



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

Department of Environmental
Conservation

DIVISION OF WATER
Wastewater Discharge Authorization Program

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Anchorage, Alaska 99501-2617
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www.dec.alaska.gov/water/wwdp

August 10, 2018

Donlin Gold, LLC
Attention: Andy Cole
4720 Business Park Blvd, Suite G-25
Anchorage, AK 99503
(via email)

Re: Donlin Gold, LLC, Donlin Gold Mine
POA-1995-120, Crooked Creek

Dear Mr. Cole:

In accordance with Section 401 of the Federal Clean Water Act of 1977 and provisions of the Alaska Water Quality Standards, the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is issuing the enclosed Certificate of Reasonable Assurance for placement of dredged and/or fill material in waters of the U.S., including wetlands and streams, associated with the development of a gold mine 10 miles north of the village of Crooked Creek, Alaska.

DEC regulations provide that any person who disagrees with this decision may request an informal review by the Division Director in accordance with 18 AAC 15.185 or an adjudicatory hearing in accordance with 18 AAC 15.195 – 18 AAC 15.340. An informal review request must be delivered to the Director, Division of Water, 555 Cordova Street, Anchorage, AK 99501, within 20 days of the permit decision. Visit <http://dec.alaska.gov/commish/review-guidance/> for information on Administrative Appeals of Department decisions.

An adjudicatory hearing request must be delivered to the Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Conservation, 410 Willoughby Avenue, Suite 303, PO Box 111800, Juneau, AK 99811-1800, within 30 days of the permit decision. If a hearing is not requested within 30 days, the right to appeal is waived.

By copy of this letter we are advising the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers of our actions and enclosing a copy of the certification for their use.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of James Rypkema in black ink.

James Rypkema
Program Manager, Storm Water and Wetlands

Enclosure: 401 Certificate of Reasonable Assurance

cc: (with enclosure via email)
Dan Graham, Donlin Gold
Jamie Hyslop, USACE, Anchorage
Shelia Newman, USACE Anchorage
Calvin Alvarez, USACE Anchorage

Faith Martineau, ADNR
Megan Marie, ADF&G
USFWS Field Office Anchorage
Matthew LaCroix, EPA Operations, Anchorage
Mark Douglas, EPA Operations, Anchorage

STATE OF ALASKA
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION
CERTIFICATE OF REASONABLE ASSURANCE

In accordance with Section 401 of the Federal Clean Water Act (CWA) and the Alaska Water Quality Standards (18 AAC 70), a Certificate of Reasonable Assurance, is issued to Donlin Gold, LLC, attention: Andy Cole, at 4720 Business Park Blvd, Suite G-25, Anchorage, Alaska 99503, for placement of dredged and/or fill material in waters of the U.S. including wetlands and streams in association with the development of a gold mine located 277 miles west of Anchorage, 145-miles northeast of Bethel, and 10 miles north of the village of Crooked Creek in the Kuskokwim watershed. There is no existing overland year-round access to the site, or a utility service to supply the mine.

Donlin Gold is proposing the development of an open pit, hard rock gold mine. The proposed Donlin Gold project includes land leased from Calista Corporation (Calista), The Kuskokwim Corporation and CIRI Inc. All three are Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) regional corporations. The remainder of potentially affected lands (principally pipeline impacts) are owned primarily by the State of Alaska or U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

A U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) permit pursuant to Section 10 of the River Harbors Act of 1899 (33 USC 403) and pursuant to Section 404 of the CWA (33 USC 1344) is to be issued to Donlin Gold for the discharge of fill material into waters of the U.S., including wetlands, and the construction of structures in and under navigable waters. The USACE permit will authorize the Applicant's proposed action (Alternative 2 North Option) which incorporates the North Route Pipeline option as detailed in the April 2018 Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). This alternative incorporates all practicable avoidance and minimization measures.

To the extent practicable, the proposed project has been designed and modified to avoid impacts to waters of the U.S. and important cultural resources and wildlife habitats. The construction of all Project components (Mine Site, Transportation Corridor, and Pipeline) will result in the discharge of 4,368,300 cubic yards (cy) of fill material, permanently impacting 2,877 acres of wetland, 3 acres of fill below the Ordinary High Water Mark (OHWM) of the Kuskokwim River, and 172,844 linear feet of stream, and temporarily impacting 538 acres of wetland and 53,346 linear feet of stream.

The Project would have an average process throughput of 59,000 tons of ore per day, an estimated operational life of 27 years, and would produce approximately 30 million ounces of gold. Construction of the Project would take 3 to 4 years. Final reclamation and closure activities will take six years post operations. Approximately 45 years post-reclamation the mine pit will fill and there will be need for treatment in perpetuity of the wastewater discharged from the mine pit.

Major Project components include the proposed Mine Site, Transportation Corridor, and Pipeline. See the Donlin Gold FEIS, Section 2.3.2, Alternative 2 – Donlin Gold's Proposed Action with incorporation of the North Route Pipeline option (referred to as the Alternative 2 North Option) for a detailed description of the Project. The three major project components are summarized as follows:

Mine Site

The Mine Site construction will result in the discharge of 2,943,005 cy of fill material, resulting in the permanent loss of 2,572 acres of wetland and 171,100 linear feet of stream. The primary Project subcomponents of the Mine Site include Donlin-Jungjuk road (East of Crooked Creek), Laydown areas,

Mine Internal Roads, North and South Overburden Stockpile, Open Pit, Snow Gulch Freshwater Reservoir, Tailings Storage Facility (TSF), Treated Water Discharge Facility, Material sites and Stockpiles, and Waste Rock Facility (WRF).

Transportation Corridor

The Transportation Corridor construction will result in the discharge of 156,280 cy of material, resulting in the permanent impact to 105 acres of wetland, 3 acres below the OHWM of the Kuskokwim River, and 1,844 linear feet of stream. The primary Project subcomponents of the Transportation Corridor include a port facility at Angyaruq (Jungjuk), a 30-mile mine access road from the port (West of Crooked Creek), a 5,000 foot airstrip, airstrip spur road, material sites.

Pipeline

The Pipeline construction will result in the discharge of 1,269,015 cy of material, resulting in the permanent loss of 200 acres of wetland and temporary impacts to 538 acres of wetland and 53,346 linear feet of stream. The Pipeline component includes the construction of a 14-inch-diameter steel Pipeline to transport natural gas approximately 316 miles from an existing 20-inch gas pipeline tie-in near Beluga, Alaska to the Mine Site power plant. Natural gas will be supplied to the Pipeline from existing Cook Inlet infrastructure. The Pipeline will require one compressor station at Milepost (MP) 0.4. An associated fiber optic line will be installed in the right-of-way corridor parallel to the natural gas pipeline for operational needs and communications. The primary Project subcomponents of the Pipeline include access routes, airstrips, block valves, work camps, horizontal directional drill (HDD) workspace, material sites, pipeline storage yards, pipeline, water extraction sites, and work pads.

The permit requires compensatory mitigation for the direct impacts to waters of the U.S., including wetlands.

Project Location: The Mine Site is located at Latitude 62.0179° N., Longitude 158.1884°W, 277-miles west of Anchorage and 10-miles north of Crooked Creek village. The river port (Jungjuk) is located on the north bank of the Kuskokwim River approximately 9-river miles south of Crooked Creek village at Latitude 61.7952° N, Longitude 158.2142° W. The Mine Site airstrip is located approximately 15.5-miles northwest of Crooked Creek village at Latitude 62.0319°N, Longitude 158.2351°W. The natural gas pipeline tie in near the community of Beluga at Latitude 61.2694° N Longitude 150.9017°W.

A state issued water quality certification is required under Section 401 because the proposed activity will be authorized by a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers permit (POA-1995-120) and a discharge of pollutants to waters of the U.S. located in the State of Alaska may result from the proposed activity. Public notice of the application for this certification was given as required by 18 AAC 15.180 in the Corps Public Notice POA-1995-120-M20 posted from November 25, 2015 to April 30, 2016, and April 27, 2018 to May 29, 2018. DEC publically noticed intent to issue 401 Certificate from June 13, 2018 to July 13, 2018.

Donlin Gold submitted a Preliminary Section 404 and Section 10 permit application to the USACE in July 2012. In December 2012, USACE published a Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Donlin Gold Project. Donlin Gold revised the application in December 2014, and again in August 2015. The latter revision was public-noticed along with the Draft EIS in November 2015. After agency comments were received, Donlin Gold revised the application again December 20, 2017. The updated application includes revisions and refinements to the project design and footprint resulting, in part, from the NEPA process review, and supersedes all previous applications.

The most significant changes included in the updated application are:

- Modified natural gas pipeline alignment to include the “North Route” option through the Alaska Range;
- Refined project footprint;
- Updated calculations of the project’s impacts to waters of the U.S. using USACE preliminary determined wetlands data;
- Inclusion of a final and detailed Compensatory Mitigation Plan;
 - Restore and preserve approximately 102-acres of wetlands and riparian areas with 8,501-linear feet (1.61-miles) of stream, and establish another 71- acres of riparian preservation buffers, in historic placer mining areas in the Upper Crooked Creek watershed (within the HUC-10 of the MA).
 - Preserve a total of 5,888-acres of important and productive habitat, of which it is estimated 2,558 acres are wetland and ponds, with an additional 3,330-acres of riparian areas, stream area, and buffers, and 228,325-linear feet (43.24-miles) of streams in the Chuitna watershed.
- Streamlined application format.

State Certification and Conditions

The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) reviewed the application and certifies that there is reasonable assurance that the proposed activity, as well as any discharge which may result, will comply with applicable provisions of Section 401 of the CWA and the Alaska Water Quality Standards, 18 AAC 70, provided that the following additional measures are adhered to.

1. Reasonable precautions and controls must be used to prevent incidental and accidental discharge of petroleum products or other hazardous substances. Fuel storage and handling activities for equipment must be sited and conducted so there is no petroleum contamination of the ground, subsurface, or surface waterbodies.
2. During construction, spill response equipment and supplies such as sorbent pads shall be available and used immediately to contain and cleanup oil, fuel, hydraulic fluid, antifreeze, or other pollutant spills. Any spill amount must be reported in accordance with Discharge Notification and Reporting Requirements (AS 46.03.755 and 18 AAC 75 Article 3). The applicant must contact by telephone the DEC Area Response Team for Central Alaska at (907) 269-3063 during work hours or 1-800-478-9300 after hours. Also, the applicant must contact by telephone the National Response Center at 1-800-424-8802.
3. If the industrial activity of this project includes storm water discharges associated from mineral or metal mining, or open-cut gravel quarries, the permittee will need to obtain additional discharge coverage from an appropriate Alaska Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (APDES) permit. Further information in regards to the Multi-Sector General Permit (MSGP) authorization, please see <http://dec.alaska.gov/water/wastewater/stormwater/MultiSector.aspx> and/or contact William Ashton, 907-269-6283, William.Ashton@alaska.gov for more information. The applicant currently has received an APDES MSGP authorization (AKR06AA92) for storm water discharges.

4. All surface runoff from areas disturbed during the stripping of overburden or moving of existing overburden piles shall be diverted to existing mine cuts or stabilized areas, such as settling ponds, using berms, diversion channels, or brush barriers. Surface runoff containing sediment from disturbed areas shall not be discharged without treatment into any water body.
5. Construction equipment shall not be operated below the ordinary high water mark if equipment is leaking fuel, oil, hydraulic fluid, or any other hazardous material. Equipment shall be inspected and recorded in a log on a daily basis for leaks. If leaks are found, the equipment shall not be used and pulled from service until the leak is repaired.
6. For culverts that carry waters that are discharging or will discharge into fish-bearing waters, installation shall not occur within the flowing waters of the stream. Culvert installation techniques such as stream diversion, dam and pump, or stream fluming shall be incorporated into the installation activity to insure that silt laden water is not carried into sensitive fish habitat.
7. All work areas, material access routes, and surrounding wetlands involved in the construction project shall be clearly delineated and marked in such a way that equipment operators do not operate outside of the marked areas.
8. Excavated or fill material, including overburden, shall be placed so that it is stable, meaning after placement the material does not show signs of excessive erosion. Indicators of excess erosion include: gullying, head cutting, caving, block slippage, material sloughing, etc. The material must be contained with siltation best management practices (BMPs) to preclude reentry into any waters of the U.S., which includes wetlands.
9. If a BMP is not working properly (for instance, sediment runoff) corrective measures shall be implemented as soon as possible.
10. A minimum 50-foot wide, vegetated buffer zone should be maintained between a snow storage area and any surface water bodies. This distance could be decreased if adequate stormwater/sediment catchment basins, coarse gravel berms, or sediment traps/barriers/filters are built to reduce impacts on surface water bodies from snowmelt that may potentially run off from these sites.
11. Accumulated trash and debris need to be removed from the snow storage area in the spring as they become visible when the snow melts. This may need to be done several times over the course of the summer as the snow piles continue to melt. Wastes and litter that become uncovered as the snow melts need to be picked up before off-site migration of the waste becomes a problem.

This certification expires five (5) years after the date the certification is signed. If your project is not completed by then and work under U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Permit will continue, you must submit an application for renewal of this certification no later than 30 days before the expiration date (18 AAC 15.100).

Date: August 10, 2018



James Rypkema, Program Manager
Storm Water and Wetlands