

Donlin Gold Project EIS

Akiak Scoping Meeting
Akiak Community Center
Thursday, January 31, 2013, 1:00 pm

Attendance:

Over 30 people attended the scoping meeting for the Donlin Gold Project EIS held at Akiak, Alaska on January 31, 2013. Don Kuhle with the Army Corps of Engineers, the lead federal agency, presented an overview of the proposed Donlin Gold Mine EIS Project. Cooperating agencies in attendance were BLM, EPA, ADNR, and ADHSS. We also had people from Kwethluk and Akiachak in attendance.

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.

- New barges should be used in the Donlin project, because an older barge recently sank near Kwethluk.
- Will the natural gas pipeline have an adequate supply of fuel for the mine?
- What about air quality and industrial emissions? There are many sources, including the plant and the mill. Air-borne contaminants may travel as far as the coast, depending on the wind.
- Increased barge traffic may have negative effects on river bank erosion and private lands. Above Kwethluk there is a place where the barges touch both sides when they turn.
- How are surface waters diverted from the mine and will this protect against contaminants in the creeks and rivers?
- Barge traffic might conflict with our fishing, and we have such a short time to harvest salmon.
- We are concerned that barge travel plans may not be practical when water levels are low. Seasonal weather impacts needs to be studied.
- What about the impact of a large influx of people, what about housing, diseases, alcohol and drugs? We need to protect our language and culture.
- Health Impact Assessment must be done as part of the EIS, addressing all aspects including physical health, emotional health, and spiritual health. The project should not diminish our health, but increase our health.
- There were already problems with bank erosion from high winds and storms last year. The project may increase these impacts.
- Concerns about mercury, in air emissions, in tailings that may get into the Kuskokwim River. It could affect our salmon. Concerns about air quality outside the mine.

- The mine will have a big impact in our region and on our way of native life. We need to protect our language, our traditions, and our subsistence way of life.
- Tribal Councils must be on the table, in preparing the EIS to protect our way of life.
- Jobs at the mine are important, but we must train our young people to be prepared. What happens to employment at the end of the mine?
- What is the water balance plan? What will happen when there is too much rain in one year, what will happen to the run off?
- Some homes in Kwethluk had to be relocated last year due to erosion. Increase barge traffic may cause more erosion and will Donlin Gold pay for relocation of homes due to this erosion?
- We are concerned about barge traffic accident response time. If there is an accident what will the response time be?
- Some barges have dumped gravel into the Kuskokwim River when they aground. The river has changed channels and new islands were created. Would this also happen with the Donlin barges?
- The Akiak Native Community passed a resolution several years ago, not to stop the project but to be able to have input into the Donlin Gold Project.
- If Donlin Gold opens or becomes operational this may create a precedent and this will this open up the area for other companies.
- Regarding housing, currently there is a shortage in Akiak, so an influx of people may increase the housing shortage problem.
- We are concerned about human impacts. There should be adequate dollars allocated for addressing potential problems with drugs and alcohol.
- Be sure to invite the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium to comment on health issues.
- If the natural gas pipeline doesn't go through, does it mean that the mine will not open?
- Will we be able to see the mine? The pit and tailings from the river?
- Will pipeline be monitored in case of gas leakage?
- What are the effects of using explosives at the mine?
- What about fault lines and risk of earthquakes?
- For wetlands restoration, money must be set aside in advance.
- The EIS should examine causes of king salmon declines in the Kuskokwim River. The George River is a king salmon spawning river.
- Are there alternatives to barging with less impact to resources? Would a road be a better alternative, even though it would go through the Yukon Delta Refuge?
- Donlin should be required to set up an escrow account to do restoration, to be controlled by the tribes and the state. That way, if there is a disaster, the funds to restore wetlands are already available. In the absence of a borough government, we need a way to do this.