on the river; a 30-mile-long access road from the  
 10 Kuskokwim River up to the mine, and that would include an  
 11 additional 45 stream crossings and additional 13 gravel  
 12 pits; and of course, that 5,000-foot airstrip that was  
 13 talked about.  
 14 Barges would supply the mine with fuel and cargo and  
 15 would involve 64 cargo trips and 58 fuel barge trips, so a  
 16 total of 122 round trips from Bethel to Jungjuk Creek  
 17 annually within a June 1st to October 1st shipping season.  
 18 Those river barges would be transported by a tug that  
 19 would push a configuration of four barges each trip, and  
 20 each of those fuel barges would be carrying 1.29 million  
 21 gallons of diesel fuel each trip.  
 22 The port at Jungjuk would continue to be needed after  
 23 the mine closure to supply fuel and cargo to this waste  
 24 treatment plant for treating water from the pit into  
 25 perpetuity. So that port would be there indefinitely.

Page 10

1 So the preliminary analysis of the impacts to  
2 subsistence based on the alternatives outlined in the  
3 draft EIS was completed by BLM. In fact, it was completed  
4 by me. And I included all six of these alternatives.  
5 That actually is on the back table at the sign-in table  
6 there. It's in the EIS, also. If you go into there, it's  
7 page 409 of the Appendix M through O section. But on your  
8 way out, if you are interested, you can grab a copy there,  
9 and it's the same that's in the EIS.

10 So we are going around to 11 communities, and the  
11 testimony and input from 11 communities where these public  
12 hearings are being held to talk about the impacts of the  
13 project will be included in the final EIS. And so I've  
14 done a preliminary impact analysis, and then after  
15 comments from communities, I have to do a final. And that  
16 would be included with the final EIS from the Corps of  
17 Engineers.

18 So from BLM's preliminary analysis, I just wanted to  
19 go over what I found for each one of those three  
20 components and the effect of the project on uses and needs  
21 for the mine and natural gas pipeline and transportation  
22 infrastructure for each of the components of the project.

23 So for the mine site, the villages closest to the  
24 mine here would potentially experience the most effects to  
25 subsistence, and that includes Napaimute, and especially

Page 11

1 here in Crooked Creek.

2 The mine activities, such as ore trucks in the mine,  
3 trucks on the road, drilling, blasting, power generation,  
4 the mill site, port site activity and those sorts of  
5 things would likely change the distribution of wildlife  
6 species important to subsistence like moose and caribou  
7 and fur bearers, and that would be long term and would  
8 cause potential impacts during the construction phases and  
9 during the mining activities throughout the life of the  
10 mine.

11 Areas important to Crooked Creek for wood cutting and  
12 berry picking and hunting would be directly affected by  
13 the mine, and adjacent areas would be potentially  
14 contaminated with dust emissions from ore processing and  
15 from haul trucks going on the road up from the port to the  
16 mine. This would affect those areas, particularly berry  
17 picking areas, and possibly make them undesirable and  
18 unusable to subsistence users.

19 Water released from the mine during the operation has  
20 the potential to affect salmon and resident fish  
21 populations that's important to subsistence, as well as  
22 the aquatic food web in Crooked Creek and the Kuskokwim  
23 River.

24 After mine closure, the pit lake would fill with  
25 untreated water that would not meet water quality

Page 12

1 standards and could potentially impact fish and wildlife.  
2 Potential runoff from the tailings dam and pit lake would  
3 have the potential to contaminate fish resources important  
4 to subsistence in Crooked Creek and the Lower Kuskokwim  
5 River into perpetuity, impacting the subsistence fish  
6 resources important to all communities from Crooked Creek  
7 all the way down the Kuskokwim River.

8 For the natural gas pipeline, those potential effects  
9 to subsistence from construction and operation of the  
10 pipeline would affect the villages of Tyonek, Skwentna,  
11 Nikolai, McGrath and Takotna, as well as downriver  
12 villages of Sleetmute, Stony River, Georgetown and Crooked  
13 Creek.

14 During the construction phases, the effects of  
15 physically clearing the right-of-way, trenching, drilling  
16 and the presence of machinery on that right-of-way,  
17 pipeline transport, workers and construction camps and  
18 infrastructure on and along the pipeline right-of-way  
19 would cause, again, a redistribution of moose and caribou  
20 and fur bearers along it and negatively affect access to  
21 subsistence use areas and the availability of subsistence  
22 resources.

23 During operations, the airstrip would remain along  
24 the pipeline right-of-way at Farewell about halfway  
25 through near McGrath and would potentially increase access

Page 13

1 to subsistence uses along there by nonresident or  
2 nonqualified subsistence users; sport hunters, in effect;  
3 and they would be using aircraft and four-wheelers. That  
4 airstrip is there now, but it would be improved, and there  
5 would also be a right-of-way that they could travel on  
6 from there. Villages negatively affected by that  
7 increased access would likely be McGrath, Nicolai and  
8 Takotna.

9 For impacts to the transportation infrastructure part  
10 of it, it would include barging of cargo and fuel and the  
11 construction of a port at Jungjuk Creek on the Kuskokwim  
12 River. Essentially the barging would affect all villages  
13 on the river from Crooked Creek all the way to the mouth  
14 of the Kuskokwim past Bethel. Impacts from barging  
15 include displacement and disruption of subsistence  
16 activities by the barge traffic or reduced access to  
17 subsistence fishing activity, such as set nets or fish  
18 wheels or processing rafts along the river.

19 Subsistence fish resources or salmon and resident  
20 fish populations may also be negatively affected by just  
21 the magnitude and intensity of barge traffic proposed in  
22 Alternative 2, which is the preferred alternative of  
23 Donlin Gold.

24 Effects to fish may increase when the water levels  
25 are low in the river in mid-summer and possibly earlier in

Page 14

1 the year and later in the year as barge rafts will need to  
2 be uncoupled and the barges towed individually or in  
3 pairs, or lighter barge loads would be required for a trip  
4 for them to be able to navigate up the Jungjuk. This  
5 would require additional barge traffic on the Kuskokwim  
6 River and would affect the river itself and subsistence  
7 fish resources.  
8 So overall, the findings for all those things  
9 concludes that with Alternative 2, a significant  
10 restriction to subsistence uses for the communities of  
11 Crooked Creek and Napaimute in relation to the mine  
12 itself; and the communities on the Kuskokwim River from  
13 barge traffic, and that would include Bethel, Napaskiak,  
14 Oscarville, Kwethluk, Akiakchak, Akiak, Tuluksak, Upper  
15 and Lower Kalskag, Aniak; and here in Crooked Creek and  
16 the communities of McGrath, Nicolai and Takotna for  
17 increased access along that pipeline right-of-way from  
18 nonlocal users at the Farewell airstrip.  
19 In addition, potential spill scenarios involving  
20 ocean and river barge release of diesel fuel, cyanide,  
21 mercury, tailings dam failure, and the release of  
22 untreated water from the pit lake and the tailings dam  
23 after the mine closes could also result in a significant  
24 restriction to subsistence uses on the Kuskokwim River for  
25 all those communities on the river from here on down to

Page 15

1 the mouth.  
2 So we found that through all those alternatives, all  
3 of them -- Alternative 2, 3A, 3B, 4, 5A and 6 and the  
4 cumulative case -- that are stated in the Donlin draft EIS  
5 may significantly restrict subsistence uses. Because of  
6 that, BLM is required to come out here and ask for your  
7 opinion. We have to solicit comments from people who are  
8 potentially affected by it, and that's under ANILCA  
9 810(a). That's why I'm here tonight.  
10 Following these public hearings, we will go back to  
11 Donlin and AECOM and tell them these impacts, and that  
12 finding may be revised to will not significantly affect if  
13 they can have changes in alternatives or find new  
14 information or have new mitigation measures resulting from  
15 the hearing.  
16 If, in fact, those impacts can't be mitigated, then  
17 we are in the position to go into a three-part  
18 determination in the next step before anything like this  
19 could be authorized.  
20 So what does that mean next? What would happen under  
21 ANILCA? After the hearings, then the determination  
22 section is prepared only when there is a finding of may  
23 significantly affect or significantly restrict subsistence  
24 uses, and we have to state clearly why the proposed action  
25 is necessary and how the action complies with each of

Page 16

1 these requirements. So those requirements are, we ask the  
2 questions of why such a significant restriction of  
3 subsistence uses is necessary and how it is consistent  
4 with sound management principles for multiple use of  
5 public land.  
6 Secondly, how the proposed activity will involve  
7 minimal amount of public lands necessary to accomplish the  
8 project; and thirdly, what reasonable steps can be taken  
9 to minimize those effects upon subsistence uses and  
10 resources resulting from developing the mine.  
11 After we go through that process, a manager is able  
12 legally to proceed with the action or approve that action.  
13 And BLM's action would be to approve the right-of-way for  
14 the pipeline.  
15 So that's basically what I'm here to tell you and  
16 tell you about 810 ANILCA. So I'll open the hearing to  
17 public testimony now, and I'd like you to speak and let us  
18 know your name. And I don't think there is anybody here  
19 from other than Crooked Creek, but -- and just we want to  
20 have information of how you think building this mine would  
21 affect your subsistence activities and the way of life out  
22 here related to subsistence.  
23 There is many ways to comment. You can comment right  
24 here tonight. It's being recorded. We will take your  
25 comments in. Or you can email us. You can mail us with

Page 17

1 the good-old mail. Or you can email us at these numbers  
2 here. And we are going to have this open until April  
3 30th, just like the EIS deadline. So if you don't feel  
4 like getting up in front of everybody tonight, you can do  
5 it in these other ways. But I would encourage you to  
6 speak up and let everyone know how the mine development  
7 will affect anything to do with subsistence.  
8 So thanks, and I'll leave it to opening the hearing.  
9 **MR. ALAN BITTNER:** Okay. Please remember  
10 this is not a question-and-answer session, but if you have  
11 any comments related to subsistence, both beneficial or  
12 negative, this is your opportunity within the hearing  
13 context to provide those to us. So if we have anybody  
14 that would like to speak, let us know.  
15 **MS. ELENA PHILLIPS:** My name is Elena  
16 Phillips. I live here in Crooked Creek. I worked back at  
17 Donlin. And when I worked back there, I worked two weeks  
18 on and two weeks off. And I did that during the summer.  
19 So while I was working at Donlin, I did my work out there,  
20 and then when I came home, I did my subsistence fishing.  
21 So while I -- there were some changes. I still -- I  
22 was still able to get the fish that I needed, almost all  
23 the fish that I needed. That's all I have to say.  
24 **MR. PAUL ALEXIE:** My name is Paul Alexie.  
25 As Elena was saying about subsistence fishing, we have

Page 18

1 pretty limited fishing now, pretty tight restrictions for  
2 king salmon. We have to -- like when we catch it, we have  
3 to release it. And if the mine goes, it's going to even  
4 be tighter. So is there any way that --  
5 My main concern is the water discharge, you know.  
6 All the chemicals and -- like I was saying a while ago,  
7 they did that testing on the Slope with the rain. And on  
8 that open pit, all that rock, it's not going to be  
9 guaranteed that the air quality will be the same. You  
10 know, all the acids or -- that's all I'm just worried  
11 about is our fishing and how it will affect us because if  
12 we had a spill, it will impact us really hard, like -- you  
13 know, they have been doing these tests, you know. They  
14 got weirs up around here, and it's steadily declining our  
15 fish.  
16 Last summer we go out, and there is a weir there, and  
17 we stop in and visit them. We have some questions about,  
18 like, is our steady streamline of fish like coho and all  
19 the other types of fish -- they say it's steady, but it's  
20 less and less fish. And that's the main thing because we  
21 are so used to it. We live along the river. That's our  
22 life is the water flow. It's pretty scary for a spill  
23 to -- you know, it's pretty scary, like down in the  
24 states, like people were commenting.  
25 We have got to sacrifice something. We take

Page 19

1 something, but we got to sacrifice to get something back.  
2 And they talk about all this, fish started being -- you  
3 know, like they are reintroducing them, you know, like a  
4 fishery. And they don't want it.  
5 So what I'm trying to say is that, you know, we can't  
6 guarantee there's not going to be a spill. This is our  
7 life right here along the river. And we don't want to  
8 lose that because that's our life. We are so used to it,  
9 eating fish, you know. We only fish for, like, three  
10 months out of the year, maybe not even -- nowadays we  
11 can't even fish. We have limited time.  
12 But all I want to say is that, you know, we would  
13 like to have it -- I'm in support of Donlin. You know, I  
14 worked all over there in Donlin. When I first went back  
15 there I was camp maintenance, and then I went to core  
16 cutting. Then I went to driller's helper. They even  
17 tried to get me to go into the prep lab, but I said no, I  
18 don't want to be amongst the dust all day long. I did a  
19 lot of work back there. But it's scary to see that spill  
20 risk and the tailings dam and the water flow.  
21 And the main thing is our subsistence, you know,  
22 because we are so used to eating our Native food like fish  
23 and moose. And that's really scary, you know, to see them  
24 people down in the states to see their water turn orange.  
25 And that's really scary.

Page 20

1 All I want is just to, you know, make sure all these  
2 posters are, you know, just abided by. There is no  
3 guarantee because if we lose our fish, we don't have  
4 nothing. And if the mine comes up, you know, we are  
5 having to go further and further up to get wood. Not only  
6 that, we hardly go up there -- only time we go up there is  
7 wintertime because the creek is so shallow. You have to  
8 have a jet unit to go up. And in the springtime --  
9 All I want is Donlin to be -- I know Donlin is  
10 community friendly, you know, all that. You know, they  
11 got all this -- they support our region, you know, our  
12 schools. Like Ali was saying, you know, they give back.  
13 But, you know, we are having to sacrifice. And it's going  
14 to be very hard for us to sacrifice.  
15 But I like what Donlin is doing, you know, coming to  
16 each village, you know. Even some people, you know,  
17 object to it. But after they go -- after you guys go,  
18 they will talk about it and they will say, oh, man, you  
19 should have come to the meeting, and it will be too late,  
20 like Nick was saying. You know, 25 people down there  
21 in -- where -- you know, but we are not like 25 people  
22 here. That would be one community, all of us, 25 people.  
23 But it's -- it's kind of scary, you know, to see all  
24 this here. You know, there are safety measures. I know  
25 EPA has a lot of strict regulations about water discharge,

Page 21

1 hazardous chemicals, spill response, and they have to  
2 protect fisheries.  
3 And they donate to socioeconomic. They donate. And  
4 you know, Donlin Creek is like -- they say everybody goes  
5 home; make sure everybody goes home safely first, you  
6 know. You know, it's really nice that they have it there.  
7 That's all I want is Donlin to be safe, you know, if they  
8 open the mine.  
9 But it's good for the whole area. Like they say,  
10 it's going to be 700 people at the mine. And it's going  
11 to be operated for 25 years. And for 20 years somebody  
12 could work back there and retire and get good benefits.  
13 All I want is just Donlin to be a safe project and not  
14 like anywhere else, you know, in the world because we only  
15 live in this land once, and whatever we leave behind them  
16 kids are going to have. We got to leave them something.  
17 Like we can't just always take and then when they run out  
18 of work, they have to go further and further away, like  
19 that.  
20 So that's all I have to say. Thank you.  
21 **MR. DAVID JOHN:** I have a question for  
22 BLM. I'm concerned about air emissions and water  
23 discharge over here. You were talking about that. The  
24 question I have for air emissions --  
25 **MR. ALAN BITTNER:** During the hearing

Page 22

1 right now, I'd like to hold it just a -- well, on  
2 subsistence, we would like to take comments on  
3 subsistence. And we will still be here after we close  
4 the --  
5 **MR. DAVID JOHN:** If we go back to  
6 subsistence, you said you are a biologist for BLM. How  
7 many trips to you take out to the field in a year?  
8 **MR. BRUCE SEPPI:** I'm in the field all  
9 seasons of the year. I have been on the Kuskokwim for  
10 about 25 years, mostly between Aniak and McGrath.  
11 Peregrine falcon surveys is my main task.  
12 **MR. DAVID JOHN:** How many times year,  
13 summer, do you come down the river?  
14 **MR. BRUCE SEPPI:** I haven't in the last  
15 two years. The project is finished. But usually once a  
16 year.  
17 **MR. DAVID JOHN:** Because last summer I was  
18 fishing. I have been fishing ever since I was small. And  
19 I notice that our fish are changing. Last summer I wish  
20 we had a biologist down there because the first time I  
21 ever catch a fish with a -- that was deformed, and it  
22 looked very weird. It was a salmon. But, you know, the  
23 top of their head is supposed to be hard like cartilage  
24 type. It was not hard, and it was soft like a balloon.  
25 All around it was very soft.

Page 23

1 And then we discarded it. I didn't want it. The  
2 first time I ever seen a fish like that. I didn't bother  
3 to open it up or anything. I threw it back in the river  
4 where it came from. I was thinking I wish we had a fish  
5 biologist out here, and I'd show them how -- why did that  
6 fish turn out the way it did, you know.  
7 And another one my wife caught was when we were  
8 cutting fish, she was dipping water to wash our strips and  
9 she pulled a fish out about four inches long, and it  
10 looked like a regular fish, but towards the end at the  
11 tail, the tail part, it was deformed like it had a big  
12 bubble. And there was a bubble on the tail end of the  
13 fish. You know, fish are streamlined. But this one came  
14 down and went up and then down, and then the tail. And so  
15 my wife tossed it out. I was going to tell her to save it  
16 and send it to a fish biologist. But when it hit that  
17 water, it knocked that fish out. When I tried to grab it,  
18 it drifted away.  
19 The second time I seen fish that were like that this  
20 past summer. And I was thinking maybe it has got to do  
21 with -- BLM had something to do with that cleaning up at  
22 Red Devil. You know, that fish was around there  
23 somewhere, but they can't all swim upriver. They have to  
24 stop and take a rest. I was thinking maybe it came from  
25 that. I don't know. Are you going to be sending a

Page 24

1 biologist out here on the river?  
2 **MR. ALAN BITTNER:** We still travel out  
3 here from time to time, you know.  
4 **MR. DAVID JOHN:** What's time to time?  
5 **MR. ALAN BITTNER:** Well, like Bruce said,  
6 he usually travels once a year out here.  
7 **MR. DAVID JOHN:** So you guys have not  
8 found anyone yet?  
9 **MR. ALAN BITTNER:** It depends on what the  
10 mission is for that particular trip.  
11 **MR. DAVID JOHN:** Another one was that air  
12 emission. How many plants are you going to have operating  
13 back there? How many plants are you going to have --  
14 that's a different subject. Sorry.  
15 **MR. BRUCE SEPPI:** You have to talk to the  
16 Donlin or AECOM guys about that.  
17 **MS. NANCY DARIGO:** I can talk to him  
18 afterwards.  
19 **MS. ELENA PHILLIPS:** I was listening to  
20 David talk about the weird fish that he caught, and I have  
21 had to throw away a couple of fish that were like what he  
22 described. I didn't keep them. The heads were just awful  
23 looking. And then parts of the body, they -- they looked  
24 so soft, like they were just ready to fall apart. Just a  
25 concern again that there is some fish out there that are

Page 25

1 deformed or sick or something.  
2 **MR. ALAN BITTNER:** Anyone else?  
3 **MR. NICK JOHN:** Does he work for Fish &  
4 Game?  
5 **MR. BRUCE SEPPI:** I work for BLM.  
6 **MR. ALAN BITTNER:** Both of us are with  
7 BLM.  
8 **MR. NICK JOHN:** Is there anybody, like,  
9 here from Fish & Game?  
10 **MR. KEITH GORDON:** Not from the Alaska  
11 Department of Fish & Game tonight.  
12 **MR. PAUL ALEXIE:** Is it possible for you  
13 guys -- like for us to use you guys as an agency? You  
14 know, like David's point was to him how often you come out  
15 here. And Elena's point, too, was the fish that have the  
16 sores, you know -- like what I'm trying to address is that  
17 we need somebody from Fish & Game to come out here and  
18 analyze it, you know, like part of the environmental  
19 impact studies.  
20 **MR. ALAN BITTNER:** It depends on the exact  
21 concerns that you have what the best agency is that might  
22 be able to deal with it. It sounds like some of those  
23 concerns would be with the Alaska Department of Fish &  
24 Game.  
25 **MR. BRUCE SEPPI:** In McGrath, most likely.

Page 26

1 Roger Savoy is an area biologist in McGrath with Fish &  
2 Game.  
3 **MR. PAUL ALEXIE:** Doesn't he work up in  
4 the river, too, huh?  
5 **MR. BRUCE SEPPI:** Yeah.  
6 **MR. NICK JOHN:** My best way to deal with  
7 it is take a picture of it. You guys got all those  
8 iPod's, camera. Take a picture or video of it and send it  
9 to -- put it on Facebook and --  
10 **MR. BRUCE SEPPI:** Or if you can grab it  
11 and get it in the freezer as soon as you can, you can send  
12 the actual fish in.  
13 **MR. NICK JOHN:** What we catch out here and  
14 what we see different is like, oh, we are going to throw  
15 it away. That's their research right there. It's gone.  
16 Okay. For them to study it, you have to give it to them.  
17 You have got to send something to them like an email or a  
18 photo of it to get their attention. You can't like, oh, I  
19 threw it away because I didn't understand it. I don't  
20 understand what you are talking about. You don't  
21 understand what you see or what I see. A frog with three  
22 legs, I threw it away. Well, it tells them like, yeah, I  
23 saw a frog with three legs.  
24 Take a picture of it. Put it in a container, mail it  
25 to them, and that's their feedback. What you give to them

Page 27

1 is what they are going to put into it. That's all I got.  
2 **MR. ALAN BITTNER:** Thanks. Any other  
3 comments for subsistence?  
4 **MS. ELENA PHILLIPS:** I just want to say  
5 thank you to Nick because I never thought to keep a  
6 -- thank you, Nick. Next summer if I catch a fish and it  
7 looks deformed, I know exactly what I'm going to do. I'm  
8 going to freeze it and --  
9 **MR. BRUCE SEPPI:** Freeze it to keep it  
10 from going bad.  
11 **MS. ELENA PHILLIPS:** And keep it. And  
12 that's a very good idea. Thank you.  
13 **MS. CATHE HEROY:** I'm Cathe Heroy with  
14 DNR. We do have a representative of Fish & Game who is in  
15 my office. I'd be happy to take names and addresses so he  
16 can try to contact you and tell you where you might be  
17 able to send that information, whether Roger is the  
18 appropriate Fish & Game contact or if there is a fish  
19 biologist elsewhere in the department who might be a good  
20 contact for you. I'm sure they would be interested in  
21 what you are finding out here. So I'd be happy to help  
22 and act as a liaison to get you to the right person at the  
23 Department of Fish & Game who will be interested in the  
24 information that you have to send.  
25 **MS. ELENA PHILLIPS:** That would be

Page 28

1 awesome.  
2 **MR. ALAN BITTNER:** Okay. Any last  
3 comments on the subsistence analysis?  
4 **MS. AMANDA SAKAR:** I'm Amanda Sakar. I  
5 live here in Crooked Creek. And you know, if there is a  
6 contamination, you say, from Crooked on down to the bay,  
7 there will be -- but that's not how it works, you know.  
8 Our fish come from down there, and they come up. What are  
9 we going to do if we lose our subsistence fish and our  
10 animals? We won't have nothing. It wouldn't be just from  
11 here down that way. It will be the whole river.  
12 **MR. ALAN BITTNER:** Anyone else? Okay.  
13 Thanks for your comments today. At this time the Section  
14 810(a) of ANILCA hearing related to the proposed Donlin  
15 Gold mine here in the village of Crooked Creek is now  
16 closed. Thank you for your comments.  
17 And like Bruce said earlier, if you would like to  
18 also respond to the subsistence analysis, there is copies  
19 back there that you can read. You can also get ahold of  
20 us on the address, fax and email that are on the screen  
21 right here. And also we will also be taking any  
22 subsistence comments that are sent to the Corps in the  
23 draft EIS phase of this. So thanks again. I'll turn it  
24 back over to Keith for a minute.  
25 **MR. KEITH GORDON:** Thank you very much,

Page 29

1 Alan. Thank you all for coming tonight. And as Alan  
2 mentioned, the public comment portion of the draft EIS is  
3 open till April 30. The testimony portion for the 810  
4 ANILCA hearing is open till April 30. So let us know any  
5 additional feedback that you have. Thank you very much.  
6 I know a few of you had some questions you wanted to  
7 ask to people in the room, so please feel free to do that.  
8 In the meantime, I think we will start and pack up all our  
9 electronics.  
10 (Proceedings adjourned at 9:03 p.m.)  
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<b>A</b>	12:19;24:25;28:23 <b>agency (2)</b> 25:13,21	<b>Anchorage (1)</b> 3:3	<b>Barges (5)</b> 9:14,18,19,20;14:2	4:1 <b>bubble (2)</b> 23:12,12
<b>abided (1)</b> 20:2	<b>ago (1)</b> 18:6	<b>ANCSA (1)</b> 6:2	<b>barging (3)</b> 13:10,12,14	<b>building (1)</b> 16:20
<b>able (5)</b> 14:4;16:11;17:22; 25:22;27:17	<b>ahold (1)</b> 28:19	<b>Aniak (2)</b> 14:15;22:10	<b>barriers (1)</b> 5:14	<b>buried (1)</b> 5:19
<b>abundance (1)</b> 5:4	<b>air (5)</b> 7:11;18:9;21:22,24; 24:11	<b>ANILCA (5)</b> 15:8,21;16:16;28:14; 29:4	<b>based (1)</b> 10:2	
<b>access (8)</b> 5:11,13;9:9;12:20, 25;13:7,16;14:17	<b>aircraft (1)</b> 13:3	<b>animals (1)</b> 28:10	<b>basically (1)</b> 16:15	<b>C</b>
<b>accomplish (1)</b> 16:7	<b>airstrip (4)</b> 9:12;12:23;13:4; 14:18	<b>annually (1)</b> 9:17	<b>bay (1)</b> 28:6	<b>came (4)</b> 17:20;23:4,13,24
<b>acids (1)</b> 18:10	<b>Akiak (1)</b> 14:14	<b>apart (1)</b> 24:24	<b>bearers (2)</b> 11:7;12:20	<b>camera (1)</b> 26:8
<b>ACMA (1)</b> 8:6	<b>Akiakchak (1)</b> 14:14	<b>Appendix (1)</b> 10:7	<b>behind (2)</b> 8:4;21:15	<b>camp (1)</b> 19:15
<b>acres (4)</b> 7:15,16,25;8:2	<b>ALAN (17)</b> 3:2,2;4:12,16;17:9; 21:25;24:2,5,9;25:2,6, 20;27:2;28:2,12;29:1,1	<b>application (2)</b> 5:15;6:19	<b>beneficial (1)</b> 17:11	<b>camps (2)</b> 7:14;12:17
<b>Act (4)</b> 3:7,17;6:22;27:22	<b>Alaska (5)</b> 3:6,17;5:23;25:10,23	<b>appropriate (1)</b> 27:18	<b>beneficially (1)</b> 4:4	<b>can (16)</b> 5:13;10:8;15:13; 16:8,23,25,25;17:1,4; 24:17;26:10,11,11; 27:16;28:19,19
<b>action (5)</b> 15:24,25;16:12,12, 13	<b>Alexie (4)</b> 17:24,24;25:12;26:3	<b>approve (2)</b> 16:12,13	<b>berry (2)</b> 11:12,16	<b>capability (1)</b> 9:8
<b>activities (4)</b> 11:2,9;13:16;16:21	<b>Ali (1)</b> 20:12	<b>April (3)</b> 17:2;29:3,4	<b>best (2)</b> 25:21;26:6	<b>cargo (5)</b> 9:5,14,15,23;13:10
<b>activity (3)</b> 11:4;13:17;16:6	<b>almost (1)</b> 17:22	<b>aquatic (1)</b> 11:22	<b>Bethel (4)</b> 9:5,16;13:14;14:13	<b>caribou (2)</b> 11:6;12:19
<b>actual (1)</b> 26:12	<b>along (9)</b> 7:13;12:18,20,23; 13:1,18;14:17;18:21; 19:7	<b>area (3)</b> 7:18;21:9;26:1	<b>big (1)</b> 23:11	<b>carrying (1)</b> 9:20
<b>actually (2)</b> 8:5;10:5	<b>alternative (7)</b> 4:23;6:11,13;13:22, 22;14:9;15:3	<b>areas (6)</b> 7:15;11:11,13,16,17; 12:21	<b>biologist (8)</b> 3:5;22:6,20;23:5,16; 24:1;26:1;27:19	<b>cartilage (1)</b> 22:23
<b>addition (2)</b> 6:6;14:19	<b>alternatives (7)</b> 4:21,22;6:9;10:2,4; 15:2,13	<b>around (5)</b> 4:7;10:10;18:14; 22:25;23:22	<b>BITTNER (13)</b> 3:2,3;17:9;21:25; 24:2,5,9;25:2,6,20; 27:2;28:2,12	<b>case (1)</b> 15:4
<b>additional (5)</b> 7:15;9:11,11;14:5; 29:5	<b>although (1)</b> 6:18	<b>attention (1)</b> 26:18	<b>blasting (1)</b> 11:3	<b>catch (4)</b> 18:2;22:21;26:13; 27:6
<b>address (2)</b> 25:16;28:20	<b>always (1)</b> 21:17	<b>authorized (1)</b> 15:19	<b>BLM (14)</b> 3:4,12;5:15,21;6:19, 20;7:5;10:3;15:6; 21:22;22:6;23:21;25:5, 7	<b>Cathe (2)</b> 27:13,13
<b>addresses (1)</b> 27:15	<b>AMANDA (2)</b> 28:4,4	<b>availability (3)</b> 5:3,6;12:21	<b>BLM-managed (1)</b> 3:11	<b>caught (2)</b> 23:7;24:20
<b>adjacent (1)</b> 11:13	<b>American (2)</b> 7:24,24	<b>away (6)</b> 21:18;23:18;24:21; 26:15,19,22	<b>BLM's (2)</b> 10:18;16:13	<b>cause (4)</b> 5:2,10;11:8;12:19
<b>adjourned (1)</b> 29:10	<b>amongst (1)</b> 19:18	<b>awesome (1)</b> 28:1	<b>body (1)</b> 24:23	<b>caused (2)</b> 5:3,7
<b>AECOM (2)</b> 15:11;24:16	<b>amount (2)</b> 7:1;16:7	<b>awful (1)</b> 24:22	<b>both (3)</b> 5:13;17:11;25:6	<b>certain (1)</b> 3:15
<b>affect (14)</b> 5:5;6:10,15;11:16, 20;12:10,20;13:12; 14:6;15:12,23;16:21; 17:7;18:11	<b>Anaconda (1)</b> 8:1	<b>back (14)</b> 10:5;15:10;17:16,17; 19:1,14,19;20:12; 21:12;22:5;23:3;24:13; 28:19,24	<b>brand-new (1)</b> 7:12	<b>change (3)</b> 5:7,10;11:5
<b>affected (4)</b> 11:12;13:6,20;15:8	<b>anadromous (1)</b> 7:20	<b>balloon (1)</b> 22:24	<b>brief (1)</b> 3:23	<b>changes (2)</b> 15:13;17:21
<b>affecting (1)</b> 3:11	<b>analysis (12)</b> 3:12,21;4:1,1,11,17; 6:21;10:1,14,18;28:3, 18	<b>barge (9)</b> 6:8;9:15;13:16,21; 14:1,3,5,13,20	<b>Bruce (15)</b> 3:4,20;4:10,12,13; 22:8,14;24:5,15;25:5, 25;26:5,10;27:9;28:17	<b>changing (1)</b> 22:19
<b>affects (2)</b> 4:4,5	<b>analyze (1)</b> 25:18	<b>bad (1)</b> 27:10	<b>Bruce's (1)</b>	<b>chemicals (2)</b> 18:6;21:1
<b>afterwards (1)</b> 24:18				<b>clarify (1)</b> 7:7
<b>again (3)</b>				<b>cleaning (1)</b> 23:21
				<b>clear (1)</b> 7:14
				<b>cleared (2)</b>

7:13,15 <b>clearing (2)</b> 7:9;12:15 <b>clearly (1)</b> 15:24 <b>close (1)</b> 22:3 <b>closed (1)</b> 28:16 <b>closes (3)</b> 8:14,24;14:23 <b>closest (1)</b> 10:23 <b>closure (2)</b> 9:23;11:24 <b>coho (1)</b> 18:18 <b>collect (1)</b> 4:9 <b>coming (2)</b> 20:15;29:1 <b>comment (6)</b> 3:24;4:2,6;16:23,23; 29:2 <b>commenting (1)</b> 18:24 <b>comments (11)</b> 4:9;10:15;15:7; 16:25;17:11;22:2;27:3; 28:3,13,16,22 <b>communities (9)</b> 3:15;10:10,11,15; 12:6;14:10,12,16,25 <b>community (2)</b> 20:10,22 <b>completed (3)</b> 3:8;10:3,3 <b>completing (1)</b> 4:17 <b>complies (1)</b> 15:25 <b>component (1)</b> 6:10 <b>components (4)</b> 6:17;7:7;10:20,22 <b>concern (2)</b> 18:5;24:25 <b>concerned (1)</b> 21:22 <b>concerns (2)</b> 25:21,23 <b>concluded (1)</b> 3:13 <b>concludes (1)</b> 14:9 <b>configuration (1)</b> 9:19 <b>Conservation (2)</b> 3:7,17 <b>consider (1)</b> 5:1 <b>consistent (1)</b> 16:3	<b>construct (2)</b> 5:18;8:23 <b>construction (6)</b> 7:14;11:8;12:9,14, 17;13:11 <b>contact (3)</b> 27:16,18,20 <b>container (1)</b> 26:24 <b>contaminate (1)</b> 12:3 <b>contaminated (1)</b> 11:14 <b>contamination (1)</b> 28:6 <b>context (1)</b> 17:13 <b>continue (1)</b> 9:22 <b>Cook (2)</b> 5:20;7:18 <b>copies (1)</b> 28:18 <b>copy (1)</b> 10:8 <b>core (1)</b> 19:15 <b>corporation (1)</b> 6:2 <b>Corps (3)</b> 6:9;10:16;28:22 <b>couple (1)</b> 24:21 <b>course (5)</b> 5:17;6:3,5,7;9:12 <b>Creek (27)</b> 3:19;6:5;7:24,25;8:1, 19,22;9:2,2,7,16;11:1, 11,22;12:4,6,13;13:11, 13;14:11,15;16:19; 17:16;20:7;21:4;28:5, 15 <b>Crooked (19)</b> 3:19;6:5;8:19,22; 9:2;11:1,11,22;12:4,6, 12;13:13;14:11,15; 16:19;17:16;28:5,6,15 <b>cross (2)</b> 5:21;7:19 <b>crossings (2)</b> 7:20;9:11 <b>cumulative (2)</b> 4:23;15:4 <b>cutting (3)</b> 11:11;19:16;23:8 <b>cyanide (1)</b> 14:20	8:3,4,6;12:2;14:21, 22;19:20 <b>DARIGO (1)</b> 24:17 <b>DAVID (8)</b> 21:21;22:5,12,17; 24:4,7,11,20 <b>David's (1)</b> 25:14 <b>day (1)</b> 19:18 <b>deadline (1)</b> 17:3 <b>deal (2)</b> 25:22;26:6 <b>dealing (1)</b> 6:19 <b>decline (1)</b> 5:3 <b>declining (1)</b> 18:14 <b>deep (3)</b> 8:7,7,8 <b>deformed (4)</b> 22:21;23:11;25:1; 27:7 <b>Department (4)</b> 25:11,23;27:19,23 <b>depends (2)</b> 24:9;25:20 <b>described (1)</b> 24:22 <b>determination (3)</b> 3:9;15:18,21 <b>determined (1)</b> 4:19 <b>developing (1)</b> 16:10 <b>development (1)</b> 17:6 <b>Devil (1)</b> 23:22 <b>diesel (4)</b> 6:11;9:8,21;14:20 <b>different (5)</b> 4:22;6:13,16;24:14; 26:14 <b>dipping (1)</b> 23:8 <b>directly (1)</b> 11:12 <b>discarded (1)</b> 23:1 <b>discharge (3)</b> 18:5;20:25;21:23 <b>discussed (2)</b> 4:21;5:17 <b>displacement (1)</b> 13:15 <b>disposition (1)</b> 3:10 <b>disruption (1)</b> 13:15	<b>distribution (2)</b> 5:8;11:5 <b>DNR (1)</b> 27:14 <b>donate (2)</b> 21:3,3 <b>done (1)</b> 10:14 <b>Donlin (19)</b> 3:18;4:18;5:15;6:19; 13:23;15:4,11;17:17, 19;19:13,14;20:9,9,15; 21:4,7,13;24:16;28:14 <b>down (12)</b> 12:7;14:25;18:23; 19:24;20:20;22:13,20; 23:14,14;28:6,8,11 <b>downriver (1)</b> 12:11 <b>draft (5)</b> 4:18;10:3;15:4; 28:23;29:2 <b>drifted (1)</b> 23:18 <b>driller's (1)</b> 19:16 <b>drilling (2)</b> 11:3;12:15 <b>Due (1)</b> 3:11 <b>dug (1)</b> 8:7 <b>during (8)</b> 8:5;11:8,9,19;12:14, 23;17:18;21:25 <b>dust (2)</b> 11:14;19:18	<b>elsewhere (1)</b> 27:19 <b>email (4)</b> 16:25;17:1;26:17; 28:20 <b>emission (1)</b> 24:12 <b>emissions (3)</b> 11:14;21:22,24 <b>encourage (1)</b> 17:5 <b>end (2)</b> 23:10,12 <b>energy (1)</b> 6:3 <b>Engineers (1)</b> 10:17 <b>entire (1)</b> 5:25 <b>Environmental (2)</b> 6:22;25:18 <b>EPA (1)</b> 20:25 <b>especially (1)</b> 10:25 <b>essentially (2)</b> 5:23;13:12 <b>estimated (2)</b> 7:16;8:16 <b>evaluated (1)</b> 6:16 <b>evaluation (2)</b> 3:7;5:1 <b>even (5)</b> 18:3;19:10,11,16; 20:16 <b>everybody (3)</b> 17:4;21:4,5 <b>everyone (2)</b> 4:12;17:6 <b>exact (1)</b> 25:20 <b>exactly (1)</b> 27:7 <b>expand (1)</b> 9:6 <b>expanded (1)</b> 9:5 <b>experience (1)</b> 10:24
			<b>E</b>	
			<b>earlier (4)</b> 6:9;8:17;13:25; 28:17 <b>eating (2)</b> 19:9,22 <b>effect (2)</b> 10:20;13:2 <b>effects (7)</b> 3:21;4:24;10:24; 12:8,14;13:24;16:9 <b>EIS (11)</b> 4:19;6:23;10:3,6,9, 13,16;15:4;17:3;28:23; 29:2 <b>electronics (1)</b> 29:9 <b>ELENA (7)</b> 17:15,15,25;24:19; 27:4,11,25 <b>Elena's (1)</b> 25:15 <b>else (3)</b> 21:14;25:2;28:12	<b>Facebook (1)</b> 26:9 <b>facility (4)</b> 7:23,25;8:3,14 <b>fact (2)</b> 10:3;15:16 <b>factors (1)</b> 4:25 <b>failure (1)</b> 14:21
				<b>F</b>
	<b>D</b>			
	<b>Dalzell (1)</b> 6:14 <b>dam (7)</b>			

<b>falcon (1)</b> 22:11	11:22;19:22	8:10	26:4	6:25;8:10,15,19,22, 22:9;1,2,24;10:6;12:5; 15:17;19:17;27:1
<b>fall (1)</b> 24:24	<b>foot (1)</b> 7:11	<b>guarantee (2)</b> 19:6;20:3	<b>hunters (1)</b> 13:2	<b>involve (6)</b> 7:19,23,25;8:2;9:15; 16:6
<b>Farewell (2)</b> 12:24;14:18	<b>found (3)</b> 10:19;15:2;24:8	<b>guaranteed (1)</b> 18:9	<b>hunting (2)</b> 5:12;11:12	<b>involving (1)</b> 14:19
<b>fax (1)</b> 28:20	<b>four (2)</b> 9:19;23:9	<b>guys (6)</b> 20:17;24:7,16;25:13, 13;26:7	<b>I</b>	<b>iPod's (1)</b> 26:8
<b>federal (1)</b> 3:8	<b>four-wheelers (1)</b> 13:3	<b>H</b>	<b>idea (2)</b> 8:12;27:12	<b>J</b>
<b>feedback (2)</b> 26:25;29:5	<b>free (1)</b> 29:7	<b>halfway (1)</b> 12:24	<b>impact (4)</b> 10:14;12:1;18:12; 25:19	<b>January (1)</b> 5:17
<b>feel (2)</b> 17:3;29:7	<b>freeze (2)</b> 27:8,9	<b>happen (1)</b> 15:20	<b>impacting (1)</b> 12:5	<b>jet (1)</b> 20:8
<b>feet (5)</b> 7:10,10,11;8:6,8	<b>freezer (1)</b> 26:11	<b>happy (2)</b> 27:15,21	<b>impacts (10)</b> 3:13;4:17;7:1;10:1, 12;11:8;13:9,14;15:11, 16	<b>job (1)</b> 4:16
<b>few (1)</b> 29:6	<b>friendly (1)</b> 20:10	<b>hard (4)</b> 18:12;20:14;22:23, 24	<b>important (5)</b> 11:6,11,21;12:3,6	<b>JOHN (11)</b> 21:21;22:5,12,17; 24:4,7,11;25:3,8;26:6, 13
<b>field (4)</b> 3:3,3;22:7,8	<b>frog (2)</b> 26:21,23	<b>hardly (1)</b> 20:6	<b>improved (1)</b> 13:4	<b>July (1)</b> 5:16
<b>fill (4)</b> 7:24;8:1,17;11:24	<b>front (1)</b> 17:4	<b>harvestable (1)</b> 5:4	<b>inches (1)</b> 23:9	<b>June (1)</b> 9:17
<b>final (3)</b> 10:13,15,16	<b>fuel (8)</b> 9:8,14,15,20,21,23; 13:10;14:20	<b>haul (1)</b> 11:15	<b>include (6)</b> 5:13;9:7,10;13:10, 15;14:13	<b>Jungjuk (5)</b> 9:6,16,22;13:11;14:4
<b>finally (1)</b> 9:4	<b>fur (2)</b> 11:7;12:20	<b>hazardous (1)</b> 21:1	<b>included (3)</b> 10:4,13,16	<b>K</b>
<b>find (1)</b> 15:13	<b>further (4)</b> 20:5,5;21:18,18	<b>head (1)</b> 22:23	<b>includes (3)</b> 7:9;9:4;10:25	<b>Kalskag (1)</b> 14:15
<b>finding (3)</b> 15:12,22;27:21	<b>G</b>	<b>heads (1)</b> 24:22	<b>including (1)</b> 4:23	<b>keep (5)</b> 8:18;24:22;27:5,9,11
<b>findings (3)</b> 3:13;4:2;14:8	<b>gallons (2)</b> 9:8,21	<b>headwaters (1)</b> 7:24	<b>increase (2)</b> 12:25;13:24	<b>KEITH (3)</b> 25:10;28:24,25
<b>finished (1)</b> 22:15	<b>Game (9)</b> 25:4,9,11,17,24; 26:2;27:14,18,23	<b>hear (2)</b> 4:3,14	<b>increased (2)</b> 13:7;14:17	<b>kids (1)</b> 21:16
<b>first (4)</b> 19:14;21:5;22:20; 23:2	<b>gas (4)</b> 5:19;6:12;10:21; 12:8	<b>hearing (8)</b> 3:18;15:15;16:16; 17:8,12;21:25;28:14; 29:4	<b>indefinitely (1)</b> 9:25	<b>kind (1)</b> 20:23
<b>fish (53)</b> 11:20;12:1,3,5; 13:17,19,20,24;14:7; 17:22,23;18:15,18,19, 20;19:2,9,9,11,22;20:3; 22:19,21;23:2,4,6,8,9, 10,13,13,16,17,19,22; 24:20,21,25;25:3,9,11, 15,17,23;26:1,12;27:6, 14,18,18,23;28:8,9	<b>generation (1)</b> 11:3	<b>hearings (3)</b> 10:12;15:10,21	<b>individually (1)</b> 14:2	<b>king (1)</b> 18:2
<b>fish-bearing (1)</b> 7:21	<b>Georgetown (1)</b> 12:12	<b>held (1)</b> 10:12	<b>information (4)</b> 15:14;16:20;27:17, 24	<b>knocked (1)</b> 23:17
<b>fisheries (1)</b> 21:2	<b>given (1)</b> 3:23	<b>help (1)</b> 27:21	<b>infrastructure (7)</b> 6:4,7,18;7:4;10:22; 12:18;13:9	<b>Kuskokwim (16)</b> 5:20,24;6:8;8:19;9:3, 7,10;11:22;12:4,7; 13:11,14;14:5,12,24; 22:9
<b>fishery (1)</b> 19:4	<b>goes (3)</b> 18:3;21:4,5	<b>helper (1)</b> 19:16	<b>initial (1)</b> 4:1	<b>Kwethluk (1)</b> 14:14
<b>fishing (7)</b> 13:17;17:20,25;18:1, 11;22:18,18	<b>Gold (6)</b> 3:18;4:18;6:4,19; 13:23;28:15	<b>Heroy (2)</b> 27:13,13	<b>Inlet (2)</b> 5:20;7:18	<b>L</b>
<b>flow (2)</b> 18:22;19:20	<b>good (4)</b> 21:9,12;27:12,19	<b>Hi (1)</b> 4:12	<b>input (1)</b> 10:11	<b>lab (1)</b> 19:17
<b>focuses (1)</b> 6:20	<b>good-old (1)</b> 17:1	<b>high (1)</b> 8:4	<b>instead (1)</b> 6:11	<b>lake (5)</b> 8:16,25;11:24;12:2; 14:22
<b>following (3)</b> 3:23;4:25;15:10	<b>GORDON (2)</b> 25:10;28:25	<b>hit (1)</b> 23:16	<b>intensity (1)</b> 13:21	<b>land (4)</b> 3:12;5:22;16:5;
<b>food (2)</b>	<b>Gorge (1)</b> 6:14	<b>hold (1)</b> 22:1	<b>Interest (2)</b> 3:6,17	
	<b>grab (3)</b> 10:8;23:17;26:10	<b>hole (1)</b> 8:10	<b>interested (3)</b> 10:8;27:20,23	
	<b>gravel (2)</b> 7:16;9:11	<b>home (3)</b> 17:20;21:5,5	<b>into (14)</b>	
	<b>ground (1)</b>	<b>huh (1)</b>		

21:15 <b>Lands (9)</b> 3:6,10,17;5:22,22; 6:1,2,15;16:7 <b>landscape (1)</b> 7:13 <b>Last (5)</b> 18:16;22:14,17,19; 28:2 <b>late (1)</b> 20:19 <b>later (1)</b> 14:1 <b>lease (1)</b> 3:9 <b>leave (3)</b> 17:8;21:15,16 <b>legal (1)</b> 5:14 <b>legally (1)</b> 16:12 <b>legs (2)</b> 26:22,23 <b>length (3)</b> 3:22;5:25;7:12 <b>less (2)</b> 18:20,20 <b>levels (1)</b> 13:24 <b>Lewis (1)</b> 8:7 <b>liaison (1)</b> 27:22 <b>life (5)</b> 11:9;16:21;18:22; 19:7,8 <b>lighter (1)</b> 14:3 <b>likely (4)</b> 8:20;11:5;13:7; 25:25 <b>limited (2)</b> 18:1;19:11 <b>listen (1)</b> 3:25 <b>listening (1)</b> 24:19 <b>live (6)</b> 5:9,9;17:16;18:21; 21:15;28:5 <b>lives (1)</b> 5:9 <b>loads (1)</b> 14:3 <b>long (5)</b> 7:10;8:11;11:7; 19:18;23:9 <b>look (3)</b> 7:3,3,4 <b>looked (3)</b> 22:22;23:10;24:23 <b>looking (2)</b> 6:25;24:23	<b>looks (1)</b> 27:7 <b>lose (3)</b> 19:8;20:3;28:9 <b>lot (3)</b> 7:9;19:19;20:25 <b>low (1)</b> 13:25 <b>Lower (2)</b> 12:4;14:15	4:14 <b>mid-summer (1)</b> 13:25 <b>might (3)</b> 25:21;27:16,19 <b>migration (1)</b> 5:8 <b>mike (1)</b> 4:7 <b>mile (1)</b> 8:11 <b>miles (6)</b> 5:21,21;6:5,15;7:11; 8:11 <b>mill (1)</b> 11:4 <b>million (2)</b> 9:8,20 <b>mine (32)</b> 3:18;4:18;6:4,6,17; 7:3,22;8:13,24;9:10,14, 23;10:21,23,24;11:2,2, 10,13,16,19,24;14:11, 23;16:10,20;17:6;18:3; 20:4;21:8,10;28:15 <b>mined (2)</b> 8:9,13 <b>minimal (1)</b> 16:7 <b>minimize (1)</b> 16:9 <b>mining (2)</b> 8:5;11:9 <b>minute (1)</b> 28:24 <b>minutes (1)</b> 3:22 <b>mission (1)</b> 24:10 <b>mitigated (1)</b> 15:16 <b>mitigation (1)</b> 15:14 <b>months (1)</b> 19:10 <b>moose (4)</b> 5:12;11:6;12:19; 19:23 <b>most (2)</b> 10:24;25:25 <b>mostly (1)</b> 22:10 <b>mouth (2)</b> 13:13;15:1 <b>much (2)</b> 28:25;29:5 <b>multiple (1)</b> 16:4	24 <b>names (1)</b> 27:15 <b>NANCY (1)</b> 24:17 <b>Napaimute (2)</b> 10:25;14:11 <b>Napaskiak (1)</b> 14:13 <b>National (3)</b> 3:6,17;6:22 <b>Native (1)</b> 19:22 <b>natural (3)</b> 5:19;10:21;12:8 <b>navigate (1)</b> 14:4 <b>near (2)</b> 6:5;12:25 <b>necessary (3)</b> 15:25;16:3,7 <b>need (3)</b> 8:21;14:1;25:17 <b>needed (4)</b> 5:1;9:22;17:22,23 <b>needs (3)</b> 3:8;4:20;10:20 <b>negative (1)</b> 17:12 <b>negatively (4)</b> 4:5;12:20;13:6,20 <b>NEPA (2)</b> 6:22,23 <b>nets (1)</b> 13:17 <b>new (3)</b> 9:6;15:13,14 <b>next (3)</b> 15:18,20;27:6 <b>nice (1)</b> 21:6 <b>Nick (7)</b> 20:20;25:3,8;26:6, 13;27:5,6 <b>Nicolai (2)</b> 13:7;14:16 <b>Nikolai (1)</b> 12:11 <b>nine (2)</b> 7:12,14 <b>no-action (1)</b> 4:23 <b>nonlocal (1)</b> 14:18 <b>nonqualified (1)</b> 13:2 <b>nonresident (1)</b> 13:1 <b>north (1)</b> 5:22 <b>notice (1)</b> 22:19 <b>nowadays (1)</b>	19:10 <b>numbers (1)</b> 17:1
<b>O</b>				
	<b>M</b>			
	<b>machinery (1)</b> 12:16 <b>magnitude (1)</b> 13:21 <b>mail (3)</b> 16:25;17:1;26:24 <b>main (4)</b> 18:5,20;19:21;22:11 <b>mainly (1)</b> 6:20 <b>maintenance (1)</b> 19:15 <b>man (1)</b> 20:18 <b>manage (1)</b> 5:22 <b>management (1)</b> 16:4 <b>manager (2)</b> 3:3;16:11 <b>many (5)</b> 16:23;22:7,12;24:12, 13 <b>may (7)</b> 3:14;4:3;13:20,24; 15:5,12,22 <b>maybe (3)</b> 19:10;23:20,24 <b>McGrath (7)</b> 12:11,25;13:7;14:16; 22:10;25:25;26:1 <b>mean (1)</b> 15:20 <b>meaning (1)</b> 7:20 <b>meantime (1)</b> 29:8 <b>measures (2)</b> 15:14;20:24 <b>meet (2)</b> 8:20;11:25 <b>meeting (1)</b> 20:19 <b>mentioned (3)</b> 4:13,16;29:2 <b>mercury (1)</b> 14:21 <b>merge (1)</b> 8:9 <b>microphone (1)</b>		<b>object (1)</b> 20:17 <b>occupancy (1)</b> 3:10 <b>ocean (1)</b> 14:20 <b>October (1)</b> 9:17 <b>off (1)</b> 17:18 <b>office (3)</b> 3:3,5;27:15 <b>officially (1)</b> 3:16 <b>often (1)</b> 25:14 <b>once (4)</b> 7:5;21:15;22:15; 24:6 <b>one (10)</b> 3:25;4:21;7:16;8:10; 9:5;10:19;20:22;23:7, 13;24:11 <b>only (7)</b> 6:20,24;15:22;19:9; 20:5,6;21:14 <b>open (7)</b> 16:16;17:2;18:8; 21:8;23:3;29:3,4 <b>opening (2)</b> 3:16;17:8 <b>operate (1)</b> 5:18 <b>operated (1)</b> 21:11 <b>operating (1)</b> 24:12 <b>operation (2)</b> 11:19;12:9 <b>operations (1)</b> 12:23 <b>opinion (1)</b> 15:7 <b>opportunity (2)</b> 3:24;17:12 <b>orange (1)</b> 19:24 <b>ore (2)</b> 11:2,14 <b>Oscarville (1)</b> 14:14 <b>otherwise (1)</b> 3:9 <b>out (25)</b> 5:12,20;7:13;8:13; 10:8;15:6;16:21;17:19; 18:16;19:10;21:17;	
		<b>N</b>		
		<b>name (5)</b> 3:2;4:8;16:18;17:15,		

22:7;23:5,6,9,15,17; 24:1,2,6,25;25:14,17; 26:13;27:21 <b>outlined (1)</b> 10:2 <b>over (6)</b> 4:10;7:18;10:19; 19:14;21:23;28:24 <b>overall (1)</b> 14:8 <b>overflowing (1)</b> 8:19 <b>overview (4)</b> 3:20,22,23;7:7	<b>photo (1)</b> 26:18 <b>physical (1)</b> 5:13 <b>physically (1)</b> 12:15 <b>picking (2)</b> 11:12,17 <b>picture (3)</b> 26:7,8,24 <b>pipe (1)</b> 7:15 <b>pipeline (23)</b> 5:16,19,19;6:1,3,6, 10,11,12,18,20,25;7:4, 9,18;10:21;12:8,10,17, 18,24;14:17;16:14 <b>pit (14)</b> 8:4,6,7,10,11,15,16, 20,25;9:24;11:24;12:2; 14:22;18:8 <b>pits (4)</b> 7:16;8:5,9;9:12 <b>plant (3)</b> 8:24;9:1,24 <b>plants (2)</b> 24:12,13 <b>please (3)</b> 4:6;17:9;29:7 <b>pm (1)</b> 29:10 <b>point (3)</b> 8:18;25:14,15 <b>Policy (1)</b> 6:22 <b>population (1)</b> 5:4 <b>populations (2)</b> 11:21;13:20 <b>port (8)</b> 9:5,6,7,22,25;11:4, 15;13:11 <b>portion (2)</b> 29:2,3 <b>position (1)</b> 15:17 <b>possible (1)</b> 25:12 <b>possibly (2)</b> 11:17;13:25 <b>posters (1)</b> 20:2 <b>potential (7)</b> 3:21;11:8,20;12:2,3, 8;14:19 <b>potentially (5)</b> 10:24;11:13;12:1,25; 15:8 <b>power (1)</b> 11:3 <b>preferred (1)</b> 13:22 <b>preliminary (6)</b>	3:12,13;4:1;10:1,14, 18 <b>prep (1)</b> 19:17 <b>prepared (2)</b> 3:12;15:22 <b>presence (1)</b> 12:16 <b>pretty (4)</b> 18:1,1,22,23 <b>prevent (1)</b> 9:1 <b>prevents (1)</b> 6:24 <b>principles (1)</b> 16:4 <b>proceed (1)</b> 16:12 <b>Proceedings (1)</b> 29:10 <b>P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S (1)</b> 3:1 <b>process (5)</b> 4:19,25;6:23,24; 16:11 <b>processing (2)</b> 11:14;13:18 <b>professional (1)</b> 3:20 <b>project (13)</b> 3:11,14,21;4:4;5:2; 6:16;8:9;10:13,20,22; 16:8;21:13;22:15 <b>proposal (1)</b> 8:23 <b>proposed (12)</b> 3:11,18,21;4:18,18; 5:2;6:4;7:9;13:21; 15:24;16:6;28:14 <b>proposing (1)</b> 5:18 <b>protect (1)</b> 21:2 <b>provide (3)</b> 3:24;4:2;17:13 <b>providing (1)</b> 4:6 <b>public (8)</b> 3:10,12;10:11;15:10; 16:5,7,17;29:2 <b>pulled (1)</b> 23:9 <b>pumped (2)</b> 8:15,25 <b>pumping (1)</b> 8:18 <b>purposes (1)</b> 5:7 <b>push (1)</b> 9:19 <b>put (3)</b> 26:9,24;27:1	<b>Q</b> <b>quality (3)</b> 8:21;11:25;18:9 <b>question-and-answer (2)</b> 3:25;17:10 <b>quick (1)</b> 7:6	<b>R</b> <b>rafts (2)</b> 13:18;14:1 <b>rain (1)</b> 18:7 <b>Rainy (1)</b> 6:14 <b>Range (1)</b> 5:23 <b>ranging (2)</b> 7:11,16 <b>rather (1)</b> 8:6 <b>read (1)</b> 28:19 <b>ready (1)</b> 24:24 <b>really (5)</b> 4:3;18:12;19:23,25; 21:6 <b>reason (1)</b> 7:2 <b>reasonable (1)</b> 16:8 <b>record (3)</b> 3:24;4:8,9 <b>recorded (1)</b> 16:24 <b>Red (1)</b> 23:22 <b>redistribution (1)</b> 12:19 <b>reduce (1)</b> 5:6 <b>reduced (1)</b> 13:16 <b>reducing (1)</b> 7:1 <b>reduction (2)</b> 5:2,10 <b>region (1)</b> 20:11 <b>regular (1)</b> 23:10 <b>regulations (1)</b> 20:25 <b>reintroducing (1)</b> 19:3 <b>related (4)</b> 3:18;16:22;17:11; 28:14 <b>relation (1)</b>	14:11 <b>release (3)</b> 14:20,21;18:3 <b>released (2)</b> 8:22;11:19 <b>remain (1)</b> 12:23 <b>remember (1)</b> 17:9 <b>representative (1)</b> 27:14 <b>represents (1)</b> 5:25 <b>require (1)</b> 14:5 <b>required (3)</b> 8:18;14:3;15:6 <b>requirements (2)</b> 16:1,1 <b>requires (1)</b> 3:7 <b>research (1)</b> 26:15 <b>reserve (1)</b> 3:9 <b>resident (2)</b> 11:20;13:19 <b>resources (11)</b> 5:3,4,5,6,11;12:3,6, 22;13:19;14:7;16:10 <b>respond (1)</b> 28:18 <b>response (1)</b> 21:1 <b>rest (1)</b> 23:24 <b>restrict (2)</b> 15:5,23 <b>restriction (4)</b> 4:20;14:10,24;16:2 <b>restrictions (2)</b> 3:14;18:1 <b>result (2)</b> 3:14;14:23 <b>resulted (1)</b> 4:21 <b>resulting (2)</b> 15:14;16:10 <b>retire (1)</b> 21:12 <b>review (2)</b> 7:2,3 <b>revised (1)</b> 15:12 <b>right (8)</b> 5:23;9:9;16:23;19:7; 22:1;26:15;27:22; 28:21 <b>right-of-way (13)</b> 5:16,21;6:12,21; 7:10,14;12:15,16,18, 24;13:5;14:17;16:13 <b>risk (1)</b>
<b>P</b>					
<b>pack (1)</b> 29:8 <b>page (1)</b> 10:7 <b>pairs (1)</b> 14:3 <b>part (6)</b> 6:3,23;9:4;13:9; 23:11;25:18 <b>particular (1)</b> 24:10 <b>particularly (1)</b> 11:16 <b>parts (1)</b> 24:23 <b>pass (2)</b> 4:7;6:14 <b>past (2)</b> 13:14;23:20 <b>patterns (1)</b> 5:8 <b>PAUL (4)</b> 17:24,24;25:12;26:3 <b>people (9)</b> 15:7;18:24;19:24; 20:16,20,21,22;21:10; 29:7 <b>percent (3)</b> 5:25;6:1,2 <b>Peregrine (1)</b> 22:11 <b>permit (2)</b> 3:10;6:19 <b>permitting (1)</b> 7:5 <b>perpetuity (3)</b> 9:1,25;12:5 <b>person (1)</b> 27:22 <b>phase (1)</b> 28:23 <b>phases (2)</b> 11:8;12:14 <b>PHILLIPS (6)</b> 17:15,16;24:19;27:4, 11,25					

19:20 <b>river (31)</b> 5:11,20,24;6:8;8:20; 9:3,7,9,10,18;11:23; 12:5,7,12;13:12,13,18, 25;14:6,6,12,20,24,25; 18:21;19:7;22:13;23:3; 24:1;26:4;28:11 <b>road (3)</b> 9:9;11:3,15 <b>rock (2)</b> 7:23;18:8 <b>Roger (2)</b> 26:1;27:17 <b>room (1)</b> 29:7 <b>round (1)</b> 9:16 <b>route (1)</b> 6:13 <b>run (2)</b> 6:4;21:17 <b>runoff (2)</b> 8:14;12:2	<b>seasons (1)</b> 22:9 <b>second (1)</b> 23:19 <b>Secondly (1)</b> 16:6 <b>Section (5)</b> 3:6,16;10:7;15:22; 28:13 <b>segments (1)</b> 7:1 <b>send (6)</b> 23:16;26:8,11,17; 27:17,24 <b>sending (1)</b> 23:25 <b>sent (1)</b> 28:22 <b>separately (1)</b> 5:15 <b>Seppi (12)</b> 3:4,20;4:12,13;22:8, 14;24:15;25:5,25;26:5, 10;27:9 <b>session (2)</b> 3:25;17:10 <b>set (1)</b> 13:17 <b>seven (1)</b> 7:19 <b>shallow (1)</b> 20:7 <b>shipping (1)</b> 9:17 <b>show (1)</b> 23:5 <b>sick (1)</b> 25:1 <b>significant (5)</b> 3:14;4:20;14:9,23; 16:2 <b>significantly (5)</b> 9:6;15:5,12,23,23 <b>sign-in (1)</b> 10:5 <b>site (5)</b> 6:6,17;10:23;11:4,4 <b>six (2)</b> 4:22;10:4 <b>size (2)</b> 7:17;8:12 <b>Skwentna (1)</b> 12:10 <b>Sleetmute (1)</b> 12:12 <b>Slope (1)</b> 18:7 <b>small (1)</b> 22:18 <b>smaller (1)</b> 6:25 <b>socioeconomic (1)</b> 21:3	<b>soft (3)</b> 22:24,25;24:24 <b>solicit (1)</b> 15:7 <b>somebody (2)</b> 21:11;25:17 <b>somewhere (1)</b> 23:23 <b>soon (1)</b> 26:11 <b>sores (1)</b> 25:16 <b>Sorry (1)</b> 24:14 <b>sorts (1)</b> 11:4 <b>sound (1)</b> 16:4 <b>sounds (1)</b> 25:22 <b>speak (3)</b> 16:17;17:6,14 <b>species (1)</b> 11:6 <b>spell (1)</b> 4:8 <b>spill (6)</b> 14:19;18:12,22;19:6, 19;21:1 <b>splitting (2)</b> 6:24,25 <b>sport (1)</b> 13:2 <b>springtime (1)</b> 20:8 <b>standards (2)</b> 8:21;12:1 <b>start (1)</b> 29:8 <b>started (1)</b> 19:2 <b>state (4)</b> 4:7;6:1,15;15:24 <b>stated (1)</b> 15:4 <b>states (2)</b> 18:24;19:24 <b>steadily (1)</b> 18:14 <b>steady (2)</b> 18:18,19 <b>step (1)</b> 15:18 <b>steps (1)</b> 16:8 <b>still (4)</b> 17:21,22;22:3;24:2 <b>Stony (1)</b> 12:12 <b>stop (2)</b> 18:17;23:24 <b>storage (4)</b> 7:15,25;8:2,14	<b>storing (1)</b> 9:8 <b>stream (2)</b> 7:19;9:11 <b>streamline (1)</b> 18:18 <b>streamlined (1)</b> 23:13 <b>streams (1)</b> 7:21 <b>strict (1)</b> 20:25 <b>strips (2)</b> 7:11;23:8 <b>studies (1)</b> 25:19 <b>study (1)</b> 26:16 <b>subject (2)</b> 7:5;24:14 <b>submitted (1)</b> 5:15 <b>subsistence (49)</b> 3:4,8,13,15;4:2,4,5, 17,20;5:3,5,7;10:2,25; 11:6,18,21;12:4,5,9,21, 21;13:1,2,15,17,19; 14:6,10,24;15:5,23; 16:3,9,21,22;17:7,11, 20,25;19:21;22:2,3,6; 27:3;28:3,9,18,22 <b>summer (7)</b> 17:18;18:16;22:13, 17,19;23:20;27:6 <b>supply (2)</b> 9:14,23 <b>support (2)</b> 19:13;20:11 <b>supposed (1)</b> 22:23 <b>sure (3)</b> 20:1;21:5;27:20 <b>surface (1)</b> 8:10 <b>surveys (1)</b> 22:11 <b>swim (1)</b> 23:23	<b>talked (5)</b> 6:7,9;7:22;8:16;9:13 <b>talking (5)</b> 7:8;8:3,13;21:23; 26:20 <b>task (1)</b> 22:11 <b>tasked (1)</b> 4:16 <b>tells (1)</b> 26:22 <b>ten (1)</b> 6:5 <b>term (1)</b> 11:7 <b>testimony (3)</b> 10:11;16:17;29:3 <b>testing (1)</b> 18:7 <b>tests (1)</b> 18:13 <b>thanks (4)</b> 17:8;27:2;28:13,23 <b>thinking (3)</b> 23:4,20,24 <b>thirdly (2)</b> 5:10;16:8 <b>thought (1)</b> 27:5 <b>three (6)</b> 6:16;7:7;10:19;19:9; 26:21,23 <b>three-part (1)</b> 15:17 <b>threw (3)</b> 23:3;26:19,22 <b>throughout (1)</b> 11:9 <b>throw (2)</b> 24:21;26:14 <b>tight (1)</b> 18:1 <b>tighter (1)</b> 18:4 <b>till (2)</b> 29:3,4 <b>times (1)</b> 22:12 <b>today (1)</b> 28:13 <b>tonight (8)</b> 5:18;6:9;7:23;15:9; 16:24;17:4;25:11;29:1 <b>top (2)</b> 8:1;22:23 <b>tossed (1)</b> 23:15 <b>total (1)</b> 9:16 <b>towards (1)</b> 23:10 <b>towed (1)</b> 14:2
<b>S</b>			<b>T</b>	
<b>sacrifice (4)</b> 18:25;19:1;20:13,14 <b>safe (2)</b> 21:7,13 <b>safely (1)</b> 21:5 <b>safety (1)</b> 20:24 <b>SAKAR (2)</b> 28:4,4 <b>salmon (4)</b> 11:20;13:19;18:2; 22:22 <b>salmon-bearing (1)</b> 7:21 <b>same (3)</b> 6:12;10:9;18:9 <b>save (1)</b> 23:15 <b>Savoy (1)</b> 26:1 <b>saw (1)</b> 26:23 <b>saying (4)</b> 17:25;18:6;20:12,20 <b>scary (6)</b> 18:22,23;19:19,23, 25;20:23 <b>scenarios (1)</b> 14:19 <b>schools (1)</b> 20:12 <b>screen (1)</b> 28:20 <b>season (1)</b> 9:17				

traffic (4) 13:16,21;14:5,13	11:18	16:23;17:5	8:8	15:3
transport (1) 12:17	up (19) 4:6;6:24;9:10;11:15; 14:4;17:4,6;18:14; 20:4,5,6,6,8;23:3,14, 21;26:3;28:8;29:8	web (1) 11:22	1,800 (1) 8:6	3B (2) 6:11;15:3
transportation (6) 6:7,8,17;9:4;10:21; 13:9	upon (1) 16:9	weeks (2) 17:17,18	1.29 (1) 9:20	4
transported (1) 9:18	Upper (1) 14:14	weir (1) 18:16	11 (2) 10:10,11	4 (2) 6:2;15:3
travel (2) 13:5;24:2	upriver (1) 23:23	weird (2) 22:22;24:20	12 (1) 7:11	409 (1) 10:7
travels (1) 24:6	use (5) 3:10;4:14;12:21; 16:4;25:13	weirs (1) 18:14	122 (1) 9:16	45 (1) 9:11
treated (2) 8:21,25	used (4) 5:7;18:21;19:8,22	west (1) 5:23	13 (1) 9:11	46 (1) 6:15
treating (1) 9:24	users (3) 11:18;13:2;14:18	what's (3) 4:24;7:5;24:4	15 (1) 3:22	464-foot (1) 8:4
treatment (3) 8:24;9:1,24	uses (11) 3:8,15;4:20;10:20; 13:1,14;10:24;15:5,24; 16:3,9	wheels (1) 13:18	150 (2) 7:10,10	5
trenching (1) 12:15	usually (2) 22:15;24:6	whole (3) 7:3;21:9;28:11	1st (2) 9:17,17	5,000 (1) 7:11
tried (2) 19:17;23:17		wide (2) 7:10;8:11	2	5,000-foot (1) 9:12
trip (4) 9:19,21;14:3;24:10		wife (2) 23:7,15	2 (3) 13:22;14:9;15:3	50 (3) 7:16;8:17,24
trips (4) 9:15,15,16;22:7		wildlife (2) 11:5;12:1	2,050 (1) 8:2	55 (1) 8:17
trucks (3) 11:2,3,15	V	wintertime (1) 20:7	2,240 (1) 7:25	58 (1) 9:15
try (1) 27:16	vague (1) 7:8	wish (2) 22:19;23:4	2.2 (1) 8:11	5A (1) 15:3
trying (2) 19:5;25:16	video (1) 26:8	withdraw (1) 3:9	2.8 (1) 9:8	6
tug (1) 9:18	village (3) 3:19;20:16;28:15	within (2) 9:17;17:12	20 (1) 21:11	6 (1) 15:3
Tuluksak (1) 14:14	villages (5) 10:23;12:10,12;13:6, 12	wood (2) 11:11;20:5	2012 (1) 5:16	64 (1) 9:15
turn (4) 4:10;19:24;23:6; 28:23	visit (1) 18:17	work (7) 17:19;19:19;21:12, 18;25:3,5;26:3	2013 (1) 5:17	65 (2) 6:1;7:15
two (7) 5:6;6:8;8:5,9;17:17, 18;22:15	W	worked (4) 17:16,17,17;19:14	233 (1) 7:15	66 (1) 6:1
Tyonek (1) 12:10	wash (1) 23:8	workers (1) 12:17	25 (5) 20:20,21,22;21:11; 22:10	6A (1) 6:13
type (1) 22:24	waste (2) 7:23;9:23	working (1) 17:19	3	7
types (1) 18:19	water (20) 8:20,20,23,24;9:1,2, 24;11:19,25,25;13:24; 14:22;18:5,22;19:20, 24;20:25;21:22;23:8, 17	works (2) 7:3;28:7	3 (1) 6:2	6 (1) 15:3
U	watershed (3) 5:24;8:2,22	world (1) 21:14	3,500 (1) 7:11	70 (1) 7:16
uncoupled (1) 14:2	watersheds (1) 7:19	worried (1) 18:10	30 (3) 5:25;29:3,4	700 (1) 21:10
under (2) 15:8,20	way (8) 10:8;12:7;13:13; 16:21;18:4;23:6;26:6; 28:11	Y	30-mile-long (1) 9:9	77 (1) 7:20
undesirable (1) 11:17	ways (2)	year (8) 14:1,1;19:10;22:7,9, 12,16;24:6	30th (1) 17:3	8
unit (1) 20:8		years (6) 8:17,24;21:11,11; 22:10,15	315 (2) 5:21;7:10	810 (2) 16:16;29:3
untreated (3) 9:2;11:25;14:22		1	315-mile (1) 5:19	810a (4) 3:6,16;15:9;28:14
unusable (1)		1,600 (1)	396 (1) 7:19	9
			3A (1)	



**9:03 (1)**  
29:10  
**97 (1)**  
5:21