



AMBLER ACCESS PROJECT

NEWSLETTER



Second Chief Gordon Bergman of Allakaket speaks on the importance of sustainable jobs in the region.

Fourth Quarter 2023 | December 2023

SUCCESSFUL ALLAKAKET SEIS HEARING

"In Allakaket, we have 67 adults without jobs; additionally, 17 households lack snowmachines, and 14 households don't have four-wheelers, which are essential for fetching water, wood, and groceries. These households rely on others for their needs, especially when obtaining subsistence resources, sometimes requiring long journeys. The cost of gas is over \$11 a gallon," stated Gordon Bergman, Second Chief of Allakaket. He went on to emphasize, ***"It takes cash. It takes jobs. Our community needs these jobs to improve our way of life. Mining, our natural environment, and clean water can coexist. It's not an either/or situation. We, the Allakaket Tribe and the people of Allakaket, must be at the table and part of the discussion."***

Representatives from the BLM were present in Allakaket on November 14, to hear commentary on the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (D-SEIS). Several road opponents, many from Fairbanks with roots in the region, also came to the meeting. "You don't live here," Second Chief Bergman pointed out, "and our needs here are great. Our job [as leaders] is not easy. We [the Tribal Council] analyze information and carefully weigh our options. ***For Allakaket to change and prosper, we need jobs. That is the path to wellness."***

Comments from these public meetings will be documented and incorporated into the Final SEIS that BLM anticipates publishing next year.

2 In Memoriam:
Honoring the Legacy of Wilmer Beetus

3 Alaskans Submit
Comments in Support of AAP

3 Committees Pass
Important Resolutions

4 Listening to Stakeholders
in the NANA Region

4 Successful 2023 Summer
Field Season

5 The Ambler Road: Meeting
Our Needs while Preserving
Our Ideals

6 Stakeholder Highlight:
Residents Speak Out for
Jobs and Opportunities

Be among the first to know what's happening with the AAP. Sign up for project updates at: info@ambleraccess.com. Updates emailed directly to your inbox.

Take Action: <http://pathtoopportunity.org>

IN MEMORIAM: HONORING THE LEGACY OF WILMER BEETUS



Mayor and First Chief Wilmer Beetus of Hughes, Alaska will be deeply missed.

Photo by Joseph Barranco

It is with heavy hearts that we remember and pay tribute to former Mayor and First Chief Wilmer Beetus. Wilmer was a remarkable leader and tireless advocate for Hughes, representing the community as its member on the AAP Subsistence Advisory Committee (SAC) and Workforce Development Working Group (WDWG). Wilmer's mark on the community is significant; he spearheaded numerous projects to improve the quality of life and provide economic opportunities.

One of his most recent efforts was this year's Sunnyvale Road project, providing a new road to the community cemetery. This project not only created a road but also offered job opportunities and training to young people from Hughes, Huslia, and Allakaket.

Many team members from this project are now prepared and eager for future similar road and heavy equipment job opportunities, including those that may arise from the AAP.

Mayor Beetus's legacy should inspire us all to work together for the betterment of our shared home, Alaska. While we mourn his loss, we also celebrate his life and the lasting impact he had on the people and places he held dear. As we continue the work of the AAP, we do so with the memory of Chief Beetus as a guiding light, reminding us of the difference one person can make when they devote themselves to the betterment of their community and the well-being of their neighbors.

Wilmer Beetus and the Hughes Sunnyvale Road crew.



Take Action: <http://pathtoopportunity.org>

ALASKANS SUBMIT COMMENTS IN SUPPORT OF AAP

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) recently published the AAP D-SEIS. The document is intended to address the rationale for the 2021 suspension of the right-of-way and the on-going lawsuits against the 2020 EIS and record of decision (ROD). Numerous groups, including AIDEA, believe that it falls short in meeting these goals; its deficiencies include:

- It only considers caribou studies that identify potential impacts of roads upon migration or animal behavior without considering studies that indicate minimal impacts; this includes the many herds in Alaska that co-exist with roads.
- It speculates about impacts to caribou or fish from the road where these may be impossible to discern from ongoing climate change or herd/fishery harvest practices.
- It inaccurately calculates potential spills and their severity, and doesn't recognize the numerous measures that AIDEA and Ambler Metals have agreed to implement for reducing these risks (many are adapted from proven approaches used at Red Dog Mine).
- It under-represents the many benefits that the road and potential mines may provide, including revenues to the communities (like the Red Dog



Hundreds of caribou cross the Dalton Highway.

funded Village Improvement Fund) and job opportunities for residents of the region. It also under-represents the current unemployment and out-migration that many communities are experiencing due to a lack of opportunity.

The D-SEIS is currently open for review, and the AAP encourages everyone to read the document and submit comments. It is also important for the BLM to hear from individuals who support the project and how crucial it is for the region. The BLM is accepting comments through December 22, 2023. Please let your voice be heard – comments can be submitted through <http://pathtoopportunity.org>.



COMMITTEES PASS IMPORTANT RESOLUTIONS

In August, the AAP SAC and WDWG held their quarterly meetings in Allakaket, providing the committee members and AIDEA leadership an opportunity to visit the community and learn about its many needs. The participants also toured the nearby village of Alatna and held a community meeting to



SAC Member, Henry Horner, discusses the issues with Allakaket Elder, Harold Davis.

provide updates on the project and hear questions and provide answers. Some of the input received from community members are provided through the videos linked on the <http://ambleraccess.org> website.

On December 6-7, the SAC and WDWG met in Fairbanks to learn about the D-SEIS and discuss ongoing project issues. Each committee passed resolutions encouraging the BLM to expeditiously complete the SEIS process. The WDWG resolution expressed concern about how the D-SEIS and the uncertainty it gives to the project have caused a pullback in spending from AIDEA and the mining companies that will reduce future job opportunities. The resolutions are available on the AAP website.

The next SAC meeting will be held in Anchorage in February 2024.

Take Action: <http://pathtoopportunity.org>

LISTENING TO STAKEHOLDERS IN THE NANA REGION

Craig Jones, AAP Deputy Program Manager, originally from Ambler, and Kathy Mayo, Stakeholder Outreach Coordinator, recently visited several communities, including Kiana, Ambler, Shungnak, and Kotzebue.

During an AAP Informational Meeting in Shungnak in November, a notable turnout of over 20 community members gathered to hear from the BLM about the D-SEIS. These community members voiced their strong support for Alternative A, which was the alter-native recommended in the original EIS. Prior to the community meeting, the Shungnak Tribal Council engaged in a productive dialogue with Jones and Mayo.

The Ambler Tribal Council also had a meeting in November with AAP representatives, where they expressed their support for the project. Miles Cleveland, IRA President, led discussions within the Tribal



Larry Westlake of Kiana, WDWG Co-Chair, and Andy Baker, WDWG member.

Council, focusing on the project’s potential benefits, including job creation, economic growth, and the use of the private road for transporting heavy goods and materials, such as fuel and construction supplies, similar to how the North Slope communities use winter roads and private oilfield roads.

SUCCESSFUL 2023 SUMMER FIELD SEASON



H&H team operating out of Bornite included project area residents or shareholders Aaron Towarak, Cody Edwards, and Vincent Simon.

The AAP had a very busy summer 2023 field season, clearing 62 landing zones, performing hydrology and hydraulic (H&H) studies on 202 creeks and rivers, surveying many of these rivers, continuing the archaeology surveys, conducting engineering reconnaissance, and identifying fish habitat and spawning areas at 154 creeks/rivers. The project supported 151 field season jobs that included 53 local residents and shareholders, including the 8 Tribal Liaisons from communities in the region. It is important to note that the teams logged more than 2,000 person days of fieldwork with no safety incidents. The data gathered from this past summer will help inform the project design, ensuring that it is sustainable and meets permit requirements.

THE AMBLER ROAD: MEETING OUR NEEDS WHILE PRESERVING OUR IDEALS



Reprinted from: https://www.newsminer.com/opinion/editorials/the-ambler-road-meeting-our-needs-while-preserving-ourideals/article_fd22be30-8986-11ee-b293-a358cde7504b.html

Nov 26, 2023

News-Miner opinion:

By the time we reach adulthood most of us are aware of certain truths. For instance, most of us know that life is not always fair, good does not always triumph over evil, and the world does not owe us a living. Most of us are also aware that facts are not always compatible with our ideals, and our wants are not always compatible with our needs.

Alaskans are intimately acquainted with this concept. Yes, we all want our unspoiled wilderness to remain just that: unspoiled. We want to enjoy our abundant recreational opportunities, we want our wildlife to be healthy and plentiful, we want to stay connected to the rest of the world but also safe from predation by unfriendly foreign powers.

However, we also need certain things. We need our state to be financially solvent, we need to provide jobs and opportunity to isolated communities, and we need to do our part in helping the U.S. achieve energy independence and to maintain national security. Failure to fulfill these needs will result in the inability to achieve our wants.

Now we get to the place where the rubber meets the road, or, more specifically, the Ambler Road.

Opponents of the proposed 211-mile project say it would destroy fragile ecosystems, endanger wildlife and wreak havoc on nearby communities. They also say the road is not needed and its risks far outweigh its benefits.

We disagree.

The fact is, the United States needs these resources. Alaska has them. The trick is to get to them. The Ambler Road, which will run west from the Dalton Highway to the Ambler Mining District, will provide

access to rare earth minerals that are used in renewable energy projects and which are vital to national defense systems. The road's construction and subsequent mining operations will bring much-needed jobs to rural Alaskans. The resulting all-season industrial road, though not open to the public, will also help connect these rural communities to the rest of the state.

Speaking of connections, another indisputable fact is that Alaska is sadly lacking when it comes to our road system. Alaska is a whopping one-fifth the size of the contiguous United States yet it contains a paltry 14,336 miles of public roads, 1,082 of which are interstate highways. By contrast, the Lower 48 contains more than 47,000 miles of interstate highways. There are reasons for this, of course. Alaska's geography, vast size, weather extremes and often unstable ground conditions make road building problematic and expensive, but not impossible. In the case of the Ambler Road, the project would be funded by private loans and owned by two entities — Ambler Metals LLC and the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority. The creation of 211 miles of roadway in a previously isolated region, at no cost to the state or its residents, can only be seen as a positive development.

It's also worth noting that right-of-way across federal lands for the Ambler Road project is guaranteed in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, which Congress signed into law in 1980. This guarantee was granted in exchange for locking up so much of the other mineralized areas of Alaska into parks and refuges.

The permitting process for the road began in 2015 and has included two environmental impact statements, more than 40 public meetings, 24,000 public comments, and a review by the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. How much more do we need?

The fact is, if Alaska is to prosper then development must happen, and thanks to modern environmental policies we can ensure that this happens in a responsible manner. We can set the pace, and we can meet our needs while still preserving our ideals.

Take Action: <http://pathtoopportunity.org>



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

STAKEHOLDER HIGHLIGHT: RESIDENTS SPEAK OUT FOR JOBS AND OPPORTUNITIES



Elisa Bergman, Allakaket resident, spoke about her vision for the village.

To see Elisa's full statement and watch additional videos featuring project area residents who recognize the urgent need for a healthy economy to stem out-migration, please visit ambleraccess.org. You can keep up to date on the project by following us on Facebook or Instagram.



<https://www.facebook.com/AmblerAccessProject>



https://www.instagram.com/ambler_access_project

Take Action: <http://pathtoopportunity.org>