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July 29, 2021

Wyn Menefee, Executive Director
Trust Land Office
Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority
2600 Cordova Street
Anchorage, AK 99503
Submitted via email to mhtlo@alaska.gov

Re: Decision to Issue a Negotiated Mineral Lease for Ester Dome Project – Fairbanks

Dear Mr. Menefee:

The Alaska Miners Association (AMA) writes to comment in support of the Decision to issue a negotiated mineral lease for the Ester Dome Project.

AMA is a professional membership trade organization established in 1939 to represent the mining industry in Alaska. We are composed of more than 1,400 members that come from eight statewide branches: Anchorage, Denali, Fairbanks, Haines, Juneau, Kenai, Ketchikan/Prince of Wales, and Nome. Our members include individual prospectors, geologists, engineers, suction dredge miners, small family mines, junior mining companies, major mining companies, Alaska Native Corporations, and the contracting sector that supports Alaska's mining industry.

The decision to issue a negotiated mineral lease to Felix Gold Alaska is in the best interest of Alaska Mental health Trust (AMHT) beneficiaries, and Alaskans.

First, Felix Gold has applied for the negotiated mineral lease to conduct early-stage exploration activities in the project area. At this stage, activities associated with environmental study and deposit modeling will be conducted. There is no imminent plan to construct or operate a mine. Should the company proceed with the next stage of mineral development, an extensive regulatory process will begin in which dozens of permits will need to be obtained. Throughout this stringent process, there will be multiple opportunities for the community and general public to provide input. Alaska's mining industry has a successful record of partnering with stakeholders to ensure mines are part of their communities and compatible with their surrounding environment, and we expect that to remain the case at Ester Dome.

Finally, we observe that the AMHT was created to provide mental health care for Alaskans who suffer from mental illness, disability, and diseases. It was granted one million acres of resource-value lands to generate income for its programs and beneficiaries, and the Trust has an obligation to maximize revenues from the lands when it is shown development can be done responsibly. Issuing a lease for Felix Gold to conduct the exploration activities to pursue responsible development is a prudent first step in obtaining Trust revenues, and other economic benefits for Alaska. We appreciate the AMHT seriously considering this economic opportunity for our state.



Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "DSK".

Deantha Skibinski
Executive Director