

PLACER MINING RESOURCE NETWORK NEWSLETTER

FALL 2024

DEAR ALASKA PLACER MINERS

The Placer Mining Resource Network (PMRN) is an informal, cooperative network of interested parties (permitting agencies and miners) that was formed to address challenges placer miners and agencies face related to permitting and compliance.

Goals of the PMRN are to:

1. Improve permitting and compliance processes.
2. Improve technical assistance to placer miners related to permitting and compliance.
3. Develop and maintain relationships built on trust and mutual understanding among agencies and between agencies and placer miners.

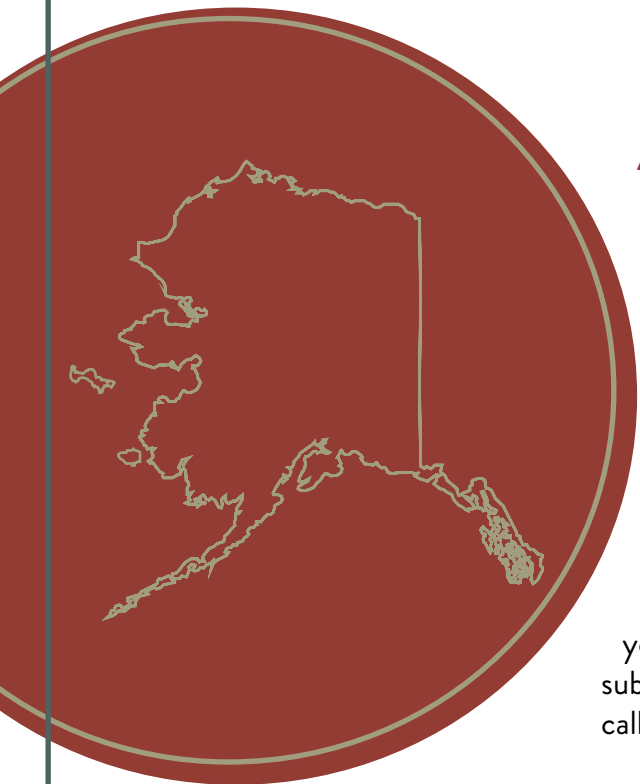
COOPERATING AGENCIES

- Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC)
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G)
- Alaska Department of Natural Resources (ADNR)
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- National Park Service (NPS)
- Salcha-Delta Soil & Water Conservation District (SD-SWCD)
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- U.S. Forest Service (USFS)

AGENCIES ARE LISTENING:

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION DATABASE ANNOUNCEMENT

The Environmental Data Management System (EDMS) is a database sponsored by ADEC as a one-stop portal for submitting ADEC Annual Reports, permit applications, requesting permit authorization changes, and paying permit fees. Once registered, placer miners will be able to access their discharge authorizations, a copy of the general permit, and additional permit records. If you need assistance with registering for an EDMS account or submitting Annual Reports, please email edms.help@alaska.gov or call (907) 465-5353. Access the database at dec.alaska.gov.



AGENCY HIGHLIGHTS



2024 placer mining season
Photo: ADEC

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION (ADEC)

ADEC permitting and compliance staff worked with miners across Alaska this season to reissue permit authorizations on existing claims, issue permit authorizations for new miners, and conduct compliance inspections in the Petersville, Nome, and Chicken areas. Additional highlights from the 2024 season include:

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (ADNR)

Placer Mine Permitting 101 Short Course:

State and federal regulatory agencies presented a short course during the Alaska Miners Association's 2024 Fairbanks Convention & Trade Show. Topics included requirements for ADNR and BLM permits and reclamation, ADF&G fish habitat permits, ADEC wastewater discharge permits, and USACE wetland permits.

Also during the Fairbanks Convention, the ADNR gave an introductory presentation about the PMRN.

- **Placer Mining Documentation Clean-up:** ADEC Compliance staff reviewed every placer authorization and contacted those with missing Annual Reports or delinquent permit fees. From this experience, agencies as well as placer miners are better informed about the monitoring and reporting requirements of their permit and ADEC benefited from a more complete database. Big thanks to all the miners who participated in this outreach effort!
- **Offshore Nome Mining Informational Open House:** ADNR and ADEC permitting staff hosted an informational open house June 5th, 2024 for mining claim owners, operators, permit holders, and prospective miners in the Nome area. The event provided an opportunity to connect with permitting agencies in a casual meet-and-greet setting. Participants were able to pick up or submit forms and ask questions regarding mining in Nome. The Nome offshore meeting has been occurring regularly since the kick-off meeting in 2012.

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT (BLM)

- Mining staff completed a safe and successful 2024 mine inspection season, having the privilege to visit almost all operational mines on BLM lands.
- We are pleased to announce the full deployment of the new Mineral & Lands Records System (MLRS) where customers can look up case information, file and maintain mining claims, and access geospatial resources.

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS (USACE)

- Launched their new regulatory website which is more user-friendly and allows visitors to easily navigate the pages and find helpful information and resources.
- Introduced its new Regulatory Request System (RRS), an online application portal that allows the public to submit permit applications and other information when requesting permission to dredge, fill, or conduct activities in jurisdictional wetlands and waters of the U.S.
- Completed cross-training with state agencies and BLM earlier this year, aimed towards getting new staff more familiar with placer mining processes.
- Is getting close to releasing agency and public notices for reissuance of their Placer Mining Regional General Permit (RGP) and continues working towards streamlining the permitting process while protecting the Nation's aquatic resources and navigation capacity and allowing reasonable development through fair and balanced decisions.



ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

Mining operations are often required to comply with various local, state, and federal regulations. Permitting agencies primarily assess compliance based on the operator's daily business practices.

A mining operation that strives to work more efficiently can also lessen its environmental impact while being profitable. Here are two helpful tips for mining operations that benefit both the company and the environment.

Water Management – proper water management is essential in mining operations. Using water wisely throughout the life of a mine can lower costs and increase the amount of valuable materials collected. Effective water management also helps protect local fish, wildlife, wetlands, and other aquatic resources. Additionally, water management is a key concern for several regulatory agencies in Alaska. To optimize the use of water at your mine and minimize environmental impacts, it's important to review water management regulations and best management practices.

Exploration – the exploration of new or prospect ground can better enable operators to make well-informed decisions about the costs versus benefits of mining a desired area without significantly impacting the environment if the prospect land does not yield desired returns based off exploration data. This practice saves operations time, resources, and money while preserving and reducing unnecessary impacts on the surrounding ecosystems.

PMRN UPDATES

The PMRN has been working on the following projects that are planned for implementation or release in 2025:



Muskoxen feeding in wetland, Nome
Photo: USACE

WETLANDS RECLAMATION BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

In 2024, agency staff worked together to create Best Management Practices (BMPs) to assist miners with wetland reclamation. This wetland team reached a mutual agreement on BMPs to help miners (1) meet permit requirements for wetlands and/or (2) create functioning wetlands that provide habitat for fish and wildlife. Since all agencies collaborated in developing these BMPs, they are aligned on the best ways to use them to support fish and wildlife habitats. In 2025, the ADNR plans to launch an online tool to provide miners with information and examples of these BMPs for potential implementation at their mine site.

PLACER MINING 101 GUIDEBOOK

The PMRN understands that planning a placer mining operation in Alaska is complex and there are many factors to consider. Therefore, we wanted to provide an introductory guidebook for placer miners who are new to the business, new to Alaska, or even those who could use a refresher or handy resource. We contracted with Shane Lasley, Publisher of North of 60 Mining News and Metal Tech News, to work with us to produce what we are calling the Placer Mining 101 Guidebook. We will be asking interested placer miners to review a draft version of the Guidebook and provide feedback to us to ensure this product is most useful to placer miners. The Guidebook will be finalized in 2025 in both electronic and printable format.

INTERAGENCY COMPLIANCE INSPECTOR TRAINING

The Compliance Inspector Training Subgroup of the PMRN is made up of representatives from BLM, ADEC, ADNR, ADF&G, and USACE who are working on developing an annual training for compliance inspectors. The training will focus on lessons learned from inspectors and miners in the field, training resources, and frequently asked mining questions in hopes of helping inspectors become better resources for the mining community. The first training will be available for inspectors across the participating agencies in 2025.

Stormwater drain
Photo: BLM



FISH & WILDLIFE CORNER

DOLLY VARDEN

A common best practice during mining operations is keeping sediment from entering waterways. When sediment stays suspended in the water and does not have time to settle out, it makes the water look murky (or turbid). Turbid water can harm fish in several ways. It makes it hard for them to see predators, find food, and damages spawning grounds. It can also cause lower oxygen which makes it harder for fish to breathe. Finally, it can harm fish physically by clogging gills and smothering eggs.

Interestingly, some fish have adapted to survive and thrive during some of their life stages in naturally turbid waters, like the Tanana, Yukon, Kuskokwim, the Matanuska and Kenai rivers. However, many fish cannot handle these conditions. While they may be able to tolerate infrequent exposure to turbidity, such as during a flood event, extended exposure to turbid water may seriously affect their survival.

If you are operating in or near a stream, there is a good chance there will be fish in it. One of the species of fish you may encounter during mining operations is the Dolly Varden. Though similar to, and often confused with, trout, Dolly Varden are actually a char (*Salvelinus* sp). To tell a char from a trout, look at their spots—char have light spots (white or yellow to red) on a dark body, while trout have dark spots (brown to black) on a light body.

Dolly Varden spawn in the fall, between September and November, over gravel beds in small headwater streams or occasionally in larger rivers. The female, depending on her size, will deposit eggs in nests (redds), which she digs in the streambed gravel with her tail while turned on her side. As the female deposits eggs, one or more males simultaneously fertilize them.

Unlike pacific salmon, Dolly Varden are capable of spawning multiple times during their lives, but they rarely survive to spawn more than three times. Depending on food availability, adults may skip a year or two between spawning events.

Freshwater-resident Dolly Varden are often dwarfed (maturing at 3–6 inches), and are most-commonly found in small headwater streams without easy access to the ocean, or in land-locked lakes and ponds. Dolly Varden may also remain in fresh water if they have access to a large, productive lake or river, in which they may grow to a similar size as sea-run (anadromous) Dolly Varden.

(Source: ADF&G)



Resident Dolly Varden
Photo: ADF&G



Adult Dolly Varden
non-spawning colors



Adult Dolly Varden
spawning colors

IMPORTANT DATES

ADNR

The 2025 APMA Application, Annual Reclamation paperwork, and other related information can be found on [the ADNR website](#).

Current APMA Permit holders are reminded to submit the 2024 Reclamation Statement and 2025 Letter of Intent/Reclamation Plan by **December 31, 2024**.

ADEC

Reminder to submit your 2024 ADEC Discharge Permit Annual Reports by **January 31, 2025**. Annual Reports may be submitted electronically in EDMS, sent to dec-wqreporting@alaska.gov, or mailed to: 555 Cordova Street, Anchorage, AK 99501, Attention Compliance & Enforcement. Printable forms are [available online](#). Make sure to keep copies of any submittals for your records.



ADNR and miners working on annual paperwork

MINER RECOGNITION

The Alaska Department of Natural Resources awarded the annual Mine Reclamation Award to Donlin Gold, LLC and Calista Corporation for their outstanding reclamation efforts of exploratory work done at the Donlin Gold Project.

Visit the [ADNR website](#) on the Annual Mining Reclamation Program to find out how to nominate a project.



Christy Colles, Director of DNR's Division of Mining, Land & Water, presented the annual Mine Reclamation Award to representatives of the Donlin Project and Calista Corp. at the Alaska Miners Association Convention.
Photo: Alaska Miners Association

The Placer Mining Resource Network Newsletter will come out twice yearly. To unsubscribe to the newsletter, please email Dave Charon at david.charon@alaska.gov.