

Donlin Gold Project EIS

BIA Tribal Providers Conference

December 3, 2015

3:00 p.m.

Dena'ina Center

Anchorage, Alaska

USACE

Jason Berkner, USACE

Matt Ferguson, USACE

AECOM

Elizabeth Bella, AECOM

Taylor Brelsford, AECOM

Bill Craig, AECOM

Jessica Evans, AECOM

Donne Fleagle, AECOM

Jon Isaacs, AECOM

DONLIN GOLD

Vernon Chimegalrea, Community Relations

Tanana Chiefs Conference Inc

Will Mayo, Executive Director of Tribal Government and Client Development

FEDERALLY RECOGNIZED TRIBES:

Bernie Gregory, Chief, Telida Village

Tracy Simeon, Tribal Administrator, Chuathbaluk Village

Patricia Yaska, Administrative Assistant/Brownsfield Coordinator, Chuathbaluk Village

CENTER FOR SCIENCE

Kendra Zamzow, Center for Science

ALASKA INTER TRIBAL COUNCIL ATTENDEES

Delice Calote

Nikos Pastos

OTHERS

Ollie Lake

Frank Wood, Dillingham

+3

Status Report on the Donlin Gold Project Draft EIS:

AECOM was invited to give a presentation during the annual BIA Providers Conference held in Anchorage, Alaska at the Dena'ina Center, December 3, 2015, at 3 p.m. Using a presentation approved by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Donne Fleagle provided a status report on the Donlin Gold Project EIS. The presentation focused on promoting participation in reviewing the Draft EIS, released on November 27, 2015. Topics included: major issues addressed in the Draft EIS, organization of the Draft EIS, proposed locations for meetings on the Draft EIS, and methods for submitting comments.

Bill Craig, AECOM & Chief Bernie Gregory,
Telida



ISSUES SUMMARY:

Question: Looking at the picture of the barge, and imagining a regular barge on the Kuskokwim River; that one looks pretty big. How much space would the barges leave? That picture looks like the mouth of the river, but it is narrower in some spots. I am unsure how the proposed barge is going to fit.

Response: Chapter 2 talks about barge dimensions, narrow channels, and how the loading will be managed. The fish section talks about the impacts to fish from barge passage in those narrow places. There were some trials to estimate the navigation of the four barge tow, so experienced barge operators have contributed to the planning. In addition, Donlin Gold has proposed a load management plan which takes into account the Kuskokwim River flow rate, as measured with a gauge at Crooked Creek, and then adjusts each barge load appropriately. At this point, we've done our best as a technical team to determine what we think the impacts would look like, and the next step is for the public to say what you think the impacts would be.

Comment: The Alaska Intertribal Council has been opposed to the project through scoping and continues to advocate for the No Action Alternative, for the cumulative impacts to the people and the subsistence way of life.

Question: Are you getting translators, for people that can't use a computer or speak English? What are you doing to ensure effective involvement for Alaska Native people in the affected communities?

Response: This large, complex project was initiated by the Alaska Native Corporations: the resource is on their lands. From the beginning, Calista and The Kuskokwim Corporation have looked at ways to enhance the economy while also protecting the environment. Donlin Gold has recognized the importance of communication with communities and has been meeting in the Calista and TKC villages for a decade.

In the EIS, the federal government is independently and critically reviewing the proposed project. This EIS discloses the likely impacts, and provides opportunities for people in the villages to identify issues and provide comments. Within the EIS, several tools are used to make it more accessible. Each resource section starts with a synopsis to provide a summary and show a reader where to look for more detail. To make the EIS widely available, a DVD version is available, and will be sent to a large mailing list. A hard copy of the Executive Summary is also available on request. We are also working on a translation of an introduction to the EIS, about 20 pages in Yupik. Meetings will be held all over the region. In the past there has been some travel support so people can get to nearest meeting from other villages.

Comment: The Alaska Intertribal Council has been involved in children's air, and atmospheric trust. Barges are dirty. They are diesel. They harm and impact coastal communities, so we hope you are looking at that. Asthma is horrible and we have concerns about children, the health of children, and hope that Donlin will be using clean engines. And noise. The increase of noise in the river, and what that's going to do. This isn't good news for the fish habitat. Diesels pollute wherever they go. I oppose this thing and I'm sorry that the corporations forced the villages into this deal.

Question: How is the barge traffic different from what is occurring now?

Response: Our estimate is 64 tows per year currently. Donlin would introduce 122, so adding these together, the result would be three times more than current. And the barges would be bigger—four as opposed to two (as an order of comparison).

Question: How many barges per day?

Response: About 2.2, as many as 3 a day. Chapter 2 – Alternatives has three ways to reduce barge traffic, and if one of those is adopted, there could be less barge traffic.

Question: I've been aware of recent disasters in mining and think about those impacts. The containment walls giving out, and leaching into the riverine systems. What safeguards would be in place, and what technology to give us confidence over the history of disasters like Mt. Polley?

Response: After Mt. Polley, Donlin Gold and the State of Alaska moved forward a technical analysis, called the Failure Modes Effects Analysis, to examine whether the Donlin Gold project takes into account the things that went wrong in Mt. Polley. The proposed Donlin Gold tailings storage facility would be the first fully lined tailings facility in Alaska, and there are other design features to avoid problems. The spill section looks at what would happen if the tailings dam failed. The purpose of the EIS is to disclose impacts. After the impacts are disclosed, it is up to the people in the region to weigh the balance and share with the Corps. We need to make sure there is opportunity for villages to speak up.

Question: Have you calculated the minimal gold price for this to pencil out, and if so, what is that number?

Response: When an applicant submits an application, the Corps treats the project as viable. Donlin has a business plan. The current price of gold and a break even price is not considered in the EIS.

Question: You can build a really good dam, and Donlin has done a good job of designing the dam. But you don't just build a dam, you build it in increments. There is price fluctuation, and company turnover, etc. so there needs to be community involvement during the low price times when there is additional risk, beyond the first days of operation. Referring to the spill scenario for the tailings failure, I question the volume of the spill and whether it was analyzed appropriately.

Response: DNR permits the incremental changes in the tailings. Continuing oversight would be a good comment to submit on the EIS.

Comment: I attended spill response meetings in Valdez. I hope Donlin is not using the same kind of liner that the oil companies used in Valdez for secondary containment that now they 'can't find'.

Question: Do you have an estimate about the noise level for communities like Crooked Creek or Chuathbaluk? We can hear river activity at our homes.

Response: The noise section has a detailed analysis of decibel levels and sound signature, and what the effects of blasting and barge traffic would look like, and how it dissipates. There are graphs that show affected area(s). We welcome you to have a look and tell us if it makes sense. It is a crucial issue.

Comment: A lot of the problems we have is that the draft becomes reality whether we testify or not. When we testify, it doesn't change the draft, really. One thing we talk about is that in order to have wisdom you have to have knowledge. You don't understand us and don't know the area we are from, and it seems a lot of time you don't listen to us. Not that we are mad at you but this is how it seems.



Response: (Donne) Taylor lived in Sleetmute, and then Aniak. I am from McGrath. This EIS is different than others. It has Yupik translation in an Executive Summary. It has taken a huge effort to include and represent the people properly. Every summer I've done interviews. We've looked at and talked about real effects to people in the villages when projects go forward.

Follow up Comment: I know you want to help, but if you don't know how, then how are you going to help us? In order to make it work, you need to understand us. If you look at the draft, and you work for an agency, your mind is on how it affects your work. I know that you mean well, and you know the state and federal laws, but it's not how we think.

Response: (Taylor) Everyone serves a purpose, and it's our job to provide the space for Alaska Natives to participate. You have done a good job of making the western world stop and think. There is a movement to use Alaska Native knowledge as a respected and recognized science and appreciate the contributions. This EIS tries to create and provide opportunities for people to speak. Let's work together to make sure that the people in the region get the information they need, and then discuss how to communicate.

Question: Why is Chuathbaluk not on the public meeting list? We are the second village closest to the mine and would like to have a meeting in our community as well.

Response: The list is in flux right now. But we knew we couldn't go to all 66 villages, so we are looking at strategies to use the hub/neighbor village model. So Aniak was chosen as that region's hub. This EIS had unprecedented number of scoping meetings. Perhaps Chuathbaluk is a better choice than Aniak; we will listen to those suggestions

Question: It has happened before—there is one design or concept and you use the same design in other places where it won't work.

Response: There is a good effort to date to work with the area. The design has been changed a lot since it started. As an example, the natural gas pipeline was added to reduce barging, as a result of local voices.

Comment: Seeing the project 30 years from now, I don't see it being good for my people. With the river, climate change, don't see a potential need for jobs.

Comment: The Upper Kuskokwim region of TCC is very interested in this project and the village of Nikolai is a good place to host a meeting as there are a large number of subsistence users in the community and very few jobs. They have traditionally hunted in the foot hills of the

Alaska Range. The pipeline route which will run through this traditional hunting area will open new lands to access by motorized vehicles which will be dropped at the Farewell airstrip. It is one of our deepest concerns.