ALASKA MINERS ASSOCIATION

121 W. Fireweed Suite 120 | Anchorage, Alaska | 99503 | 907.563.9229 | alaskaminers.org

October 23, 2026

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Alaska District
Bureau of Land Management, Alaska State Office
Re: Donlin Gold Project Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement
Submitted online at Donlin Gold SEIS Project Involvement Site

Re: Donlin Gold SEIS

Dear U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Land Management:

The Alaska Miners Association (AMA) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the Donlin Gold Project.

AMA is a statewide trade association whose mission is to advocate for and promote responsible mineral development in Alaska. AMA members include large and small mining companies, individual miners, contractors, suppliers, professional service providers, and Alaskans who support a strong, responsible mining industry.

The Donlin Gold Project has undergone extensive environmental review

The Donlin Gold Project has already undergone one of the most extensive federal environmental reviews for a resource-development project in Alaska. In 2018, after years of technical analysis, interagency coordination, and public review, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) issued the Final Environmental Impact Statement, Joint Record of Decision, USACE Clean Water Act and Rivers and Harbors Act authorization, and BLM right-of-way authorization. That record remains the foundation for the agencies' decisions and for the current supplemental review.

The Draft SEIS is appropriately focused on the issue identified by the court: supplemental analysis of a larger hypothetical tailings release scenario. AMA supports the agencies' decision to keep the Draft SEIS within that court-directed scope. The SEIS should remain focused on that issue and should not be expanded to revisit matters that were fully evaluated in the 2018 Final Environmental Impact Statement or that fall outside the scope of the remand.

Donlin is not designed like the dams that failed; it is designed around the lessons those failures taught.

AMA recognizes that tailings dam failures elsewhere have raised legitimate public concern and have provided important lessons for the mining industry regarding design, construction, water management, monitoring, and long-term oversight. Those lessons are directly relevant to the Draft

SEIS, but it is also important to distinguish the Donlin Gold tailings storage facility from many historical facilities that failed. The proposed Donlin facility is designed as a downstream-raised rockfill embankment, rather than an upstream-raised dam that depends in part on previously deposited tailings for structural support. This distinction is significant because many historical failures involved upstream construction methods, poor water control, weak foundations, liquefaction-prone materials, overtopping, or internal erosion. Based on the available record, the Donlin facility incorporates multiple design features intended to address those known failure mechanisms. The embankment would be constructed with rockfill and founded on competent bedrock after removal of unsuitable soils and highly weathered rock. The seismic design is based on a conservative earthquake criterion for the Iditarod–Nixon Fork Fault near the project, with the objective of preventing release of tailings or water during the design event. The design also emphasizes water management through diversion of non-contact water, storage capacity and freeboard for storm and snowmelt events, and permitted treatment and discharge systems for excess water when needed. In addition, the facility includes seepage controls such as a geomembrane liner, bedding layers, engineered filters, transition zones, and underdrains to manage water, reduce seepage pressures, and protect against internal erosion.

AMA further notes that design alone is not the only safeguard. The facility is planned with instrumentation, monitoring, independent technical review, and closure planning intended to support long-term stability and accountability.

In addition to these project-specific safeguards, the Alaska Dam Safety Program, administered by the Alaska Department of Natural Resources under Alaska Statute 46.17 and Article 3 of 11 AAC 93, provides a comprehensive regulatory framework for the review and oversight of jurisdictional dams, including mine tailings facilities. The program requires qualified engineers to prepare and certify design plans, specifications, engineering analyses, and supporting documentation before the State may issue a Certificate of Approval to Construct, Modify, or Repair a Dam. Following construction, the dam must be shown to conform to the approved design before it may receive a Certificate of Approval to Operate. Continued authorization is supported by periodic safety inspections conducted by qualified engineers, current operations and maintenance manuals, monitoring and recordkeeping requirements, and emergency preparedness measures. An Emergency Action Plan provides an additional layer of protection by establishing procedures for identifying and evaluating unusual or potentially hazardous conditions, assigning responsibilities, and promptly notifying state and local emergency-management authorities and potentially affected communities if an emergency develops. The plan typically addresses warning and notification protocols, emergency contacts, response responsibilities, inundation information, and actions intended to reduce potential consequences. It must be maintained as an operational document, coordinated with appropriate response agencies, and reviewed and updated as facility conditions, personnel, or emergency contacts change. The Emergency Action Plan helps ensure that developing conditions are recognized and communicated quickly and that responsible parties are prepared to respond in a coordinated manner. The State may also inspect the facility and its records, impose project-specific operating conditions, require corrective action, and review proposed modifications, repairs, or closure measures.

Together, these requirements establish continuing regulatory oversight across the dam's full life cycle, from design and construction through operation, emergency preparedness, modification, and

eventual closure. The successful operation of tailings and mine-water management facilities at other Alaska mines demonstrates that modern facilities can be responsibly designed, regulated, and operated in Alaska's challenging environment. This proven oversight framework should give the public confidence that tailings facility risks can be effectively managed through sound engineering and continued regulatory accountability.

No tailings facility can be described as having zero risk; however, the relevant question for the Draft SEIS is whether risk has been responsibly reduced through sound engineering, conservative design assumptions, water and seepage controls, qualified review, and ongoing regulatory oversight. From AMA's perspective, the Donlin Gold tailings storage facility should be evaluated in that context: not as a generic tailings dam, but as a modern facility in a jurisdiction with robust regulatory oversight designed around the lessons learned from historical failures.

USACE and BLM should reaffirm the 2018 Joint Record of Decision and permits issued.

AMA recognizes that the Draft SEIS evaluates scenarios in which a major tailings release could have severe consequences. Those potential consequences deserve serious, technically sound analysis. At the same time, the supplemental analysis does not change the underlying facility design, engineered safety measures, mitigation commitments, or regulatory oversight framework previously reviewed by the agencies. From AMA's perspective, the available record indicates that the tailings storage facility is supported by rigorous engineering standards, conservative design criteria, multiple layers of protection, water and seepage controls, monitoring systems, emergency planning, and long-term closure considerations.

Alaska's Dam Safety Program provides a proven and important layer of technical review, regulation, and ongoing oversight for tailings facilities, including requirements for qualified engineering review, approvals, inspections, and safe operation, emergency preparedness, modification, and eventual closure.

The Draft SEIS evaluates tailings release scenarios that are proportionally larger in size and potential effect than the scenario evaluated in the 2018 Final Environmental Impact Statement. While the analysis recognizes that a major release could have severe consequences, regardless of whether that release is 0.5% or 27%, it does not change the underlying facility design, engineered safety measures, mitigation commitments, or independent and regulatory oversight framework previously reviewed by the agencies. Those safeguards were central to the agencies' prior decision and remain unchanged by the analysis in the Draft SEIS. For that reason, AMA encourages USACE and BLM to reaffirm the 2018 Joint Record of Decision and existing authorizations.

Conclusion

The Donlin Gold Project represents a major long-term opportunity for employment, local and regional business activity, infrastructure investment, and broader economic development in the Yukon-Kuskokwim region and across Alaska. The project would support direct and indirect jobs, create contracting and supplier opportunities for Alaska businesses, and generate long-term benefits for communities, service providers, and the state economy. These economic opportunities are

particularly important in a region where year-round employment, private investment, and durable infrastructure can have lasting positive effects. Predictable, timely, and durable permitting decisions are critical to Alaska's mining industry. Mining projects require substantial up-front investment, years of technical studies, extensive agency review, and ongoing compliance commitments. When agencies complete a rigorous environmental review, respond to a court-directed remand, and confirm that the existing analysis and mitigation remain sound, the resulting authorizations should be reaffirmed so that Alaska can continue to attract investment in responsible resource development.

For these reasons, AMA respectfully urges USACE and BLM to complete the SEIS efficiently, maintain the court-directed scope of the analysis, recognize the strength of the existing permitting record, and reaffirm the 2018 Joint Record of Decision and existing federal authorizations if supported by the supplemental analysis.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments.

Sincerely,

Deantha Skibinski
Executive Director
Alaska Miners Association