

From: [John Binkley](#)
To: [donlingoldeis, POA](#)
Cc: [John Binkley](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Donlin Gold Draft EIS comment
Date: Tuesday, May 31, 2016 4:17:47 PM
Attachments: [image00001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)

John Binkley has shared a OneDrive file with you. To view it, click the link below.

 [Donlin EIS comments.docx](#)

Please find our comments on the Donlin Creek EIS attached and below. Thanks you. John and Judy Binkley.

John and Judy Binkley
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Keith Gordon
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
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Mr. Gordon,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed Donlin Gold draft environmental impact statement.

My wife and I have a significant history in the Yukon Kuskokwim (YK) region. In 1977 we built and operated a tug and barge business on the (YK) Rivers and coastwise on the YK Delta.

Our barge business generally served the people of the YK Delta and specifically, the Kuskokwim River from its mouth, past Crooked Creek, McGrath and Nikolai; even up to Telida on occasion. We employed local residence to run various tugs and barges, delivering fuel, freight, gravel and supplies along the river. Over the years we had as many as five sets of tugs and barges per day operating on the Kuskokwim River between May and October. We worked with local fishermen to make certain the tugs and barges were not disruptive to the salmon runs or interfered with commercial or subsistence fishing activities. I believe the Kuskokwim River can handle additional barge traffic as it is one of the widest and longest rivers in the state of Alaska, allowing both barging and subsistence fishing to co-exist.

During our time barging, my wife and I saw first-hand how job opportunities can significantly improve the quality of life in the YK region. The people we worked with were highly motivated, skilled at river work and hard working. They looked forward to productive summer days on the river and found joy in providing for their families.

I believe that if the Donlin Gold project moves forward, we will see the same effects in the region on a much larger scale, with an estimated 3,000 jobs created during the construction phase of the project, which is anticipated to last three to four years. As it moves forward into the 27-year operation phase, 600 to 1,200 high-paying, full-time jobs will exist because of the Donlin Gold mine.

With more jobs, we can expect to see an abundance of benefits. More young people will have the opportunity to remain in the region and preserve its long cultural history. With high-paying jobs the people of the YK region will also have a steady source of income, allowing them to pay for expenses that help support a subsistence way of life. Hunting and trapping supplies, transportation, gas and heating fuel all require cash. Being able to independently provide for themselves and their family will give

people a sense of purpose and fulfillment, improving the quality of life.

Additionally, families battle the crippling cost of living in Western Alaska, the proposed natural gas pipeline from tidewater to the region will serve as an opportunity for reasonable energy prices. With steady careers and a reduced cost of living, the financial burden that rests on the shoulders of the YK residents will be lightened.

Our first-hand experience of how more jobs can benefit the YK region did not stop with my work in the barge business. After moving from the Yukon River 1979, Bethel was our home for the next 11 years. During those years, I had the privilege of serving on the Bethel City Council, in the Alaska House of Representatives and the Alaska State Senate. My Senate District included 74 villages from the Canadian border to the Bering Sea.

As an elected official, I had the responsibility to find opportunities that could ultimately improve the quality of life in the YK region. Additionally, I served as chairman of a special committee aimed at giving local communities more law enforcement tools to combat the devastation of alcohol abuse.

To learn what tools would be most beneficial to the YK residents, we held 18 hearings on the issue. During this time, I listened to gripping testimony from scores of people on countless tragedies resulting from alcohol abuse.

I will never forget our first hearing in Aniak and one of the first people, an elder who testified, offered that; “the solution to the health and social problems related to alcohol abuse were not in additional laws...but for people to have meaningful jobs”. He further stated that “the self-worth found in supporting one’s family through a job is far more effective than any law banning alcohol consumption” (paraphrased).

I also sat on a Senate Special Committee on suicide prevention, where we heard testimony in a number of Alaska villages. People poured their hearts out to us in an attempt to make sense of the devastation that takes place in a community when someone takes their own life.

Out of all the information I have learned about laws, social programs and our desire to do well, the first testimony in Aniak was the most poignant. **Allowing people to earn the self-respect that comes with a job to provide for their family, is the most meaningful solution for allowing people to find the right path.**

After managing the barge business, serving multiple leadership roles in the YK region and listening to testimony from so many local people, I believe I have some insight into the benefits of new job opportunities in the YK region and how that can improve people's quality of life.

I believe Donlin Gold will bring these opportunities to the YK region with their demonstrated commitment to local hire and their insistence on a drug and alcohol-free work place. Residents will have the motivation to give up dangerous vices, which could lead to fewer drug and alcohol related deaths. With fewer deaths in the YK region, we could experience a brighter future for an area tormented by tragedies, financial turmoil and broken dreams. The Donlin Gold project has the potential to be a bright light for the YK people.

The people we worked with in the YK region are some of the hardest working, most productive, responsible and caring people I have ever had the pleasure of knowing, and they will embrace the new opportunities that Donlin Gold will bring. Please allow them the opportunity to prosper and to thrive.

Thank you. John and Judy Binkley.