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September 8, 2021

Mr. Russell Kirkham
Division of Mining, Land, and Water
550 W 7th Avenue Suite 920
Anchorage, AK 99501
Submitted via email at coalprogram@alaska.gov

Re: Informal Conference on Surface Coal Mining Permit Renewal for the Wishbone Hill Mine Permit (01-89-796 & 02-89-796)

Dear Mr. Kirkham:

The Alaska Miners Association (AMA) appreciates the opportunity to support the renewal of the Wishbone Hill Mining permits.

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 submitted comments in April 2020 within the renewal period for the existing mining permit. At that time, we shared that during its last renewal, both the State of Alaska and Usibelli Coal Mine, Inc. performed a tremendous amount of study to ensure mining activity at Wishbone Hill met our permitting system's rigorous regulatory requirements. Through the Alaska Surface Coal Mining Control and Reclamation Act (ASMCRA), Wishbone Hill was determined to have met the necessary safeguards to protect all aspects of the environment and public health.

The Matanuska Coal Fields have a long history of coal mining in Alaska. The low-sulfur, bituminous coal is a valuable state resource and allows us to boast "Alaska Clean Coal," continuing the Usibelli family's 78-year record of supplying an abundant and affordable energy source to Alaskans and beyond.

AMA is keenly aware of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough's need for family wage jobs close to home. Based on the last feasibility study, the project would employ approximately 100 people. Mining jobs in Alaska carry an average annual wage of approximately \$115,000, higher than the median household income of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and over twice the state average for all sectors of the economy. In addition, the State of Alaska and the Mat-Su Borough will receive revenues from mining taxes and royalties. Mining at Wishbone Hill could bring needed economic benefits at a time when our state most needs them.



As Alaskans who care deeply about our environment, we appreciate that the two primary reclamation goals are for moose habitat and recreation, and remain confident that given the permit complies with all state and federal requirements, mining can be done here while protecting all aspects of the environment.

The Wishbone Hill project provides for new economic opportunities while coexisting with the Alaska environment. For these reasons, we urge you approve the permit renewal.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D Skibinski', is positioned above the typed name.

Deantha Skibinski
Executive Director