

## **Donlin Gold Project EIS**

Bethel Scoping Meeting

Yup'it Piciryarait Cultural Center

Monday, January 14, 2013, 6:00 pm

### **Attendance:**

Over 100 residents attended the scoping meeting held in Bethel. Don Kuhle of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers made a presentation about the Donlin Gold Project EIS. Cooperating agencies in attendance included the BLM, EPA, Alaska Department of Natural Resources, the Native Village of Napaimute, Village of Crooked Creek, and the Kuskokwim River Watershed Council.

### **Issues Raised:**

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

- Barge traffic may conflict with limited commercial fishing opportunities.
- Ballast water discharges may introduce invasive species into the Kuskokwim River.
- If there is a spill of diesel fuel, it may affect birds across the YK Delta and marine mammals at the mouth of the Kuskokwim River.
- The proposed barge travel plans may not be feasible due to low water levels.
- All hazardous materials and potential contaminants must be examined; not just mercury, but also others like arsenic and cadmium.
- CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and climate change should be examined.
- Tailings represent a potential threat to the fisheries if the tailings dam fails and there is a release into the river.
- Air quality impacts from the mine are a major risk, particularly mercury emissions.
- Any impacts to subsistence would be like losing our supermarket.
- The water demands of the mine may drain the aquifer.
- Since the mine is huge in scale, with billions of tons of waste rock, the geochemistry and risk of acid drainage must be examined.
- Hazardous [acid-generating] rock must be adequately characterized with a large sample, not just a few drilling sites.
- Mercury is a large risk, in air emissions, but also for worker health. Worker exposure must be monitored with baseline and annual measurements.
- Reclamation, perpetual monitoring, and treatment of water runoff must be adequately funded with a secure reclamation bond.
- During the life of the monitoring there should be air quality monitoring by a third party and a mass balance accounting of mercury.
- A detailed Human Health Impact Assessment should be implemented as part of the EIS.

- The barge traffic and supporting infrastructure may alter the Kuskokwim River. The river should not be changed to just a shipping channel.
- Kuskokwim River subsistence fisheries have suffered from closures in recent years. Will the mine result in further impacts and reductions in subsistence fishing?
- The region needs jobs, so hopefully the impacts of barging can be mitigated with measures like “no traffic” days.
- There is a risk that economic benefits from the project would spill out to Anchorage and the urban centers rather than staying in the villages. Is there any way to control this loss to the region?
- Barge traffic may cause increased river bank erosion.
- The project could bring millions of dollars in employment to the region, providing more support to meet the costs of subsistence activities.
- If the gas pipeline could provide natural gas to communities up and down the river, this would reduce costs and provide for cleaner energy.