

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

September 29, 2022

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

Dear Secretary Haaland:

I write in support of the Ambler Access Project for the potential economic benefits it could bring to area residents, the state and the nation, and to encourage the Department of the Interior to fulfill its review of the Project under the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) process in a timely manner.

The mineral resources in the area, including copper, are of critical importance to the country. The minerals are there; the state and private interests in exploring and developing those resources are in place; the support of Alaska Native corporations and tribes is strong. What is missing is access, which the Project would provide.

While the state, area residents and interested parties certainly want a thorough and nothing-missed review in the SEIS, they — and I — are concerned that the timeline could stretch beyond a reasonable schedule. From the Department's voluntary remand filed with the court in February, now, seven months later, the Department is embarking on the scoping process for the SEIS. The draft SEIS could be available the second quarter of 2023, according to the Department's Sept. 16 status report filed with the court. Allowing for public comments on the draft SEIS and Department consideration of those comments, it appears that the Department would not be in a position to issue its final SEIS and Record of Decision until late 2023 or early 2024. Any further delay would be detrimental to residents, their Tribes and Native corporations that support the Project.

I hope that the Department's next status report to the court, scheduled for Nov. 15, will reaffirm plans to continue working the review in a timely manner, without further encumbrances. Of particular importance is allowing the Project to continue with its field activities under the work plan approved by the department this summer.

The court order in the remand for a SEIS is clear in its instructions that the additional review, which is now starting its scoping period, shall be limited to "impacts to subsistence uses under ANILCA Section 810 and ... consultation with Tribes pursuant to NHPA Section 106." To ensure the protection of subsistence resources so critical to area residents, I am strongly supportive that the Final SEIS continue with the requirement that the Project sponsor follow through on its plans to keep the access road closed to the general public.

The Final EIS, issued more than two years ago, states: "Public access to the area by the general public and project workers for hunting or fishing via the proposed road would not be

allowed.” The Final EIS acknowledged that harvesting activities by non-residents of the area could “reduce resource availability for local residents.”

The issue was further addressed in the Final EIS: “AIDEA would operate the Ambler Road as an industrial access road not open to the general public and would establish a road-use permit system to ensure authorized use only.” Authorized use would include allowing communities “to use the road for certain uses, such as commercial delivery of fuel and goods,” which would be of tremendous economic benefit to area residents.

Addressing the issues cited in the remand for the SEIS, while building on the analysis in the Final EIS, will produce a solid environmental document to help this project proceed to the next step, which would include a thorough financial review by the state of the project economics.

I appreciate the Department’s work and your attention to this critical endeavor.

Sincerely,



Mary Sattler Peltola

Representative for All Alaska