



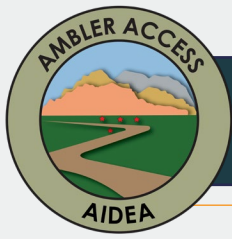
Subsistence Advisory Committee

Draft SEIS Overview

December 6, 2023

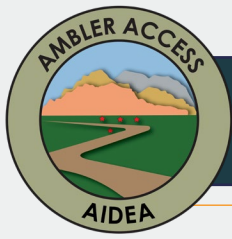
Anna Kohl, HDR

Matt Narus, Kuna



Overview

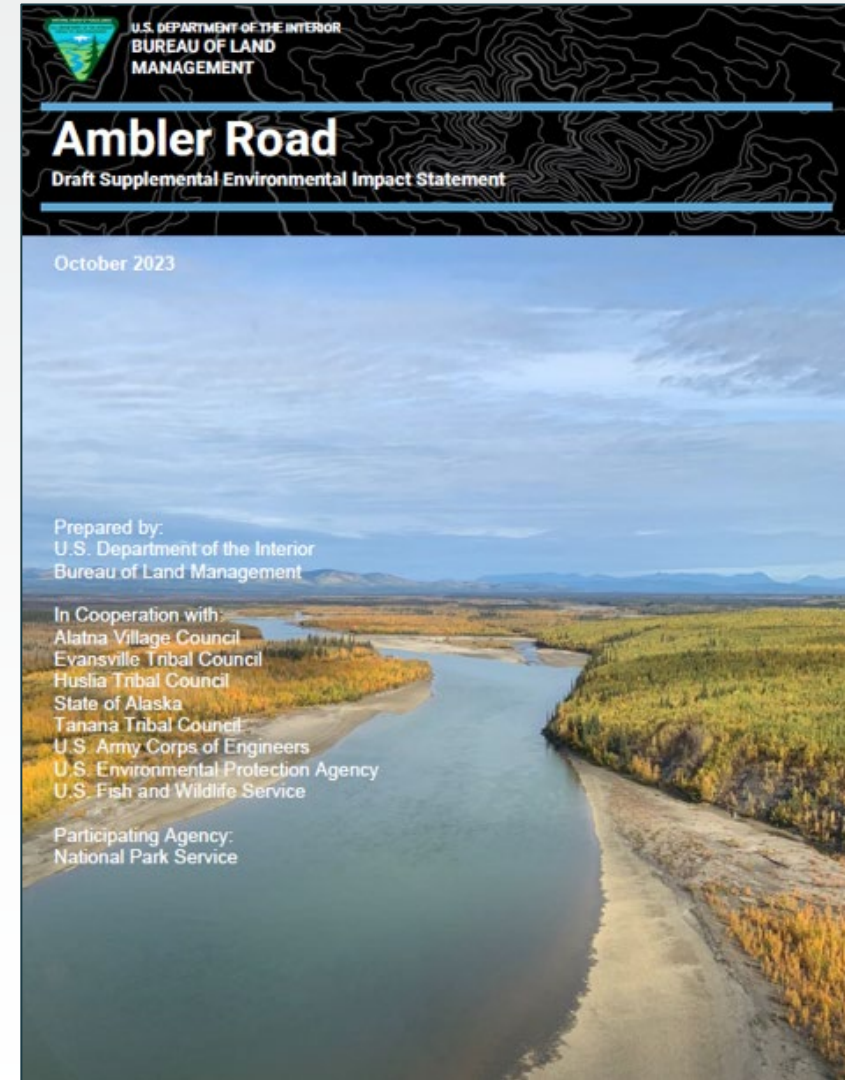
- NEPA Process – how did we get here?
- Reason for the Supplemental EIS
- Final and Draft Supplemental EIS differences
- Subsistence resources in the Draft Supplemental EIS
- AIDEA's comments on the Draft Supplemental EIS
- Additional studies published since the FEIS
- Next steps

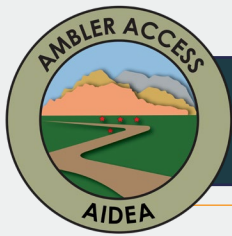


NEPA Process – How did we get here?

Timeline – 43 years and counting

- **December 1980:** Access between the Dalton Highway and the Ambler Mining District preserved in the passage of ANILCA
- **November 2015:** AIDEA submits right-of-way application to BLM
- **2017:** BLM begins scoping for the EIS to identify key issues
- **2019:** Draft EIS released
- **March 2020:** Final EIS released
- **July 2020:** Record of Decision released; Alternative A selected
- **May 2022:** Court grants BLM a voluntary remand to re-evaluate deficiencies in subsistence impacts and tribal consultation
- **October 2023:** BLM publishes Draft Supplemental EIS
- **December 22, 2023:** end of Draft SEIS comment period
- **2024:** Final SEIS and Record of Decision (ROD)





Reason for the Supplemental EIS

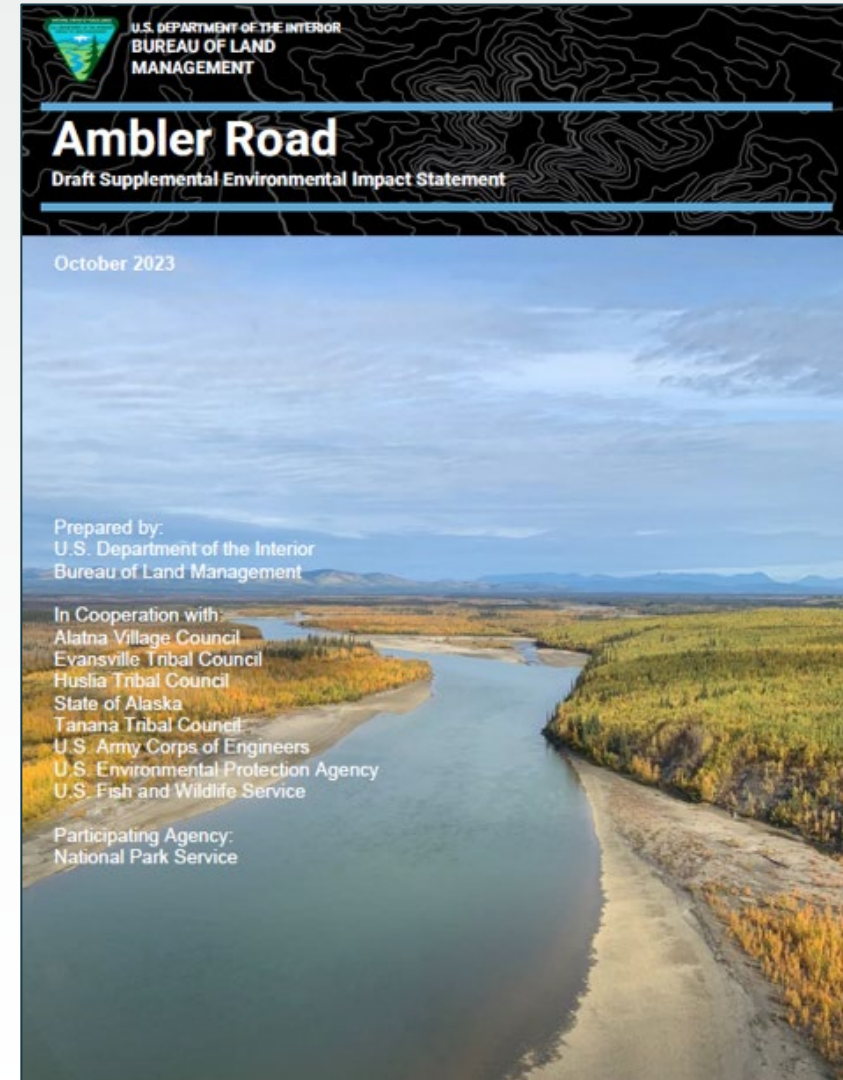
BLM requested court remand

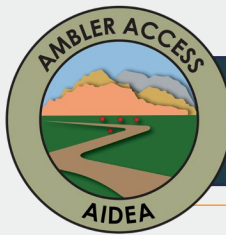
- Response to opposition lawsuits
- 6 months since ROD
- Change in presidential administration and Secretary of Interior

BLM cited the need to reconsider two topics:

- ANILCA Section 810 analysis
- Government-to-government consultation with Tribes

NEPA states a SEIS should be prepared when there is *substantial new information* relevant to environmental concerns that have bearing on the proposed action or its effects.





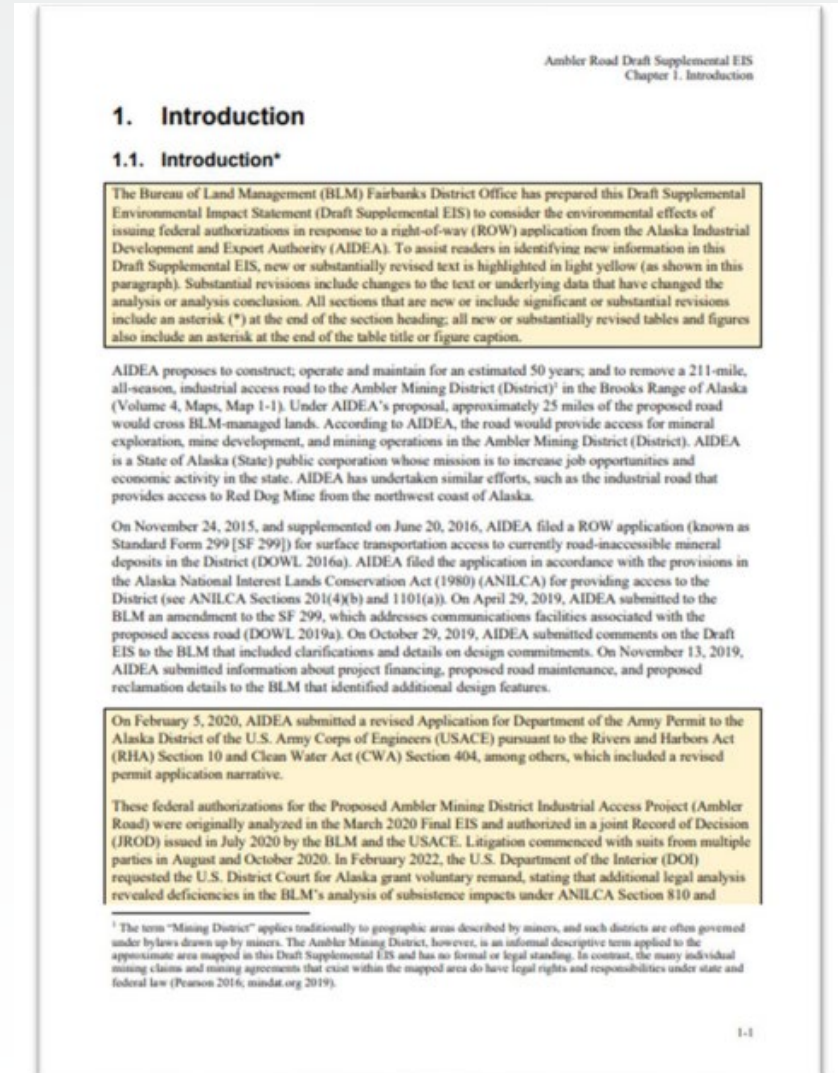
Final and Draft Supplemental EIS Differences

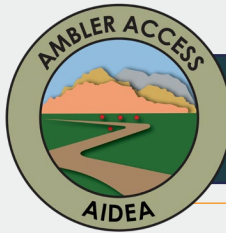
Format

- Includes original analyses
- Added text highlighted in yellow

Content

- Expanded scope of analysis from remand
- Alternatives analysis
- Expanded ANILCA 810 impact geography

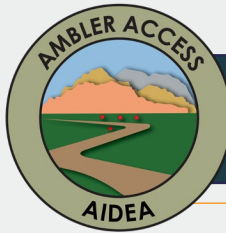




Final and Draft Supplemental EIS Differences

Content: Expanded scope of analysis from remand

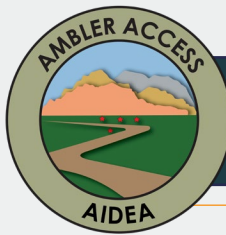
- Remand request **specified deficiencies** with ANILCA Section 810 and NHPA analyses
 - ANILCA Section 810
 - *Potential impacts to subsistence caribou harvest from vegetation (forage) impacts*
 - *Potential impacts to subsistence fish harvest from construction and operation dewatering needs*
 - *New information regarding declines in Yukon River salmon runs and Western Arctic Caribou Herd population: “deteriorating conditions now warrant thorough reconsideration.”*



Final and Draft Supplemental EIS Differences

Content: Expanded scope of analysis from remand

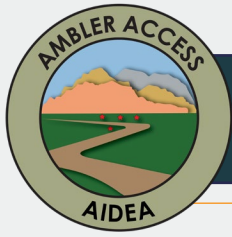
- Remand request **specified deficiencies** with ANILCA Section 810 and NHPA analyses
 - National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Analysis
 - *Programmatic Agreement (PA) developed with Final EIS and included tribes who indicated interest in being involved. Required signatories are Federal agencies and SHPO.*
 - *BLM requested to revisit consultation obligations with sovereign tribal governments and consider if tribes should be invited as PA signatories.*



Final and Draft Supplemental EIS Differences

Content: Expanded scope of analysis from remand

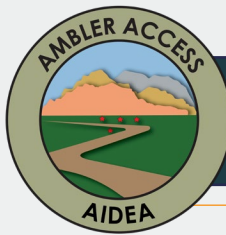
- In addition to remand topics, Draft SEIS re-analyzes:
 - Alternatives analysis
 - Air quality and climate
 - Birds
 - Mammals
 - Transportation and access
 - Environmental justice
 - Socioeconomics and communities
- Updates are also made regarding
 - Reasonably foreseeable future actions
 - Proposed mitigation measures



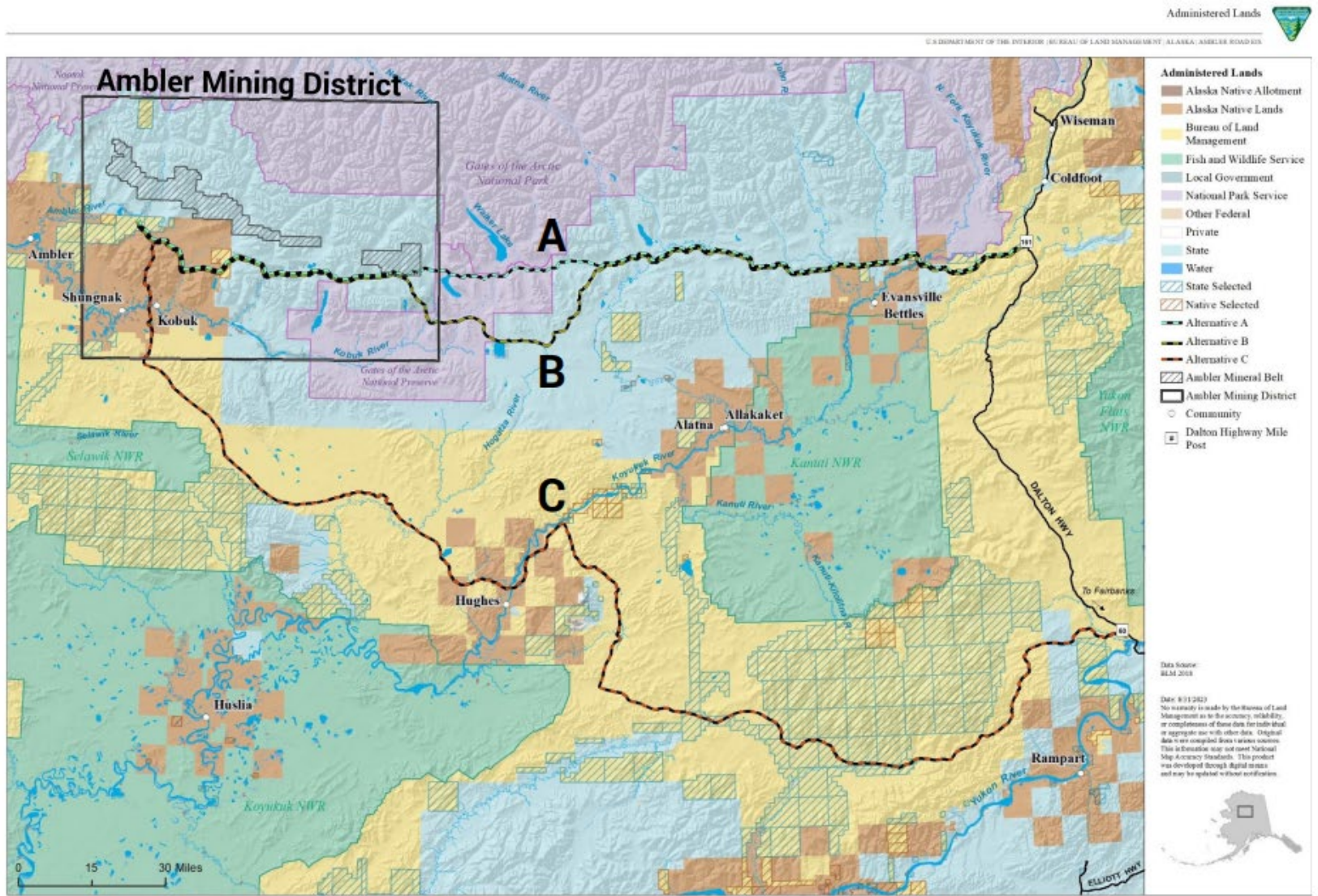
Final and Draft Supplemental EIS Differences

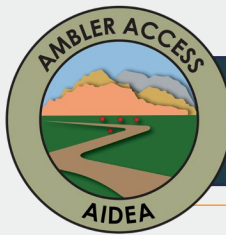
Content: Alternatives Analysis

- Evaluation of Alternative A
 - Chosen by BLM and NPS in the Final EIS and selected by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as the “Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative”
- Evaluation of dismissed alternatives
 - Alternative B: 17 miles longer than A, less NPS land
 - Alternative C: 121 miles longer than A, close to Hughes, Kobuk, and Shungnak
 - Both alternatives were eliminated in earlier analysis due to environmental impacts
 - Alternative analysis not required in Supplemental NEPA process



Final and Draft Supplemental EIS Differences

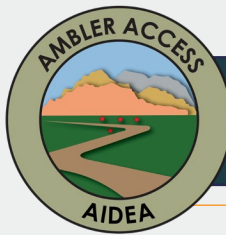




Final and Draft Supplemental EIS Differences

Summary of Alternatives

Component	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C
Road length (miles)	211	228	332
Project footprint (acres)	4,524	5,138	8,210
Anadromous fish stream crossings (approx.)	40	43	270
Bridges	49	41	251
Wetland impacts (acres)	2,079	2,416	3,885
WACH habitat impacts (acres)	4,161	4,775	4,120
Ray Mtn. caribou herd habitat impacts (acres)	0	0	1,964

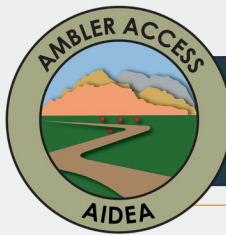


Final and Draft Supplemental EIS Differences

Content: National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Analysis

Document doesn't reflect ongoing activities relative to the Programmatic Agreement, which is the document developed to satisfy NHPA

- AIDEA has held more than 30 public meetings in the region to update the public and solicit questions
- Formation and proceedings of the Subsistence Advisory Committee
- Formation and proceedings of the Workforce Development Working Group
- Employment of regional shareholders through the Tribal Liaison Program to support archaeological surveys



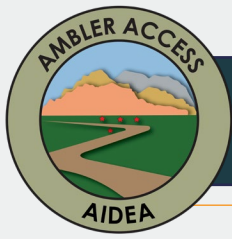
Final and Draft Supplemental EIS Differences

Content: Expanded ANILCA 810 impact geography

- Analysis of potential subsistence impacts expanded to 66 communities from 27
- Cannot distinguish potential road-related impacts to communities from non-road related impacts

*Section 810 Analysis Finding of Significant Restriction to Subsistence Uses
(number of communities)*

Alternative A		Alternative B		Alternative C	
Final EIS	Draft SEIS	Final EIS	Draft SEIS	Final EIS	Draft SEIS
16	29	16	30	12	31

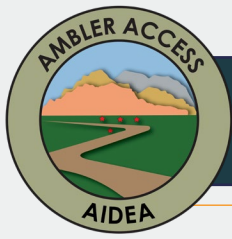


Subsistence Resources in Draft SEIS: Caribou

- Draft SEIS states project will have negative impact on WACH
 - Current literature is inconclusive on cause of declining population
 - Does not address frequency at or time spent in the project corridor
 - Does not address existing arctic roads with minimal impacts to caribou
- Cites only selected literature about caribou behavior around roads, but only those with substantial negative effect
- “Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no reduction in the abundance of harvestable resources used for subsistence purposes.”
 - Does not speculate on future trends regarding population decline or recovery, with or without the project



Photo from: <https://fineartamerica.com/featured/caribou-crossing-kobuk-river-nick-jans.html>

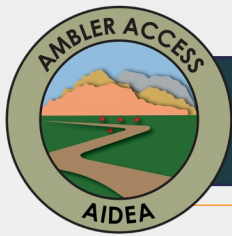


Subsistence resources in Draft SEIS: Fish

- “Alter and degrade fish habitat both upstream and downstream from the road”
- “Bridges and culverts would eliminate and alter fish habitat”
- Does not include 2023 fish count data or AIDEA’s mitigation measures
- Potential for impacts due to sedimentation, water quality, turbidity, temperature, spills, permafrost thaw, and habitat change
- Over-estimates spill frequency and impacts
- RFAs: mine development; increased access impacts
- Design commitments would minimize, but not eliminate, adverse impacts to fish and aquatic habitat
- AIDEA commitment to developing an adaptive management plan for monitoring, maintaining, and repairing road culverts, with plan oversight by the SAC.



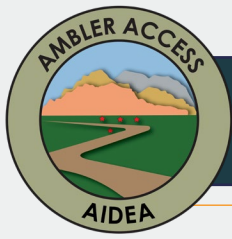
Photo from: <https://alaskamagazine.com/authentic-alaska/food-drink/eskimo-food/>



AIDEA Comments on the Draft SEIS

Comment Topics:

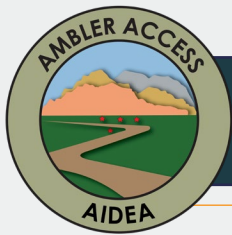
- Assumes road trespass and public use are inevitable and uncontrollable
- Selection of any alternative other than A cancels the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers permit
- Data selectively used for analyses (e.g., caribou-road deflection study)
- Downplays potential for economic impact (e.g., area residents receiving 20% of future mine jobs)
- BLM modifies AIDEA's proposed construction phasing
- Incomplete list of reasonable future actions
- Expands potential subsistence impacts from 27 to 66 communities
- Includes editorial content, not scientific analysis
- Limited or no discussion of potential positive impacts (e.g., economics, health, safety, education)
- States project will impact and “severely restrict access” to subsistence resources without evidence
- Omits potential ANCSA 7(i) cost sharing, access to Roosevelt state mining claims, commercial use by communities, or internet access
- Many topics outside of BLM jurisdiction (reclamation, construction methods)
- Lack of available information since 2020 FEIS (spills, dust abatement, wildlife, seeps)
- Arbitrary expansion of Area of Potential Effect (APE) for cultural resources (should be addressed in PA)



Additional published studies since the Final EIS

Published topics since release of Final EIS:

- Caribou population and movement
- Fish presence, populations, and habitat
- Local and regional economic forecasts and unemployment/underemployment rates
- National security; particularly, reliance on foreign sources of critical minerals
- Dust abatement technologies and application
- Recent forecasts for potential mine developments
- Reasonably foreseeable actions (RFAs), including potential Aktiguruk and Anaaraaq development at Red Dog Mine, Roosevelt claims, and status of Alaska mining projects



Next Steps

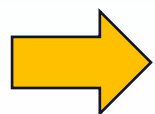
- Review and comment on the Draft SEIS:

www.blm.gov/AmblerRoadEIS

Public meetings in Anchorage Dec. 13
and Alatna Dec. 14

Comment period closes December 22, 2023

- Final SEIS by end of March 2024
- Record of Decision by end June 2024



Assuming the BLM and NPS right-of-way easements are reinstated, back to collecting field data to inform design, minimize impacts, and creating jobs

DECEMBER 2023						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
26	27	28	29	30	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

Questions or Comments



Thank You

www.ambleraccess.org