

Angoon Community Association

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Angoon Community Association Resolution # 2023-004

Title: Hawk Inlet Hecla Mine Resolution

WHEREAS, Angoon Community Association (ACA) is the Federally Recognized Tribal Government of Angoon and entitled to engage in government-to-government consultations and negotiations with the Federal and State Governments on behalf of our Tribal Members; and

WHEREAS, the Alaska National Interest Lands Act (ANILCA) authorized the Greens Creek mine to operate within and adjacent to Admiralty Island National Monument, until the year 2095 with the condition, among others, that the mine will not cause irreparable harm to the pre mining values of the National Monument; and

WHEREAS, ANILCA identifies the Preservation of traditional culture and subsistence as a key value in designating the Monument; and

WHEREAS, subsistence is a cornerstone of Tlingit culture embracing education of youth, sharing food to honor elders and return favors, and fueling our cultural obligations; and

WHEREAS, an ancient midden in Hawk Inlet was dated over 4,000 years old is evidence of our long and complex culture that is tied to the land and sea; and

WHEREAS, a new study released by Friends of Admiralty proves that the dramatic increase in lead toxins in Hawk Inlet is the result of fugitive dust from the mine's tailings pile; and

WHEREAS, other studies by Friends of Admiralty demonstrated that a suite of other toxic metals in the tailings, including copper, cadmium, mercury, zinc, and silver have also entered the Hawk Inlet food chain; and

WHEREAS, Tributary Creek in Hawk Inlet has been declared a polluted waterbody, due to increased lead from the mine tailings; and

WHEREAS, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has consistently published the opinion and that opinion has been accepted by the Forest Service that the increasing toxins found in Hawk Inlet are not mine related, but the result of the naturally high background metals entering the ecosystems; and

WHEREAS, in 2015 an Angoon hunter killed, distributed in Angoon, and consumed a Hawk Inlet seal that later tested to have one of the highest amounts of mercury ever recorded in Alaska in its liver; and

WHEREAS, DEC reported in a public meeting, without citing scientific sources that the mercury accumulated in that seal resulted from airborne toxins from coal-fired plants in China and no further effort was made to determine the source or other impacted marine mammals; and

WHEREAS, in response to the toxic seal, then ACA President Wally Frank advised Tribal Citizens not to collect subsistence food from an area north of Parker Point including Hawk Inlet because of unknown threats to their health; and

WHEREAS, losing some 60 miles of Admiralty shoreline from the subsistence opportunities violates ANILCA and constitutes a “taking” from a sovereign indigenous nation; and

WHEREAS, in the 2013 FS Record of Decision on the Tailing’s Expansion EIS, Tongass Forest Supervisor Forrest Cole cited the lack of knowledge on tailings alternatives and impacts had forced him to make a short-term decision, not the 30–50-year decision the mine requested stating the need for more information and stakeholder consultation to enable his successor to make an informed decision; and

WHEREAS, in the ten years since the 2013 ROD the Tribe has not been consulted on Supervisor Cole’s recommendations and we are not aware of any effort by the Forest Service to attain the needed information; and

WHEREAS, the mine is now in the process of seeking another decision on expanding the tailings pile and creating the potential for further harm; and

WHEREAS, the Tribal Members of Angoon have and will continue to suffer physical harm due to tailing toxins polluting our traditional food, exposure to toxins by our food gatherers and also cultural harm in limiting the continuous opportunities for expressing and teaching of our culture.

WHEREAS, We have great concerns that after the mine is closed Angoon will continue to suffer loss of subsistence due to tailings pollution. Hecla Greens Creek and the Forest Service have promised us a plan for reclaiming the mine and milling sites. This plan we have not seen. We have depended on Admiralty Island for thousands of years and for our culture to survive. In the future we require healthy areas for food gathering; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT ANGOON COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION DEEMS IT ESSENTIAL THAT THE RESPONSIBLE AGENCIES AND HECLA GREENS CREEK:

1. Declare the Green Creek tailings as “irreparable harm” to the health and well-being of our Indigenous People of the Island – Monument Values and require the necessary steps and studies to remediate this harm before approving tailings expansion.
2. Compensate the Indigenous People of the Island for loss of traditional subsistence and cultural values due to Green Creek mine operations in a manner prescribed by the Tribe.
3. Delay the EIS process in order to determine the mine’s effect on the health of the Hawk Inlet ecosystems by replicating the original population and species diversity study, testing anew for the original 11 metals in the baseline tissue, sediment and water studies, conducting a terrestrial and marine contaminate uptake analysis to the highest trophic levels and comparing with baseline concentrations in eagle, bear and deer. Also to delineate the extent of fugitive dust contamination in the Monument and Kootsnoowoo Wilderness Area by repeating the 1993 lichen study out to the full extent of measured effects prior to issuing any new permits for tailings expansion.
4. Determine and require prevention of the pathways by which mine toxins enter the marine, aquatic fresh water and upland ecosystems.
5. Evaluate how the 1989 spill of lead ore concentrate in front of the mine and continuous releases of fugitive dust from the tailings pile affects the Hawk Inlet food chain and terrestrial wildlife. This is necessary as a first step toward developing a mitigation and removal plan.
6. Develop a monitoring plan that can accurately determine the rate and pathways of toxins to higher trophic consumers, including humans.
7. Request the state of Alaska to declare the entirety of Hawk Inlet as an “Impaired Water Body” under applicable law.
8. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Hecla Mining and the Forest Service provide whatever means necessary to build ACA’s capacity to be a full participating partner in the monitoring and evaluation of the mine’s activities.

Adopted, this 23 day of April 2023, by the Angoon Community Association by a vote of ___ yeas, ___ Nays.

Signed: Mary Jean Duncan
Mary Jean Duncan Tribal President

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J Kookesh
Attested by: _____
Jeannette Kookesh Tribal Secretary