

# AMBLER ACCESS PROJECT NEWSLETTER

Second Quarter 2023 | August 2023



Josephine Howarth, Tribal Liaison from the Ambler Tribe, assists the archaeology team with cultural surveys.

2 Job Fairs Emphasize Readiness for Future Opportunities

3 Hughes Prepares Workforce for the Future

4 SAC & WDWG Discuss Training and Subsistence Protection in Kotzebue

5 The Red Dog Experience Shapes Leadership Views

6 Hydrology and Hydraulic Surveys Provide Insights to Design Engineers

## Working Together to Find Opportunity

The Ambler Access Project (AAP) is being developed collaboratively, in close consultation with the tribes and communities throughout the NANA and Doyon Regions.

## KNOW THE LATEST!

Be among the first to know what's happening with the AAP. Sign up for project updates by emailing: [info@ambleraccess.com](mailto:info@ambleraccess.com). Updates emailed directly to your inbox.

## JOB FAIRS EMPHASIZE READINESS FOR FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

In April and May 2023, the AAP outreach team conducted a number of job fairs, community meetings, and classroom presentations in the communities of Kobuk, Ambler, Shungnak, Noorvik, Kiana, Hughes, Huslia, and Allakaket. Attendance was robust, and topics discussed during the events included: the summer season, preparation for future work in construction and regional studies, and timing for the AAP. Attendees were provided with information on current jobs ([ambleraccess.org/Employment-Info](https://ambleraccess.org/Employment-Info)), future jobs (projected), and available training programs.

“Jobs for the 2023 season are limited due to conditional approval from BLM,” stated Jeff San Juan, Program Manager. The federal permitting process is complex and often does not move quickly. Craig Jones, Deputy Program Manager, who grew up in Ambler, felt that despite the slow pace the jobs picture was optimistic. “Response for these jobs is positive,” he noted, “and the prospect of training and jobs to strengthen the local economy is welcomed.”

Informal follow-up meetings were held on June 5 in Alatna and Allakaket. Meetings in Kiana, Kobuk, and Ambler are planned for later in the summer.

## Time for Training is NOW—Readying for Jobs

“We need to get ready now for good jobs,” states Fred Bifelt, Co-Chair of the Workforce Development Working Group. During the group’s June meeting, all committee members expressed interest in fully participating in planning, strategy development, and delivery of the right kind of training for their communities and tribal members.

The AAP is committed to ensuring that AAP jobs are filled by trained local individuals. These jobs will provide income to help sustain the subsistence lifestyle. It will also reduce the number of residents who have to permanently leave their villages to find work. Good-paying jobs, small business opportunities, and revenue for local communities are goals for the AAP.

AIDEA is leading efforts in response to the committee’s recommendations to develop a training strategy and plan for transportation projects necessary for Alaska’s infrastructure development. “AIDEA is proposing a workforce development effort in partnership with the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) to prepare under-served communities for potential infrastructure development jobs,” says Randy Ruaro, Executive Director for AIDEA. The proposed AIDEA workforce development plan is intended to foster and advance outcomes aimed at addressing critical workforce demands from large scale projects in the near future, such as the Ambler Access Project.

Alaska has rich assets in its training centers such as the Alaska Technical Center (ATC) in Kotzebue. Alaskans are also anxious to work close, especially



**ATC Director Karl Kowalski and Kathy Mayo**

in their home communities and regions. Bringing together these regional training centers and local, talented people who wish to remain in and support their villages offers lasting benefits for individuals, families, and communities.

To learn more about ATC and trainings, visit <https://www.nwarctic.org/atc>.

## HUGHES PREPARES WORKFORCE FOR THE FUTURE



Hughes Tribe was awarded an Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF) grant for a 2.5-mile road (Sunny Lane) that will provide all-season access to the community cemetery, future housing sites above the 100-year floodplain, subsistence-use areas, and a wood gathering area. “This project is important for many reasons,” said Hughes Chief Wilmer Beetus. “It will give access to our cemetery, which is cut off from regular access; only those physically able can climb the steep hill.”

Construction of this road will provide an excellent opportunity to train the young people of Hughes and nearby villages. Training in heavy equipment operation, mechanics, and CDL truck driving will be conducted throughout the project. This will serve as a gateway for local community jobs well into the future. It will provide well trained and experienced road builders ready for construction projects, especially for the Ambler Road. It will also increase capacity for local infrastructure building, which addresses many needs including local roads, housing, airports, and broadband.

A total of 45 applicants applied for the project, and nearly 40 were selected to participate in this construction project and training. Trainers with extensive experience in operating equipment have been brought in, including Micky Allen, a seasoned heavy-duty mechanic.

“This is part of what makes a local economy diversified,” stated Chief Beetus. He and the community hosted a project kick-off on June 12 that was also attended by Commissioner Ryan Anderson from the ADOT&PF.

Chief Beetus serves on the Ambler Access Project Subsistence Advisory Committee (SAC) and the Workforce Development Working Group (WDWG) providing a strong voice for creating good, local jobs. Such jobs are an important component to keep young people in the village and maintain the subsistence way of life.



## SAC/WDWG MEET IN KOTZEBUE FOR Q2

The SAC and WDWG held their second quarter meetings on June 14 and 15 in Kotzebue.

At the WDWG meeting on June 14, members welcomed ADOT&PF Commissioner Ryan Anderson and representatives from NANA and the ATC. The attendees discussed the job fairs and prospects for training opportunities, as well as possibilities offered by the Hughes training and construction project.

At their June 15 meeting, the SAC welcomed guests from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and the Bureau of Land Management. The group discussed project updates, permitting and planning, and the AAP's potential impacts to fish populations. Members spoke about the ongoing studies on spring breakup and water runoff, and how the knowledge gleaned from those studies contributes to bridge placement and design. "I hope

we hear about what they learned during these studies, and this information is shared with our communities in the scheduled meetings this winter," stated Harold David (Allakaket). "People are very interested."

"ADF&G will conduct a helicopter flight, including Chief Harding Sam, to look at the proposed bridge area at the Alatna River road crossing," said Craig Jones, Program Manager. "This study is a direct response to recommendations by the tribes of Alatna and Allakaket ." The flyover will also include other areas of the Alatna River.

Both committees passed a resolution to provide advice to AIDEA regarding both job opportunities and training for local residents and maintaining the road as private access. AIDEA and the AAP leadership team are now developing follow-on activities related to the

resolution; these activities will be tracked and updates will be provided to the committee as they are progressed. A copy of the resolution will be posted to the AAP website.

The next SAC and WDWG meetings will be held in Allakaket in August. You can find information about the upcoming and past meetings on the Ambler Access website, [ambleraccess.org](http://ambleraccess.org).



**Chief Harding Sam of Alatna and AIDEA Executive Director, Randy Ruraro, share a conversation during a meeting break.**

## THE RED DOG EXPERIENCE



**Elizabeth “Liz” Qaulluq Cravalho, Vice President of NANA Lands, addressed the SAC and WDWG on their tour of Red Dog Mine.**

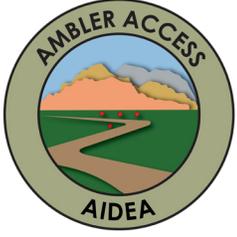
On June 13, the SAC and WDWG were given a tour of the Red Dog Mine coordinated by NANA and hosted by Teck, which operates the Mine. The Mine has been a successful component of the region for four decades, and this was an opportunity for the members to see firsthand how infrastructure and subsistence can co-exist—and thrive—in a strong, supportive community. Fred Bifelt, Co-Chair of the SAC and the WDWG, was enthusiastic in his response. “It is important for our committee members to see the mine up close, and talk to managers with responsibilities to the environment, mine operations,

and their workforce,” he noted. “This was a valuable tour. Talking to the NANA shareholder employees, many who are second generation working at the mine, was a great experience. We are excited to share some of this with our region.”

Both committees want to learn from the Red Dog experience and apply that knowledge to policies and practices of the AAP. To learn more about the Red Dog Mine and its operations, technology, and policies, visit <https://www.teck.com/operations/united-states/operations/red-dog/>.



**The members found the Mine’s water treatment facility particularly impressive, as it presented a vivid demonstration of excellence and commitment to stewarding the environment. The tour also helped clarify how the Ambler Access Project can support the subsistence lifestyle.**



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## HYDROLOGY AND HYDRAULIC SURVEYS

A big focus of this summer's field season for the Ambler Access Project is collecting hydrology and hydraulic (H&H) information about the many waterways (rivers, creeks, etc.) the proposed road will cross. Hydrology refers to the amount, routes, and velocity at which the water flows. Hydraulics is an understanding of the way the water flows and will impact man-made structures, such as bridges and culverts. H&H information and observations are crucial to properly designing road related structures, ensuring that they can be both environmentally friendly and sized to match the stream or river's characteristics, without being exorbitantly oversized. Of course, oversized structures can significantly add to the construction costs.

In April and May, the AAP design team observed and measured the ice breakup and ice flows down many of the large rivers. Ice flows and potential ice dams can present significant risks to bridges and culverts and the road itself. Large ice flows can easily destroy structures if not properly designed.

This spring's information, combined with the summer information currently being performed - flow measurements, river surveys and depths (bathymetry) - will be used to develop the basis of design for the proposed bridges and culverts. River and creek information is also crucial for understanding potential fish habitats in these waterways; AIDEA is committed to constructing a road that minimizes impacts to fish and their habitats.



**Stranded ice buildup along the banks of the Koyukuk River.**