

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

DONLIN GOLD PROJECT
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
PUBLIC MEETING

LOWER KALSKAG, ALASKA

Taken April 5, 2016
Commencing at 1:35 p.m.

Volume I - Pages 1 - 59, Inclusive

Taken at
Lower Town Hall
Lower Kalskag, Alaska

Reported by:
Mary A. Vavrik, RMR

Page 2

1 For U.S. Army Corps of Engineers:
 2 Keith Gordon
 3 Project Manager
 4 For U.S. Bureau of Land Management:
 5 Alan Bittner
 6 Anchorage Field Office Manager
 7 For AECOM:
 8 Taylor Brelsford
 9 Social Science Lead
 10 Nancy Darigo
 11 Physical Science Lead
 12 Jessica Evans
 13 Public Involvement Lead
 14 David Every
 15 Biological Science Lead
 16 Donne Fleagle
 17 Senior Rural Outreach Lead
 18 Taken by:
 19 Mary A. Vavrik, RMR
 20
 21 BE IT KNOWN that the aforementioned proceedings were taken
 22 at the time and place duly noted on the title page, before
 23 Mary A. Vavrik, Registered Merit Reporter and Notary
 24 Public within and for the State of Alaska.
 25

Page 4

1 the process. So everything from helping define what we
 2 analyze to helping define whether or not the analysis is
 3 adequate and how we should go about it.
 4 All right. Our agenda today is an opening
 5 presentation in which I'll discuss what I just mentioned
 6 regarding what Donlin is proposing to do, as well as the
 7 status of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. After
 8 I go through this brief presentation, we will do a poster
 9 session. You can see that we have hung a dozen posters on
 10 the wall that describe what Donlin is proposing to do, as
 11 well as the analyses that's included in the Draft
 12 Environmental Impact Statement in relation to the primary
 13 resources impacted that most folks were concerned about at
 14 scoping.
 15 After we go through that poster session, which will
 16 take anywhere from 30 to 45 minutes -- or less or more
 17 time if you all would like -- we will reconvene to take
 18 your comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement,
 19 after which the Bureau of Land Management will do a formal
 20 ANILCA 810 hearing to document your comments regarding
 21 subsistence.
 22 Alan, would you like to mention a little background
 23 on the 810?
 24 **MR. ALAN BITTNER:** Hi. My name is Alan
 25 Bittner with the Bureau of Land Management. And because

Page 3

1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S
 2 **MR. KEITH GORDON:** Good afternoon, folks.
 3 We thank you very much for your patience waiting for us to
 4 get set up. Obviously, our flight was a little delayed
 5 getting out of Aniak this morning.
 6 My name is Keith Gordon. I'm a project manager with
 7 the Army Corps of Engineers Alaska District Regulatory
 8 Division. We're here today to give you a little bit of
 9 information about the proposed Donlin Gold Mine Project if
 10 you are not familiar with it, as well as status on the
 11 Draft Environmental Impact Statement that is currently out
 12 and available for you to comment on through the 30th of
 13 April. We will also be doing an 810 ANILCA hearing via
 14 the Bureau of Land Management, which we will talk about in
 15 just a minute.
 16 The Army Corps of Engineers is the lead federal
 17 agency for development of the Donlin Environmental Impact
 18 Statement. The Army Corps of Engineers is assisted by 11
 19 cooperators in the development of that Environmental
 20 Impact Statement. Five of the six federal and State
 21 agencies that are assisting us you can see on the screen.
 22 And then there is half a dozen Native communities that are
 23 also cooperators.
 24 A cooperator is someone who assists in the
 25 development of the EIS and in just about every aspect of

Page 5

1 of the potential impacts to subsistence based on this
 2 proposed project, we are conducting an ANILCA 810 hearing.
 3 So we will give a short presentation in a little bit, our
 4 preliminary analysis related to subsistence, and then we
 5 will conduct a short 810 hearing at the end of the
 6 proceedings here today to receive testimony from you if
 7 you would like to tell us about subsistence. Thanks.
 8 **MR. KEITH GORDON:** Thank you very much.
 9 Okay. If you are not familiar with it already, I'll
 10 just give you a very brief overview of what Donlin is
 11 currently proposing to do by way of the proposed project.
 12 The proposed project, the mine site itself has three
 13 primary components, and there are three primary components
 14 to the project overall.
 15 We will start with the mine site. At the mine site,
 16 you can see on the screen we have the numbers 1, 2, and 3.
 17 No. 1 represents the pit that would be created if Donlin
 18 were to open the mine. Donlin is proposing what would be
 19 the largest open pit gold mine in the state of Alaska.
 20 Their pit would actually be initially two pits, the ACMA
 21 and Lewis pits, which would be combined later in the
 22 process to a single pit. That pit, depending on whether
 23 you are measuring its depth from the lowest side of it or
 24 the highest side of it, is anywhere from 1,100 feet deep
 25 to 1,850 feet deep. The pit is about 2.2 square miles in

Page 6

1 size.

2 The next primary facility that you see, Nos. 2 and 3,

3 relate to what Donlin has to do with the material that

4 they mine. In the middle of that whole facility is the

5 mill facility. Obviously, once Donlin removes the

6 overburden and starts taking rock out that contains enough

7 gold to be considered ore that is economical to process,

8 they would run that ore through the mill facility, crush

9 the rock, remove the gold via a chemical process, and

10 what's left over is -- one of the components that's left

11 over is referred to as tailings.

12 Tailings are basically crushed rock, ground up to a

13 very fine point, effectively, so that they can move it as

14 a slurry. And what comes out of that mill is this slurry

15 of water and rock and some residual chemicals that would

16 all go into that valley that you see there under No. 2 in

17 relation to the tailings storage facility.

18 That tailings storage facility would be about 3.5

19 square miles in size, and all those tailings and all the

20 water that's constrained in it are held in place by a

21 downslope dam that would reside there in perpetuity.

22 The third primary component of the project, to get to

23 the ore, the gold-bearing rock, Donlin has to remove a

24 substantial quantity of overburden, rock and other soils,

25 et cetera, that just is not reasonable to process or

Page 7

1 doesn't contain gold. That rock and any rock removed that

2 didn't have enough gold in it to be worth processing would

3 go into this waste rock facility you see depicted by

4 No. 3. That waste rock facility is also approximately 3.5

5 square miles in size and would remain after mining was

6 completed.

7 As far as the pit itself, that also, of course, would

8 remain after mining was completed and would fill with

9 water over approximately 50 to 55 years.

10 Okay. I mentioned there is three primary components

11 to Donlin's overall project. Those are the mine site, the

12 transportation facilities, and the pipeline.

13 This is the second of those three primary components,

14 the transportation facilities. The pink blob you see in

15 the center of the screen is the mine site itself. To

16 supply material to the mine as Donlin is proposing it,

17 they would barge fuel and cargo up the Kuskokwim River to

18 a new industrial port facility, a private industrial port

19 facility at Jungjuk. The port facility at Jungjuk is

20 connected to the mine site by a proposed 30-mile road.

21 And along that road is a variety of materials sites that

22 Donlin would need to open to build the road, maintain the

23 road, et cetera.

24 In addition to the road, there is a 5,000-foot

25 airstrip that would need to be constructed so that folks

Page 8

1 can fly in to work at the mine, whether it's during

2 construction or during operations, as well as a camp

3 facility along the road.

4 In addition to those facilities, Donlin is expected

5 to use approximately 40 million gallons of diesel every

6 year. The diesel is actually used to power the heavy mine

7 equipment, the equipment primarily that operates in the

8 pit itself, versus the fuel that would be used to operate

9 the mill facilities and other facilities. That fuel is

10 proposed to be natural gas, and that fuel would be

11 supplied to the mine site via a 315-mile long, 14-inch

12 diameter buried steel pipeline that is proposed to run

13 from the western side of Cook Inlet at Beluga over to the

14 mine site itself.

15 The project, if constructed as proposed, takes

16 approximately three to four years to construct, is

17 expected to operate for approximately 27 and a half years,

18 and then closure and reclamation would be conducted to

19 reclaim those areas that could be reclaimed to varying

20 degrees. It's important to note, however, that closure

21 does not only happen at the end of the mine life. For

22 instance, there are some facilities that Donlin may need

23 during construction that are only needed during

24 construction. So as soon as construction is over or

25 sometime during construction, those facilities would be

Page 9

1 reclaimed to the degree they propose to reclaim them to.

2 There are also a variety of facilities that might be

3 needed only for a portion of the operational life of the

4 mine and would be reclaimed somewhere during the life of

5 the mine.

6 The vast majority of the facilities that would be

7 reclaimed would be reclaimed after mining ceased. So as

8 you note, I mentioned that the pit lake stays -- the pit

9 stays and becomes a big pit lake as it fills with water

10 over 50 to 55 years. The tailings storage facility stays.

11 It is proposed to have its surface contoured and some

12 growth medium put over the top of it to facilitate

13 revegetation. The waste rock facility is proposed to see

14 that same thing, recontouring of the surface to facilitate

15 revegetation to the degree possible. There is a whole

16 variety of facilities that would be effectively reclaimed.

17 There is also some facilities, things called shoofly

18 roads, that are proposed. These are short little

19 construction segments of roads that are proposed to be

20 built in along some segments of the pipeline to facilitate

21 construction of the pipeline, whether that's actual

22 construction of the pipeline, access to a materials site,

23 or access to a water source. Those roads are proposed to

24 be reclaimed by putting material on the surface to help it

25 revegetate, but the road prism, the fill, the gravel,

Page 10

1 et cetera, that's put in place is proposed to stay there.
 2 So when we talk about closure and reclamation, it
 3 just depends on what facility we are talking about and
 4 when. Some would effectively be completely reclaimed. In
 5 some cases by way of mitigation, there might be creation
 6 of habitat that doesn't currently exist that is considered
 7 beneficial. In other cases, facilities might not be
 8 reclaimed simply because it's not engineering -- the
 9 engineering or the natural science just doesn't allow
 10 reclamation. For instance, the pit itself, they don't
 11 have -- they wouldn't have the rock to put back in there,
 12 the tailings, et cetera. So they could never actually
 13 fill that all the way back up to where it used to be.
 14 The next couple of slides give you a little
 15 information on the permits, the authorizations required
 16 for this project. There is over 100 authorizations
 17 required for this project if Donlin is permitted to
 18 construct it; federal, State, authorizations from Native
 19 communities, et cetera, that are needed before the project
 20 could go forward. This is just an indication of some of
 21 the primary federal authorizations necessary.
 22 And this slide gives you a little bit of information
 23 on some of the primary State authorizations that are
 24 necessary for the project to go forward.
 25 As far as the Environmental Impact Statement I was

Page 11

1 referring to, this document is available for you all to
 2 comment on that discloses what Donlin is proposing to do,
 3 the potential effects of Donlin's proposal and how they
 4 propose to reclaim any portion of it that they propose to
 5 or can reclaim. That document, as I mentioned, is out and
 6 available for you all to comment on through the 30th of
 7 April.
 8 Very briefly, we were in the lower Kuskokwim -- the
 9 whole Kuskokwim River region between October 2012 and 2013
 10 to get what's referred to as scoping comments from various
 11 communities. The purpose of those comments was to help us
 12 define what we needed to analyze in the Environmental
 13 Impact Statement by way of disclosing impacts and
 14 analyzing the potential effects of the project. We used
 15 those scoping comments to develop the Draft Environmental
 16 Impact Statement that is out there for you all to comment
 17 on now.
 18 And that gold bubble oval is where we are at now, the
 19 comment process that, as I mentioned, is currently open
 20 until April 30 of this year. After we get your comments
 21 on the draft EIS, what we will do is look at those
 22 comments and determine if there is any additional analyses
 23 we need to do, if there is analyses we did that we need to
 24 redo, if there is additional field work we need to do, if
 25 there is additional studies we need to do, et cetera. And

Page 12

1 any comments you make today or before the end of the
 2 comment closure period, the response to your comments
 3 would actually appear in the Final Environmental Impact
 4 Statement.
 5 So while we will take your comments today and we may
 6 be able to answer some questions if you have them, the
 7 vast majority of comments made will actually be addressed
 8 when we publish the Final Environmental Impact Statement a
 9 little over a year from now.
 10 Then once that Final Environmental Impact Statement
 11 has been put out for everyone, the federal agencies who
 12 use it to make a decision regarding whether or not we can
 13 permit the project would use that document and other
 14 information to develop what's referred to as a Record of
 15 Decision. And that Record of Decision is simply the
 16 document that indicates whether we can permit Donlin's
 17 project as Donlin is proposing to construct it, whether we
 18 permit some alternative to what Donlin is proposing to
 19 construct, or whether we could not permit at all.
 20 And please note that there is almost no entity who
 21 makes a decision on this project who typically requires
 22 another entity to make the same decision. So if the Corps
 23 of Engineers makes a decision to permit what Donlin
 24 proposes and another entity makes a decision to permit an
 25 alternative to what Donlin proposes, well, then, those

Page 13

1 entities would need to sit down and figure out how to come
 2 to some resolution so that they both came up with
 3 something that could actually be permitted by both.
 4 Okay. Very briefly I'll run you through the first
 5 half a dozen chapters of the Environmental Impact
 6 Statement. And my purpose here is just to give you
 7 briefly an indication of what's in these chapters so you
 8 have an idea of what you might want to look at in the
 9 Draft Environmental Impact Statement.
 10 The Army Corps of Engineers, because of our role as
 11 the lead federal agency and because of our permitting
 12 authorities under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and
 13 Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act, is required to
 14 define not only the overall purpose of the project from a
 15 NEPA standpoint, but from the standpoint of our permitting
 16 authorities.
 17 The Corps developed the overall purpose that you can
 18 see on the screen, but I do need to note that the document
 19 that we put out had an administrative error in it. We
 20 have another half a sentence added after the words
 21 "Western Alaska," which indicates that part of our purpose
 22 is to maximize economic benefit of the project from the
 23 standpoint of Donlin's stockholders and Calista and TKC
 24 shareholders.
 25 Well, what I didn't mention earlier is the Army Corps

Page 14

1 of Engineers' role at this point in the process from a
 2 NEPA standpoint and our authorities is to do unbiased
 3 middle-of-the-road analyses where we are taking
 4 everybody's input and we are coming up with an unbiased
 5 decision by way of the NEPA analysis regarding the pluses
 6 and minuses of the project. Therefore, we can't
 7 excessively weight the economic benefit of the project too
 8 substantially to one entity or another. So the whole
 9 reason I'm pointing that out is because, if you look at
 10 the overall purpose that's in the document, it says
 11 something other than what you are seeing on the screen.
 12 And what's on the screen is actually what the analyses are
 13 based on. Okay. And you can also see the need for the
 14 project as it's been noted in the document.
 15 I mentioned mitigation earlier. Mitigation is
 16 basically a way you can potentially minimize the negative
 17 impacts of a project someone is proposing to do by finding
 18 another way to do it or doing it by a means or mechanism
 19 that eliminates or avoids some of the impacts.
 20 (Phone connection was discontinued.)
 21 **MR. KEITH GORDON:** Okay. There were over
 22 300 options that were developed that could be used to
 23 develop alternatives or could have become alternatives.
 24 What you see on the screen are the seven alternatives that
 25 went forward for detailed analysis in the Environmental

Page 16

1 alternative potentially minimizes impacts of the barging
 2 on the Kuskokwim River. It potentially impacts or
 3 minimizes the potential for spill of diesel on the river,
 4 et cetera.
 5 Alternative 3B, this alternative potentially
 6 minimizes impacts of diesel usage at the mine by supplying
 7 diesel to the mine via a pipeline instead of barging it up
 8 the Kuskokwim River. So you remember that slide I showed
 9 you of the pipeline route that ran from western Cook Inlet
 10 over to the mine site? Under this alternative, you still
 11 have a pipeline running from western Cook Inlet over to
 12 the mine site, but instead of being a natural gas
 13 pipeline, it would be a diesel pipeline, and it would be
 14 19 miles longer because it would actually start just south
 15 of Tyonek. The whole pipeline length would be 334 miles
 16 long. This alternative also requires the improvement to
 17 the North Foreland Barge Facility.
 18 So one of the things we are trying to point out by
 19 way of discussion of these alternatives is that anytime we
 20 change how we might do a project, we potentially offset
 21 change -- the potential impacts of the project and we also
 22 change how we weigh and balance the potential impacts of
 23 projects.
 24 Okay. Alternative 4 is the Birch Tree Crossing
 25 alternative. This alternative I'll show you on the next

Page 15

1 Impact Statement. And I won't run through them on this
 2 screen, as we are about to look at them very briefly as we
 3 go through this. But one thing I will note is
 4 Alternative 2, Donlin Gold's proposed action, we won't
 5 talk about that further in the next couple of slides
 6 because you have already seen that by way of the
 7 description of what Donlin is proposing to do on previous
 8 slides.
 9 When we do unbiased middle-of-the-road analyses, we
 10 are required to always start by comparing someone's
 11 proposed project to the no action alternative. The no
 12 action alternative simply means that nothing would happen.
 13 No project would be built, no change to what's out there
 14 now. So the no action alternative is just the
 15 environmental, social, et cetera, conditions that
 16 currently exist in this area of the Kuskokwim River
 17 region.
 18 Alternative 3A, how does this alternative potentially
 19 minimize impacts of the proposed project? Alternative 3A
 20 involves powering those heavy haul trucks that would
 21 operate inside the mine by liquid natural gas instead of
 22 by diesel. So those 300-ton payload capacity trucks would
 23 be powered by liquid natural gas instead of diesel. What
 24 that means is less diesel has to be barged up the
 25 Kuskokwim River to the mine site. Therefore, this

Page 17

1 slide. I'll give you a graphic of it. The advantage of
 2 this alternative is it potentially reduces barging
 3 distance on the Kuskokwim River by 75 miles. So instead
 4 of the barges running all the way upstream to that
 5 proposed industrial port site at Jungjuk, they would
 6 actually run upstream to an industrial port site at Birch
 7 Tree Crossing.
 8 So the red blob on the right side of the screen is
 9 the proposed mine site, and immediately south of it by
 10 approximately ten miles you can see a road that runs down
 11 to Crooked Creek. You remember, as I mentioned earlier,
 12 Donlin is proposing a 30-mile road to a new industrial
 13 port facility at Jungjuk.
 14 Alternative 4, the change is that instead of having
 15 this 30-mile-long road down to a port site at Jungjuk,
 16 what you end up with is a 76-mile-long road, that purple
 17 line, that would run all the way down to an industrial
 18 port facility at Birch Tree Crossing.
 19 And so your question is, well, okay, what really are
 20 the benefits of that? Well, if virtually all the fuel and
 21 cargo came to the Birch Tree Crossing port facility, what
 22 that means is, save for some limited amount of barging on
 23 the Kuskokwim River during construction, all the fuel and
 24 cargo effectively would be barged to the Birch Tree
 25 Crossing port site, and you eliminate virtually all the

Page 18

1 impacts of barging from this proposed project upstream of
 2 that point.
 3 Of the half a dozen areas that we are aware that
 4 barges potentially strand or do strand upstream of Birch
 5 Tree Crossing -- not upstream -- five of the six areas
 6 where barges strand in that section of the river are
 7 upstream from Birch Tree Crossing. So we are -- this
 8 alternative would limit the potential for stranding by
 9 avoidance of those five shallow spots and narrow spots on
 10 the river.
 11 Alternative 5A. So far all the alternatives we
 12 talked about talk about primarily limiting the impacts of
 13 barging and diesel consumption or changing how diesel is
 14 consumed or quantities. This alternative deals with the
 15 tailings storage facility.
 16 You remember that 3.5-square-mile area that fills a
 17 portion of the valley with tailings? Well, under this
 18 alternative, what you would actually have, you would still
 19 have a tailings storage facility that had tailings in it,
 20 but the tailings in it would be a much drier type of
 21 tailing. Effectively, the tailings under this alternative
 22 are dried substantially after leaving the mill, and the
 23 water that comes out of them is stored in the operating
 24 pond downstream of the tailings storage facility.
 25 So the slide you originally saw of the tailings

Page 19

1 storage facility that occupied about a 3.5-square-mile
 2 footprint, well, this tailings storage facility is much
 3 smaller, but because the tailings are drier, they are
 4 also stacked up substantially higher. Because they are
 5 stacked up substantially higher, there is greater
 6 potential for wind erosion of those tailings and
 7 deposition of dust in the area overall.
 8 It's important to note under this alternative that
 9 the tailings dam in relation to what Donlin is proposing,
 10 they were proposing a single large dam to retain the
 11 tailings. Under this alternative, because the footprint
 12 is smaller, the landscape position of that tailings
 13 facility means you have two smaller dams retaining the
 14 tailings and one downstream hydraulic dam retaining all
 15 that water that's removed from the tailings.
 16 The operating pond, that water body that we are
 17 showing on the screen, would only exist during mining.
 18 Post-mining, that water would all be pumped over to the
 19 pit.
 20 And one of the things that I didn't mention earlier
 21 is there would be a requirement if this project goes
 22 forward that all the water released from the mine site,
 23 from any of its facilities, et cetera, meet federal and
 24 State water quality standards. So if Donlin's project
 25 goes forward as proposed or in any form where the project

Page 20

1 is constructed, water would have to be treated in
 2 perpetuity because, obviously, if these facilities are
 3 going to remain in perpetuity, there is going to be water
 4 infiltrating through them or coming off them; and that
 5 water, before it could go back to Crooked Creek, the
 6 Kuskokwim River, et cetera, needs to meet federal and
 7 State water quality standards.
 8 Alternative 6A is the Dalzell Gorge pipeline route.
 9 You remember that 315-mile-long pipeline route I showed
 10 you earlier? Well, one of the advantages of this
 11 alternative is that it's a couple of miles shorter than
 12 what Donlin is proposing because a portion of the pipeline
 13 route is rerouted, but one of the drawbacks of this
 14 alternative is that that route potentially has greater
 15 impact on the Iditarod Trail.
 16 Donlin's route is the pipeline route that you see
 17 depicted in gold on the screen. This Alternative 6A
 18 route, the Dalzell Gorge route, is depicted in purple on
 19 the screen.
 20 Okay. That was Chapters 1 and 2 of the document.
 21 I'm going to try to, in the next couple of minutes, give
 22 you a little bit of information on Chapter 3, and then we
 23 will wrap up the last couple of chapters really quickly
 24 and move on to the next portion of this.
 25 What we are doing in the next couple of slides is

Page 21

1 taking Chapter 3 and giving you examples of the analyses
 2 that are in it that you might want to comment on and how
 3 the analyses are structured and why.
 4 When we consider a project like Donlin or any other
 5 project, we look at the types of resource impacts it might
 6 have. Donlin's proposed project is considered at this
 7 point to have impacts to basically 26 major resource
 8 categories, whether we are talking about air quality,
 9 water quality, wetlands, visual resources, climate change,
 10 surface water hydrology. There is 26 of these primary
 11 resource categories that can be impacted by Donlin's
 12 proposed project.
 13 This slide is intended to depict the 14 that we think
 14 could be impacted by barge traffic. So what we are
 15 wanting to know from you all is: Not just in relation to
 16 barge traffic, but in relation to the document overall, is
 17 our analysis of the potential effects of this project
 18 adequately detailed? Is it adequately defined?
 19 And what I haven't mentioned yet is that -- I keep
 20 referring to this Draft Environmental Impact Statement.
 21 Well, the Draft Environmental Impact Statement contains
 22 the draft analyses of the potential impacts of this
 23 project and draft conclusions that have been drawn. So
 24 what we are wanting to know from you all is: Is the draft
 25 analysis adequate? Is there anything additional that

Page 22

1 needs to be done or redone? And are the draft conclusions
 2 reasonable based on what you are seeing and what Donlin is
 3 proposing to construct?
 4 Continuing the barging example, this slide is
 5 intended to give you another example of the types of
 6 information you would find in the document, again, using
 7 barging as an example. Based on what we are currently
 8 aware of, to our knowledge there are 68 riverine barges
 9 that leave Bethel and run upstream some distance before
 10 they turn around and go downstream every summer. And
 11 typically the barge configurations that we are aware occur
 12 on the Kuskokwim River include a small tug pushing one or
 13 two barges some distance upstream before it comes back
 14 downstream.
 15 So what's depicted in that burnt gold color on the
 16 screen are the 68 barge trips that happen each year. And
 17 the screen -- the reason you have two sets of bar graphs
 18 there, on the right side of the screen you see the
 19 construction period and barging that would occur in the
 20 construction period under these various alternatives. And
 21 on the left side of the screen you see the barging that
 22 would occur during operations.
 23 So the purpose of this slide is to depict that during
 24 construction, virtually regardless of which alternative we
 25 select, the impact of barging of this project is basically

Page 23

1 the same. Obviously, under the no action alternative,
 2 Alternative 1, if nothing is constructed, well, there is
 3 no additional barging. So all you have is those 68 trips
 4 you currently have. But it's important to note that when
 5 you are looking at a document like this, the graphs and
 6 tables don't always tell the whole story.
 7 You remember I mentioned that Donlin's alternative,
 8 Alternative 2, involves barging all the way up to the
 9 Jungjuk port site versus Alternative 4, which means you
 10 only need to barge, except for a portion of construction,
 11 up to the Birch Tree Crossing site? Well, both of those
 12 alternatives are shown under the same bar graph because
 13 the volume of traffic is the same under each alternative.
 14 What we are not able to depict is that the distance cargo
 15 and fuel barges go upstream under Alternative 4 is less.
 16 So whenever you are looking at a document like this,
 17 please don't look just at the tables and figures. If you
 18 have something you are interested in, please also take a
 19 look at the text so you are sure that what you are seeing
 20 is actually everything that the project might impact.
 21 The next side of that, the operations side, just
 22 gives you an indication that if Donlin were to permit --
 23 if Donlin were to construct the project as they propose,
 24 there is effectively a 179 percent increase in barge
 25 traffic on the Kuskokwim River. And you can see that on

Page 24

1 the left side of the screen. That's a 179 percent
 2 increase over what currently exists.
 3 And you see the same thing that we have been talking
 4 about in these other alternatives. The LNG haul truck
 5 alternative, because you use less diesel, well, there is
 6 less barging related to the project because there is less
 7 diesel being barged upstream. And if you continue all the
 8 way over to the left side of the screen, Alternative 3B,
 9 the diesel pipeline route, well, there is even -- you
 10 basically don't have to barge any diesel upstream, save
 11 for a small quantity during construction.
 12 So the only -- that light blue under Alternative 3B
 13 effectively represents almost nothing but cargo barging
 14 that would be related to the proposed project under that
 15 alternative.
 16 The best way I can depict the change in barging that
 17 you might see if Donlin's project is constructed as they
 18 propose it, currently right now if you were standing on
 19 the shoreline of the Kuskokwim River somewhere upstream of
 20 Bethel during this last summer, in a 24-hour period you
 21 would have seen a small tug pushing one or two barges
 22 going upstream in that 24-hour window. Now if this
 23 project is permitted as Donlin is proposing to do it in
 24 that same 24-hour period, you would see three tugs pushing
 25 barges. And Donlin's configuration, as they propose it

Page 25

1 for cargo, is a larger tug pushing four cargo barges. For
 2 fuel it can be one or two barges.
 3 So what you would see in that same 24-hour period is
 4 three tugs pushing barges, and it could be two four-barge
 5 configurations pushed by tugs and a small tug pushing one
 6 or two barges, or it could be any combination of those
 7 variations. But basically three tugs and barges passing
 8 you instead of one is basically what it boils down to.
 9 Okay. Very briefly, the next two slides, when we are
 10 asking you whether or not we understand the environment
 11 you all live in out here, we are using, again, the
 12 potential of barges that impact fish. To give you an idea
 13 of what's included in the Draft Environmental Impact
 14 Statement, the Draft Environmental Impact Statement at
 15 this point concludes for Alternative 2, Donlin's proposed
 16 project, that barge traffic could have a moderate impact
 17 on fish, meaning whether the fish are disturbed, weather
 18 habitat is disturbed, whether their feeding is disturbed,
 19 whether they are injured or killed by a propeller, we
 20 expect the impacts to be moderate, except in narrow or
 21 shallow segments of the river where the impacts might be
 22 slightly larger.
 23 Again, you see the same trend you saw on the earlier
 24 discussion of the other alternatives. Each time we lessen
 25 the amount of barges going upstream under Alternative 3A,

Page 26

1 3B or 4, we potentially lessen the impacts to fish.
 2 So again, this is just an example of how the analysis
 3 is put together. And the question for you all is: What
 4 do you think of our draft conclusions that are in the
 5 document?
 6 This is another slide that gives you basically the
 7 same thing you have seen over and over again. The
 8 alternatives are intended to minimize impacts to the
 9 project. So again, this is a depiction that there is the
 10 potential for some of the alternatives to minimize some of
 11 the impacts of barging on fish, but then there is also
 12 tradeoffs. Anytime we go with one of these alternatives
 13 versus what Donlin is proposing, there are potentially
 14 other impacts that could occur, and we need your opinion
 15 on those, as well.
 16 Okay. To wrap this up, Chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 4
 17 is cumulative impacts. With cumulative impacts, we are
 18 effectively forecasting the potential impacts of a project
 19 into the future. Cumulative impacts are all past,
 20 present, and reasonably foreseeable impacts of a project.
 21 So we have looked at what's happened in the past in the
 22 Kuskokwim and the Yukon River regions. We've looked at
 23 what is currently happening. And we look at what we think
 24 is going to happen in the next number of years, the
 25 proposed life of Donlin's project, which carries out

Page 28

1 just before we go to the poster session, all the other
 2 folks that are here in the room today will introduce
 3 themselves, give you an idea of their role in the project,
 4 and give you an idea which of these posters they can talk
 5 to you about. And when we take break, like I said, we
 6 will have 30, 45 minutes, whatever you all need, to talk
 7 about the information you see on those posters, as well as
 8 what Donlin is proposing.
 9 So the whole point of our coming out here today in
 10 relation to the Environmental Impact Statement is to give
 11 you all an opportunity to provide us substantive comments
 12 on the document so that we know if there is any more work
 13 we need to do.
 14 And I need to define what I mean by way of a
 15 substantive comment. If you make a comment on the
 16 project, whether you are for it, whether you are against
 17 it, whether you are somewhere in between, it helps us if
 18 we know why you have the position you have on the project.
 19 The why is the thing that tells us whether or not we have
 20 adequately analyzed the potential impacts of the project
 21 or not.
 22 I mentioned earlier that responses to your comments
 23 on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement would be
 24 answered in the Final Environmental Impact Statement. So
 25 let me give you an example. If I have 100 people that say

Page 27

1 basically 50 years into the future. And we have combined
 2 all those things and forecasted the potential impacts of
 3 this project. And what we would like to know is, from
 4 what we have in the document, the draft analyses and the
 5 draft conclusions, did we get it right, wrong, or are we
 6 somewhere in between.
 7 And again, I mentioned mitigation earlier, just
 8 mitigation to minimize impacts, offset impacts, avoid
 9 impacts, or mitigation via the development of alternatives
 10 to find another way to minimize impacts.
 11 Chapter 5 talks about mitigation for the project and,
 12 again, we are interested in your input regarding whether
 13 or not we are right, wrong or otherwise.
 14 I mentioned at the beginning of this that after this
 15 presentation we would do a poster session. So what we
 16 will do, we will do one more presentation before we get to
 17 the poster session; but when we go to the poster session,
 18 you will see that we have 12 posters around the room.
 19 Three of them depict what Donlin is proposing to do, which
 20 are these three over here [indicating]. And the other
 21 nine posters around the room potentially define impacts of
 22 Donlin's proposed project, whether it's the socioeconomic
 23 impacts of the project, subsistence impacts, fisheries
 24 impacts, water flow impacts, et cetera.
 25 What will happen when we go to that poster session --

Page 29

1 I support the project but don't tell me why they support
 2 it, well, our response to that in the Final Environmental
 3 Impact Statement would be "comment noted." If I have 100
 4 people that say I oppose the project and they don't tell
 5 me why they oppose the project, our response to that in
 6 the Final Environmental Impact Statement would be "comment
 7 noted."
 8 If I have folks that tell me I support the project
 9 for these reasons, we can look back at the document and
 10 see if we have adequately captured the potential positive
 11 impacts of the project. If I have people who say I oppose
 12 the project for these reasons, we can look back at the
 13 document and see if we have adequately analyzed potential
 14 impacts of the negative side of the project.
 15 So your comments are welcome any way you would like
 16 to provide them, but the more detail you can give us, the
 17 more you are telling us about whether or not we understand
 18 how you all live out here and the potential impacts of
 19 this project and/or whether or not there is additional
 20 work that we need to do in our analyses.
 21 I mentioned that the comment period is open until
 22 April 30. You can make comments in this meeting, either
 23 of the two meetings that we have coming up, one tomorrow
 24 and one next week. You can email comments. You can mail
 25 comments or fax comments. And we have this information

Page 30

1 available for you, so once I move off of the screen you
 2 can still find it.
 3 As I mentioned, we have got a couple other meetings
 4 coming up, one tomorrow and one next week.
 5 My -- there is a website that you can go to to get
 6 additional information on the project. This Donlin Gold
 7 EIS website has the entire Draft Environmental Impact
 8 Statement on it under the EIS documents tab. There is
 9 also background information on the project, various other
 10 presentations we have done, et cetera. My information is
 11 on the bottom of the screen. You are welcome to contact
 12 me directly if you would like to.
 13 And if you have matters that are specifically tribal
 14 and you would like to talk to Ms. Amanda Andraschko, our
 15 tribal liaison, you can certainly contact her, as well.
 16 And again, we have this information for you here today.
 17 The next thing we are going to go to before we go to
 18 the comments session, Mr. Alan Bittner of the Bureau of
 19 Land Management will give you an introduction to the
 20 ANILCA 810 hearing that he's going to do shortly. As soon
 21 as he brings that up on the screen, he will give you that
 22 introduction, and then we will go ahead and go to the
 23 poster session.
 24 One thing that I will mention while he's bringing
 25 that up is you have undoubtedly noticed that Ms. Mary

Page 32

1 subsistence, either for or against the impacts of
 2 subsistence to the mine.
 3 So I have a few comments written here in this
 4 presentation. And to be accurate, I'm going to read
 5 through these comments. And I'll do that slowly. If you
 6 need to stop me for any reason, let me know, and we can
 7 proceed that way.
 8 So through this ANILCA 810 subsistence process, BLM
 9 determined if a significant restriction of subsistence
 10 uses and needs may result from any one of the alternatives
 11 that Keith has been describing in his presentation,
 12 including the cumulative effects, the three factors that
 13 were used in this analysis are here on the screen.
 14 No. 1, reduction in availability of subsistence
 15 resources caused by a decline in population or abundance
 16 of harvestable resources. This may include fish,
 17 wildlife, edible plants, house logs, firewood or drinking
 18 water, for example. Factors that might cause a reduction
 19 include adverse impacts on habitat, direct impacts on the
 20 resource, increased harvest, and increased competition
 21 from nonsubsistence users.
 22 No. 2, reductions in the availability of resources
 23 used for subsistence purposes caused by an alteration in
 24 their distribution, migration patterns or location. And
 25 the third factor, limitations on access to subsistence

Page 31

1 Vavrik of Midnight Sun Court Reporters is here today
 2 documenting the meeting. We need that for our purposes so
 3 we know that we have adequately addressed your comments.
 4 What Mary needs when you all go to make a comment, whether
 5 it's in relation to the EIS or the ANILCA 810 hearing,
 6 please state your name. If you are formally representing
 7 anyone here, any entity, please state who that entity is
 8 and then go ahead and make your comment.
 9 If she needs anything because she needs to document
 10 it as it's happening, she will stop any of us that she
 11 needs to to get clarity on something. We just need to do
 12 that so we can adequately assure that we have responded to
 13 your comments.
 14 **MR. ALAN BITTNER:** Hi. Once again, my
 15 name is Alan Bittner with the Bureau of Land Management.
 16 I'm the Anchorage field manager. And that covers this
 17 area. And under the Alaska National Interest Lands
 18 Conservation Act, Section 8 and specifically Section 810,
 19 because of our involvement in this project and the
 20 potential to subsistence impacts, we have conducted an 810
 21 analysis, and we are going to give you a short
 22 presentation on that. Takes about 15 minutes. I have
 23 about ten slides to run through here. And then, like I
 24 said, later we will conduct a short hearing where you will
 25 be given the opportunity to provide testimony related to

Page 33

1 resources, including limitations from increased
 2 competition for resources or physical or legal barriers.
 3 Donlin Gold, LLC submitted applications to the Bureau
 4 of Land Management for a right-of-way grant in July of
 5 2012 and in January of 2013. Donlin Gold is proposing to
 6 construct, operate, maintain and close a 315-mile long,
 7 14-inch diameter buried natural gas pipeline and
 8 associated fiber optic cable from the west side of Cook
 9 Inlet to the mine site near Crooked Creek within the
 10 Kuskokwim River watershed.
 11 The proposed 315-mile long pipeline right-of-way
 12 would cross about 97 miles of BLM land north and west of
 13 the Alaska Range in the Kuskokwim River watershed. This
 14 represents about 30 percent of the total right-of-way
 15 length, with State of Alaska lands constituting 65 percent
 16 and ANCSA Corporation lands, Calista and TKC, or The
 17 Kuskokwim Corporation, and Cook Inlet Regional, or CIRI,
 18 constituting about 3.7 percent.
 19 The pipeline is part of the energy supply
 20 infrastructure for a proposed open pit gold mine located
 21 approximately ten miles north of the village of Crooked
 22 Creek.
 23 In addition to the pipeline and the mine site, the
 24 Donlin Gold Project will include transportation
 25 infrastructure for barge transportation on the Kuskokwim

Page 34

1 River. Two of the six alternatives analyzed in this draft
 2 EIS would affect the pipeline component. Alternative 3B
 3 would substitute a diesel pipeline for the natural gas
 4 pipeline within the same planned right-of-way.
 5 Alternative 6A would route a portion of the pipeline
 6 through Dalzell Gorge, affecting 46 miles of State lands.
 7 The proposed Donlin Gold Project is evaluated in
 8 three components: Mine site, transportation
 9 infrastructure, and pipeline.
 10 Although the permit applications to the BLM focuses
 11 on the BLM-managed portions of the pipeline, the National
 12 Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA, prohibits splitting the
 13 project into smaller components in order to minimize the
 14 estimated effects of environmental impacts. For that
 15 reason, this review of impacts to subsistence will address
 16 the entire project and not just the portion subject to
 17 permitting by the BLM.
 18 So what I'm going to do is run through a very brief
 19 overview of the three major components. I know Keith
 20 already did that, but we are going to give you just a
 21 really brief summary of those three, and then we are going
 22 to tell you what our proposed impact analysis is to
 23 subsistence in each one of those components, and then we
 24 will wrap it up.
 25 The proposed pipeline includes a 150-foot wide

Page 35

1 cleared construction right-of-way; 12 airstrips ranging
 2 from 3,500 to 5,000 feet long, nine of which would be
 3 newly built along the pipeline right-of-way during
 4 construction; nine construction camps; 65 cleared pipe
 5 storage areas; an estimated 70 gravel pits, ranging from
 6 one to 50 acres in size. The pipeline would cross seven
 7 watersheds, involving 396 stream crossings, 77 of which
 8 are anadromous, or salmon-rearing, streams.
 9 And this photo here is a picture of the proposed
 10 pipeline route in the Windy Fork area of the Kuskokwim
 11 watershed, which is in Game Management Unit 19C.
 12 The proposed mine itself includes a waste rock
 13 facility that would fill in 2,240 acres of American Creek,
 14 a tailings storage facility that would fill in 2,351 acres
 15 of Anaconda Creek. The tailings storage facility would be
 16 contained behind a 464-foot high dam. The mine has two
 17 pits. The ACMA pit would be approximately 1,850 feet deep
 18 from the high wall, and the Lewis pit would be
 19 approximately 1,653 feet deep from the high wall. The two
 20 pits would merge at the surface into one open pit about
 21 2.2 miles long and one mile wide near the end of mining
 22 operations.
 23 At mine closure, any runoff from the TSF, or the
 24 tailings storage facility, would be pumped into the open
 25 pit. The pit is estimated to take roughly 50 years to

Page 36

1 fill, and pumping would be required to prevent it from
 2 overflowing into Crooked Creek and the Kuskokwim River
 3 watershed. The pit water may not meet water quality
 4 standards and would need to be treated before it could be
 5 released into Crooked Creek.
 6 A water treatment plant would be constructed 50 years
 7 after mine closure. Water from the pit lake would have to
 8 be pumped and treated in the water treatment plant into
 9 perpetuity to prevent untreated pit water from flowing
 10 into Crooked Creek and into the Kuskokwim River.
 11 This photo here is a picture of the proposed mine
 12 site, including the waste rock facility, the tailings
 13 storage facility. And that one is in Game Management Unit
 14 19A.
 15 The proposed transportation facilities component
 16 include construction of expanded port facilities in the
 17 Bethel cargo terminal, a new port site at Jungjuk Creek on
 18 the Kuskokwim River with 2.8 million gallons of fuel
 19 storage, a 30-mile long mine access road from the
 20 Kuskokwim River to the mine with 45 stream crossings and
 21 13 gravel pits and a 5,000 foot airstrip at the mine. And
 22 this is a photo here of the Kuskokwim River at Jungjuk in
 23 Game Management Unit 19A.
 24 Barges would supply the mine with fuel and cargo and
 25 involve 64 cargo barge round trips and 58 fuel barge round

Page 37

1 trips, resulting in 122 total round trips annually from
 2 the Bethel port to the Jungjuk port site during the
 3 110-day shipping season, approximately June 1 to
 4 October 1. River barges would be transported by tug
 5 pushing a four-barge configuration each trip. Each fuel
 6 barge would carry 1.29 million gallons of diesel fuel.
 7 The port at Jungjuk would continue to be needed to supply
 8 fuel and cargo to the wastewater treatment plant treating
 9 water from the pit lake into perpetuity.
 10 And again, this is another view of Jungjuk Creek
 11 where the proposed port and fuel storage facility would be
 12 constructed.
 13 The preliminary analysis of the impacts to
 14 subsistence based on the alternatives outlined in the
 15 draft EIS includes all six alternatives outlined in the
 16 EIS, and it can be found at Appendix N of the draft EIS on
 17 page 409 of the .pdf, which is labeled Appendix N through
 18 O in the table of contents. And Donne also passed around
 19 some copies of the subsistence analysis for you today.
 20 And we can certainly get you additional copies if you
 21 wanted.
 22 The testimony and input from 11 communities where
 23 public hearings will be held on the impacts to subsistence
 24 from the Donlin Gold Project will be analyzed and included
 25 in the final ANILCA 810 subsistence impact evaluation, and

Page 38

1 that will be included in the final EIS.
 2 So now I want to turn to our evaluation or our
 3 preliminary evaluation of subsistence impacts. And again,
 4 we need to hear from you if you feel like this preliminary
 5 analysis is accurate or if you feel there is either
 6 beneficial impacts of the project to subsistence or
 7 detrimental impacts to subsistence from this proposed
 8 project.
 9 So the following is an evaluation of the effect of
 10 the Donlin Gold Project proposal on subsistence uses and
 11 needs for the mine site, the natural gas pipeline, the
 12 transportation infrastructure components of the project.
 13 The subsistence evaluation was done for each project
 14 component and looked into the effects on subsistence uses
 15 and needs.
 16 So for the mine site, villages closest to the mine
 17 would potentially experience the most effects to
 18 subsistence, including Napaimute and especially Crooked
 19 Creek. Mine activities such as ore trucks in the mine,
 20 trucks on the port road, drilling, blasting, power
 21 generation, port site activity would likely change the
 22 distribution of wildlife species important to subsistence,
 23 such as moose, caribou and fur bearers. It would be
 24 long-term and would cause potential impacts during the
 25 construction phases and during mining activities

Page 39

1 throughout the life of the mine.
 2 Areas important to Crooked Creek for berry picking,
 3 wood cutting and hunting would be directly affected by the
 4 mine, and adjacent areas would be potentially contaminated
 5 with dust emissions containing various particulate
 6 materials from ore processing and from ore trucks on haul
 7 roads and access roads. This would make berry picking
 8 areas undesirable or unusable to subsistence users.
 9 A water treatment plant would be built 50 years after
 10 mine closure to treat water from the pit that may or may
 11 not meet water quality standards for fish. Possible water
 12 releases from the mine during operations, after mine
 13 closure when the water is being pumped into the pit, and
 14 after the water treatment plant is constructed may have
 15 the potential to impact fish in Crooked Creek and the
 16 Kuskokwim River, which could result in significant
 17 restrictions to subsistence resources.
 18 Potential runoff from the tailings dam and pit lake
 19 would have the potential to contaminate fish resources
 20 important to subsistence in Crooked Creek and the lower
 21 Kuskokwim River into perpetuity, impacting subsistence
 22 fish resources important to all communities from Crooked
 23 Creek to the mouth of the Kuskokwim River.
 24 For the natural gas pipeline, potential effects to
 25 subsistence from construction and operation of the natural

Page 40

1 gas pipeline would affect the villages of Tyonek,
 2 Skwentna, Nikolai, McGrath, Takotna, as well as downriver
 3 villages of Sleetmute, Stony River, Georgetown and Crooked
 4 Creek.
 5 During construction, the effects of clearing the
 6 right-of-way, trenching, drilling and the presence of
 7 machinery, pipeline transport, workers in construction
 8 camps and infrastructure on and along the pipeline
 9 right-of-way would cause a redistribution of moose,
 10 caribou and fur bearers and negatively affect access and
 11 availability of subsistence resources.
 12 During mine operations, the airstrip that would
 13 remain along the pipeline right-of-way at Farewell would
 14 potentially increase access to subsistence resources by
 15 nonlocal residents using aircraft and increased
 16 competition for those subsistence resources along and
 17 adjacent to the pipeline right-of-way. Villages
 18 negatively affected by increased access to and competition
 19 in the area include McGrath, Nikolai and Takotna.
 20 For the transportation infrastructure, the potential
 21 effects on subsistence from the transportation
 22 infrastructure, including barging of cargo and fuel and
 23 the construction of a port at Jungjuk on the Kuskokwim
 24 River, would affect all villages on the river from the
 25 Crooked Creek to the mouth of the Kuskokwim River.

Page 41

1 Impacts from barging include displacement and
 2 disruption of subsistence activities by barge traffic or
 3 reduced access to subsistence fishing activities and sites
 4 such as set nets, fish wheels and processing rafts along
 5 the river. Subsistence fish resources, salmon and
 6 resident fish species populations, may also be negatively
 7 affected by the magnitude and intensity of barge traffic
 8 proposed in Alternative 2.
 9 Effects to fish may increase when river levels are
 10 low as barge rafts will need to be uncoupled and barges
 11 towed individually or in pairs or lighter barge loads per
 12 trip would be required to navigate to the Jungjuk port.
 13 This would require additional barge round trips on the
 14 river and potentially increase impacts to subsistence
 15 fishers on the Kuskokwim River and to subsistence fish
 16 resources.
 17 So our findings: This evaluation concludes that
 18 Alternative 2 may result in significant restrictions to
 19 subsistence uses for the communities of Crooked Creek and
 20 Napaimute in relation to the mine site and the communities
 21 on the Kuskokwim River from barge traffic on the river,
 22 including Bethel, Napakiak, Napaskiak, Oscarville,
 23 Kwethluk, Akiakchak, Akiak, Tuluksak, Kalskag, Lower
 24 Kalskag, Aniak, Chuathbaluk, Napaimute and Crooked Creek;
 25 and the communities of McGrath, Nikolai and Takotna for

Page 42

1 increased access and competition from nonlocal users at
 2 the Farewell strip along the pipeline right-of-way.
 3 In addition, potential spill scenarios involving
 4 ocean and river barge release of diesel fuel, cyanide,
 5 mercury, tailings dam failure, and release of untreated
 6 water from the pit lake and tailings dam after mine
 7 closure may also result in significant restriction to
 8 subsistence uses for the Kuskokwim River communities
 9 listed above.
 10 BLM has found in this preliminary ANILCA 810
 11 evaluation that Alternatives 2, 3A, 3B, 4, 5A and 6 and
 12 the cumulative case considered in the draft Donlin Gold
 13 EIS may significantly restrict subsistence uses. These
 14 findings require BLM to conduct hearings to solicit public
 15 comment input from potentially affected communities and
 16 subsistence users under ANILCA 810(a)(1) and (2) in
 17 conjunction with the release of the draft EIS.
 18 And like I said, in a little while we will give you
 19 the opportunity to open and close a subsistence hearing
 20 and provide testimony if you would like related to
 21 subsistence.
 22 And we welcome your testimony today.
 23 Following the public hearing, a finding may be
 24 revised to "will not significantly restrict" based on
 25 changes to alternatives, new information, or new

Page 43

1 mitigation measures resulting from the hearings. Or if
 2 the finding may -- if the finding of "may significantly
 3 restrict subsistence uses" is not revised or the impacts
 4 can't be mitigated, a three-part determination must be
 5 made before the action can be authorized.
 6 An 810(a)(3) determination section is to be prepared
 7 only when there is a finding of "may significantly
 8 restrict subsistence uses" for the selected alternative or
 9 action. So I'm talking about in the final now, if we
 10 still are at this point of "may significantly affect,"
 11 this is the process we would have to go through.
 12 The determination will separately address each of the
 13 three required items under 810(a)(3) and state why the
 14 proposed action is necessary and how the action complies
 15 with each requirement. The three items that are required
 16 in the determination are here, and they are: Why such a
 17 significant restriction of subsistence uses is necessary
 18 and how it is consistent with sound management principles
 19 of multiple use of public lands; how the proposed activity
 20 will involve the minimal amount of public lands necessary
 21 to accomplish the purposes of the project; and what
 22 reasonable steps will be taken to minimize adverse effects
 23 upon subsistence uses and resources resulting from the
 24 project.
 25 After compliance with the 810 project, a BLM manager

Page 44

1 may proceed with the action of authorizing. And in our
 2 case it's authorizing rights-of-way both for the pipeline
 3 and fiber optic cable.
 4 So when commenting on subsistence impacts, please
 5 consider what additional specific information about how
 6 the proposed mine would affect subsistence abundance
 7 and/or availability of subsistence resources important to
 8 you or how it would affect access to subsistence resources
 9 important to you. So again, I talked about this at the
 10 beginning. It's the abundance and/or availability and the
 11 access to those and the type of access, as well.
 12 So comments or testimony can be given at the brief
 13 hearing that we are going to have in a little while, or
 14 they can be written, mailed, faxed, emailed to us. Also,
 15 anything that you comment in the draft EIS both today or
 16 in writing or to the Corps of Engineers, as Keith stated,
 17 anything related to subsistence could further influence
 18 our final determination on subsistence impacts under
 19 ANILCA.
 20 So that evaluation is a different law than NEPA.
 21 It's different than the draft EIS, but also its threshold
 22 is "may not significantly affect" or "may significantly
 23 affect." So again, on all three components of the project
 24 right now, our preliminary finding is that this proposed
 25 project may significantly affect subsistence resources.

Page 45

1 And we really need to hear from you either today or in
 2 writing as to those potential effects.
 3 So at this time I'm going to turn it back over to
 4 Keith. And I believe we are going to move on to the
 5 poster session and after that receive comment on the draft
 6 EIS.
 7 Thank you.
 8 **MR. KEITH GORDON:** Thank you, Alan. As I
 9 mentioned when we started, the Army Corps of Engineers has
 10 11 cooperators assisting us in development of the
 11 Environmental Impact Statement, do the analyses,
 12 et cetera. We also are assisted by AECOM. AECOM is an
 13 international engineering and environmental analysis firm.
 14 AECOM staff are the folks that are primarily putting the
 15 Draft Environmental Impact Statement together that's out
 16 there for you all to review and comment on. So at this
 17 point in time, you know who I am as an employee of the
 18 Army Corps of Engineers and our role. You know who
 19 Mr. Alan Bittner is and the Bureau of Land Management's
 20 role in the project.
 21 The other folks with us today are AECOM staff and
 22 some folks from both Donlin and NOVAGOLD.
 23 Taylor, at this point in time, would you like to
 24 introduce the folks from AECOM, their role in the project
 25 and what posters they might be able to help people with?

Page 46

1 **MR. TAYLOR BRELSFORD:** Sure. Thank you
2 very much. I'm Taylor Brelsford. I work with AECOM, as
3 Keith said. I'll actually be standing next to the
4 subsistence and socioeconomic posters. Also with us are
5 Jessica Evans. And you will be standing with the project
6 component posters. Then Nancy Darigo is a physical
7 scientist, and she will be able to talk with you about
8 water flow, air emissions, water discharges and hazardous
9 chemicals. Then Dave Every here is a biological science
10 lead, and he will be standing next to the barge traffic
11 and fisheries posters to answer questions.
12 And then I also want to highlight Donne Harris
13 Fleagle. You know Donne. She's been absolutely central
14 in the public outreach, the rural community engagement for
15 the Donlin EIS project. So that's the AECOM team, Don.
16 Keith.
17 **MR. KEITH GORDON:** Don was my predecessor,
18 and he and Taylor and these folks went around on the
19 scoping meetings.
20 Enrique, would you like to introduce the folks with
21 you?
22 **MR. ENRIQUE FERNANDEZ:** Sure. Enrique
23 Fernandez with Donlin Gold. I'm the senior environmental
24 coordinator for the project.
25 **MR. RON RIMELMAN:** Donlin Gold Project is

Page 47

1 actually 50 percent owned by NOVAGOLD Corporation and 50
2 percent by Barrick Gold. I'm Ron Rimelman. I'm with
3 NOVAGOLD, the environmental lead.
4 **MR. WAYNE MORGAN:** Wayne Morgan from Aniak
5 upriver from here. So a lifelong resident there. I do
6 work for Donlin Gold, but I am on a few organizations
7 within the region that I would like to comment on behalf
8 of.
9 **MR. KEITH GORDON:** Okay. Thank you very
10 much. At this time we will just go ahead and go to the
11 poster session. Like I said, we usually set 30 to 45
12 minutes aside, but we will take less time or more time,
13 whatever works for you all. And then we will reconvene
14 and take your comments. So please feel free to go to any
15 of the posters you would like, and we will see if we can
16 answer your questions.
17 (Off the record.)
18 **MR. KEITH GORDON:** We will try the phone
19 again, but if it continues to be staticky, we will
20 probably kill the line again.
21 Okay. At this point in time, if there is anyone who
22 would like to make comments on the Draft Environmental
23 Impact Statement, if you would please state your name and
24 any formal affiliation that you have, then we will record
25 your comment and respond to it in the Final Environmental

Page 48

1 Impact Statement.
2 **MR. YAGO EVAN:** I'm Yago Evan from Lower
3 Kalskag. I'm a local here. I'm a member of the tribe
4 here in Lower Kalskag. I'd like to see this project go
5 forward because there is just no work out here in the
6 Bush, you know. Everything is declining. We need people
7 out here to find some kind of work. And if something like
8 Donlin Gold comes up, if we have something that's going to
9 help our economy out here where we have no jobs at all,
10 I'd like to see this one go forward.
11 That's all the comment I have.
12 **MR. KEITH GORDON:** Is there anybody else
13 who would like to comment?
14 **MR. WAYNE MORGAN:** Good afternoon. Thank
15 you for your presentation. And I thank BLM also for
16 theirs. My name is Wayne Morgan. I am employed by Donlin
17 Gold. I'm a community relations director for Donlin Gold.
18 I work out of the Aniak office, and it's my fourth year of
19 being employed by Donlin Gold. A lifelong resident of the
20 community of Aniak, which is upriver from here 30 miles.
21 And I do have some affiliations with other organizations
22 that I was and I'm still currently involved with: School
23 board president of the Kuspuk School District, tribal
24 council member of the Native Village of Aniak. I am
25 currently also a council member of the watershed council

Page 49

1 of the Kuskokwim, and also within the AVCP region, the
2 AVCP board chairman for our regional housing authority
3 within AVCP. So those are my introductions.
4 And I'll just -- first on behalf of Donlin Gold, and
5 being a lifelong resident of the region in Aniak -- I'm 50
6 years old and I'm one of the youngest within my large
7 family. I wouldn't have -- being a lifelong resident and
8 being an active subsistence user within this region like
9 everyone else does that lives off the river, I wouldn't
10 have supported and let alone worked for a project that's
11 being proposed currently right now which we are going
12 through with the EIS if I didn't think that it would be
13 safe, safe for myself and my family and also for the
14 people of the region. I wouldn't want to be employed by
15 someone like that if I knew that it was not going to be
16 safe and done in a responsible manner.
17 So being involved with the project, I know as much as
18 what you guys know right now. I travel to villages and
19 presenting to people within most of our communities. It's
20 56-plus villages, not only within the Calista region, but
21 outside of the Calista region to present the project and
22 let them know what the project entails with the small
23 footprint at the Donlin mine site, which is owned by
24 Calista Corporation and also The Kuskokwim Corporation.
25 And I have been doing that for the last four years.

Page 50

1 Also next is my involvement with the organizations
 2 that I mentioned, like the Kuspuk School District and
 3 currently the Native Village of Aniak Council which still
 4 has, at least ten years ago till today, a continued
 5 resolution in support of the project. So long ago we have
 6 as a council and as a Native community have put forth a
 7 resolution that support ongoing efforts of this project.
 8 I have been here since the exploration days.
 9 And as a Kuspuk board member in Kuspuk School
 10 District, you know, those within the tribe and the Kuspuk
 11 School District is -- like we mentioned, the
 12 socioeconomics that we have mentioned I saw on the poster
 13 here. Those are the current -- currently what we have
 14 that's on the list of what's reality along the river.
 15 High unemployment within every community. We are the
 16 poorest region within the state of Alaska. We have very
 17 low, very, very -- excuse me -- very, very high, you know,
 18 high unemployment, suicide rate, drugs and alcohol use
 19 that's the highest in the state. And out of our young
 20 people that go to school, only about, say, 25, 30 percent
 21 of our children get a chance to go move on to a -- go to
 22 college to try and further their career. And we had at
 23 least 70 percent of those that are staying home because
 24 they don't have -- college is not for them to go to. They
 25 don't have anything, you know, real that's a -- within the

Page 51

1 vocational field where they need to go to be a hands-on
 2 training where they don't need to have a two-year degree
 3 or a four-year degree.
 4 So with a project like Donlin coming forth and
 5 planning for is where not only Donlin has been talking
 6 about, but regional organizations like Calista, Kuskokwim
 7 Corporation and within our own school district with Kuspuk
 8 is wanting a plan in place to have our young children that
 9 are going out of high school or as they are going up
 10 through high school in a program where they get introduced
 11 to careers, careers such as in the vocational field, oil
 12 and gas field, introduction to careers, exploring other
 13 sites that does this kind of thing because in Alaska there
 14 is no place that really does that within the vocational
 15 field or mining field or oil and gas field. There is no
 16 place for young people to have that introduction or get
 17 that in place.
 18 For example, there is an excel program, what you call
 19 excel where we have kids as young as eighth grade getting
 20 into a -- follow through from eighth grade all the way
 21 through graduation steps of every year how to be
 22 successful after high school. And one of those fields is
 23 looking into trying to get them employed for many -- one
 24 of the many careers that are involved with a large project
 25 like the Donlin Gold Project, if that were to go through.

Page 52

1 There is more than just to dig for gold within a
 2 project like this. There is more that goes into it
 3 because there is many careers within that that can benefit
 4 our young people. We have heard comments that it's only a
 5 30-year project, 30-plus years. 30-plus years, then the
 6 project will be gone. And that's short money; fast and
 7 short money. Right now fast and short money within our
 8 communities is a summer job, three months long. Fast and
 9 short, then they are gone. Okay?
 10 Look at the water project that we have here in Lower
 11 Kalskag. It's a two-year project, but it's seasonal and
 12 it's gone. That's what our people have to look and wait
 13 for within each and every community, you know, that we
 14 have looked for it, we -- I wonder what's going to be work
 15 or what's going to be happening within our village for
 16 this summer. I wonder if there is going to be a project,
 17 infrastructure. Is there going to be a new housing
 18 development? Is there going to be road development? Is
 19 there going to be water/sewer development? And that's a
 20 reality for every community within this region, southwest
 21 Alaska.
 22 And to hear that a 30-year-plus project -- 30 years
 23 where we have a chance to employ a family could be two
 24 people working in one same site to have an income for
 25 30-plus years to develop a retirement, to have the

Page 53

1 luxuries that everyone else has outside their community,
 2 that they could build a home, they could buy their
 3 snowmachine, they could buy a vehicle, they can buy a
 4 boat.
 5 And these vehicles are used not only for
 6 recreational; it's for subsistence activities so they can
 7 go out and do that and support their families because they
 8 don't want to live off the stores that we have in these
 9 communities. They don't do that. Much of our food source
 10 comes from outside of the store, outside in the wilderness
 11 that we will continue to carry on into -- into perpetuity.
 12 Yes, the long-term word. Okay? We want to carry -- we
 13 are going to practice that for eternity.
 14 Concern about barging. And I'm kind of surprised
 15 with the concerns that have been brought up by both -- was
 16 it the CIS project and also BLM with the concerns of
 17 restriction to or impact subsistence within this region
 18 and impacts that it may have with subsistence.
 19 If that were the case -- I would say this if that
 20 were the case because I have been involved with Fish &
 21 Game, and many of us local people that are in -- every one
 22 of these villages have been involved with the local
 23 fishery committees, whether it's federal or State, Fish &
 24 Game or Fish & Wildlife Service. They would come to us
 25 and say that your barges that you have been having for the

Page 54

1 last 60 years have seriously impacted the fish out here.
 2 That's why it is the way it is today. I haven't heard
 3 that once because we have been living with barges up from
 4 the mouth of the Kuskokwim all the way up to McGrath for
 5 as many years as am I alive.
 6 So to hear that another -- hear that the barge
 7 impacts is -- will have effect on your salmon, salmon
 8 reproduction, okay, impacts on salmon. If we had these
 9 salmon impacts already, we would be seeing floating salmon
 10 down -- coming down the river because they will -- if you
 11 impact a large salmon, you will see it floating up later
 12 on because it rots and comes to the surface. They float.
 13 I haven't seen those. And our salmon and any fish
 14 species are very alert, very smart. They travel the
 15 rivers. You guys know that they travel the rivers and
 16 right to their spawning grounds where they spawn. How do
 17 they do that? They are so sensitive to the waters and
 18 what's around them. I seen them come on into the river,
 19 for example, Clearwater River, driving a boat looking in
 20 the water; and even if you are moving ten miles an hour,
 21 you are looking down there, you see salmon. But what do
 22 they do? Do they just stay one place as you are coming
 23 along as they are ten feet down? They move, move, move.
 24 But I'm concerned with the report coming out with the
 25 barge impacts and what we should have been told years ago

Page 55

1 with the current amount of barges that we do have already
 2 and then to come.
 3 And then speaking to the spill risk that we live with
 4 every summer, spill risk that we currently do live with
 5 every year. So those are just my -- some of my short
 6 comments.
 7 And as a region, just one more small -- within this
 8 middle Kuskokwim region, this region also, within these
 9 nine villages between Stony River and Kalskag, is looking
 10 at a -- within this project is a borough formation so we
 11 can -- dependent on this project, very dependent on this
 12 project, is to have a borough and have the project in
 13 payment in lieu of taxes to the State and where we can as
 14 a borough have infrastructure within our villages to
 15 improve our socioeconomic lifestyle that we all need
 16 within this region. We want running water in every
 17 village. We want water/sewer in every village. We want
 18 roads in every village. We want our city and tribal
 19 council to have the monies to do their own project within
 20 their own communities to address some of the issues in
 21 their own villages.
 22 So this goes beyond not just only working at the
 23 project site. It's improving the lifestyles of each one
 24 of our communities as a whole. We need that chance. Our
 25 communities need that chance and have that experience of

Page 56

1 working, having a career and still living in our
 2 communities and still practicing our -- and continue to do
 3 so, practice our subsistence lifestyle.
 4 So thank you. That is my comment.
 5 **MR. KEITH GORDON:** Thank you very much.
 6 Is there anybody else that would like to comment on the
 7 Draft Environmental Impact Statement?
 8 **MR. MIKE SAVAGE:** Mike Savage from Lower
 9 Kalskag. I'm a traditional council member. And I also
 10 run the -- I'm the manager of the Kalskag Native store.
 11 I'm very for this project to go through. I have been
 12 thinking about how expensive fuel is around the villages.
 13 With that pipeline going through, that will probably help
 14 us in the villages. From Kalskag all the way up to Stony
 15 would put a resolution through that we would be able to
 16 use -- buy natural gas out of you guys out at the project.
 17 And also the pipeline, fuel pipeline up to Aniak
 18 because -- a fuel line to Crooked because it's easier to
 19 haul fuel downriver than going upriver. The biggest
 20 problem you guys are going to have is getting stuff up to
 21 the mine because of the river. It varies. It changes
 22 from year to year, the channel. It's never the same.
 23 I seen where, as I was growing up, I watched gravel
 24 barges dump gravel on the main river whenever they get
 25 stuck. And I have been fishing all my life. Just the

Page 57

1 past few years is the worst I've seen it.
 2 And this weather change, my dad told me about it
 3 before he passed away, way before they even talked about
 4 global warming. Alaska is going to change. And I see it
 5 coming. You know, also he said people are never going to
 6 depend on the animals out here. And I seen it more and
 7 more every year.
 8 But I wish to see this through. Probably will help
 9 the communities in the long run and all this stuff. But
 10 I've learned from watching, hearing people talk.
 11 They say fish -- there is no kings in the river.
 12 Baloney. There is kings in the river. When that river
 13 gets warm, they swim way down deep. I fish illegally.
 14 I'll keep on doing it till I get my limit. 50 is my
 15 limit. 50 kings is my limit per year for two households.
 16 They are talking -- I laugh when they tell me there is no
 17 fish in that river because that fish is just as smart as
 18 we are. Any animal in this world is just as smart as we
 19 are.
 20 But I seen -- I seen changes. I mean, I seen big
 21 changes since I was a kid.
 22 Well, anyway, I just wish this goes through, and I'll
 23 support it the best way I can. But it's going to be up to
 24 the people and also Donlin. If gold prices drop like
 25 crazy, what is going to happen? It's going to go through?

1 Is it not?
 2 That's all I have to say. Thank you.
 3 **MR. KEITH GORDON:** Okay. Thank you very
 4 much. Is there anybody else that wanted to comment on the
 5 Draft Environmental Impact Statement? Okay. At this
 6 point in time, we thank you for your participation and
 7 your comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.
 8 We are going to move to BLM's 810 ANILCA hearing. It
 9 will take a couple of minutes. Mary needs to close out
 10 the file she's working in now and open the next file for
 11 the ANILCA 810 hearing. So if you will give us about two
 12 minutes, any comments you want to make on subsistence you
 13 can make to Mr. Bittner.
 14 Please note that any comments you have made on the
 15 Draft Environmental Impact Statement that are appropriate
 16 for the Bureau of Land Management to use for their 810
 17 ANILCA analysis or any comments you make on the ANILCA 810
 18 analysis that are appropriate for the Corps of Engineers
 19 to use in relation to the Draft Environmental Impact
 20 Statement, we will both make use of your comments.
 21 Thank you.
 22 (Proceedings adjourned at 4:07 p.m.)
 23
 24
 25

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 6th day of April 2016.
 14
 15 MARY A. VAVRIK,
 16 Registered Merit Reporter
 17 Notary Public for Alaska
 18 My Commission Expires: November 5, 2016
 19
 20
 21
 22
 23
 24
 25