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Governor Bill Walker  
STATE OF ALASKA

May 31, 2016

Mr. Keith Gordon  
Alaska District  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
CEPOA-RD-Gordon  
P.O. Box 6898  
Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, AK 99506-0898



RE: State of Alaska consolidated comments on Donlin Gold draft EIS

Dear Mr. Gordon:

The State of Alaska (State) has reviewed the draft of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Donlin Gold mine and is pleased to provide the attached comments.

As you know, exploration and development of Alaska's natural resources plays an important part of our past, present, and also our future. The five large mines currently active in our state provide excellent jobs for Alaskans and stimulate and diversify Alaska's economy. Responsible development of the proposed Donlin Gold project will continue this tradition and enable the Calista Corporation (Calista) and The Kuskokwim Corporation (TKC) to generate employment, business opportunities, and revenues for their shareholders and the shareholders of other Alaska Native corporations throughout the state, as well as for the State of Alaska.

More than twenty years have passed since Calista first entered into a mining lease for the mineral lands it selected under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA). Over that time, Donlin Gold has been extremely active with community outreach and involvement. As a resource development state, we have a long history of understanding the challenges of responsibly developing our natural resources and economy while protecting subsistence resources and cultural values. Experience has shown a balance of needs can best be met with direct and substantive involvement of the local communities and tribal governments. This type of stakeholder engagement is essential to balancing those needs and will be necessary through all phases of the proposed project.

In 2013 Donlin Gold was named National Employer of the year by the National Association of State Workforce Agencies, recognizing businesses that demonstrate outstanding accomplishments resulting in a positive impact on its workforce, industry, and community. If developed, the Donlin Gold mine would create a variety of exceptional jobs in the Yukon-Kuskokwim region, which will be required to sustain a modern, responsible mine. Donlin Gold has described many of these jobs in an employment booklet, which also describes the qualifications for those jobs. I am proud to note

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that Alaska has the universities and technical programs that provide the education and training required to qualify for those positions. Alaskans, trained in Alaska, will be able to work to help ensure that the Donlin Gold mine will be accomplished with the highest regard for our land, air, water, fish, and wildlife.

The State has been encouraged by Donlin Gold's willingness to explore and adopt major changes in their project design to meet public and regulator concerns. This type of stakeholder interaction, and the ability to respond and adapt, ensures that the design of such an important project is a collaborative effort. Donlin's demonstrated ability and willingness to respond to stakeholder concerns with tangible, substantive design changes, whether it be to the pipeline alignment or to the mine site operations, are an invaluable trait for any project proponent. Donlin Gold has been proactive in working with State agencies to discuss concerns early on in the process in order to design a project that balances the needs of all stakeholders and resources.

The State has been a cooperating agency on the development of this draft EIS and has been heavily involved in the process since 2012. The release of the draft EIS is a major milestone for the USACE and the rest of the EIS team. I ask that the USACE continue to be efficient in their development of a defensible EIS and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process and look forward to a timely release of the final EIS and subsequent Record of Decision(s).

For these reasons, I support the responsible development of this project and look forward to continuing a partnership with the USACE, the cooperating agencies, and Donlin Gold to ensure a project designed with the highest regard for the surrounding environment and communities. Additionally, the responsible development of these resources assures that Calista and TKC are allowed full enjoyment of their lands as was intended by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, while potentially extending and providing critical infrastructure and utilities to rural Alaska. As this project moves through the federal and State permitting processes, we look forward to additional discussion on a number of aspects of the project to ensure responsible development through the entire life of the project. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Donlin Gold draft EIS.

Sincerely,



Bill Walker  
Governor

Enclosure