

Statement of Calista Corp. and Donlin Gold on AVCP Resolution 19-09-09

In 2006, AVCP passed a resolution in support of Donlin Gold, citing its positive impact on the region's economy, its commitment to local hire and local training and the opportunity for area villages to fully participate in the federal and state permitting process. The goal was "to ensure that subsistence resources and the environment are protected."

In the 13 years since, Calista Corp., the minerals rights and land owner, The Kuskokwim Corporation (TKC) which owns the surface-rights, and Donlin Gold, the potential developer and operator, hosted at least 550 village meetings, workshops and site tours where they solicited comments and came up with innovative ways to train and hire local residents and reduce the environmental impact. These ranged from providing modern welding machines to train area residents to proposing a natural gas pipeline to reduce barge traffic on the Kuskokwim River.

At the same time, federal regulators invited 66 Tribes to participate in the EIS process, held 9 meetings with Tribes, 14 work sessions and 14 community meetings. More than 5,000 substantive comments were received on the draft EIS and all were considered in the final EIS and Record of Decision.

The state held 34 meetings through its intensive permitting process.

Throughout this lengthy process, Calista, TKC, Donlin Gold, as well as state and federal regulators closely listened to residents and worked with dedication to address and mitigate concerns. The result was growing, in-region support for the project. A 2015 survey of in-region residents found that 68% supported the project, including a majority in Bethel, and only 11% strongly opposed it.

Preserving the Kuskokwim River has been the highest priority for Calista, TKC and Donlin Gold. We have conducted dozens of baseline fish studies over the last decade to better track any potential impact on the fish resource. We have conducted wake studies and found ways to dramatically reduce barge traffic. We plan to use special, double-hulled barges and store response equipment along the river.

Once the mine is developed, all water that comes in contact with the mine area will be treated to water-quality standards before it is released. We plan to install a first-of-its kind liner under the tailings storage facility and utilize the most stable dam type possible, a downstream tailings design.

Andrew Guy, Calista Corporation President & CEO says, "Under ANCSA and ANILCA, it is our obligation to responsibly develop the land for the economic benefit of our people. Our early leaders successfully fought for the right to select the land because of its rich mineral deposit, and to maintain oversight as Alaska Native peoples."

For these and other reasons, we are disappointed that the delegates at the convention of the Association of Village Council Presidents, a group we have long admired and supported, chose to oppose further development and the future operations of Donlin Gold including its own Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. We do, however, stand ready to address any and all concerns the convention delegates raised and work toward agreeable solutions.