

December 28th, 2020

Earl Stewart, Forest Supervisor, US Forest Service
Matthew Reece, Project Manager
Juneau Ranger District
8510 Mendenhall Loop Road
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Dear Messrs. Stewart and Reece,

I am writing to you as a lifelong Alaskan (1959) that remembers when Juneau did not have a mining economy and knows first-hand what a wealth of beneficial benefits that Coeur Alaska Kensington Mine has brought to our community. The road has not been easy for Coeur Alaska in that they were required and succeeded at the US Supreme Court to obtain the permit and ability to use a wet tailings storage facility at Lower Slate Lake. Now Coeur Alaska is looking to extend that mine life for another decade with an expansion of their now tried and proven wet tailings in an expanded Slate Lake. I support this Plan of Amendment #1 because it uses a tried and proven tailings storage method and is consistent with the USFS Tongass National Forest Management Plan.

I understand that many wet tailing detractors are either intentionally disingenuous or unintentionally misinformed as the form letter commenters have attempted to compare the Kensington Mine expansion of the Slate Lake tailings dam with Mount Polley impoundment breach. Some commenters have gone so far as to inaccurately misstate the conclusions found in the *Report on Mount Polley Tailings Storage Facility Breach* which the investigating Panel concluded: “the dominant contribution to the failure resides in the design” and poor engineering.¹ Conversely, the Kensington Tailings dam is well-engineered, well-constructed, and built to standards that will last indefinitely. The dam has gone through rigorous state reviews and approvals with the most recent review occurring post-Mount Polley breach and which incorporated the learnings from that dam failure. I ask the Forest Service to stick with the facts, the State of Alaska approved engineering, and the conclusions of the esteemed Canadian Panel.

Additionally, POA 1 is enhancing and increasing Dolly Varden spawning access and will improve fish passage. These measures help maintain and improve fish populations and seem that POA 1 is the alternative that most harmonizes with nature but is also the most practicable alternative.

Lastly, the social, cultural, and economic benefits of the mine life expansion cannot be more important to our community that’s economy have been ravaged by Covid 19 and the decline of our once robust tourism industry. The Kensington Mine employs over 375 full-time employees

¹ Report on Mount Polley Tailings Storage Facility Breach, page 135 Conclusions.
<https://www.mountpolleyreviewpanel.ca/final-report>

with a direct payroll contribution of over \$55M locally, but there are hundreds of ancillary and second and third-order jobs indirectly attributed to the Kensington Mine. This is a “shovel ready” project that should be approved and implemented promptly. Kensington is generous to local charities and community causes. Recently Coeur Alaska provided a \$300,000 endowment to the University of Alaska for its Environmental Sciences Program.² The Kensington Mine has also been the leading contributor to the Juneau School District reading program. It is sufficient to state that Coeur Alaska has been a responsible, reliable, and trustworthy community partner and that the US Forest Service give great weight and counsel to the proposed POA 1 as the most responsible and practicable alternative that comports to the Tongass Land Management Plan so that Coeur Alaska can provide another 10 years of service to the community, to our economy, to our schools, but that also POA 1 responsibly utilizes the forest in its multi-purpose role and nature as intended by statutes.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Scott Spickler

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<https://www.kinyradio.com/news/news-of-the-north/coeur-alaska-donates-300000-to-environmental-science-endowment-at-uas/>