



MEDIA STATEMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Mother Kuskokwim Tribal Coalition expresses deep disappointment with Alaska’s Congressional delegation for supporting the Donlin Gold Mine over Tribal requests, wild salmon**

**Bethel, AK** – Mother Kuskokwim Tribal coalition members today expressed deep disappointment with Alaska’s Congressional delegation, which today filed an amicus brief in support of mining interests planning what would be the world’s largest gold mine in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. The Yukon-Kuskokwim is one of the world’s largest river deltas and a critically important ecosystem that is more valuable than gold to people in the region.

The amicus brief was filed by U.S. Senators Dan Sullivan and Lisa Murkowski and U.S. Representative Mary Peltola, who is from Bethel, AK, and who has previously worked for Donlin.

In an [Associated Press story from 2022](#), Peltola said she wanted to use her campaign to elevate issues of food insecurity and ocean productivity. She also said she recognized how important fish, plants and other wildlife are to Alaska Native communities. At the time, Peltola said her litmus test for any development project is “social license to operate.” In the case of Donlin, she said she was not sure if there was social license to proceed, and “I defer to that.”

Peltola also told the reporter that after six years, she left Donlin following a mine waste dam failure at the Mount Polley Mine in Canada. The Donlin Gold mine would have a bigger tailings dam that threatens catastrophic destruction to the region should it fail. The danger posed by Donlin’s mine waste dam is one of the claims in the Tribes’ federal lawsuit challenging the mine’s federal permits and authorizations. An independent [report released by Mother Kuskowkim](#) earlier this month detailed the consequences of a tailings dam failure or breach. A copy of that report was provided to the Alaska delegation last week while tribes were in DC presenting the new data.



"It's a very sad day for our region, especially for the Tribes opposing the Donlin Mine," said Sophie Swope, Executive Director of the Mother Kuskokwim Tribal Coalition, an organization supporting the Alaska Native Tribes opposed to the Donlin Gold development. "We met with Representative Peltola's staff last week in Washington, D.C. and she is well aware of the widespread opposition to the mine in our region. The fact that this issue has escalated to federal litigation underscores that Donlin lacks the social license to operate. Tribes' request for a supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, as well as our demands for sound science and adequate Tribal consultation, are entirely justified. We are deeply disappointed by Representative Peltola's lack of responsiveness and dismissal of our concerns."

Donlin Mine LLC and Calista Corporation are defendant-intervenors in a federal lawsuit brought by six Kuskokwim River region Tribes who are challenging Donlin Gold mine's federal permits and authorizations. The Tribes are Orutsararmut Native Council, Tuluksak Native Community, Organized Village of Kwethluk, Native Village of Eek, Native Village of Kwigillingok, and Chevak Native Village.

Alaska's Congressional delegation, in filing the amicus brief, is siding with Donlin and Calista, essentially ignoring pleas from the region asking them to support Tribes or at least stay neutral on the proposed acid-producing, open-pit gold mine, which threatens catastrophic environmental consequences for the region.

"We have so many concerns it's hard to say them in a soundbite," said Bernice Andrew, Tuluksak Tribal Council Secretary/Treasurer and Anastasia Jones, Utilities Assistant Manager and Tribal Delegate. "It affects our village and our people, who have already been affected by mining, in so many ways. If our lands and waters are harmed, it affects our fish and wildlife. If there is a catastrophic tailings breach, our entire village may need to relocate quickly -- how can first responders relocate 500 people? Crooked Creek would be inundated in less than 30 minutes. Tuluksak is already affected by a small mine, Nyac, that has made our river non-drinkable and non-usable. The Donlin mine would be the largest gold mine in the world. It will affect our river, our future, our food, everything. We elected Representative Peltola to represent us, and by signing this amicus brief, she is going against us."

Most Yukon-Kuskokwim Tribes are on record opposing the mine. At the [Association of Village Council Presidents annual convention in 2019](#), 34 Tribes out of 41 Tribes attending the convention voted to



withdraw a resolution supporting the mine. Another resolution opposing the Donlin mine passed with 35 delegates in favor, two opposed, and three abstaining. There were 41 Tribes at that meeting out of 56 Association of Village Council Presidents member Tribes.

The Village of Crooked Creek is the only Tribe that has entered into litigation on the side of the federal government in support of the Donlin Gold mine. The court allowed them to file an amicus brief in support of the federal agencies permitting the mine on April 16, 2024.

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