

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 9, 2021

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington DC 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland:

We write to express our concerns over the administration's recent actions with respect to the Ambler Access Project in northwest Alaska, and to urge the administration to ensure the timely implementation of the project's previously-issued Record of Decision.

As you know, the Ambler Access Project is a proposed road that would run from the Dalton Highway to the Ambler Mining District, one of the most valuable mining districts in the United States. After extensive environmental analysis, this project was approved through a Joint Record of Decision by the Department of the Interior (DOI) and the Army Corps of Engineers in July 2020. Following that decision, two challenges arose under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) over the legal sufficiency of the analysis that preceded it.

The federal government has defended against those challenges since they were filed in August and October 2020, respectively. In late September 2021, however, the administration abruptly filed motions to stay each case – so that DOI can conduct additional consultation with tribes concerned about the access road – interminably delaying their consideration and resolution.

We agree with government-to-government tribal consultation and have long supported its use. In fact, this consultation can and should continue to occur outside of the NEPA and legal processes. We also recognize the Record of Decision is valid, not subject to re-opening based simply on a change in administration, and are concerned the administration's recent actions are subjecting the Ambler Access Project to renewed uncertainty, depriving Alaskans, as well as the rest of the country, of the many benefits it will bring.

The Ambler Access Project will provide a transportation link to the Ambler Mining District, and mines developed there will supply the United States with substantial amounts of copper, cobalt, and other critical or strategic minerals. These minerals are needed to support the development of green technologies, such as electric vehicles; strengthen our international competitiveness by reducing our dependence on imports; and sustain our national defense. The Ambler Mining District has many commercially viable deposits; what it lacks is the access infrastructure necessary for their responsible development.

It is important for the administration to understand that Alaska has a history of beneficial mine development as shown by the Red Dog Mine, which is also located in northwest Alaska. That mine is owned by an Alaska Native Corporation, NANA Regional Corporation, Inc. (NANA), and its revenues

are shared with 11 other Alaska Native Regional Corporations under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA). Red Dog has generated more than \$2.1 billion in royalties for NANA, including \$1.5 billion that was subsequently distributed to other Alaska Native Corporations for the social, economic, and cultural benefit of their shareholders.

The Red Dog ore is transported on a road to a port in the Arctic owned by the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA), which is also the proponent in the Joint Record of Decision for the Ambler Access Project. More than 50 percent of the workers at the Red Dog Mine are NANA shareholders. What AIDEA and the State of Alaska have proposed is to replicate the success of that port and road project through the development of the Ambler Mining District access road.

The State of Alaska has also recognized the benefits of the Ambler Access Project, financially supporting it throughout the permitting process while ensuring the highest level of environmental protections are incorporated. Permitting for it stands as the linchpin for thousands of jobs for Alaska, and often Alaska Native, residents, as well as other opportunities for rural communities, such as broadband infrastructure, that will be enabled by it. Further, this project will be a controlled access facility in order to reduce environmental and wildlife impacts, and to respect traditional subsistence values and uses by Alaska Native residents.

The Ambler Access Project has a valid Record of Decision and DOI is responsible for implementing it. This includes the resolution of legal challenges, which should not serve as a platform to delay the project's construction or pending litigation. It is possible to advance this important project while still engaging in renewed consultation that fully respects the rights, views, and interests of Alaska Natives who live in the region.

We appreciate your consideration of this letter, and again urge the administration to move forward on the Ambler Access Project.

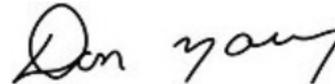
Sincerely,



LISA MURKOWSKI
United States Senator



DAN SULLIVAN
United States Senator



DON YOUNG
Congressman for All Alaska