



Donlin Gold Project EIS
BIA Tribal Providers Conference
Donlin EIS Presentation
Thursday December 4, 2014
Anchorage, Alaska

Project Team Attendees:

Don Kuhle, USACE
Jessica Evans, URS
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Overview:

The Donlin Gold Project EIS presentation was given on Thursday December 4, 2014, in Anchorage, Alaska at the Dena'ina Center.

The presentation included a summary of the project components, an overview of the EIS process, a synthesis of the scoping comments, the process for developing alternatives, the TEK workshops, results of the fish studies conducted the summer of 2014, and a means of contacting the USACE.

Issues Raised:

Question: Is the pipeline analyzed in the same EIS as the mine?

Response: Yes, it is all in the same EIS document.

Question: When would construction on the pipeline begin?

Response: After the EIS is finalized and the permitting is completed; during the construction phase on timeline slide.

Comment: There should be a comprehensive study on water flow, and the impacts if there was a breakage of the dam; what rivers it would affect.

Response: That is all discussed in the EIS: surface water, groundwater, and the impacts to all waterways. It will be included in the Draft EIS, and the Final EIS. You can review the Draft EIS when it comes out.

Question: Will other assessments from previous mines be included? There have there been studies on the outcomes on what happens after mining is completed. They always say they will clean up after mines but there are places in the Lower 48 where native communities are living with impacts. Is there anything written down on that?

Response: We are looking at many other EIS's and other available documents to compare with other mining projects. The State oversees mining, including bonding, reclamation, and monitoring. If you have concerns about how it is being addressed, please comment when the Draft EIS comes out.

Question: For the pipeline, are you including branches to other communities in the EIS?

Response: The EIS will not include an evaluation of it, but the pipeline will be built with extra capacity to be tapped into by other communities: termed a common carrier. It would be incumbent upon communities to provide the infrastructure.

Question: Does the EIS include alternative energy sources?

Response: Many alternatives were considered that included alternative energy. The ones that got carried through to analysis in the EIS are the diesel pipeline and the LNG trucks. The EIS will include descriptions of which alternatives were not carried through.

Question: Will the EIS have a plan for if there is a break of the tailings dam? Is there a plan in place?

Response: Yes, there will be plans in place, and the EIS is supposed to evaluate the measures that will be taken.

Question: In terms of the criterion you use to decide pollution impacts to the air: I saw research that said that EIS's have said that there will be no affect to air pollution, and then 76% of the time that ends up being incorrect. How will the EIS account for that?

Response: The Corps is looking at what Donlin puts forward. The project must comply with all state and federal regulations. The EIS is looking at alternatives to further reduce pollutants. We can't say now what measures would be required to mitigation impacts and to address unexpected occurrences. We can address this more fully in the Final EIS if you submit comments on the Draft EIS.

Question: How many people would be employed from the Kuskokwim and surrounding villages?

Response: Unsure of exact number but I think it is approximately 2500 during construction, 500 during operations. Donlin has program to inform communities about employment opportunities, and has a strong local hire policy.

Comment: There would be many people employed, but if something catastrophic happens, then the number of people that would be impacted would be many many more. Not sure how you would put that in a document. 500 people employed per year is nothing compared to thousands of people displaced if something drastic happened.

Response: The EIS looks at both the beneficial impacts on employment and the potential for adverse impacts. Measures would be taken to avoid adverse impacts. The Corps would welcome comments on this issue.

Question: In the EIS, there would be a monitoring process; can you explain the state and federal monitoring processes?

Response: The State of Alaska has a dam safety expert, ADF&G will monitor fish habitat and [ADEC will monitor] water pollutants. Much of the water quality oversight has been transferred from the EPA to the State, so the focus is primarily on state has environmental standards, permits and monitoring for this resource.

Comment: Having a diesel pipeline instead of barges would be better because of the fewer barges.

Response: That is one of the reasons why the diesel pipeline alternative being considered. We heard concerns over scoping about barges and erosion.

Question: You are saying there will be diesel and cargo barges; will that be a big disturbance on the river?

Response: Yes, they would need to barge diesel to power the trucks and shovels, but also need to barge cargo. There would be about 2-3 barges a day. The EIS is also looking at the Birch Tree Crossing alternative to reduce barge time.

Question: Regarding the water on the Kuskokwim River verses the weather; some years we don't get much rain or snow. The barge travel is limited in that area sometimes because there is not enough water.

Response: That has come up many times. One of the big issues is the periods when of low water and barging.

Question: Is the EIS tying barging in with the salmon runs?

Response: Yes, that is an issue that has come up and is being analyzed in the EIS, and the different alternatives. This concern was the reason for the fish studies this summer.

Question: All of the information that you use to write the EIS, and all the Donlin studies, will they be available?

Response: A lot of the studies will be available on the website.

Comment: Concern about the energy issue, and what the best option for powering the mine is.

Response: Many alternatives were considered for energy, and these are the ones that are going to be carried forward.

Question: Where in the EIS does it talk about energy?

Response: Don showed transportation on the map.

Comment: Concerned about the mouth of the Kuskokwim River, and pollutants that stay there instead of washing out into the ocean. There are some things like clam beds that would be affected.

Response: Pollutants will be monitored, and will meet State of Alaska standards for discharge.

Comment: Nobody is talking about the fact that the food supply cannot handle the state standards—the state standards still allow some pollution.

Comment: Tribal consultation is not done right. Agencies send an email and expect response, and if there is no response, then they assume it is okay.

Response: Please contact Amanda Shearer and she will talk to you about your concerns. I can have her call you.

Question: Donlin Gold should go to Bethel and main hubs, and have conferences where the rural villages can come in.

Response: We did have scoping meetings in as many of the hubs as possible.

Comment: TKC been involved in Donlin for years. The mine is close to Yukon and the Kuskokwim Rivers. In another workshop discussing history of mine failures, we were told it was fool-proof. But listening to discussions about Mount Polley and the Donlin site and where proposed tailings would located, the facts are scary. At some point in time it's going to affect both the Kuskokwim and the Yukon Rivers in one way or another. There are tailings dam failures worldwide. There are both pros and cons about how the mines could affect the people and the rivers eventually—50, 100 years down the line—what we do now will be legacy to people after us.

Response: Mt. Polley made the EIS team and Donlin take a harder look at what they are proposing and see if there are any lessons to be learned.

Comment: Concern about the route for cyanide, and ways to transport the chemicals that will be used, and how it would get there.

Response: The chemicals would be on ocean barges to Bethel, and then river barges to the Kuskokwim. There is no Yukon alternative at this point.

Comment: Concern about a mine in Utah [*attendee was unsure but thought Utah*] that will take 100 years to clean up, to clean up the mercury.

Response: A lot of mines were built before there were environmental regulations. Mines built today have more stringent requirements for pollutants.