



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

Department of Natural Resources

DIVISION OF MINING, LAND & WATER
Mining Section
Northern Office

3700 Airport Way
Fairbanks, Alaska 99709-4699
Main: 907.451.2736
TTY: 711 or 800-770-8973
Fax: 907.451.2703

Response to Comments on the Department of Natural Resources

Draft Plan of Operations Approval F20259339POOA

and

Draft Reclamation Plan Approval F20259339RPA,

For the

Anarraaq-Aktigiruaq Exploration Program

Teck American Incorporated

December 3, 2025

Introduction

Notice to the Public Start: September 5, 2025

Notice to the Public End: October 6, 2025

The Anarraaq-Aktigiruk Exploration Program is a lead-zinc prospect in the exploration stage. The current and proposed surface disturbance in the Plan of Operations Modification, Anarraaq and Aktigiruk Exploration Program (August 2025) is on state land. The current and proposed surface disturbance in the Reclamation Plan (August 2025) is on State and private lands. This modification request is being submitted and reviewed for approval to change the location of the approved North Portal and North Camp Pads to a site approximately four miles south to improve the safety and underground efficiency of the AAEP and includes name changes for the infrastructure pads. The South Portal and South Camp Pads are proposed to be the site of surface facilities that are required to support a multi-year underground exploration program. Construction of the South Camp Pad and associated project components and infrastructure will take place once authorized and financial assurance requirements are met.

The overall program is directed at further evaluation of the Anarraaq-Aktigiruk Exploration Program. The long-term project objective is to continue evaluating the technical and economic viability of developing an underground mine.

The Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) draft Plan of Operations Approval (POOA) No. F20259339POOA stipulates the requirements and performance standards of exploration activities in accordance with and subject to Alaska Statutes 38.05 (Alaska Land Act) and 11 AAC 86.800 (Plan of Operations) for activities on State land. The DNR draft Reclamation Plan Approval (RPA) No. F20259339RPA stipulates the requirements for reclaiming the proposed disturbance on State and private lands in accordance with AS 27.19 and 11 AAC 97 and outlines the costs associated with conducting reclamation activities by a third-party contractor to meet the State's financial assurance requirements.

This document addresses the substantive comments received concerning the requirements outlined under DNR's POOA and RPA drafts, and the State's responses to those comments. This document does not address comments outside the scope and beyond the regulatory authority of this approval. Changes made to the draft DNR approvals resulting from comments received during the public notice period are reflected in the final approval documents. Minor changes made to the approval for correcting typographical and grammatical errors, formatting or clarifying information are not detailed in this document.

Opportunities for Public Participation:

To ensure public and agency opportunities for participation, the DNR:

- Published a Notice to the Public and Request for Information with associated documents to the State of Alaska Online Public Notice site from September 5, 2025, through October 6, 2025.
- Webpage (DNR, DMLW, Mining Section, Large Mine Projects) for the Anarraaq-Aktigiruk Exploration Program shared the information for the public notice in the News section beginning September 5, 2025.

Comment Overview:

The State received a total of 2 comments prior to the deadline. The State received unique comments from Mr. Lance Miller on behalf of NANA Regional Corporation supporting the project and from Mr. Zach Huff from ABR, Inc. – Environmental Research and Services on behalf of Kivalina IRA Council with a list of concerns and approval-specific comments. Concerns addressed are noted under these major topics: Acreage Disturbed, Potential acid generation (PAG), Reclamation, Waste Rock Handling, Water Management, and the Financial Assurance Cost Estimate. Outlined below are comments in opposition to DNR’s proposed POOA, proposed RPA, and the State’s responses to those comments. DNR has grouped some of the comments that are similar in scope to succinctly address these concerns. Comments are in italics to show a distinction between a direct quote and the DNRs responses.

Comment Topic: Acreage Disturbed

North South and Main Pads

What lead to the change in the size of the gravel pads between the 2022 approved plan and the requested 2025 modification? The North, South, and Main pad sites grew from 1.2, 1.0, and 1.6 acres to 4.9, 6.0, and 12.1 acres, respectively.

DMLW Response:

The proposed disturbance for the North, South, and Main pad sites, based on current authorizations of the PoO and RCE submissions from October 2022, listed pad disturbance of 4.9, 6.0, and 1.7 acres, respectively.¹ Service Road clearing required 1.1, 2.4, and 1.2 acres, respectively.² The Main Vent Raise Pad and Service Road are proposed to be removed and the North Camp’s name will be changed to the Main Vent Raise Pad, which will reduce disturbed acres from 32.9 to 12.1 acres with the removal of the Portal Pad.³

The AAEP PoO Section 2.1.4 (Surface Pad construction) notes that Laydown Pads 1 and 2 have already been authorized (2022). However, the original authorizations for Laydown Pads 1 and 2 were 5.7 and 2.0 acres and the PoO modification notes these pads are now 6.4 and 1.9 acres, respectively. Why were the pad sizes changed? The AAEP PoO should provide a brief explanation of why facility sizes have changed, particularly in instances where pad sizes were increased as part of the modification amendment being requested.

¹ Teck American Incorporated. (October 2022). *Basis for Reclamation Cost Estimate Anarraaq and Aktigirug Exploration Program*, Phase I – Exploration Access Road and Surface Pad Construction. Appendix I. Table 1, Pg. 5.

² Teck American Incorporated. (October 2022). *Road Engineering Drawings Anarraaq and Aktigirug Exploration Program*, Phase I – Exploration Access Road and Surface Pad Construction, Appendix A. Pg. 8.

³ Stantec Consulting Services Inc. (August 2025). *Plan of Operations Modification Anarraaq and Aktigirug Exploration Program*. Continued Exploration Access Road and Surface Pad Construction, Facilities Construction, and Underground Decline Development. Submitted by Teck American Incorporated. Pg. 27.

DMLW Response:

Laydown Pads 1 and 2 are listed as a component to be modified in Table 1 under the PoO Modification request.⁴ The acreage changed for Laydown Pad 1 from 5.7 to 6.4 acres while Laydown Pad 2 remained at 1.9 acres. For reference, the current authorized acreage is stated in Table 1 for Surface Acreage Disturbance for Project Components listed in the Basis for Reclamation Cost Estimate (October 2022).⁵ The proposed increase of 0.7 acres is considered de minimis since the overall footprint has been reduced from 213.4 to 206.5 acres. TAI has proposed that construction of Laydown Pad 1 and 2 will likely occur in 2028, which would be required to support ventilation facilities and ongoing exploration activities. This small increase in disturbance for Laydown Pad 1 is viewed by the DNR in support of development of state resources by making them available for maximum use.⁶

South Portal Pad

The South Portal Pad is described with different sized footprints across the AAEP PoO and the AAEP Reclamation Plan. This discrepancy needs to be addressed so DNR understands what would be authorized under the proposed PoO modification and required under the proposed Reclamation Plan modification.

AAEP PoO (2025) reports that the South Portal Pad would be 7.3 acres: Table 2 (Section 1.2, Location, Access, and Property Description); Figure 6 (Section 2.1.2, Exploration Access Roads); and text under South Portal Pad (Section 2.1.4, Surface Pad construction).

The AAEP Reclamation Plan reports that the South Portal Pad would be 6.6 acres: Figures 1 and 2 (Section 3.1, Project Description); and Figure 5 (Section 4.1.2, Surface Pads).

DMLW Response:

After reviewing the stated discrepancies of acreage between the AAEP PoO and Reclamation Plan submissions, the DNR found that the total acreage has remained constant throughout both proposals at 7.3 acres of disturbance. In the Reclamation Plan the total South Portal Pad footprint was precisely defined for disturbance. The author separated out disturbed acreage for the water diversions channel (0.6 acres), water collection (0.1 acres), and portal pad (6.6 acres) that tallies to a footprint of 7.3 acres. This is the acreage that will be accounted for and managed under the requirements stipulated in authorizations issued by the DNR Mining Section.

South Camp Pad

The South Camp Pad is described with different sized footprints across the AAEP PoO and the AAEP Reclamation Plan. This discrepancy needs to be addressed so DNR understands what would be authorized under the proposed PoO modification and required under the proposed Reclamation Plan modification.

⁴ Ibid. Pg. 4.

⁵ TAI. (October 2022). *Basis for Reclamation Cost Estimate AAEP*. Pg. 5.

⁶ AK Const. art. VIII, §1.

AAEP PoO (2025) reports that the South Camp Pad would be 25.5 acres: Table 2 (Section 1.2, Location, Access, and Property Description); Figure 6 (Section 2.1.2, Exploration Access Roads); and text under South Camp Pad (Section 2.1.4, Surface Pad Construction).

The AAEP Reclamation Plan reports that the South Camp Pad would be 17.1 acres: Figures 1 and 2 (Section 3.1, Project Description): and Figure 5 (Section 4.1.2, Surface Pads). The combined components that make up the greater South Camp Pad shown in Figure 5 include South Camp Pad (17.1 acres), Contact Water collection (0.6 acres), Water Treatment Pond (0.9 acres), Sediment Pond (0.9 acres), contact Water Collection Area (1.6 acres), and Secondary containment Pond (2.7 acres), which totals 23.8 acres.

DMLW Response:

The South Camp Pad footprints have been found to be identical in both the AAEP PoO and Reclamation Plan. The proposed disturbance of 25.5 acres within the AAEP PoO was referenced several times in Table 2, Figure 6 and on page 24 (South Camp Pad).⁷ The AAEP Reclamation Plan lists the footprint as 17.1 acres in Figure 1 and 2 (Pad area); however, Figure 5 breaks down individual disturbance to: contact water collection 0.6 acres, water treatment pond 0.9 acres, sediment pond 0.9 acres, contact water collection 1.6 acres, secondary containment pond 2.7 acres, and diversion channel 1.7 acres.⁸ The tally of the acreage gives a total sum of 25.5 acres. A Reclamation Plan Approval issued by DNR Mining Section will be for all the facilities, ditches, water treatment, and pad disturbances proposed by TAI.

Note: The primary land manager for the proposed South Camp Pad is NANA Regional Corporation, who has the authority for surface use and allowable disturbance. DNR only has authority under AS 27.19 (Reclamation) and 11 AAC 97 (Mining Reclamation) for private land to ensure that disturbance is reclaimed to state standards unless the property owner requests post-secondary use after mining ceases or they have specific reclamation standards that exceed state regulatory requirements.

The South Camp Pad is noted as being approximately 25.5 acres (Table 2) and Figure 11 (AAEP PoO, Section 2.1.4, Surface Pad Construction) denotes that the three containment ponds have an approximately 24.3-acre-feet storage volume, though their footprints are not provided. AAEP Reclamation Plan Figure 6 (Section 4.1.5, Surface Buildings and Infrastructure) includes this same figure.

DMLW Response:

Within the AAEP Reclamation Plan, Figure 5, TAI has provided an area of disturbance for each of the ponds and shows the proposed proximity and footprint of each next to the Camp Pad.⁹ It is not a requirement to provide volumes of each pond as outlined under 11 AAC 97.310(b) (Reclamation Plan), only the acreage disturbed. DNR views the listed volumes of

⁷ Stantec. (2025). *Plan of Operations Modification AAEP*. Pg. 7.

⁸ SRK Consulting. (August 2025). *Anarraaq and Aktigiruaq Exploration Program*. Reclamation Plan, Teck American Incorporated. Pg's. 5, 6, and 17.

⁹ Ibid. Pg. 14.

each pond as a courtesy because it provides an approximate maximum depth of 5.4 feet after a quick calculation assuming the edges are not sloped.

The AAEP Reclamation Plan (2025), figure 5 (Section 4.1.2, Surface Pads) shows the South Camp Pad as being 17.1 acres and three containment ponds (with labels for four ponds that total 6.1 acres. These features (pad and containment ponds) total 23.2 total acres in Figure 5. The AAEP Reclamation Plan (Section 4, Project Components and Construction, Table 2) states there would be 9.1 acres of Water Management Structures. The specific features being totaled in Table 2 should be noted, and accompanying text should describe each feature's purpose, volume capacity, and footprint size so reviewers and decisionmakers can understand the extent of the proposal.

DMLW Response:

According to Figure 5, in the AAEP Reclamation Plan, there are five distinct water management features: 1) A diversion channel (0.6 acres State land, 1.7 acres NANA land) that prevents natural drainage from entering the site; 2) Contact Water Collection that diverts drainage from the South Portal Pad, road, and Camp Pad (0.1 acres State land, 0.6 acres and 1.6 acres NANA land) which are divided into three sections; 3) Water Treatment Pond (0.9 acres NANA land); 4) Sediment Pond (0.9 acres NANA land); 5) Secondary Containment Pond (2.7 acres NANA land).¹⁰ Total water management disturbance on state land is 0.7 acres with a water management disturbance on NANA land totaling 8.4 acres, which coincides with Table 2. TAI has provided sufficient information required under 11 AAC 97.310 and additional text to describe each feature's purpose, volume, or footprint have been well outlined and documented within their submission's requests for Plan of Operations and Reclamation Plan Approvals.

Comment Topic: PAG

Pad Construction

AAEP PoO Section 2.3(Construction Rock Management) includes an AAEP best management practice for PAG material encountered on pad, "...the material may be removed or may be used as internal fill in the same pad if placed more than 100 feet inside the designed edge of the pad and covered with at least 3 feet of clean fill as part of the pad construction."

AAEP PoO Section 2.1.4 (Surface Pad construction) notes that "pads will consist of up to 3 feet of general embankment fill from material sites and capped with resistant material suitable as a driving surface." In essence, this means that there is very likely little available area on pads where the three feet of cover requirement can be met. As such, this measure should be struck and PAG-identified material should not be reused to support project construction.

DMLW Response:

As outlined in the Construction Rock Handling Plan, Best Management Practices (BMPs) for ARD Classification of "bedrock" for all road, pad and material site construction activities are implemented by field geologists whenever "bedrock" is initially exposed. BMPs require the geologist to examine and assign the rock to a recognized geologic unit. If it is not part of a

¹⁰ Ibid. Pg. 14.

recognized unit, the geologist examines the rock using multiple standard industry practices and assigns an ARD classification (PAG or non-PAG).¹¹

Concerning surface pad construction, geologists give AAEP Operations the option of disposing it at Red Dog waste management facilities,¹² hauling material to a stockpile, or using it as internal fill in the same pad, but Operations is responsible for making sure the PAG fill is placed more than 100 ft inside the design edge of the pad and is covered with at least 3 ft of clean fill as part of pad construction.¹³ Non-PAG material may be sourced from material sites to be hauled in to meet the proposed 3 feet of clean fill to cover any PAG that is not removed during pad construction.

Note: The Construction Rock Handling Plan is available to the public on the DNR Mining website. https://dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/mining/large-mines/anarraaq-aktigirug/pdf/aaep_rock_handling_plan_amended2022.pdf

Does the State believe that placing PAG material inside a gravel pad will keep acid rock drainage from migrating off pad over the life of the Project? All identified PAG material should be segregated and removed from the AAEP area, not reused in a permeable structure where contaminated water can percolate through it to reach area waterways.

DMLW Response:

As stated previously, concerning surface pad construction, and based on the site specific geologists determination of ARD classification geologists give AAEP Operations the option of disposing it at Red Dog waste management facilities,¹⁴ hauling material to a stockpile, or using it as internal fill in the same pad, but Operations is responsible for making sure the PAG fill is placed more than 100 ft inside the design edge of the pad and is covered with at least 3 ft of clean fill as part of pad construction.¹⁵ Waste rock generated from infrastructure development that includes a mixture of low-acid generating and low metal-leaching potential, material with delayed onset of acid generation, or low potential of acid generating material with a higher metal-leaching potential will be disposed of at Red Dog waste management facilities.¹⁶

DNR should consider requiring TAI to install downgradient monitoring wells in any pads where identified PAG material is to be used. These monitoring wells should be tested at least quarterly, if not monthly, to confirm that acid rock drainage water is not migrating across and off the pad.

¹¹ TAI American Incorporated. (February 2022). *Anarraaq and Aktigirug Exploration Program Construction Rock Handling Plan*. Original Document Created December 2018 and Amended February 2022. Pg. 4.

¹² Teck Alaska Incorporated. (June 2025), *Intent to Accept Waste Rock from the Anarraaq and Aktigirug Exploration Program*. Letter of intent to the Alaska Department of Natural Resources.

¹³ TAI. (2022). *AAEP Construction Rock Handling Plan*. Pg. 5.

¹⁴ TAI. (2025). *Red Dog Mine Letter of Intent to Accept Waste Rock*

¹⁵ TAI. (2022). *AAEP Construction Rock Handling Plan*. Pg. 5.

¹⁶ TAI. (2025). *Red Dog Mine Letter of Intent to Accept Waste Rock*

DMLW Response:

The requirement for placement of monitoring wells is outside the scope of DNR's authority and would reside primarily with DEC and/or ACOE depending if placement is on wetlands. DNR will require the "...site to be reclaimed in a manner that prevents the generation of acid rock drainage or prevents the offsite discharge of acid rock drainage" as stated under 11 AAC 97.240 (Acid rock drainage). This authority only occurs as part of the reclamation process to determine if the site meets these criteria set forth under regulation.

Comment Topic: Reclamation**Underground Openings**

The AAEP Reclamation Plan (Section 6.3.2, Underground Access Portal, Shafts, and Ventilation Raise) states that ventilation shafts would either be backfilled with non-reactive waste rock or capped with concrete slab. The discussion notes that backfill material can consolidate over time and concrete caps have a finite life expectancy. We recommend DNR require both backfill of the ventilation shaft(s) and concrete capping to protect the site and environment for as long of a term as possible. As the site should be reclaimed in such a way that after a generation or two visitors would be unaware of the past mining activity, exposed ventilation shafts could pose an extreme danger.

DMLW Response:

The company has provided a reclamation plan that meets the requirements under 11 AAC 97.220 (Underground mines) and specifically addresses requirements for closure of underground openings in their plan. TAI states, "closure of the underground workings will include installation of cemented portal plugs at the surface, backfilling and plugging the vent raise, and installing a hydraulic plug in each of the decline adits."¹⁷ Upon closure, DNR will hold the financial assurance, and only release funds, until the designed and state regulatory requirements have been satisfied under 11 AAC 97.200 (Reclamation Performance Standards).

Foundations

The AAEP Reclamation Plan (Section 6.2.4, Concrete Foundations and Slabs) states "all foundation walls, footings and concrete slabs will be broken below grade and/or buried in place with a minimum 36 inches of cover."

We recommend as a project mitigation measure that during project reclamation, any concrete foundation (e.g.; slabs) stained with hydrocarbons or other hazardous chemicals should be removed from the site and not buried below grade.

DMLW Response:

DNR contacted TAI regarding mitigation measures to be used for disposal of hydrocarbon-stained concrete foundation slabs or footings. TAI responded by email and stated, "Consistent with Teck American Inc.'s 2025 SWPPP (Section 3.5 and MSGP Part 11.G.4.1) and the solid waste requirements of 18 AAC 60, Teck will not bury hydrocarbon-stained

¹⁷ SRK. (2025). *AAEP Reclamation Plan Basis of Estimate*. Pg. 8.

concrete in place. Any such material would be removed from site and transported to an ADEC- approved disposal facility.”¹⁸ The disposal of and management of such material is outside the scope of DNR’s regulatory authority. DNR will only release bonding for hydrocarbon-stained slabs once DEC has approved that disposal conditions have been met under their regulatory requirements and reclamation has been completed.

Road, Cuts, and Pad Material

Where will material identified as being PAG (e.g., material site, roadway cut sections) be placed for permanent storage? Is this described in the Construction Rock Handling Plan (referenced in AAEP PoO Section 2.3, Construction Rock Management)? This plan should be made available to the public and included in the documents attachment section of the DNR public notice of the plan modification.

DMLW Response:

Material sites were selected based on geochemical data that indicate they are likely comprised of non-PAG material. However, at the initial development of each of the material sites, and at any time when mineralized material is identified in a site, TAI will characterize the material as PAG or non-PAG in accordance with the Construction Rock Handling Plan. If significant PAG is identified the site will likely be abandoned and eventually reclaimed.¹⁹ Any potentially acid generating (PAG) material that is excavated will be managed in accordance with TAI’s approved Construction Rock Handling Plan. Material identified as PAG cut material is sent to the designated stockpile area or approved Red Dog waste management facilities. The Construction Rock Handling Plan is available to the public on the DNR Mining website (see previous Note for link). All documents outlined within TAI’s submissions or within this response to comments are public information and are available by request to DNR-Mining.

DNR should require further PAG testing prior to allowing TAI to develop material sites and place the material to protect water quality from long-term potential acid rock drainage.

DMLW Response:

As stated in the Construction Rock Handling Plan, the site geologist will characterize the material as PAG or non-PAG and manage it, accordingly, based on the results of the pXRF and HCl fizz-test and instruct operations to handle the material as PAG or non-PAG. On road cuts and pads, the geologist will instruct operations to load and haul all PAG cut material to the designated stockpile area or the approved Red Dog waste management facilities; however, material deemed acceptable may be used as internal fill on pads from their cuts. Operations is responsible for insuring that the fill is placed more than 100 ft. inside the designed edge of the pad and will be covered with at least 3 ft. of clean fill as part of pad construction.²⁰

¹⁸ Rowland, Jacob. Email to William Groom. 28 October 2025.

¹⁹ Teck American Incorporated, (October 2022), *Reclamation Plan Anarraaq and Aktigiruk Exploration Program, Phase I – Exploration Access Road and Surface Pad Construction*, Appendix B. Pg. 17.

²⁰ TAI. (2022). *AAEP Construction Rock Handling Plan*. Pg. 5.

Any known PAG material allowed to remain on the project (e.g., road cut) or used in construction (e.g., pad), should be documented, including the location and extent of the material in place. Removal and disposal of this material to an authorized location should be required as part of the reclamation plan to protect long-term water quality. This proposed mitigation measure would be consistent with 11 AAC 97.240, as cited in the AAEP Reclamation Plan (Section 5.1, General).

DMLW Response:

The handling and/or disposal of PAG material has been addressed by TAI. Geologist will record the GPS coordinates, a geologic description, the pXRF Acid Potential readings, results of the HCl fizz test and the assigned ARD classification as PAG or non-PAG to be documented for a geochemical record.²¹ TAI's proposed reclamation for PAG satisfies the state regulatory requirements for use and disposal in permitted waste rock facilities. Disposal facilities are well documented and still must meet standards under 11 AAC 97.240 before bonding is refunded.

Comment Topic: Waste Rock Handling

Considering TAI's own plan to treat this extract/mined material as metal-containing waste, DNR should require the PoO detail the collection, handling, temporary storage, transport, and long-term disposal of this material and not exempt the AAEP PoO from the requirements of 11 AAC 86.800(b).

The AAEP OoO refers to and relies on the TAI produced Construction Rock Handling Plan (TAI 2018, TAI 2025) that describes the project's plan to treat PAG construction rock as an exempt inert waste. The 2018 and 2025 revised Construction Rock Handling Plan is not readily available and should be included in the DNR public notice documents. Until this plan is included in the DNR public notice documents and public comment is allowed on it and its incorporation into the PoO, DNR should not approve the AAEP modification.

DMLW Response:

11 AAC 86.800(b) is only applicable on state land where there are no proposed long term waste rock storage facilities. However, the AAEP PoO, Construction Rock Handling Plan, Red Dog Teck Alaska Incorporated letter of intent to accept waste rock, Reclamation Plan and associated cost estimate, provided by TAI, do address the "collection, handling, temporary storage, transport, and long-term disposal." Under the Reclamation Plan Approval, issued by DNR, it is a requirement to annually report disturbance, reclamation, mining, milling, and monitoring results, which is applicable for state and private lands. The Plan of Operations Approval, annual reporting requirements include summarized activities surface disturbance, reclamation, exploration, and monitoring data required by all state and federal authorizations (for state land only). The AAEP PoO is not exempt for the requirements of 11 AAC 86.800(b) for all laydown yards, pads, and roads within state land. The Construction

²¹ Ibid. Pg's. 4, and 5.

Rock Handling Plan has been publicly available since 2022 when it was amended on DNR's Large Mine Website for the AAEP.

Comment Topic: Water Management

As is stands, the public cannot know if the requirements of 11 AAC 97.240, which states, “ a miner shall reclaim a mined area that has potential to generate acid rock drainage (acid mine drainage) in a manner that prevents the generation of acid rock drainage or prevents the offsite discharge of acid rock drainage” would be met by the project.

DMLW Response:

Under an approved reclamation plan, proposed disturbance from mining, exploration, or development of a site may not begin until a financial assurance amount has been secured by the DNR that satisfies costs associated for reclamation conducted by a third party. Reclamation performance requirements under 11 AAC 97 (Mining Reclamation) must be met before the DNR can release funds. 11 AAC 97.435 (Release or decrease of bond) states, “...the commissioner will inspect or review actions taken under the approved reclamation plan, and will make a written finding that each applicable requirement of the approved reclamation plan has been completed.” This written finding is public record and requirements under 11 AAC 97.240 (Acid rock drainage) is part of the DNR's review for bond release.

AAEP (2025) Figure 11 (Section 2.1.4, Surface pad construction) shows the temporary waste stockpile (3,000 tons) located adjacent to the South Portal. How would contact water coming off of this temporary stockpile be collected and prevented from reaching the diversion ditch around (north) the South Portal and South Camp pads?

DMLW Response:

As stated in the AAEP 2025 PoO, section 2.1.4 Surface Pad Construction under subheading South Portal Pad, the waste rock stockpile area will be lined. Any water from the operational area will be collected in the contact water ditch and sent to the lined Water Treatment Pond. The AAEP 2025 PoO also states, “Water is to be treated at the on-site WTPs to meet State WQS and then be discharged to Ikalukrok Creek,” which includes all water from the South Portal and Camp Pads.²² The diversion ditch is upslope from both pads and is there to prevent natural water drainage from entering the operational areas.

Comment Topic: Financial Assurance Cost Estimate

Why does the Reclamation Basis of Estimate only call for a single vent raise (Section 5.4, Key Assumptions and conditions) when the AAEP PoO (Section 2.1.4, Surface Pad Construction) states “construction of the North and South Vent Raise Pads will likely occur in 2028.”

DMLW Response:

The methodology for the vent raise is described in the Basis of Estimate. The cost for the vent raise is accounted for in the cost estimate. The cost estimate is reviewed and adjusted

²² Stantec. (August 2025). *Plan of Operations Modification AAEP*. Pg. 24.

annually or when conditions may change. Financial assurance will be held until the project reclamation tasks have been completed and the site meets the reclamation performance standards as outlined in 11AAC 97.200 through 11 AAC 97.250. The Department maintains that the financial assurance is adequate to fund any reclamation costs that can reasonably be anticipated.