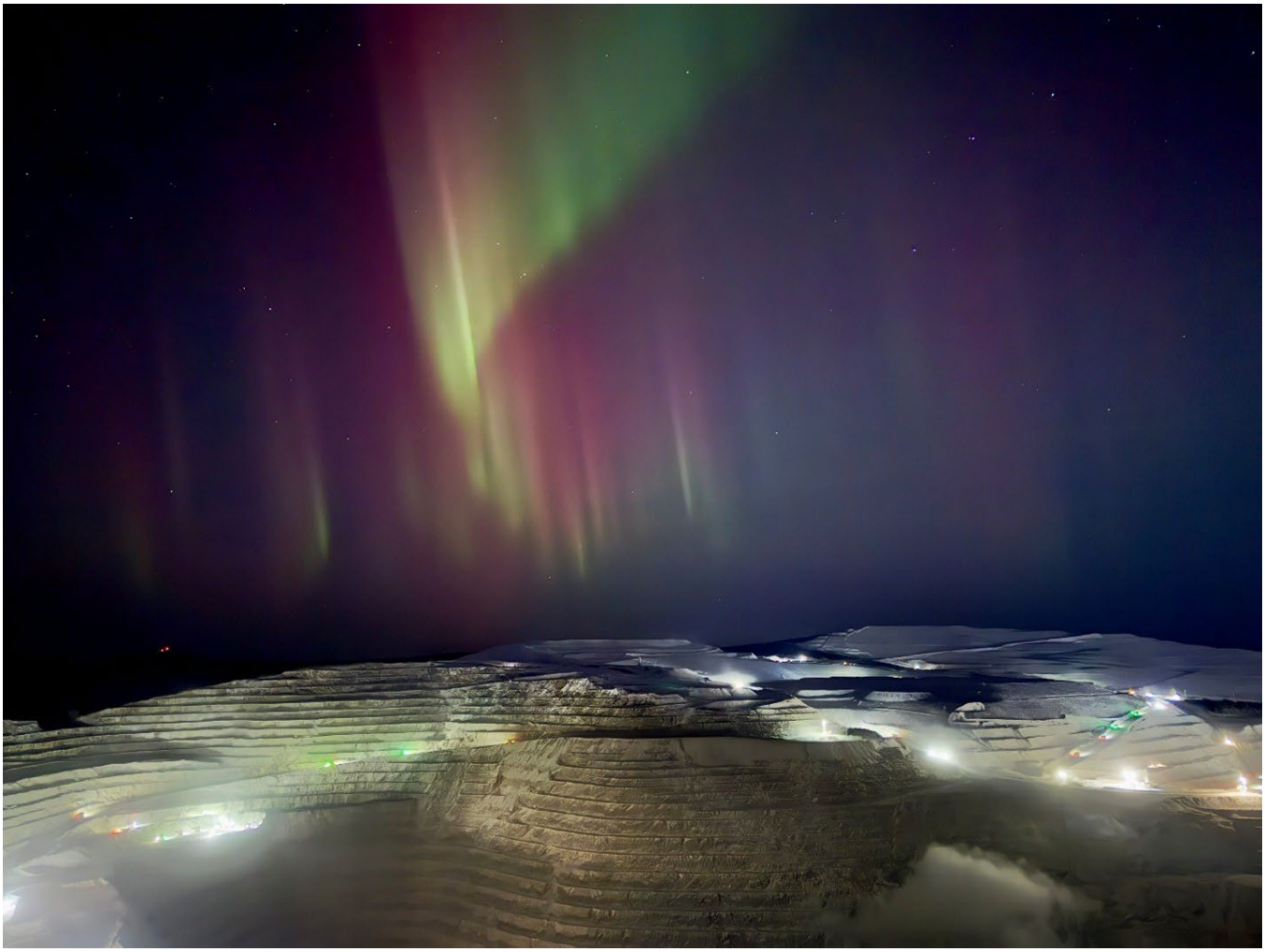
ALASKA MINERALS COMMISSION



ANNUAL REPORT

JANUARY 2026

Mike Dunleavy, Governor

State of Alaska

Julie Sande, Commissioner

Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development

Sandra Moller, Director

Division of Community and Regional Affairs

Alaska Minerals Commission

The 11-member Alaska Minerals Commission (AMC) serves in an advisory capacity to the Governor and the Alaska State Legislature. Five members are appointed by the Governor (one of whom must reside in a rural community), three members are appointed by the Senate President, and three members are appointed by the Speaker of the House . The State of Alaska Division of Community and Regional Affairs supports the AMC by facilitating their annual meetings and assisting with the annual report.

The Commission's role is to recommend strategies to promote mineral development in Alaska. Created by the Legislature in 1986, the AMC's authorization was extended through June 30, 2034, by the Legislature in 2023 via House Bill 103. Since its establishment, the AMC has worked with the State of Alaska and Alaska State Legislature to successfully implement key recommendations that support a strong and sustainable Alaska minerals industry. This report builds upon past work with the intent to identify state and federal issues that can block or disrupt responsible development.

Photo Credit: Donlin Gold LLC
Agatha Sakar, from Crooked Creek, driving a skid steer, moving core cages

Cover Photo Credit: Kinross Alaska
Aurora over the Kinross Fort Knox Mine

This publication was released by the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development (DCCED) in January 2026.
This report is required by AS 44.33.431 (d) and does not constitute an official position or opinion by DCCED.

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Through December 1, 2025

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Photo Credit: Kinross Alaska/Contango Ore
Aurora over Manh Choh operation

Would you like to serve on the Alaska Minerals Commission?

As of December 2, 2025, the commission includes six active members and has five vacant positions. Serving in the Alaska Minerals Commission can be one of the most impactful ways for Alaskans to engage in and take responsibility for governance. By becoming a member, you have the opportunity to advise State agencies that regulate industries and influence official policies. Serving on a board or commission allows you to contribute to the public process and make a meaningful difference in your community.

For more information on how to apply, visit:

https://gov.alaska.gov/services/boards-and-commissions/apply-for-a-board-appointment/

Photo Credit: Donlin Gold LLC

Tyler Samuelson, from McGrath, was responsible for operating the water truck to control dust on the runway and apron.

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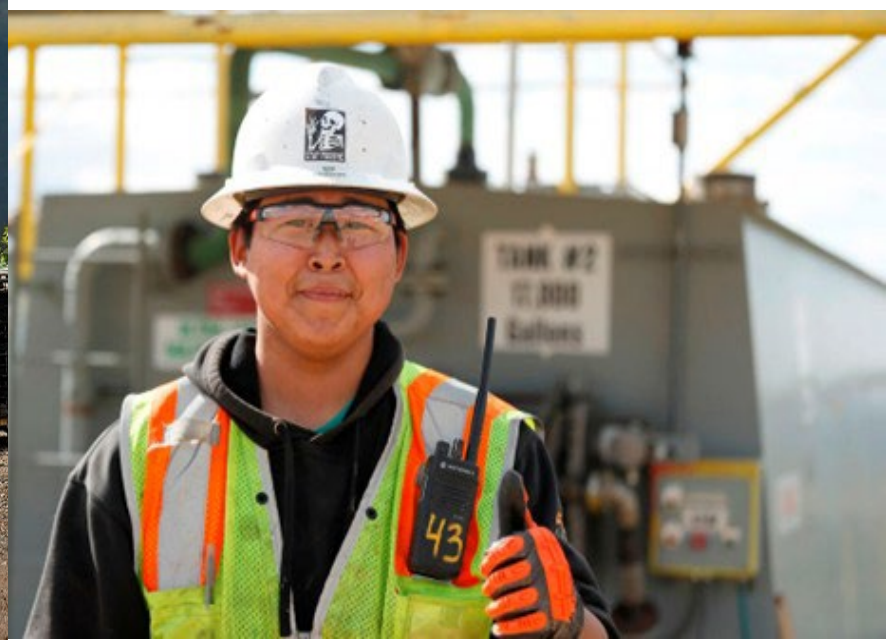

Photo Credit: Donlin Gold LLC
Left Image: Michael Venegas slinging supplies and core cages to the drills from camp.
Right Image: Randal Andrews, from Kwigillingok, near the tank farm.

INTRODUCTION

Mining has been and continues to be a cornerstone of Alaska's society and economy, supporting all aspects of our everyday life. The minerals industry is the source of raw materials used in the production of critical components for technology we use daily, from cell phones and computers to clean technologies like electric vehicles and solar panels. It provides the minerals and metals used in construction and electricity generation, and every industry that drives our state and local economies. Alaska's mining industry has demonstrated its ability to help diversify Alaska's economy and provide wide-ranging employment opportunities in both rural and urban areas, supporting rural infrastructure and lowering the cost of living, all while successfully operating at the highest environmental standards.

Alaska has a stable fiscal environment in which all businesses can thrive. Increased minerals development and exploration in Alaska can help increase fiscal stability and economic development, helping to achieve Governor Dunleavy's priorities to grow the state's economy and promote the "Alaska is Open for Business" initiative.

Alaska has six operating large hard rock mines, one large coal mine, and approximately 150 small placer mines.[1] Alaska's major mineral deposits currently in production include the Red Dog Mine in the Northwest Arctic region; the Greens Creek and Kensington in the Southeast region; and the Pogo and Fort Knox and Manh Choh Mines in the Interior region. The Usibelli Coal Mine is the state's only active coal mine, providing coal for Interior Alaska power plants. Additionally, there are numerous active mining exploration projects across Alaska, spanning various minerals like gold, silver, copper, zinc, and more.

According to the McKinley Research Group,[2] together these operations provide thousands of jobs for residents from more than 90 communities. In total, mining provided 11,800 jobs in 2023, with a total direct and indirect payroll of $1.1 billion in wages statewide. In addition, in 2023, the State of Alaska received $136 million in revenues from the mining industry from license fees, rents, royalties, material sales, and other fees. Local governments received an estimated $50 million from taxes, payment in-lieu of taxes (PILT), payments in-lieu of development (PILD), and rents or production revenue from material sales, and about $235 million in payments to Alaska Native Corporations.

The mining industry pays an Alaska corporate income tax of up to 9.4 percent of income, which is the same for all corporations in the State of Alaska. The mining industry also pays up to 7 percent of net profits as an additional mining license tax, which applies to all mining operations (including royalty owners), regardless of size, land status, mineral ownership, or location. Mining operations on State of Alaska land pay an additional 3 percent net profit royalty. Large mining operations are also significant taxpayers in their communities, paying property taxes in the Fairbanks and Juneau boroughs and a PILT in the Northwest Arctic Borough.

The AMC commends State of Alaska leadership on actions taken to improve the minerals exploration, development, and production climate in Alaska. The AMC presents this 2026 report with multiple priorities and corresponding recommendations.

[1] Twelker, Evan, Werdon, M.B., and Athey, J.E., 2022, Alaska's Mineral Industry 2020: Alaska Division of Geological & Geophysical Surveys Special Report 76; 75 p. https://doi.org/10.14509/30848

[2] Alaska Miners Association, Alaska Metal Mines. Alaska's Mining Industry: 2023 Benefits to Alaska. McKinley Research Group, August 2024.

STATE PRIORITIES

1. Modernizing the ADNR Office of Project Management and Permitting (OPMP)

AS 38.05.020 empowered the Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to "lead and coordinate all matters relating to the state's review and authorization of resource development projects." The DNR Office of Project Management and Permitting (OPMP) plays this crucial role of coordinating the permitting of complex resource development projects across the state. As Alaska positions itself to attract investment and responsibly manage its natural resources, it is essential that the OPMP be modernized to reflect current best practices and increase efficiency. One model worth emulating is the federal FAST-41 program,[3] which has demonstrated success in streamlining environmental review and permitting processes for major mining projects. Governor Dunleavy's signature of the State-Federal Permitting Council Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is an important step forward to strengthen the state and federal coordination for FAST-41 covered projects.

Recommendations:

- Direct OPMP to implement similar mechanisms as FAST-41, such as creating publicly accessible project dashboards, publishing permitting milestones, and requiring regular interagency meetings. This would ensure all stakeholders are informed and that agencies work collaboratively to resolve issues early in the process.
- Require relevant agencies to work with OPMP, and the applicant, to establish mutually agreed-upon timelines for permit decisions, with clear accountability measures if deadlines are missed. This will give project proponents more certainty and help Alaska remain competitive for investment.
- Modern permitting requires robust engagement with local communities, Tribes, and other stakeholders. OPMP should engage in outreach efforts in coordination with the applicants and provide clear opportunities for public participation. This will help build trust and ensure that projects reflect community values while meeting regulatory requirements.
- Alaska's OPMP should invest in digital platforms to facilitate not just document sharing, but project tracking, and communication among agencies and stakeholders. This modernization will improve efficiency and transparency, reduce duplicative efforts, and provide real-time updates to all parties.
- For FAST-41 mineral development covered projects, the state should investigate and pursue including in the FAST-41 dashboard major state environmental reviews, key authorization milestones, public comment periods, and decision timelines.

Photo Credit: Donlin Gold LLC
Clayton Kelly, from Pilot Station, offloading core cages

[3] Federal Infrastructure Projects: Permitting Dashboard - https://www.permits.performance.gov/projects/fast-41-covered

2. Continue to Develop a Comprehensive Mineral Development Strategy

The AMC applauds the State of Alaska legislature for taking critical first steps, as outlined in SB118, to "… develop a strategy to encourage exploration, development, production, refining, and value added manufacturing of critical and essential minerals in the state." As state leadership and agencies continue to promote the development of mineral resources in Alaska, the need for a strategy for that development has grown. Currently, projects or decisions that are external to but impact the mining industry, such as infrastructure, education, outreach, and workforce development, occur in separate silos. A comprehensive and strategic plan could coordinate these and other considerations into an integrated state-wide approach supportive of continued mineral development.

While such strategies exist at the Federal level, to the knowledge of this commission no individual U.S. state has yet developed a comprehensive mineral development strategy. This is in contrast to other countries with strong mining industries – for example, each of the Canadian provinces has their own mineral development strategy that aligns their local mineral resource industries with Canada's nationwide objectives. By being the first state in the nation to create a comprehensive mineral development plan, we can demonstrate Alaska's continued leadership in mineral and natural resource development.

The AMC was given an advance presentation of the forthcoming DCCED report. The combination of information to be provided by DNR and separately by DCCED in their forthcoming reports covers many of the informational requirements of a comprehensive mineral development strategy. The AMC is eager to review both reports in 2026 as the State moves toward a comprehensive mineral development strategy.

Recommendations:

- The AMC points out that the principles in the strategic plan to be developed should apply broadly across Alaska's mining industry, not only to specific commodities or groups of commodities. What is good for the industry is good for its individual sectors.
- As the State forms the framework of its mineral development strategy, it will be important to consider and include components that address access to infrastructure, affordable energy, workforce development, education, and community engagement.
- In addition to the development of emerging technologies and manufacturing components, consideration should be given to in-state manufacturing and refining capacity as well. Notably, concentrates from Alaska's producing mines are currently shipped out of Alaska for smelting and refining. As a result, Alaska is missing out on the opportunity to export metals, minerals, and other products that are value-added. Provisions in a strategic plan that enable an Alaskan smelter and/or refinery may be the key to following up on the Governor's mandate to develop the full potential of Alaska's minerals.
- In considering the effects of different regulatory frameworks on development of minerals within the state, attention should be paid to the people that administer those frameworks. Central to a regulatory framework that supports and accelerates mineral development, while maintaining the state's existing environmental standards, are agencies that are fully staffed with the best talent. A strategic plan must address bringing State agencies to full strength, projecting and replacing coming retirements, training to retain institutional knowledge, and retaining talent.
- After the two reports mandated by SB 118 are considered by the State in the coming legislative term, the AMC encourages the State to maintain momentum by setting new milestone dates for the next stages of development for a comprehensive mineral development strategy, such as a strategic framework or roadmap.

Photo Credit: Kinross Alaska
Environmental techs water sampling at Kinross Fort Knox Mine

3. Smelters and Refining Facilities are Needed

Searching for minerals and finding and developing productive mines has been one of the primary reasons that bring people to Alaska. However, mines generally only produce mineral concentrates; usable products require additional smelting and refining of those concentrates. Today's smelters use advanced technologies that meet strict environmental standards, ensuring cleaner production and support recycling efforts. Smelters provide metals that power our infrastructure, renewable energy systems, electric vehicles, and national defense.

Currently, mineral concentrates from Alaska's producing mines are shipped out of Alaska for processing. The development of an Alaskan smelter/refinery is the key to following up on the Governor's mandate to develop Alaska's minerals full potential. By investing in modern smelting facilities, we reduce the dependence on foreign sources, strengthen our supply chains, and create thousands of good-paying jobs here at home.

There are many potential benefits to in-state smelting and refining capacity. The costs associated with shipping mineral concentrates would be reduced for Alaskan mines, and the State could export more value-added products. Mines outside of Alaska might even take advantage of this service, shipping their concentrates here for refinement. Local smelting and refining capacity could support enhanced in-state recycling capabilities. Finally, adding smelting and refining capacity has the potential to add many high paying jobs, directly through operations and indirectly through associated infrastructure development.

Smelters are essential to Alaska's Future. Building smelters isn't just about industry - - it's about security, sustainability, and economic growth for generations to come.

Recommendation:

- Initiate a study to evaluate the building of a smelter or refinery in Alaska, in parallel to other energy infrastructure projects.

4. Reallocate Portions of the State of Alaska Mining License Tax to Communities, while Precluding Targeted Local Severance Taxes

The AMC believes that communities should benefit when natural resource exploration and development occur nearby. Whether related to large scale long-term mining or short-term seasonal prospecting, the economic boost to local economies from mining and mineral development may generate increased demand for local government services.
Communities could benefit from a reallocation of the State of Alaska Mining License Tax (AS 43.65) to support local services like libraries, schools, road maintenance, and public safety.[4]

Presently, there is no uniform mechanism to allocate a portion of the tax revenue back to communities associated with mineral development. Such a revenue-sharing model could provide needed assistance to communities.[5]

Sharing portions of State of Alaska revenue from mineral resource development with local communities in a predictable fashion reduces the need for local governments to impose their own industry targeted taxes, such as severance taxes. The uncertainty of the timing, stability, and size of a local tax could discourage mineral development. Moreover, allowing local governments to impose potentially onerous severance taxes shifts control of development decisions away from the State of Alaska.

Recommendations:

- Allocate portions of the statewide mining license tax to communities located near mining operations to create a stable economic regime that can provide an attractive investment climate in Alaska.
- Revise the municipal tax code to preclude local municipal severance taxes on mineral resources. This revision would not prevent a local government's ability to utilize a broad-based tax, such as a property tax or sales tax.

Photo Credit: Kinross Alaska
Sunrise at Fort Knox outside of Fairbanks

[4] Both the Fairbanks North Star Borough and the City and Borough of Juneau benefit from broad-based taxes that include local mine operations.

[5] The fishing industry has an informal means to split taxes between the state and the local communities. This approach would adopt the concept but be more specific in the division of revenues.

5. Support the Division of Geological & Geophysical Surveys

The Alaska Division of Geological and Geophysical Surveys (DGGS) within DNR plays an integral role in identifying Alaska mineral resources, mineral potential, and attracting investment to the State of Alaska. Their work includes collecting new geologic data, quickly publishing that data, and maintaining an extensive publicly available database. This database is commonly a first stop for explorers looking to invest within the State of Alaska. DGGS' publicly available data provides explorers an advantage when selecting areas to claim on State of Alaska land and therefore makes that investment more attractive when compared to other states or countries that lack such information.

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) released in 2021 and updated in 2022a draft list of 50 minerals which are deemed critical to the development of the country's economy.[6] The United States is dependent on unpredictable foreign producers such as China, Russia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo for many of its critical mineral supplies, which results in unacceptable risk to national and economic security. Many of these minerals (especially zinc, graphite, and cobalt) are found within established mineral belts across Alaska.

Much of Alaska's 663,000 square miles of land (more than one sixth of the total area of the United States) "has not been systematically studied or sampled for mineral resource potential"[7]. DGGS must be well supported in its further efforts to identify where critical minerals are to be found. Federal funding is vital and currently available, and State of Alaska matching funds are necessary to maximize federal support.

Another critical support for DGGS is the continuation and growth of the Geologic Materials Center (GMC) in Anchorage. The GMC hosts the State of Alaska's archives for geologic samples collected by mineral, oil, and gas exploration companies as well as state and federal agencies. Core repositories such as the GMC are commonplace in states that host significant mineral resources. The GMC archives contain records for over 18 million feet of core samples and cuttings from oil and gas exploration and 565,000 linear feet of drill core samples from mineral companies. They also contain 507,000 surface samples and over 35,000 thin sections. More recently, the State of Alaska is spearheading a first-in-the-nation geologic repository hyperspectral scanning program at the GMC. The program will focus on the analysis of samples from the extensive core collection housed at the Center to advance the understanding of the state's complex geology and associated resources. The hyperspectral scanning program is funded through a partnership between the State of Alaska and the USGS National Geological and Geophysical Data Preservation Program, aiming to digitally record legacy rock core collections.[8]

Finally, DGGS' role in promoting the State of Alaska at international mining conferences – where local experts can showcase our mineral potential and investment climate and interact with investors – needs ongoing support. Roughly 80 percent of the funding for mineral exploration in Alaska is from companies based outside of Alaska, most recently from Canada and Australia. It is through these outreach activities that the State lets the world know that Alaska welcomes mineral and mining investment.

Recommendations:

- Continue to support assessment of Alaska's critical minerals. Airborne geophysical surveys, geological mapping, and mineral inventories are activities that can be funded through annual capital appropriations to the operating budget. State investment in these programs will, in turn, ensure federal funds are maximized.
- Where needed provide matching funds to enable DGGS to access federal funds.
- Continue support for the GMC to host and maintain a core repository and ability to conduct analysis on samples.
- Funding should continue to support attendance by DGGS and DNR at national and international mining conferences to promote Alaska's mining industry.

[6] USGS Seeks Public Comment on Draft List of 50 Minerals Deemed Critical to US National Security and the Economy, accessed November 2021 https://www.usgs.gov/news/national-news-release/usgs-seeks-public-comment-draft-list-50-minerals-deemed-critical-us-0.

[7] U.S. Geological Services, 2017, Geospatial Analysis Identifies Critical Mineral-Resource Potential in Alaska Fact Sheet. https://pubs.usgs.gov/fs/2017/3012/fs20173012.pdf

[8] GMC Curator Kurt Johnson, personal communication, November 2024.

6. Support Education and Outreach for Mineral Development

Resource extraction plays a critical role in supporting our way of life. We believe that a public that understands the significance of resource management is essential for a sustainable future. Central to this is a robust system of public outreach that explains the value chain associated with resource management and extraction, raises awareness of the resource management industry's contribution to our State and communities, and inspires the next generation of resource management professionals.

The AMC commends the state for its continued support of these types of programs. This support is critically important, now more than ever, as changes in the federal funding landscape may otherwise result in a reduction in these important programs.

Recommendations

- Continue to support organizations and provide funding opportunities for organizations that engage with the public to reach more Alaskans and deepen its impact on resource education and understanding.
- Provide incentives to encourage public-private engagement: Encourage public participation by providing incentives for completing informative surveys and engaging in public forums on resource extraction topics. This will broaden the education of the public at large.
- Incorporate basic information about the permitting process in public outreach programs, including what permits are required by mineral operations, the State's role in issuing and administering permits, and which agencies administer which permit types.

Photo Credit: Kinross Alaska
Loader clearing rock at Fort Knox

7. Modernize the Online Mineral Claim Staking and Claim Management System

Alaska's rank as the third most attractive location for mineral investment globally[9] is a result of the ongoing efforts to improve baseline geologic data coverage and quality, maintain transparent and systematic regulation, and built upon secure mineral tenure. Alaska's Legislature and Governor can continue to grow the State's investment attractiveness by funding the Alaska Division of Geological and Geophysical Surveys (DGGS) baseline data collection – publication - curation efforts, assisting the Division of Mining Land and Water to maintain a fully staffed and efficient regulatory environment, and updating and streamlining the mineral tenure process.

Alaska's system for acquiring mineral tenure is antiquated and is a disincentive for would-be explorers, developers, and miners. It is recommended that Alaska invests in an online mineral claim staking system using an interactive website. Fees would be immediately collected by the State of Alaska, and subsequent claim rentals would be paid through this online system, greatly increasing the efficiency of DNR staff. This website should allow for real-time viewing of mineral claim status and online submission of claim applications and maintenance. Many more mineral claims could be staked if would-be developers could see accurate real-time land and could have the ability to stake claims using an online system. These changes could lead to additional mineral exploration, discovery, development, and mining. After the initial cost to change the system, DNR would likely save money on staff time, and the State of Alaska would realize significantly increased revenue from claim rentals and mining taxes. Many modern jurisdictions around the world have adopted such systems (Canada, Australia, etc. etc.). The result has been increased exploration and development of mineral resources and efficiency and cost savings for government.

DNR's Alaska Mapper website provides an interactive map showing land status, including information on mining claims. Unfortunately, this system is not always accurate. This presents two problems: (1) claims may have been abandoned by an owner, but since Alaska Mapper is not up to date, the land still appears to be claimed; and (2) there is risk that claims have been staked by a competing party but not yet reflected on Alaska Mapper in which case a new claimant may waste time and money staking claims on land that has already been claimed by others. Diligent stakers also check the Mining Recorder's website to see if there has been recent staking activity. However, since there can be up to 45 days from staking date to recording date, there is still risk that money will be wasted staking claims that have already been staked by others.

Recommendations:

- DNR's Division of Mining, Land, and Water (DMLW) issued a contract for an independent consultant review of the systems and workflows to recommend efficiencies. The assessment will evaluate DMLW workflows including claim management and permitting. If findings are positive, the Commission recommends that the State of Alaska institute an online claim staking system with a real time up-to-date claim map as soon as possible.

[9] Alaska Division of Geological and Geophysical Surveys website, https://dggs.alaska.gov/pubs/minerals , citing Mejia and Aliakbari, 2025.

FEDERAL PRIORITIES

1. Industry Must Have Clear Federal Permitting and Regulatory Requirements

Since statehood, the federal government has failed to give Alaskans and the State of Alaska many of the rights and resources it was granted at statehood. The federal government has pursued a policy to hinder the access and rights of Alaskans to use and enjoy the resource benefits on private and State of Alaska lands. This overreach from the federal government restricts the State's use of its resources and inhibits Alaskan's use and development of the resources they are entitled to in the state.

Recommendations:

- Continue to fund and support both DNR and the Alaska Department of Law in legal challenges against the federal government to assert the State of Alaska's rights against the federal government.
- Continue to support ongoing litigation to restore the exemption of the Tongass National Forest from the 2001 Roadless Rule. Under the Clinton Administration in 2001 and the Biden Administration in 2023, the United States Department of Agriculture added 9.4 million acres of roadless areas to the 6.5 million acres already set aside by Congress in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 (ANILCA) and the Tongass Timber Reform Act of 1990. The addition of roadless acreage makes access to critical minerals more difficult and expensive and is inconsistent with the "no more" clause of ANILCA.
- Support funding State primacy over the Clean Water Act Section 404 permit program and Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) formulation of regulations for the filling of State of Alaska waters and wetlands. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) will soon release new Federal direction and guidance on definitions for waters of the United States (WOTUS). WOTUS is a contentious permitting issue within Alaska for mineral exploration and mining development. This new direction is in response to the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in EPA v. Sackett (2023). Preliminary guidance indicates a substantive roll back in Federal protections as jurisdiction is expected to narrow.
- Demand clear directions from the EPA and the USACE with new WOTUS direction. This new regulatory change will create confusion among regulatory agencies and the public as new definitions result in both federal and state wetlands. This jurisdictional shift may lead to a new bifurcated permit process for the filling of waters including wetlands in Alaska.
- Support funding State primacy over the Clean Water Act Section 404 permit program. DEC should immediately begin promulgation of regulations for the filling of State of Alaska waters including wetlands.

Photo Credit: Kinross Alaska
Lesser Yellowlegs bird enjoying the Kinross Fort Knox reclaimed Fish Creek

Photo Credit: Donlin Gold LLC
Samantha Angaiak-Miller of Anchorage and Clayton Kelly of Pilot Station discussing helicopter operations.

The Alaska Minerals Commission appreciates the public's interest in these issues and the support of the Alaska minerals industry. Please feel free to contact the Alaska Minerals Commission with comments or concerns at any time.

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https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/dcra/AlaskaMineralsCommission.aspx

Photos courtesy of the Alaska Minerals Commission Members.