



# AMBLER ACCESS PROJECT NEWSLETTER



## Working Together to Find Opportunity

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

October 2022

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## AMBLER ACCESS PROJECT UPDATE

Tribes and communities across northwest Alaska have always shown tremendous resilience, and this time is no different.

Amid the current climate of economic uncertainty and skyrocketing costs of living, the people of the NANA and Doyon regions have remained highly engaged with our project team to advance greater economic security for their home villages and for all of Alaska.

In August, the Bureau of Land Management issued a conditional approval of AIDEA's 2022 Fieldwork Annual Work Plan.

While the Ambler Access Project has made significant strides in the closing weeks of summer, delays by the federal government created an environment of confusion and significantly shortened the project's 2022 field season, which slowed rural Alaskans' advancement towards new opportunity.

These delays have already impacted communities. The BLM's decision directly took money from the pockets of workers in the NANA and Doyon regions. Although the project originally intended to employ approximately 60 community members this summer, the limited and shortened field season meant we have only been able to employ 26 seasonal field workers. Additionally, due to the federal government's constant changes in direction for the project, many Alaska contractors lost the opportunity to complete this summer's originally planned work.

Despite the difficulties, community leaders and members of the project team have continued to strive forward to advance the limited field seasons activities.



Ron Cooke, Logistics Manager; Jessica Brown, Administrative Assistant; Craig Jones, Deputy Program Manager stand in front of a map of the project area in the AAP Fairbanks office.

Most importantly, we continue to work hand-in-hand with community members and leaders throughout the project area to ensure we responsibly develop the AAP with the utmost care for subsistence and cultural resources.

In this newsletter, you'll find additional information on some of the project's most important ongoing initiatives, including our Subsistence Advisory Committee (SAC), community visits, and project fieldwork.

With a broad base of support from communities across the project area, we will continue to advance Alaska's economic interests and preserve the rural Alaskan way of life.

Pressing forward for Alaskans,

Jeff San Juan

Interim Program Manager, Ambler Access Project



A map of the proposed route helps with visualization at the SAC meeting in Kotzebue.

## 2022 FIELD SEASON RECAP

October brings to a close the shortened 2022 Ambler Access Project field season. Cultural resources teams have been busy surveying potential sites for potential resources of cultural, spiritual, and/or religious importance. From Bornite on the east and Coldfoot on the west, teams have been out preparing helicopter landing zones to provide access to lands along the proposed project route.

A total of 26 Alaska Native shareholders were hired for summer fieldwork including Tribal Liaisons, Archaeological Technicians, landing zone clearing crews, and Bear Guards. Delays in permitting of fieldwork resulted in less work performed this summer and fewer local hires than anticipated. However, the permits that were issued are valid through 2023, so the project team anticipates a more robust field season next year.

Field teams left Bornite on September 24<sup>th</sup> and Coldfoot on October 2<sup>nd</sup>.



## BLM SUPPLEMENTAL EIS ANNOUNCEMENT

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has announced it will initiate a public scoping period which will shape the development of its Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the Ambler Access Project. The 45-day scoping period is from September 20 to November 4, 2022.

AIDEA's project leadership is encouraging everyone to contact the BLM and submit their comments during this timeframe. One important item to submit during this comment period is to request to BLM to maintain a very focused scope for the SEIS. While the Department of Justice (DOJ) and Department of Interior (DOI) have already found almost all portions of the original EIS to be sufficient to defend the agencies' decisions, there were two narrow portions of the original EIS which were deemed deficient: 1) ANILCA Section 810 Analysis and 2) National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). In order to avoid a costly, open-ended rehashing of the original EIS, we are

encouraging the BLM to limit the SEIS scope to those two specific items.

You have an opportunity to share your thoughts with BLM during this public scoping period.

All comments must be received prior to Nov. 4, 2022. They can be submitted to BLM using the contact information below:

- Email - [BLM\\_AK\\_AKSO\\_AmblerRoad\\_Comments@blm.gov](mailto:BLM_AK_AKSO_AmblerRoad_Comments@blm.gov)
- The BLM ePlanning website - <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/57323/510>
- Fax - (907) 271-5479
- Mail - BLM Alaska State Office, ATTN: Ambler Road Scoping Comments, 222 W. 7th Ave. Stop #13, Anchorage, AK 99513.

## THIRD QUARTER SAC MEETING FOCUSES ON STUDIES

The SAC met in Anchorage on August 16, 2022, for its scheduled quarterly meeting. This was the first meeting where each village had a member present. “This is important. We need to hear from representatives from each of the villages close to the project,” stated Larry Westlake, Sr., Co-Chair (Kiana). Co-Chair Fred Bifelt added, “I am glad to see everyone here. Subsistence is important to all of us, and we need to put issues on the table and have good discussions. I look forward to the dialog.”

Anna Kohl, who leads the Environmental and Permitting team for the project, presented studies on subsistence that were previously conducted. The findings are important to project decision-making. “The concerns you [the SAC] are providing on predators and the low moose population are reflected in some of these studies,” stated Kohl. “I am here to listen to concerns and recommendations for accessing subsistence along the road corridor. There will be additional studies developed to inform the road design and construction. I will seek your input early in the development of these studies.”

A comprehensive list of references contained within the Environmental Impact Study (EIS) for the AAP was provided as a handout. These documents were

part of the EIS and help to lay a foundation for the SAC in understanding what research has been done for the AAP. The studies can be found using this link: <https://ambleraccess.org/Community-Engagement/Subsistence-Advisory-Committee>.

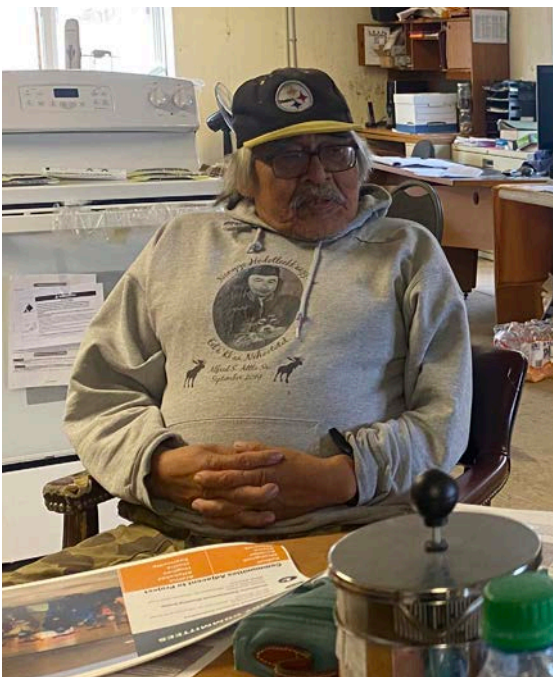
The next meeting of the SAC will be on December 6, 2022, in Fairbanks. Alaska Fish and Game Commissioner, Doug Vincent-Lang, has accepted the invitation to attend this meeting and present to the group. The meeting location will be announced on the website once it has been reserved.

Comprehensive maps for the proposed project can be found at <https://ambleraccess.org/About/Map>. These maps are used extensively during the SAC meetings as areas of potential impact are discussed.

Meetings of the SAC for the remainder of 2022 were approved. All information for meetings are available on the Ambler Access Project website <https://ambleraccess.org/Community-Engagement/Calendar>. Posted information includes notification of meetings, agendas, approved minutes, and support documents.

For more information, contact Kathy Mayo at [info@ambleraccess.org](mailto:info@ambleraccess.org).

## TEAM LEARNS FROM COMMUNITY IN ALLAKAKET



Stakeholder Outreach Coordinator, Kathy Mayo, visited Allakaket on September 1, 2022. She met with First Chief Lawrence Williams, tribal council members, and community members. “Each time we come to the community, we learn. It was good to better understand areas of traditional subsistence use and fish habitat,” stated Mayo. Concerns were also heard about the increasing number of planes flying in the region. “This is a special place to people. We looked at areas of traditional use, up the Alatna River and south of Allakaket.”

Community visits are important to the project because they are an opportunity to listen to concerns, share information, and learn.

Left: Vincent Bergman,  
Allakaket Community Member

# AMBLER ACCESS PROJECT FACTS



A road permitted as an industrial access road can't be legally changed to a public road without a whole new permitting process.

Road construction is being planned for 2026 at the earliest and is dependent upon permitting and a final investment decision which is a minimum of 3+ years away.

Field data collection and input from the Subsistence Advisory Committee and other stakeholders over the next few years will allow the AAP to refine the design to further protect the environment and subsistence resources.

## PROJECT TIMELINE

In 1980, President Jimmy Carter signed the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) into law. Commonly referred to as “The Great Compromise,” ANILCA sought to balance the state’s natural resource-based economy with environmental protection and preserve Alaskans’ unique ways of life. Access to and from the Ambler Mining District for resource development is guaranteed in Section 201(4) of ANILCA. Route evaluation began in 2009, and an Environmental Impact Statement was developed between 2015 and 2020. We are still in the pre-construction phase of the project, with a lot of investigation, studies, and public involvement going on before any construction will begin.

## OVERALL PROJECT SCHEDULE



Schedule Subject to Change

## 2022-2023 PROJECT SCHEDULE



Schedule Subject to Change



Ambler Access Project  
AIDEA  
701 Bidwell Ave, Suite 406  
Fairbanks, AK 99701

## EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT: MIKE ANDON, BEAR GUARD

Wildlife poses a potential hazard to field crews throughout the Ambler Access Project area. There are also many other seasonal hazards present, including mud bogs, thin or open ice, challenging terrain, and extremely cold temperatures.

Bear guards use their knowledge of the local area to help crews stay safe. They help them avoid wildlife and other hazards, while also taking a lead role in emergency preparedness and response.

Mike Andon, from Tanana, shares his experience as a bear guard.

*Have you worked as a bear guard before?*

No

*What training did you receive to get ready for fieldwork?*

Mandatory training: Wilderness Safety Specialist First Aid Training, Pump Action Shot Gun Training for Bear Guards, and HSE (health, safety, environment) Training

*Why did you choose this position?*

I love the outdoors and wanted to continue working.

*What advice would you give someone considering this job?*

Keep up with your certifications (listed above) and be able to pass a background check. It's a great job with great wages and great opportunities.

*Do you have anything you'd like to add about the project, the team, or this job?*

I'd like to see younger men and women getting work. It's a great opportunity, especially if you like the outdoors.

More information about bear guards and other employment opportunities can be found at [ambleraccess.org/Employment-Info](http://ambleraccess.org/Employment-Info).



Right: Rocky Riley and Mike Andon