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March 22, 2021

Mr. Nick Dallman
Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
610 University Avenue
Fairbanks, AK 99709
Submitted via email: Nicholas.dallman@alaska.gov

Subject: Comments on APDES General Permit

Dear Mr. Dallman,

The Alaska Miners Association (AMA) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the reissuance of the APDES General Permit.

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.

AMA recently encouraged the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to amend Nationwide Permit 44 to allow mechanical placer mining in tidally influenced waters and to amend POA-2014-00055-M1 to authorize mechanical placer mining in navigable waters. To that end, we encourage the following considerations for the APDES General Permit:

In Section 1.1.1 - The permit is limited to "statewide coverage for discharges to fresh waters of the U.S. within Alaska" and at Sections "1.3.1.3 [prohibits] Discharges from mechanical dredges located in open waters, such as major rivers; and 1.3.1.4 [as well as] Discharges into marine waters.." The permit should allow coverage for discharges into the "all waters of the U. S., including salt or marine waters and tidally influenced waters"; and that the prohibitions at sections 1.3.1.3 and 1.3.1.4 should be amended to allow discharges into "open waters" and "marine waters." We also suggest a provision in the text of the permit for silt barriers or turbidity curtains in areas where the operation would not inhibit fish passage.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment. If you have a need to discuss our comments with us, we will be happy to do so.

Sincerely,

Deantha Skibinski
Executive Director

