



Greater Juneau Chamber of Commerce

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December 29, 2020

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

Submitted electronically to U.S. Forest
Service: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=55533>

Subject: Kensington Mine Plan of Operation Amendment (POA 1)

Dear Mr. Reece,

The Greater Juneau Chamber of Commerce is providing the following comments to the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) in response to the agency's Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS) written to evaluate Coeur Alaska, Inc.'s (Coeur Alaska) Plan of Operations Amendment 1 (POA 1) for the Kensington Mine.

The Juneau Chamber of Commerce represents 300 businesses, organizations, agencies and individuals and devote our time and resources to protecting the health of the local business economy. Juneau, like every other community around the globe, has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, as a major cruise ship destination port, the direct impact was severe, losing nearly 1/3 of our economy when the ships stop sailing. The importance to our economy from a stable, reliable mining operation can't be overstated. Approval of POA 1, in an expedited manner, will help reduce the economic uncertainty for both the public and private sectors.

Coeur Alaska's mine life extension under POA 1 would directly employ 359 year-round jobs in Juneau with average monthly wages more than double the Juneau average (DSEIS pg. 3-98). In addition, POA 1 would indirectly create or induce an additional 321 jobs in Juneau (DSEIS pg. 3-103). The Kensington Mine is the second highest taxpayer in Juneau (DSEIS pg. 3-101), contributing more than \$1.4M in property tax, which in turn helps support local government jobs and services.

Coeur Alaska supports and enhances our communities in Juneau and Southeast Alaska through its trained and highly skilled workforce who come to Coeur with training and skills and/or learn and develop important skills through Coeur's training program. These workers then apply their knowledge and skills for the benefit of others in their communities during their time off from work. Approval of POA 1 is the best way for our communities to continue benefitting from a valuable aspect of community support that often goes unnoticed and unevaluated in an agency's project review.

Coeur Alaska is an active participant in the Juneau and Southeast Alaska community as demonstrated by the relationships they have built with non-profits and community groups that support minority and/or low-income residents and developmental activities for the area's youth. Coeur Alaska has made a positive difference for Juneau and Southeast Alaska residents and strives to improve their social situation, economic standing, and overall wellness. Coeur Alaska's charitable donation program supports areas where there are pressing community needs. Approving POA 1 will allow Coeur Alaska to remain a valuable member of our community.

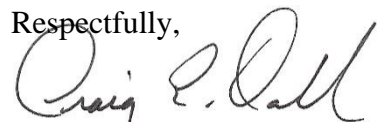
If the USFS rejects POA 1, the resulting detrimental economic effects on property values within the City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ) would be substantial. Currently, the Kensington Mine supports property values both through property tax payments from the mine itself as well as supporting homeownership rates through local jobs that pay a living wage. Mine closure could result in a lower assessment value and lead to a loss of property tax revenue to the CBJ and the loss of local jobs, in turn affecting homeownership for as many as 165 households.

We encourage the USFS to move rapidly to finalize the SEIS and reach a Record of Decision that approves POA 1. Acting in this matter is justified due to the Draft SEIS's analysis of the POA 1 which clearly and reasonably demonstrates Coeur Alaska's Life of Mine Extension will not have significant adverse effects on the human environment. Furthermore, the Draft SEIS analysis also demonstrates that POA 1 is consistent with the Tongass National Forest's Forest Plan. For these reasons, POA 1 should be promptly approved by the USFS.

We watched the Kensington Gold Mine and our other mine Hecla Greens Creek, quickly step up and put COVID protocols in place to allow them to continue operations, and in turn continue employing the people raising families and supporting our economy. I have been working directly with Kensington officials for many years, I serve on the community advisory board and have toured the facility on several occasions to observe their practices and standards. I have great respect for their commitment to safety, the environment and to our community.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment. If you have a need to discuss our comments with us, we will be happy to do so.

Respectfully,



Craig E. Dahl, Executive Director
Greater Juneau Chamber of Commerce