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

MCGRATH, ALASKA

Taken February 26, 2016
Commencing at 6:00 p.m.

Volume I - Pages 1 - 9, inclusive

Taken at
McGrath Native Village Council Office
McGrath, 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 Mark Spencer
 District Manager
 4 Taken by:
 5 Mary A. Vavrik, RMR
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 16
 17 BE IT KNOWN that the aforementioned proceedings were taken
 18 at the time and place duly noted on the title page, before
 19 Mary A. Vavrik, Registered Merit Reporter and Notary
 20 Public within and for the State of Alaska.
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 22
 23
 24
 25

Page 3

1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S
 2 **MR. MARK SPENCER:** Okay. We will go ahead
 3 and start. And this may be a little bit redundant but,
 4 again, because in the preliminary analysis there was a
 5 determination of "may significantly restrict," the law
 6 requires us to have a separate hearing. But if you
 7 provided a comment on anything related to subsistence
 8 resources on the Environmental Impact Statement, the
 9 Bureau of Land Management will get all of those comments,
 10 and they'll be fully considered in the analysis.
 11 So with that said, if anybody would like to provide
 12 any comment on subsistence as required by the law, you are
 13 welcome to come up and get the microphone. And just
 14 please give us your name for Mary. If you already
 15 provided testimony and you forgot something or would like
 16 to say something else related to subsistence resources,
 17 you are more than welcome to do that, as well.
 18 So would anybody like to come up? Have you provided
 19 a comment? You are more than welcome to come up again.
 20 I'll wait a minute or two just in case somebody changes
 21 their mind, which sometimes happens.
 22 That was short. Last chance. Anybody? Okay. Thank
 23 you very much. This concludes the 810 hearing. And
 24 again, your comments related to subsistence resources that
 25 most of you -- or many of you provided comment on on the

Page 4

1 EIS, we will be getting those comments, as well. And
 2 again, thank you for your time.
 3 Yes.
 4 **MR. DANIEL ESAI:** Those subsistence
 5 issues, is it for the past or the present or the future,
 6 the comments?
 7 **MR. MARK SPENCER:** It may be all of the
 8 above, whatever you would like to provide us. There is no
 9 sidebars on that, correct.
 10 **MR. DANIEL ESAI:** I'd like to speak a
 11 little bit. On subsistence issues, we have been hunting
 12 in that area from the park boundaries of national park,
 13 Denali National Park, all the way down to the Big River.
 14 Traditionally the Nicolai and Talida people used to go up
 15 there during the summertime and hunt moose, caribou, black
 16 bear and griz. In the old days, they used to make
 17 negadoye. That's called a skin boat. And they would go
 18 up there during the summertime. Nikolai, they had a
 19 village up there by Little Tonzona, and they would go down
 20 East Fork, which is called Tonzona now. And then the
 21 south fork down to Windy Fork. Okay. So in middle fork
 22 and then Big River.
 23 And right there about four miles from the -- where
 24 the present pipeline is, there is an old traditional salt
 25 lick site for the Big River caribou herd. And I've heard

Page 5

1 stories where they get caribou there. And to this day
 2 there is -- my great, great grandpa was one of the first
 3 ones in the area to get a moose. It said so in Ray
 4 Collins' book. I guess they tracked it for about five
 5 days. And there was no moose in the area, so they
 6 depended heavily on the Alaska Range that was -- they were
 7 highly mobile. They didn't stay in an area too long, so
 8 they used the whole range as their food basket.
 9 Talking about natural gas pipeline, like Chief Eddie
 10 Hoffman said a long time ago, there is natural gas up the
 11 Holitna River. How come they don't develop that or do a
 12 hydroelectric project up in the Kilbuck Mountains? I have
 13 been all over the state. And I know the country like the
 14 back of my hand.
 15 What Chief Eddie Hoffman said, the Holitna River is
 16 the breadbasket of the Kuskokwim. Well, I'd like to know
 17 where the breadbasket of the upper Kuskokwim people is.
 18 That's the foothills of the Alaska Range. I'd like to
 19 emphasize that point.
 20 I'm not -- I'm not against the pipeline or anything
 21 like that. It's just a critical habitat. I'd like to
 22 reroute it. And think of the archeological site. Since
 23 the 1840s or 1850s where we have a guiding camp, that used
 24 to be our traditional hunting ground in that wintering
 25 area for Dall sheep.

Page 6

1 We have to think of when we are going to do blasting
 2 during wintertime. We can't do blasting in the project
 3 through in the mountains in the wintertime because the
 4 Dall sheep are already having a tough time. And during
 5 winter range and summer range, there is a difference.
 6 Right there near Windy Fork, that's a traditional sheep
 7 hunting area for our people. And then by Egypt Mountain,
 8 what we call Toghdraya, that used to be a traditional
 9 sheep hunting area, too. But that's called Egypt Mountain
 10 now. So that made me happy when they rerouted, instead of
 11 by way of Rhone, they went by Jones Creek. That's a plus
 12 sign. The critical habitat for mountain goat is on the
 13 original proposed route.
 14 Ray Collins was on the Fish & Game Advisory
 15 Committee, which is run by the State, and we emphasized
 16 real hard. Ray Collins had been an anthropologist here in
 17 McGrath since 1963. And he's not here now. But it's the
 18 same type of spiel.
 19 So that's what I got to say was I'm glad you guys
 20 have an open mind, and I look forward to working with all
 21 these agencies. And thank you for letting me speak.
 22 Tsenan.
 23 **MR. MARK SPENCER:** Thank you for your
 24 comments. Would anybody else like to speak? Okay. This
 25 concludes the 810 hearing. Again, thank you very much for

Page 7

1 your comments on subsistence dealing with both the EIS and
 2 the preliminary analysis. And again, just encourage
 3 everyone, if you have any comments, we have forms in the
 4 back that also provides both written addresses, as well as
 5 email addresses. And I'll turn it over to Keith just to
 6 close out.
 7 **MR. KEITH GORDON:** Thank you very much.
 8 And the same applies for the Draft Environmental Impact
 9 Statement. Currently the comment period closes April 30.
 10 So you can continue to make comments via the forums we
 11 discussed.
 12 Chief, are there any closing comments you would like
 13 to make?
 14 **MR. GEORGE OWLETUK:** I'd like to call this
 15 a pretty good meeting. I'm thrilled that you guys came
 16 out here and gave us a presentation. I have got a couple
 17 of issues. I'm going to talk with Bob Sattler. I've got
 18 to go to Fairbanks on March 11th, and I'll be sitting down
 19 with him. We have a subregional meeting in Fairbanks on
 20 the 12th. And we will talk to him about some issues.
 21 One great issue I got still in the back of my mind is
 22 that the number of tugs pushing barges up to Crooked
 23 Creek. I was just wondering if anybody ever considered a
 24 railroad track between Bethel and Donlin mine.
 25 **MR. KEITH GORDON:** Yes, sir. There have

Page 8

1 been some conversations about whether or not there should
 2 be rail access. I can't -- I don't specifically know
 3 whether it was from Bethel to Donlin or from a
 4 northeastern point down to Donlin.
 5 **MR. GEORGE OWLETUK:** I think that would be
 6 the way to go. But you can't stop progress either way.
 7 You are going to impact the river. I'm worried about our
 8 fish up in this area. You know, they are declining by the
 9 year. And what's it going to do to our fishing habits in
 10 the future with all them tugs going up as far as Crooked
 11 Creek? And like I said, I'll talk with Bob in Fairbanks,
 12 and we will write some comments and mail them off to you.
 13 Again, I want to thank you all for coming out here.
 14 I appreciate people from Nikolai coming down here to say a
 15 few words. I was surprised that nobody from Takotna came
 16 down. I did send a message up that you were going to pay
 17 for fuel for three snowmachines. However, nobody showed
 18 up. But I want to thank you again. Thanks.
 19 **MR. KEITH GORDON:** Thank you, sir. We
 20 thank you all for the opportunity. And we certainly thank
 21 you for your comments. Have a good evening.
 22 (Proceedings adjourned at 6:15 p.m.)
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Page 9

1 **REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE**

2 I, MARY A. VAVRIK, RMR, Notary Public in and for
 3 the State of Alaska do hereby certify:
 4 That the foregoing proceedings were taken before
 5 me at the time and place herein set forth; that the
 6 proceedings were reported stenographically by me and later
 7 transcribed under my direction by computer transcription;
 8 that the foregoing is a true record of the proceedings
 9 taken at that time; and that I am not a party to nor have
 10 I any interest in the outcome of the action herein
 11 contained.
 12 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto subscribed
 13 my hand and affixed my seal this 29th day of February
 14 2016.
 15
 16 _____
 17 MARY A. VAVRIK,
 18 Registered Merit Reporter
 19 Notary Public for Alaska
 20 My Commission Expires: November 5, 2016
 21
 22
 23
 24
 25

A	4:17 Bob (2) 7:17;8:11	conversations (1) 8:1	else (2) 3:16;6:24	5:9,10 gave (1) 7:16
above (1) 4:8	book (1) 5:4	country (1) 5:13	email (1) 7:5	GEORGE (2) 7:14;8:5
access (1) 8:2	both (2) 7:1,4	couple (1) 7:16	emphasize (1) 5:19	glad (1) 6:19
addresses (2) 7:4,5	boundaries (1) 4:12	Creek (3) 6:11;7:23;8:11	emphasized (1) 6:15	goat (1) 6:12
adjourned (1) 8:22	breadbasket (2) 5:16,17	critical (2) 5:21;6:12	encourage (1) 7:2	good (2) 7:15;8:21
Advisory (1) 6:14	Bureau (1) 3:9	Crooked (2) 7:22;8:10	Environmental (2) 3:8;7:8	GORDON (3) 7:7,25;8:19
again (8) 3:4,19,24;4:2;6:25; 7:2;8:13,18	C	Currently (1) 7:9	ESAI (2) 4:4,10	grandpa (1) 5:2
against (1) 5:20	call (2) 6:8;7:14	D	evening (1) 8:21	great (3) 5:2,2;7:21
agencies (1) 6:21	called (3) 4:17,20;6:9	Dall (2) 5:25;6:4	everyone (1) 7:3	griz (1) 4:16
ago (1) 5:10	came (2) 7:15;8:15	DANIEL (2) 4:4,10	F	ground (1) 5:24
ahead (1) 3:2	camp (1) 5:23	day (1) 5:1	Fairbanks (3) 7:18,19;8:11	guess (1) 5:4
Alaska (2) 5:6,18	can (1) 7:10	days (2) 4:16;5:5	far (1) 8:10	guiding (1) 5:23
analysis (3) 3:4,10;7:2	caribou (3) 4:15,25;5:1	dealing (1) 7:1	few (1) 8:15	guys (2) 6:19;7:15
anthropologist (1) 6:16	case (1) 3:20	declining (1) 8:8	first (1) 5:2	H
applies (1) 7:8	case (1) 3:20	Denali (1) 4:13	Fish (2) 6:14;8:8	habitat (2) 5:21;6:12
appreciate (1) 8:14	certainly (1) 8:20	depended (1) 5:6	fishing (1) 8:9	habits (1) 8:9
April (1) 7:9	chance (1) 3:22	determination (1) 3:5	five (1) 5:4	hand (1) 5:14
archeological (1) 5:22	changes (1) 3:20	develop (1) 5:11	food (1) 5:8	happens (1) 3:21
area (8) 4:12;5:3,5,7,25;6:7, 9;8:8	Chief (3) 5:9,15;7:12	difference (1) 6:5	foothills (1) 5:18	happy (1) 6:10
B	close (1) 7:6	discussed (1) 7:11	forgot (1) 3:15	hard (1) 6:16
back (3) 5:14;7:4,21	closes (1) 7:9	Donlin (3) 7:24;8:3,4	Fork (5) 4:20,21,21,21;6:6	heard (1) 4:25
barges (1) 7:22	closing (1) 7:12	down (7) 4:13,19,21;7:18;8:4, 14,16	forms (1) 7:3	hearing (3) 3:6,23;6:25
basket (1) 5:8	Collins (2) 6:14,16	Draft (1) 7:8	forums (1) 7:10	heavily (1) 5:6
bear (1) 4:16	Collins' (1) 5:4	during (4) 4:15,18;6:2,4	forward (1) 6:20	herd (1) 4:25
Bethel (2) 7:24;8:3	coming (2) 8:13,14	E	four (1) 4:23	highly (1) 5:7
Big (3) 4:13,22,25	comment (5) 3:7,12,19,25;7:9	East (1) 4:20	fuel (1) 8:17	Hoffman (2) 5:10,15
bit (2) 3:3;4:11	comments (11) 3:9,24;4:1,6;6:24; 7:1,3,10,12;8:12,21	Eddie (2) 5:9,15	fully (1) 3:10	Holitna (2) 5:11,15
black (1) 4:15	Committee (1) 6:15	Egypt (2) 6:7,9	future (2) 4:5;8:10	hunt (1) 4:15
blasting (2) 6:1,2	concludes (2) 3:23;6:25	EIS (2) 4:1;7:1	G	hunting (4) 4:11;5:24;6:7,9
boat (1)	considered (2) 3:10;7:23	either (1) 8:6	Game (1) 6:14	hydroelectric (1) 5:12
	continue (1) 7:10		gas (2)	

	meeting (2) 7:15,19	5:3		significantly (1) 3:5
I	message (1) 8:16	open (1) 6:20	R	site (2) 4:25;5:22
Impact (3) 3:8;7:8;8:7	microphone (1) 3:13	opportunity (1) 8:20	rail (1) 8:2	sitting (1) 7:18
instead (1) 6:10	middle (1) 4:21	original (1) 6:13	railroad (1) 7:24	skin (1) 4:17
issue (1) 7:21	miles (1) 4:23	out (3) 7:6,16;8:13	Range (5) 5:6,8,18;6:5,5	snowmachines (1) 8:17
issues (4) 4:5,11;7:17,20	mind (3) 3:21;6:20;7:21	over (2) 5:13;7:5	Ray (3) 5:3;6:14,16	somebody (1) 3:20
J	mine (1) 7:24	OWLETUK (2) 7:14;8:5	real (1) 6:16	sometimes (1) 3:21
Jones (1) 6:11	minute (1) 3:20	P	redundant (1) 3:3	south (1) 4:21
K	mobile (1) 5:7	park (3) 4:12,12,13	related (3) 3:7,16,24	speak (3) 4:10;6:21,24
Keith (4) 7:5,7,25;8:19	moose (3) 4:15;5:3,5	past (1) 4:5	required (1) 3:12	specifically (1) 8:2
Kilbuck (1) 5:12	more (2) 3:17,19	pay (1) 8:16	requires (1) 3:6	SPENCER (3) 3:2;4:7;6:23
Kuskokwim (2) 5:16,17	most (1) 3:25	people (4) 4:14;5:17;6:7;8:14	reroute (1) 5:22	spiel (1) 6:18
L	Mountain (3) 6:7,9,12	period (1) 7:9	rerouted (1) 6:10	start (1) 3:3
Land (1) 3:9	Mountains (2) 5:12;6:3	pipeline (3) 4:24;5:9,20	resources (3) 3:8,16,24	state (2) 5:13;6:15
Last (1) 3:22	much (3) 3:23;6:25;7:7	please (1) 3:14	restrict (1) 3:5	Statement (2) 3:8;7:9
law (2) 3:5,12	N	plus (1) 6:11	Rhone (1) 6:11	stay (1) 5:7
letting (1) 6:21	name (1) 3:14	pm (1) 8:22	right (2) 4:23;6:6	still (1) 7:21
lick (1) 4:25	national (2) 4:12,13	point (2) 5:19;8:4	River (6) 4:13,22,25;5:11,15;	stop (1) 8:6
little (3) 3:3;4:11,19	natural (2) 5:9,10	preliminary (2) 3:4;7:2	8:7	stories (1) 5:1
long (2) 5:7,10	near (1) 6:6	present (2) 4:5,24	route (1) 6:13	subregional (1) 7:19
look (1) 6:20	negadoye (1) 4:17	presentation (1) 7:16	run (1) 6:15	subsistence (7) 3:7,12,16,24;4:4,11;
M	Nicolai (1) 4:14	pretty (1) 7:15	S	7:1
mail (1) 8:12	Nikolai (2) 4:18;8:14	Proceedings (1) 8:22	salt (1) 4:24	summer (1) 6:5
Management (1) 3:9	nobody (2) 8:15,17	P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S (1) 3:1	same (2) 6:18;7:8	summertime (2) 4:15,18
many (1) 3:25	northeastern (1) 8:4	progress (1) 8:6	Sattler (1) 7:17	surprised (1) 8:15
March (1) 7:18	number (1) 7:22	project (2) 5:12;6:2	send (1) 8:16	T
MARK (3) 3:2;4:7;6:23	O	proposed (1) 6:13	separate (1) 3:6	Takotna (1) 8:15
Mary (1) 3:14	off (1) 8:12	provide (2) 3:11;4:8	sheep (4) 5:25;6:4,6,9	Talida (1) 4:14
may (3) 3:3,5;4:7	old (2) 4:16,24	provided (4) 3:7,15,18,25	short (1) 3:22	talk (3) 7:17,20;8:11
McGrath (1) 6:17	one (2) 5:2;7:21	provides (1) 7:4	showed (1) 8:17	Talking (1) 5:9
	ones (1)	pushing (1) 7:22	sidebars (1) 4:9	testimony (1) 3:15
			sign (1) 6:12	Thanks (1)

8:18 three (1) 8:17 thrilled (1) 7:15 Toghdraya (1) 6:8 Tonzona (2) 4:19,20 tough (1) 6:4 track (1) 7:24 tracked (1) 5:4 traditional (4) 4:24;5:24;6:6,8 Traditionally (1) 4:14 Tsenan (1) 6:22 tugs (2) 7:22;8:10 turn (1) 7:5 two (1) 3:20 type (1) 6:18	6:5 wintering (1) 5:24 wintertime (2) 6:2,3 wondering (1) 7:23 words (1) 8:15 working (1) 6:20 worried (1) 8:7 write (1) 8:12 written (1) 7:4			
U	Y			
up (13) 3:13,18,19;4:14,18, 19;5:10,12;7:22;8:8, 10,16,18 upper (1) 5:17 used (5) 4:14,16;5:8,23;6:8	year (1) 8:9	1		
	11th (1) 7:18 12th (1) 7:20 1840s (1) 5:23 1850s (1) 5:23 1963 (1) 6:17			
V	3			
via (1) 7:10 village (1) 4:19	30 (1) 7:9	6		
W	6:15 (1) 8:22	8		
wait (1) 3:20 way (4) 4:13;6:11;8:6,6 welcome (3) 3:13,17,19 what's (1) 8:9 whole (1) 5:8 Windy (2) 4:21;6:6 winter (1)	810 (2) 3:23;6:25			