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Mr. Matthew Reece
Minerals Program Manager
Tongass National Forest
8510 Mendenhall Loop Road
Juneau, AK 99801

December 10, 2020
Service Sent via Email

Dear Mr. Reece,

We, the undersigned Haines-based organizations formally request an additional virtual public meeting on the proposed Kensington Mine expansion, due to the ongoing natural disasters occurring in the Chilkat Valley that will interfere with residents' ability taking part in the December 10th meeting. We are also requesting a thirty day extension to the public comment period, in light of our need to prioritize community disaster response and recovery at this time. It is important for Chilkat Valley residents who will be impacted by proposed changes to be afforded reasonable opportunities to learn about the proposal in a public meeting, where they can ask questions in order to prepare substantive public comments under the National Environmental Policy Act. This expansion is both a matter of public interest, and a controversial issue.

On December 2nd, 2020, unprecedented rainfall fell on already frozen ground and several inches of snow in the Chilkat Valley, resulting in severe floods and multiple landslides that have damaged and destroyed homes, and left two residents missing. Additional storms continued over the course of a week, resulting in numerous ongoing slides and evacuations. While the precipitation has let up, the risk of landslides remains imminent, and many residents are still evacuated from their homes, or on notice to be prepared to evacuate. Additional areas of concern were added as recently as December 8th. Governor Dunleavy has signed a disaster declaration.

We appreciate the Forest Service setting up a virtual public meeting on December 10th. Chilkat Valley residents will be unable to attend the meeting, as it conflicts with a Haines Town Hall meeting on the ongoing disaster and recovery. Therefore, we request an additional virtual public meeting at a later date. With many residents evacuated, the community experiencing collective grief and ongoing trauma, and the entire community involved in recovery response, we request a thirty day extension to the public comment period, considering our extenuating circumstances.

Thank you for considering the interests of Chilkat Valley residents.

Sincerely,

Shannon Donahue
Executive Director
Great Bear Foundation

Jessica Plachta
Executive Director
Lynn Canal Conservation

Derek Poinsette
Executive Director
Takshanuk Watershed
Council