



# Ambler Road Environmental Impact Statement

Alatna Public Scoping Meeting

## MEETING NOTES

November 15, 2017

Alatna Tribal Office Building, Alatna, Alaska

## Project Team Participants

Bureau of Land Management (BLM): Laurie Thorpe

HDR: John McPherson, Katherine Wood

National Park Service (NPS): Linda Hasselbach

## Public Participants

Approximately 19 people attended the meeting.

## Meeting Purpose

To share information about the BLM's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process, and to gather input from the public.

## Meeting Topics

### 1. Welcome by Harding Sam, First Chief

Harding Sam asked Alex to say a prayer, followed by introductions.

### 2. Presentation by Laurie Thorpe (BLM)

We are here today to talk about a right-of-way permit request received by BLM to build a road from the Dalton Highway over to the Ambler mineral belt.

## Other Cooperating Agencies:

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
- Northwest Arctic Borough (NAB)
- National Park Service (NPS)
- Allakaket wants to join as a Cooperating Agency
- Alatna wants to join as a Cooperating Agency

## ***Background***

The purpose of today's meeting is to get input from the local communities. Without that input, the EIS process will not be effective. Public input about issues and concerns is very important.

## ***Project Background***

In the 1950s, mineral exploration efforts discovered significant mineral resources on the south side of the Brooks Range. In the 1980s, The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) was established.

Congress passed the law recognizing the mineral potential in the Ambler Mining District and the need for transportation access. Section 201(4)(b) provides for surface transportation access through Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve, but did not address access across BLM lands. That's why we are here today to address it with you as we respond to the application for the right-of-way.

In 2009-2010, the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) began evaluating multiple road and rail routes that could provide access to the Ambler Mining District. In 2013, project ownership was transferred from DOT&PF to Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA). In 2015, AIDEA submitted an SF-299 application requesting right-of-way for the road. In 2016 AIDEA spent the first half of the year responding to requests for additional information from the application recipients (BLM, NPS, U.S. Coast Guard [USCG], and USACE).

The application was complete by June 30, 2016, which triggered a timeline for BLM action on the application. BLM filed a Notice of Intent (NOI) on February 28, 2017, to prepare an EIS, initiating a 90-day public scoping period. We knew that would not allow enough time for public scoping through all the affected communities. BLM did not want to impact your subsistence activities during the summer months so extended the public scoping period through January 31, 2018.

In 2017, NPS began a separate but parallel Environmental and Economic Impact Analysis (EEA) for the portion of the road on National Park Service land. That road must connect to other lands managed by BLM, the State, and Native corporation land to reach the Ambler Mining District.

## ***Proposed Project***

The right-of-way application from AIDEA proposes a road across public and private land to the Ambler Mining District to increase job opportunities, and otherwise encourage the economic growth of the state, including the development of its natural resources.

According to AIDEA, without that access the mineral assets associated with the Ambler Mining District would remain unused, and AIDEA would not be able to support economic development and increase job opportunities within a region known for high unemployment rates.

## ***Road Elements***

Maps are available to see the route. AIDEA's proposed alignment begins at the Dalton Highway Milepost 161 and extends 211 miles westward along the south side of the Brooks Range to the south bank of the Ambler River.

The type of land crossed by the road includes State lands (61 percent), Federal land managed by BLM and NPS (24 percent), and lands associated with two Alaska Native Corporations (15 percent).

The road would be 211 miles long, all-season gravel two-lane road with industrial access only. It would not be open to the public. It includes bridges, material sites, maintenance stations, airstrips, and related infrastructure and utilities.

Vehicles using the road would be designed to accommodate two-way traffic for large semi-trailer trucks.

The proposed project area begins at Milepost 161 of the Dalton Highway. It is 211 miles long, and ends at the Ambler mineral belt area as shown on the Proposed Project Area Map. Additional maps were presented that showed a close-up of each section of the route.

## ***Agency Roles***

BLM is the lead federal agency, and is required to prepare the EIS with the authority to grant permits across BLM lands. BLM must also comply with ANILCA Section 810 to hold subsistence hearings as well as the Nation Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 to address cultural and historic resources.

USACE is a Cooperating Agency, and would be responsible for the wetlands permits that would be required. The USACE would evaluate the project application under Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act and Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, and would use the EIS as the basis for its permit decisions.

USCG is a Cooperating Agency, would be responsible for bridge permits over navigable waters, and would also use the EIS as a basis for its decisions.

State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources is a Cooperating Agency, and would be responsible for state permits. DNR would make land management decisions for right-of-way access across state-managed lands.

NAB is a Cooperating Agency. NAB will provide traditional knowledge and input on subsistence, cultural resources, and coordination with Tribal members and affected communities. The NAB would also enforce local permitting requirements, and would advise the BLM on NAB's responsibilities under State law and Northwest Arctic Borough regulations.

Allakaket and Alatna will also be able to provide input on those subjects once they are added as Cooperating Agencies.

NPS, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are all Participating Agencies.

After scoping meetings have finished, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will be developed to add Allakaket and Alatna as Cooperating Agencies.

### ***What is an EIS?***

This EIS is about whether or not BLM should issue right-of-way for the proposed Ambler Road. An EIS is a document required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) which requires federal agencies to assess the environmental consequences of their decisions.

An EIS includes the following:

- Project Purpose and Need.
- Issues raised during scoping (internal/external).
- Project alternatives.
- Description of potentially affected environment, which would be impacted by this project.
- Environmental consequences of all the alternatives.
- Proposed mitigation.
- BLM must also include a no-action alternative where a permit for right-of-way would not be issued. It gives a good baseline to compare all the other alternatives.

### ***So where are we now?***

We published the Notice of Intent to produce an EIS in February 2017, and are now in the Scoping Process.

### ***Draft Purpose and Need***

Project need is based on the requirement for the BLM to respond to a ROW application from AIDEA for surface transportation access to currently inaccessible, economically valuable mineral deposits in the Ambler Mining District.

Project purpose of the BLM action is to provide AIDEA with: (1) technically and economically practical and feasible surface transportation access across BLM-managed lands for mining exploration and development in the Ambler Mining District, and (2) authorization to construct, operate, and maintain associated facilities for that access.

### ***BLM Decisions to be made***

The BLM must decide whether ROW shall be granted, and if so, the terms and conditions that will be included in the ROW.

### ***What is Scoping?***

Scoping is the process used to get input on the issues, impacts, and potential alternatives that will be addressed in the EIS. The intent of scoping is to:

- Inform agencies and public about AIDEA's application and the proposed project.
- Identify resources, impacts, and issues of concern to be addressed in the EIS.
- Obtain input to help refine the purpose and need and the alternatives to study.
- Identify potential mitigation measures that may be needed to avoid, minimize, or mitigate for project impacts.
- Obtain information to help evaluate the project with applicable laws.

The EIS document will cover many issues, and we want your input about them.

### ***ANILCA Section 810***

ANILCA Section 810 addresses subsistence issues and impacts. Under Section 810 of ANILCA, the BLM must determine whether the project "may significantly restrict subsistence uses." This analysis will be included in the EIS.

If alternatives may significantly restrict subsistence uses (either abundance, access, or availability), then this will be identified in the analysis, and ANILCA Section 810 hearings will be held at the same time as public meetings upon release of the Draft EIS.

### ***National Historic Preservation Act Section 106***

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) requires Federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties and places of religious and cultural significance.

Tribal entities, the State Historic Preservation Officer (Judy Bittner), and other interested parties are consulted to identify significant places and ways to reduce or mitigate potential effects.

A cultural resources management plan is developed to help resolve adverse effects that were identified during the consultation process.

### ***NPS EEA Process***

NPS EEA process focuses only on the NPS managed lands. The AIDEA proposal includes two alternative routes across NPS lands (North and South).

Under ANILCA, NPS is legally required to permit access across NPS lands, and prepare an EEA to evaluate which route is preferable based on environmental, social, and economic effects, and develop permit terms and conditions.

## **EEA Public Input**

NPS seeks comments on the NPS route selection and permit terms and conditions. The comment period is open through January 31, 2018. To comment go to <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/Ambler>.

## **Schedule**

Notice of Intent was published in the Federal Register February 28, 2017. Scoping concludes January 31, 2018. A Draft EIS will be developed by March 29, 2019, followed by public review. We would also be holding subsistence hearings during this time. A Final EIS based on public and agency review of the draft will be produced by December 30, 2019, and the Record of Decision is targeted to be completed by January 30, 2020.

## **What's Next?**

BLM is collecting comments and feedback. You are not limited to commenting once. You can submit comments throughout the scoping period. BLM will consider input received to potentially refine the Purpose and Need, determine issues and impacts to be studied, determine alternatives to be studied, and potentially identify mitigation measures to apply to the project.

## **Substantive Comments**

Writing substantive comments assists BLM to make good decisions.

- Be as specific as possible about what you are concerned about.
- Present new information.
- Share issues relevant to the environmental analysis.
- Suggest alternatives to the proposed project and the reason(s) why they should be considered.
- "I don't like this" or "I do like this" is not useful. Explain why.

You are welcome to comment on the proposed project. You can submit comments in the following ways:

- Submit a comment form in the box
- Submit comments via the website: <http://www.blm.gov/AmblerRoadEIS>
- Fax to: (907) 271-5479
- Email to: [blm\\_ak\\_akso\\_amblerroad\\_comments@blm.gov](mailto:blm_ak_akso_amblerroad_comments@blm.gov)
- Mail to: 222 West 7th Avenue, Stop #13, Anchorage, Alaska 99513

## **3. Comments**

***Below are a compilation of verbal comments received at this meeting.***

### **Question from Vanessa Edwards**

If you don't allow the access across BLM land, would that stop the road from being developed or just over that land?

### **Response from Laurie Thorpe, BLM**

Just over that BLM land. Our decision only covers BLM land. The EIS covers all lands.

### **Question from Vanessa Edwards**

Limiting public access concern. Having out-of-state people coming and taking our already limited resources. What would the restriction be? Like a toll station?

### **Response from Laurie Thorpe, BLM**

We don't know what all the details look like right now. The application from ADIEA is for industrial access only.

### **Question and Comment from Amelia Edwards**

Questioned industrial access only. How are you going to stop public use? Seems like anybody can have access to it. That is our concern. People are going to step into it and access our hunting land. There's no way you can stop public access to any road. We've seen it happen before and it will impact our subsistence.

### **Response from Katherine Wood, HDR**

Once we get to the Draft EIS, we will have more answers about how that will be handled.

### **Additional Response from John McPherson**

When BLM makes the decision, they can add restrictions like having a 24-hour guard shack.

### **Comment from Susanne James**

They opened a road to Tanana two years ago. They had the same concerns about how they were going to use that road. I read online that outsiders said that they should have rights to use that road too.

### **Comment from Jared Sam**

If the road goes through it's going to have to cross a lot of creeks and rivers, and if they have a spill we're going to be the first ones to be impacted. Our people rely heavily on subsistence. It's one of the last things we have, and we'd like to pass it on to the next generation.

### **Comment from Carl David, Allakaket Tribal Member**

I reside in Alatna. My grandparents are from Kobuk River. These are all my cousins here. My wife is from Shungnak. I don't have a voice in Allakaket or Alatna. I can't vote there or here. I work at Bornite mine seasonally. First with NovaGold as a carpenter, and moved to maintenance. This season is Trilogy, which is still going on. They may not rehire me. There are incidents going on. The road is only 10 miles from Dall Creek, 4 miles from Kobuk to Dall Creek, and then 10 miles to Bornite, the camp. There were accidents that involved two helicopters and a loader. We cleaned that up. EPA knows their business, but its human error. It's only 10 miles exploration that's been going on after Kennecott mine

shut down. Work is still going on but I was sent home. They overflowed the tank with a creek right next to it. They did everything they were supposed to do. Every time it rains on contaminated soil there's no way you can clean it up. It will always be there. They asked me not to say anything about it, but they're not going to hire me again so that's all I have to say.

#### **Comment from Harding Sam, First Chief**

Usually when we have a meeting it's only me. Thank you all for speaking up. I am really against this road, because our subsistence lifestyle is very high to us. Every time we give up something, we don't get anything back. Look at the pipeline. It's right in our backyard, and yet, we're paying the highest price for gas in the whole United States. They said it wouldn't affect the caribou, but we haven't seen them come through since the pipeline so it's really coming heavily in our community here. Every time we come to these public meetings, we always come and say what we want, and by the time we get the paperwork, it's like an afterthought. It's not as firmly as we stated as a priority to us. The unfortunate thing is we are a small number of people. We are outnumbered. We don't have money to fight it, and it's just really concerning to see another road that does not help us.

#### **Comment from Vanessa Edwards**

First concern. They talked about creating a raised pipeline so the caribou could pass under, but they still don't want to do that. If that Ambler Road comes in and we already have the pipeline, we are going to be totally blocked in without access. The caribou will not be able to access this area. It's very important for the caribou to be able to migrate for feeding grounds and calving grounds. Second concern. They show two bridges proposed across the headwaters of the Alatna River. That is where we get our sheefish, our whitefish. What if there is a spill? It will ruin the habitat, and it won't be able to be recovered. We are already low on salmon. We are lucky to get maybe four a year. If we are cut off from the fish and the caribou, we are going to be in a hard place, and there is no amount of money that will replace it.

#### **Comment from Jared Sam**

We don't get very much salmon. Even the people from Allakaket. That's our main source. Moose season hasn't been that good. That was always a source to rely on in the winter time. The pipeline goes north and south. [The Department of] Fish and Game had a meeting, and said they collared a wolf and tracked it. It hit the pipeline 12 times trying to cross it. If they put the road in and block east and west, the caribou are not going to be able to cross. And if they have a spill at the headwaters, we will be the first to be impacted. That's why we are opposing the road.

#### **Comment from Linda Lee, NANA Board Chair**

These are the same concerns our families have in the upper Kobuk – the waters, the caribou migrations. The caribou didn't migrate through the valley so we didn't get to fill our freezers. With climate change, we didn't put up too much fish. So the same concerns we're hearing when we're traveling are concerns in Kobuk.

### **Comment from Liz Cravalho, NANA, External and Government Affairs**

We've heard a couple of times that the perception is that the NANA organization is pro-road. What I want to be clear about is that we've heard from our board and from our communities, is that we are supportive of the EIS, and we don't have a position on the road because of the concern of the people in our communities are talking about. Thank you for letting us listen in, and hear about your concerns.

### **Comment from Alex Sheldon, NANA Board Member from Kobuk**

I heard about this road and some mining. We have the Bornite mine that's only 17 miles from Kobuk. We worked there, and it was the only job we had at that time before we hit water, and they shut it down. They were figuring out how to send the ore out when they were first beginning. First they started making runways by Dollar Creek for all the stuff to come in. And they start talking about a railroad within a month. They didn't ask Kobuk. Of course, a railroad could carry lots of big ore. That was the first idea. But when they hit water, they forget it, the column filled up with water. I was checking the water. That's the idea. It will be mining like that. It won't only be copper ore close to the Bornite area. That is why they are going to make the road. I'm sure there will be more mines. We don't know, but someone knows all the minerals around there, like BLM, NPS, and who else. NPS, you can't do anything in their area. I got a Native allotment, and I didn't know it was going to be Park Service. I got a lot of rules then. I can't do anything in there. They said I can't bring 50 dogs in there because I was a musher. And I can't build five houses in there in my Native allotment rule. So many rules on Park Service, BLM, State, and Native corporations' land. The whole of Alaska used to be subsistence land. We live from land and water and sea. You ask what we think. To help our native lifestyle, I think what is best is to make decisions and agreement. First we need jobs, and we need food. The road will help us bring more food, but it will bring more problems, who knows? When I listen over at Anaktuvuk Pass, one of the elders said any development hurts our subsistence lifestyle. He knows. So we have to work together to make decisions and agreements with this road and mines to come. It's not only going to be Bornite/Ambler Road. That mine belongs to somebody already. They can pay to make a road like they did at the Red Dog Mine to the port. When you don't have money, it's hard.

### **Comment from John Lincoln, NANA**

NANA is unique in that all of our village corporations merged with our regional corporation so that the lands that NANA has in the upper Kobuk and Shungnak, there is no split estate. NANA has responsibility for surface and subsurface. A lot of the decision making that the board has about this road will stem from how our villages feel about the road and potential impacts. One thing we heard loud and clear from everybody is that we really care about the people in this area. I was born and raised in Kotzebue so I still have a lot to learn about the upper Kobuk and this country. It's been awesome to see the amount of connectedness. We're in this together. We're here to listen.

### **Question from Vanessa Edwards**

Would this road cause the least impact to the land to get the ore out of the Ambler Mining District? Did they do a study about transporting by sea or tying into the Alaska Railroad system?

### **Response from Laurie Thorpe, BLM**

DOT&PF did some other analyses, and they concluded that this was the best route they could propose. That doesn't mean we wouldn't look at other alternatives in this EIS.

### **Comment from Vanessa Edwards**

Railroad might be a good thing to consider to bypass our land completely. That would answer one of our questions and restrict access to our lands. I understand that shipping by sea might be more hazardous. But railroad, they could stay out of the river system and cut through the tundra down to the Alaska Railroad system.

### **Response from John McPherson, HDR**

One thing the EIS will look at is what DOT&PF did, and then decide if we agree with their outcome. So they may end up looking at those options again. It's not decided that this is the only route on which analysis needs to be done. And as Laurie said, the decision could be to not have the project proceed at all.

### **Comment from Vincent Bergman, Allakaket**

I agree with all these people. We rely heavily on hunting, fish, and berries. That's what we live off of. It's hard to go to the grocery stores. Food is expensive up there. When the federal government goes broke, we still have native food that we gather from the land. And that land they're going through, we go up there. The elders tell stories about hunting sheep up there. On building the road, you said you would use third-party funds and bonds. Clarify what that means.

### **Response from Laurie Thorpe, BLM**

Third-party funds would be used to build the road. To illustrate, HDR is a third-party contractor paid for by the applicant, but they are under the direction of the BLM.

### **Additional explanation by John Lincoln, NANA**

So AIDEA is the applicant, and they would build the road. But in order to pay for the road, if they used DOT&PF money it would automatically have to be a public road. Instead of pursuing public money, they would reach out to investors or to acquire debt through bonds to build and maintain the road. They would solicit a third-party for the money, and in return for that money, they would own part of the road and be responsible for maintaining and securing it, and deciding who would have access to it.

### **Comment from Liz Cravahlo, NANA**

Shared the Red Dog Mine road example. Red Dog pays annual fees for use and maintenance of that road. They are responsible for it. That's one example to look to, it's not going to be exactly like that, but maybe similar.

### **Comment from Joy Huntington, AIDEA**

Public-private finance is the term that describes that type of project. They would be using the funds that AIDEA has to guarantee bonds or get other private financiers to pay for the upfront capital costs. Then that debt would be paid back over years by getting the tolls paid by the development project out there. The tolls would also pay for the maintenance moving forward. That would be through private contracts.

### **Question from Vincent Bergman**

Why isn't DNR here if they own 61 percent of the land?

### **Response from Laurie Thorpe, BLM**

They are a Cooperating Agency, but the representative could not make it to the meeting today.

### **Comment continued by Vincent Bergman**

If they own 61 percent then they will open the road just like the Dalton Highway. They said it (Haul Road) would never be open to the public. Just look at it now, there are hunters everywhere.

### **Comment from Doug Reuben**

If this road goes through across the Alatna River and the John River, we have a lot of sheep hunters here in Allakaket and Alatna. We have elder stories that it would take two weeks by canoe to go up there. I'm a sheep hunter. If this road is built, we would be in direct competition with hunters for sheep. It's a hard animal to get anyway. It's a very special food for our people. I like sheep hunting, and I'd like to pass it on to younger people. It will be hard to compete with someone who has a lot of money and a nice jet boat to get up to Wolverine Creek or Sheep Creek. For us, it's a onetime thing. We pool money to buy gas and oil and food to go up one time. If they have the road, they don't have as far to go as we do. That direct competition is why I am not for the road. I had an accident while sheep hunting, and slid off a cliff. Sheep hunting is awesome and dangerous. You've got to walk a long ways to get to sheep hunting areas.

### **Comment from Jared Sam**

I'm really happy that everyone came to share their thoughts and have our voice heard that we oppose this road.

### **Comment from Joy Huntington, AIDEA**

I'm here in a listening capacity for AIDEA. This meeting is really for the community to speak with BLM about their concerns. I'm grateful for your hospitality. One of my goals is to help people understand what types of projects AIDEA does and who they are. Lots of people don't know about AIDEA. A good example AIDEA project is the Red Dog Road and other projects that are difficult to finance on the front end. AIDEA can help make them more financially feasible by providing private financing on the front end, and they get paid back over the years. So NANA has paid back the Red Dog Road and then some. AIDEA is proposing this project and there will be continued communication with the tribes,

cities, and communities members. Two things I want to point out. One, this is the environmental feasibility process to talk about what the impacts would be so your input is very important. The more specific the better. Two, the economic feasibility has not had a final determination either. If the AIDEA Board determines the project is not economically feasible then it would not go forward. There are still big questions about the feasibility of the project. Your input today has been really helpful. My goal today is to relay your comments back to AIDEA and get answers back from AIDEA.

#### **Question from Russell Moses**

Is NOVA here? Are there going to be more mines along the Brooks Range opened if this road goes through? That would affect us even worse. The John River and the drainages will be affected. It would be easy for people to get permits for that, and they'll do it. A lot more people would come in, even for "recreational" mining/dredging. That's a concern. There's a lot more minerals and gold up there. And there are people up there now, and we don't know what they are doing.

#### **Addition from Jared Sam**

Anything under a 6-inch dredge is considered "recreational."

#### **Response from Katherine Wood, HDR**

There is no one here today from the mining companies, but that is something we would study in the EIS. It's not just what this road does, but if you put a road in, what else might happen? That's part of what we will look at in this study.

#### **Comment from Russell Moses**

Coldfoot Gold Mine is the headwaters of the Koyukon River, and I don't think the Natives ever got a say in that project.

#### **Comment from Jared Sam**

You hear stories from the elders about the pipeline Haul Road. It was going to be restricted access, and then they ran out of money so they opened it up to everybody. And then Tanana same thing, and I guess it's open to the public, I don't know. They're having problems where Natives are getting pushed off the land away from their hunting areas negatively impacting our people.

#### **Comment from Max Hanft**

I lived up in Bettles for a long time. Russell made a great point, because there is gold in all those creeks both Malamute Forks, Bedrock Creek, Jones Creek, Tikaka, and yet they haven't been developed because of economic reasons. There's no access. That really does open up the whole Brooks Range to development that has been fairly isolated. When we are considering the impacts, we are not just considering this one little action. It's really about the long-term further industrialization of North America that started on the East Coast. It's been going on 200 years, and has laid concrete from one end of the country to the other. This is the last stand. Is nothing sacred land? This is the apex of the wilderness. There is no going back. There is no remediation. In an ecosystem so complex,

once it's out of balance, there is no remediating, reorganizing, replanting, or going back. The choices we're making now are for people 200 years from now who will say, "You just swung the door wide open, and here we are without anything." It's really long-term stuff we're dealing with. We can talk about the stuff that's impacting our lives, but it's far grander than even that. With industrialization around the world, places like this are becoming very rare and increasingly more valuable for things other than industrialization. People are becoming more interested in these rare places and in perpetuating industries that can use this land and leave it intact. It's hard for me to see, because so many decisions on development are political decisions. The people we put in office are the ones creating the tax incentives for mining companies that set the tax rates and reclaim very little for the selling of our lands. The tax rate is 7 percent. The mining industry paid \$10 million in taxes last year. You can't put a road in for what the whole mining industry has collected in taxes. It doesn't seem like a good economic position to take for the State. Financially, it doesn't seem that we're going to get a lot of money out of it, and yet, we really give up what Alaska is and has to offer. It's good that everybody comes out and gives their opinions, but it's really important to think about who you vote for and the decisions they make. That's where the political will and the decisions are ultimately being made. It's hard to see all the political will for economic development being focused in one area. There are a lot of other options. To have it go this route for long-term environmental degradation for temporary jobs not even any real tax income, it seems like a poor deal.

#### **Comment from Harding Sam, First Chief**

Thank you for that comment because you brought up another tool we can be using. Everyone can register to vote, and vote for people that will help us.

#### **Comment and Question from Delores Saunders**

My parents grew up on this land. My mom had two dogs when she started hunting. She used to go out around this time and cut rabbits, and all summer she cut fish all day. It's what we grew up on. Up till she passed away three years ago, she was tanning her own moose skin. We're going to lose all that if the road goes through. Like I said before, could you do another route by the coast?

#### **Comment and Question from Harding Sam**

What else will be coming down this road? It will really affect us socially. When the pipeline was built, it was the first time people had so much money. They could buy whatever they wanted. They got heavily into alcohol. In three years we lost 17 people that were my age. Issues like that should be brought into this. The sad thing was it was the baby-boom years. Who knows what our population would be if those people survived? I thank everyone for coming to Alatna. It is so much better than just having a meeting in Anchorage or Fairbanks. It's a much better atmosphere.

### **Comment from Amelia Edwards**

I'm not against economic growth. This road will bring jobs. But usually when projects like this come through they don't hire local. That's our main concern most of the time. The road will bring in cash money, easy money. The road will bring in other people with different ideas how to use the land up there. That's my main concern. Who knows who will land here and decide to settle in the headwaters?

### **Question by Max Hanft**

In the EIS how does the permit process identify acceptable environmental degradation? What is the threshold? What is acceptable damage to the land, and what is not acceptable? Whose choices are those?

### **Response from John McPherson, HDR**

Each agency has their own requirements, and needs to make their own decisions. The lead agency is BLM so whoever signs the EIS for BLM needs to weigh all these impacts before they make that decision. But there will be wetlands permits so these different agencies will have to weigh if the wetlands impacts are worth it to issue a wetlands permit. The State has to do the same thing for an easement across state lands. The Native corporations have a say too in whether the route can pass across their land. So the EIS provides each of those entities valuable information so they can make good decisions.

### **Comment and Question from Max Hanft**

So many of these decisions are made in balance with economic and profit decisions versus very subjective, cerebral, inconceivable concepts that span millennia in the future. It seems like really hard things to put on the same scale. Is there an economic statement made or evaluation of those lands aside from the economic development being proposed in this road? Is there a long-term financial value to those lands? Changing them will reduce that value. What is the value of the Brooks Range from a tourist standpoint view over 200 years? I would like to see some way of economically quantifying these values. There is valuation loss. I would like the EIS to quantify the financial values of the land. How much money do you put on each caribou?

### **Response from John McPherson, HDR**

Just so you know how scoping works that is a very good question. We have economists, and now we have an issue so it will be on the table to get an answer. I heard things I didn't know about. Sheep hunting, small-scale, recreational gold mining. All these issues that we didn't know about, now we have to analyze. This is really how this process works. It's really helpful.

### **Comment from Linda Hasselbach, NPS**

Thank you. I'm here in a listening role trying to hear what your concerns are. Our process is different. We are mostly concerned about which of the two alternative routes through the NPS land should be selected. A lot of the concerns you have can be transferred over to the NPS process. We are required to issue that right-of-way permit. I really appreciate the hospitality and the honesty of comments.

### **Comment from Laurie Thorpe, BLM**

To clarify, should the EIS identify a route that is different from AIDEA's proposal that avoids the NPS land they still have to select which route they think would be best. They would not have the need to issue the permit at that point if there was nothing to connect to. They wouldn't issue a permit unless the whole road right-of-way was issued.

### **Question from Max Hanft**

Is there any difference, from a land point of view, between crossing the "boot" by the Kobuk (Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve) and the portion up by Laurence Creek by the north fork?

### **Response from Linda Hasselbach**

It has to be in the Preserve portion of the park (Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve) not in the Park portion of the park. Neither of the routes through the Preserve are on Wilderness Land.

### **Comment from Jared Sam**

I'm not against economical growth, but they're coming through our backyard, and there is nothing written that says you're going to have jobs for our people.

### **Question from Vanessa Edwards**

If they open up the Ambler Mining District, would that put any money into our Permanent Fund Dividend like the oil pipeline? There is no monetary gain.

### **Response from Laurie Thorpe, BLM**

No, there is no plan for that.

### **Comment from Vanessa Edwards**

The pipeline cut off our subsistence with caribou, and we only get a little over \$1,000 each year. With our cost of living here in Allakaket that could supply about two months' worth of groceries. Is that worth it? There is no amount of money that is worth this road, subsistence-wise. This road further cuts off our subsistence livelihood.

Comments concluded.

## **4. Closing**

Laurie Thorpe thanked all the attendees, and asked them to stay involved and continue to submit all their comments.

Harding Sam thanked visitors, and invited them to lunch.