



March 20, 2026

Senators Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan
Congressman Nick Begich
United States Army of Corps of Engineers – Alaska District
City and Borough of Juneau

Re: Support for the Lake Tap Tunnel Alternative – alignment with USACE Planning Principle

To Whom it may concern:

On behalf of the Alaska Miners Association, Hecla Greens Creek Mining Company, and Coeur Alaska's Kensington Mine, we express our strong support for advancing the Lake Tap Tunnel Alternative as the preferred long-term solution to mitigate Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) risk in the Mendenhall Valley.

As long-standing members of the Juneau community with many employee families living in the flood zone, and operators of the region's two active underground mines, we place high value on solutions that prioritize life safety, protect critical infrastructure, respect environmental and cultural resources, and support the long-term economic vitality of Juneau and Southeast Alaska. Increasing frequency and magnitude of GLOF events underscore the urgency of implementing a durable, risk-reducing solution.

For three consecutive years—2023 through 2025—Juneau's Mendenhall Valley has endured record-breaking GLOF events originating from Suicide Basin. These events have grown in magnitude and severity, placing thousands of residents, and critical infrastructure at annually increasing risk. The US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) now projects a maximum potential peak flow from an outburst of 121,000 cubic feet per second—more than double the 2025 record event. A flood of this magnitude would overwhelm temporary flood-fighting measures such as HESCO barriers and could impact more than 2,800 properties across the Mendenhall Valley. The risk to life, property, and community stability is profound and escalating.

At the December 2025 multi-agency charrette, there was unanimous agreement among the City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ), Central Council of the Tlingit & Haida Tribes of Alaska, and the U.S. Forest Service that the Lake Tap tunnel through Bullard Mountain was the preferred alternative for an enduring solution. We agree that the Lake Tap tunnel offers the highest likelihood of meaningful risk reduction, the lowest consequence of failure, the least operational complexity,

the fastest construction timeline and the lowest estimated cost. It is also the only viable alternative that avoids the displacement of families through property acquisition.

Based on the multi-agency charrette process and supporting technical evaluation, the Lake Tap Tunnel Alternative best aligns with core U.S. Army Corps of Engineers planning principles. By addressing the hazard at its source through a passive, gravity-driven system, the tunnel provides the highest level of life-safety risk reduction while avoiding the creation of new, long-term public safety risks associated with large surface structures. This approach reflects sound, risk-informed planning and reduces residual risk over the full project life cycle.

The Lake Tap Tunnel Alternative also demonstrates strong technical feasibility, reliability, and resilience, particularly in a seismically active and environmentally sensitive setting.

Both Hecla Greens Creek and Coeur Alaska's Kensington Mine have decades of direct, hands-on experience designing, constructing, operating, and maintaining underground excavations in Southeast Alaska. Our operations routinely manage changing geologic conditions, variable rock mass quality, and significant groundwater inflows—using formal geotechnical investigation, ground support design, monitoring, and adaptive risk controls as standard practice. This depth of local operating experience provides a high degree of confidence that tunneling, when advanced through disciplined investigation, conservative design criteria, and rigorous construction oversight, is a proven, manageable, and resilient solution well-suited to long-term GLOF risk reduction in the Mendenhall system.

Based upon our companies' collective expertise in tunneling in formations similar to Bullard Mountain, we think there are significant opportunities to reduce cost, schedule risk, and construction complexity while simultaneously improving the long-term resilience and adaptability of the Lake Tap. The opportunities include using conventional drill and blast mechanisms instead of assuming the use of a Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM). Drill and blast mobilization is dramatically simpler and faster, drawing on equipment that is commonly used in Juneau today with parts vendors and expertise in the local community.

At the proposed tunnel angle, standard TBM equipment faces operational complications on systems designed for near-horizontal operation. Drill and blast tunneling has a much lower cost and allows more flexibility. We also question the assumption of the need for the concrete lining for the tunnel, whether the tunnel could be completed at a shallower gradient, and think that there are alternate design opportunities for the final tunnel breakthrough into Suicide Basin.

Importantly, the tunneling alternative minimizes environmental disturbance, community disruption, and land acquisition, while preserving residential neighborhoods, recreation areas, and tourism assets central to Juneau's social and economic well-being. By reducing long-term operations and maintenance complexity and avoiding extensive surface infrastructure, the Lake Tap Tunnel also reflects prudent consideration of cost effectiveness and implementability over the project life cycle.

We recognize that further geotechnical investigation, environmental review, and stakeholder engagement are necessary and appropriate next steps. Consistent with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers planning principles, we respectfully encourage advancing the Lake Tap Tunnel Alternative into preliminary design and environmental review as the preferred path forward. Considering the potential magnitude of the impact a GLOF can have, as evidenced by the 2024 event, the community does not have time to waste with interim measures and bureaucratic processes. We need to move forward collectively on the Lake Tap Tunnel project in an expedient manner.

The Alaska Miners Association, Hecla Greens Creek, and Coeur Alaska stand ready to support a timely, science-based progression of this solution in partnership with federal, state, tribal, and local stakeholders.

Respectfully,

Alaska Miners Association
Hecla Greens Creek Mining Company
Coeur Alaska – Kensington Mine