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TRIBES PUSH BACK ON DONLIN PIPELINE

Call for Meaningful Engagement Over Fish, Water & Cultural Impacts

BETHEL - In response to a new public notice from the Department of Natural Resources for the proposed 315-mile long Donlin natural gas pipeline, Alaska Native Tribes today called on the Dunleavy Administration to recognize their sovereign Tribal governments, and to hold a public hearing, to provide an honest and open dialogue about the true and cumulative impacts from the proposed pipeline and mine site on indigenous lands.

“This proposed pipeline will open vast areas that subsistence harvesters rely upon to the railbelt due to the pipeline maintenance road and its connectivity to the road system, and cross hundreds of fish streams. It’s vital that Governor Dunleavy give Alaska Native Tribes fair and equal footing when considering this project,” said Mark Springer, Executive Director of Orutsararmiut Native Council.

The proposed Donlin Gold mine would be a very large, open pit mine in a tributary of the Kuskokwim River. To power the mine, Donlin Gold has proposed a natural gas pipeline stretching from Cook Inlet, across portions of the Iditarod Trail, to the Kuskokwim mine site.

The permitting process for the Donlin pipeline has been fraught with controversy. During an initial public comment period in 2019, DNR refused to consider the full scale of impacts likely to flow from pipeline and mine construction and operation. Orutsararmiut Native Council (ONC), the Tununak IRA Council, the Kasigluk Traditional Council and other Tribal Governments asked DNR to reconsider its decision, but DNR refused. When ONC and other villages filed an appeal in state superior court, however, DNR finally relented, and agreed on February 18, 2020, to go back and re-examine the full range of impacts from the mine and the pipeline on natural and cultural resources.

The Tribal letter today asks DNR to engage in Government-to-Government consultations on the proposed pipeline, and to hold public hearings so that affected voices along the proposed pipeline corridor and around the mine can engage at a more meaningful level.

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