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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear USFS,

Thank you for allowing and considering public comments for the proposed Greens Creek North Extension Project. I am writing in opposition to extending the footprint of the dry-stack tailings disposal footprint at this time. Before any extensions and expansions are allowed, more robust studies need to be conducted to confirm that lead pollution has not in fact entered the food web or endangered the ecosystem in the vicinity of Admiralty Island. Once adequate and accurate assessments are conducted, if more lead has in fact spread into than ecosystem than is to be expected (as is suggested by the 2023 clam shell study and the recent designation of Tributary Creek as an imperiled water body), plans must be in place to remediate and/or contain these issues to the highest quality standards before expanding the tailings disposal. At this time, this expansion proposal appears to be based on assumptions that all is well without robust ecosystem studies that satisfy several reputable scientists and organizations in our region, and in contradiction to several key pieces of evidence (e.g. Tributary Creek, clam shell study).

Lead is an insidious pollutant that is nearly impossible to remediate once it circulates within any ecosystem, and it is highly dangerous to humans and all wildlife. Often, plans for mining allowances cite the economic benefits of a mine's operations, or the length of operating value (30 years, etc). However, these economic benefits are rarely highlighted in relation to the net costs to ecosystem services and length of time these impacts will take their toll, which is often for time periods that far outlast profitable operations. Given the adjacency to several important and widely used subsistence areas, and being within a National Monument, it is of the utmost importance that scientific monitoring studies ensure that the current tailings operations and fugitive dust are not imperiling the food web before plans to expand them are in place, and that these studies meet rigorous standards. We cannot afford any less.

Thank you for consideration of public comments.

Sincerely,

Tracy Leithauser