

REPORT OF THE 2003

# Alaska Minerals Commission

The Alaska Minerals Commission was created by the 14<sup>th</sup> Legislature and signed into law on June 6, 1986. The enabling legislation instructs the Commission to make recommendations to the Governor and Legislature on ways to mitigate constraints, including governmental constraints, on the development of minerals, including coal, in the state.



# ALASKA MINERALS COMMISSION

JANUARY 2003

## MEMBERS

Chairman	Irene Anderson	<b>Sitnasuak Native Corporation</b> P.O. Box 905, Nome, Alaska, 99762 Phone (907) 443-4023, Fax (907) 443-3063 E-mail ianderson@snc.org
Vice-chairman	Eric Neil MacKinnon	<b>Hyak Mining Co.</b> 1114 Glacier Avenue, Juneau, Alaska, 99801 Phone (907) 586-1254, Fax (907) 463-3433 E-mail nmackinn@ptialaska.net
	Del Ackels	<b>Goldust Mines</b> P.O. Box 61520, Fairbanks, Alaska, 99706 Phone (907) 474-0971, Fax (907) 474-0966 E-mail golddustmines@gci.net
	Greg Beischer	<b>Bristol Environmental &amp; Engineering</b> 2000 West Int'l Airport Rd., #C1, Anchorage, Alaska 99502-1116 Phone (907) 563-0013, Fax (907) 563-6713. E-mail gbeischer@beesc.com
	Charles B. Green	<b>Usibelli Coal Mine, Inc.</b> P.O.Box 71805, Fairbanks, Alaska, 99707-1805 Phone (907) 479-2489, Fax (907) 451-6543 E-mail cgreen@usibelli.com
	Karl Hanneman	<b>Teck Pogo, Inc.</b> 3520 International Way, Fairbanks, Alaska, 99701 Phone (907) 455-8325, Fax (907) 455-8326 E-mail khanneman@teckalaska.com
	Thomas Irwin	<b>Fairbanks Gold Mining, Inc.</b> P. O. Box 73726, Fairbanks, Alaska, 99707 Phone (907) 490-2201, Fax (907) 490-2290 E-mail tirwin@fairbanksgold.com
	Charlotte MacCay	<b>Teck Cominco American Incorporated</b> 3105 Lakeshore Drive, Bldg. 1-A, Anchorage, Alaska, 99517 Phone (907) 266-4552, Fax (907) 266-4568 E-mail Cmaccay@aol.com
	Leo Mark Anthony	<b>C-D Development Co.</b> 2020 Lake Otis Parkway, Anchorage, Alaska, 99508 Phone (907) 279-4702, Fax (907) 279-4702
	Dr. Lance D. Miller	<b>Juneau Economic Development Council</b> 612 W. Willoughby Ave., Suite A Juneau, Alaska, 99801 Phone (907) 463-3662, Fax (907) 463-3929 E-mail lmiller@jedc.org
	Ron Sheardown	<b>Greatland Exploration, Ltd.</b> 3512 Campbell Airstrip Road, Anchorage, Alaska, 99504 Phone (907) 333-1400, Fax (907) 333-1800 E-mail sheardown@aol.com

## STAFF

Frankie Pillifant	Development Specialist, Mining & Minerals <b>Alaska Division of Community &amp; Business Development</b> P.O. Box 110804, Juneau, Alaska, 99811-0804 Phone (907) 465-5463, Fax (907) 465-3767 E-mail Frankie_Pillifant@dced.state.ak.us
Dr. Dick Swainbank	Development Specialist, Mining & Minerals <b>Alaska Division of Community &amp; Business Development</b> Unit 7, 3677 College Road, Fairbanks, Alaska 99709 Phone (907) 451-3050, Fax (907) 451-3053 E-mail swainbnk@ptialaska.net



# FOREWORD

The Alaska Minerals Commission again wishes to thank the Governor and the Legislature for implementing some of our recommendations during 2002. Highlights include substantial positive proposed changes in the Water Quality Standards, funding to study assumption of water quality primacy, continued funding of geophysical surveys and AMEREF, and accelerated transfer of State-selected lands. Partly as a result of the responsive actions of the Governor and the Legislature over the last few years, mining development opportunities are improving in Alaska as demonstrated by the recent growth in the industry.

However, there are still significant obstacles to overcome for Alaska to reach its growth potential and to gain a reputation as a predictable and favorable place to do business.

The Alaska Minerals Commission was created by the 14th Legislature and signed into law on June 6, 1986. The enabling legislation instructs the Commission to make recommendations to the Governor and Legislature on ways to mitigate constraints, including governmental constraints, on the development of minerals, including coal, in the state.

The Commission has presented reports to the Governor and Legislature annually since January 1987, and is authorized to do so until January 2004. Commission members are appointed by the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House. The current members are representatives of placer, hard rock, and coal mining industries and come from diverse areas of the state.

During 2002, the Commission held meetings in Fairbanks and Anchorage. The recommendations in this report are the result of input at these meetings. All Commission meetings are open to the public, and members encourage comments from all interested parties at any time.

Following the list of recommendations in the executive summary, this report contains background information, or "findings", on each issue, followed by the related recommendation. These have been separated into Part A, which deals with issues mainly of State concern, and Part B that includes federal issues affecting the State that can be influenced by State participation.

On behalf of the members of the Commission, I would like to express our appreciation to those members of the public, the Alaska Miners Association, the Resource Development Council, and the many government agencies and private organizations that contributed to the preparation of the report. The Commission wishes to thank Commissioner Deborah B. Sedwick of the Department of Community and Economic Development and Dick Swainbank and Frankie Pillifant of the Division of Community & Business Development who have provided excellent administrative and professional support to the Commission.

Irene Anderson, Chair



# ALASKA MINERALS COMMISSION

## 2003 REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR AND ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

(www.dced.state.ak.us/cbd/minerals/mining.htm)

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b> .....	vii
<b>FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b> .....	1
<b>PART A: ISSUES REQUIRING STATE ACTION</b> .....	1
<b>1) REGULATORY REFORM</b> .....	1
1a Litigation Reform .....	1
1b Permit Efficiency .....	2
1c Water Quality Standards .....	3
1d Mixing Zones .....	4
1e Alaska's Clean Water Actions .....	4
<b>2) ACCESS &amp; INFRASTRUCTURE</b> .....	5
2a Roads to Resources .....	5
2b Restricting Use of Mining Airstrips .....	6
2c Power Supplies .....	6
<b>3) STATE'S RIGHTS ISSUES</b> .....	7
3a RS 2477 .....	7
3b Navigability .....	7
3c Expedited Land Transfers .....	8
<b>4) DATA ACQUISITION</b> .....	8
4a Geophysical & Geological Mapping .....	8
4b Baseline Data .....	9
<b>5) REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b> .....	10
<b>6) EDUCATION AND RESEARCH</b> .....	11
6a AMEREF .....	11
6b School of Mineral Engineering .....	11
<b>7) EXTENDING THE LIFE OF THE COMMISSION</b> .....	12
<b>PART B: FEDERAL ISSUES OF STATE CONCERN</b> .....	12
<b>B1) MARINE TRANSPORTATION TASK FORCE</b> .....	12
<b>B2) DETAILED GEOLOGIC MAPPING</b> .....	13
<b>B3) RESOLUTION OF OUTDATED SEGREGATIONS</b> .....	13
<b>B4) ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT</b> .....	14
<b>B5) ANILCA PROVISIONS</b> .....	14
<b>APPENDIX A: Act Creating the Minerals Commission</b> .....	16
<b>APPENDIX B: Minerals Commission Statement of Purpose</b> .....	17
<b>APPENDIX C: Mineral Policy Act</b> .....	18
<b>APPENDIX D: Recommendations Implemented</b> .....	19



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## CURRENT RECOMMENDATIONS

The commission encourages the Governor and Legislature to act on the following recommendations in 2003:

- Eliminate frivolous litigation by limiting “public interest litigant” status;
- Increase the efficiency of mine project permitting;
- Update water quality standards;
- Assist in infrastructure development that benefits mining and other industries;
- Resolve land tenure, navigability and right of way access issues;
- Acquire baseline geological and environmental knowledge statewide;
- Promote industry education through support of relevant university programs and the Alaska Minerals & Energy Resource Education Fund.

## INDUSTRY OVERVIEW

The mineral industry is one of three base industries of Alaska to show real growth since 1991. The industry currently has a gross value of approximately \$1 billion dollars, a milestone first reached in 1996. By virtue of several cornerstone operations, the industry has maintained this respectable level despite challenging economic conditions and depressed commodity prices. In the past year, exciting new discoveries have been made, the price of gold and platinum-group elements has risen, and a general feeling of optimism is starting to develop. Unfortunately over the same period the price of copper and zinc has fallen, and taken a toll on the base metal mines in Alaska.

However, while mining has shown growth over the past decade, the industry has been static in recent years. Exploration for new mines has diminished. Smaller hard-rock operations are absent, and placer mining is stagnant. Other countries, states, and provinces continue to surpass Alaska in the global competition for exploration dollars.

Red Dog, Fort Knox, Greens Creek, Usibelli Coal, Illinois Creek, and Anchorage Sand & Gravel are outstanding operations that contribute significantly at the local level. These mines are providing rewarding, long-term, high-paying careers in urban and remote areas alike. These operations have a profound, positive impact on their respective local communities, and serve as shining examples of what could be achieved in other regions of the state.

As the premier producing mine in the state, Red Dog continued to improve its efficiency in 2002 through its Mill Optimization Project, which translated to increased production through superior recovery and product grade. The increased production has been helpful in offsetting some of the financial impact related to decreased zinc prices, however the impact remained significant with a loss of \$10 million in the third quarter of 2002.

Three development projects, Pogo, Donlin Creek, and Kensington are poised to become viable mining operations in the near future.

Activity at the Pogo gold deposit near Delta Junction included surface geotechnical drilling and definition drilling of the lower ore zone. The major focus of this project in 2002 was the permitting process and the development of an Environmental Impact Statement.

Exploration at Donlin Creek has resulted in a dramatic expansion of the size and grade of the gold resource. The project is on the verge of becoming a major mine. This development has the potential to change the face of southwest Alaska, bringing prosperity and promise to a depressed region desperate for alternatives. Transportation infrastructure and energy development are key.

A revised mining plan has been submitted at the Kensington project in southeast Alaska, which may allow the project to proceed to development.

Grass roots exploration programs were limited, and largely reduced in scope from previous years. One bright spot was the area northwest of Iliamna, where several significant copper-gold prospects were discovered. Drill programs for gold and silver were reported near Tok, Northway, Rock Creek north of Nome, and in the Wulik Valley on the north flank of the Brooks Range. In southeast Alaska exploration continued for platinum-group elements at Union Bay and Duke Island, and for polymetallic targets on Woewodski Island. On the south flank of the Alaska Range, exploration for platinum-group elements was curtailed due to continuing uncertain land status. The state must do what it can to finalize land conveyance, so that land tenure in the state is clear to developers.

The State Division of Geological & Geophysical Surveys continued to do outstanding work on a minimal budget. Airborne geophysical surveys were flown at Council near Nome, and the Bureau of Land Management contracted for surveys within the Denali Block and at Sleetmute. Geologic mapping continued in 2002 in the Salcha and Goodpaster River areas that had airborne surveys flown in past years. Alaska continues to lag far behind the remainder of the continent in geological knowledge of its land base. Indeed, many third world countries supercede Alaska in this regard. The importance of baseline data acquisition for the state cannot be overstated.

The mining industry in Alaska has maintained the status quo over past years in the face of challenging conditions. Several development projects, if brought to fruition, will provide outstanding benefits in remote regions, and formulate the critical mass the industry requires to sustain itself over the long term. Given the proper support, the industry has the ability to make a tremendous difference in Alaska.

# FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## PART A: ISSUES REQUIRING STATE ACTION

### 1) REGULATORY REFORM

#### 1a) LITIGATION REFORM

**FINDING:** A critical component to resource development in the State of Alaska is insuring that development projects, once permitted by the appropriate State Agencies, can proceed without delay. Unfortunately, groups opposed to development routinely file litigation with the sole objective of either preventing or delaying permitted development. Often, the basis for the litigation is without merit. Under Alaska's current law, such groups, regardless of financial resources or membership composition, can routinely qualify as "public interest litigants", in which case there is absolutely no financial downside to them if they lose the litigation. The net result is that there is no disincentive to these groups not to pursue litigation. As a consequence, the State of Alaska as well as industry and developers are forced to defend themselves in lengthy and costly litigation with little chance of recovering any costs or attorney fees even when they prevail in the litigation.

The groups that regularly oppose resource development are not simply concerned citizen groups but more often special interest groups supported financially by national and/or international organizations whose stated mission is resource preservation. The result of these systematic and orchestrated lawsuits filed by purported "public interest litigants" is inhibiting development by escalating development costs, both in terms of real dollars spent on litigation and lost dollars due to delays. Modifying Alaska's existing rules and regulations for proposals where public input and administrative appeal was afforded by eliminating "public interest litigant" status in Administrative appeal decisions and awarding fees and costs to the prevailing party in litigation ensures a level playing field. Likewise, requiring disclosure of funding sources by those who seek to qualify as litigants and/or who seek to file an Administrative Appeal allows those defending the litigation to know the identity of those who are actually supporting the litigation and the amount of that financial support.

Modification of Alaska's existing "public interest litigant" rules and regulations is not aimed at preventing litigants from pursuing administrative appeals, rather the intent is one of fundamental fairness — ensuring that the identity of those who initiate the litigation are known and that the potential negative consequences of such litigation are borne equally by all parties to the litigation. The objective is not to inhibit meritorious litigation, but rather to inhibit frivolous litigation by ensuring that there is a consequence to those who file and support such litigation.

If responsible resource development is to be promoted and achieved, it is imperative that once development projects are permitted they are not delayed, by individuals, or entities that choose to pursue frivolous litigation. Modifying Alaska's existing rules and regulations regarding "public interest litigants" is critical to promoting and achieving responsible resource development in the State of Alaska.

## THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT:

- 1a.1) Public Interest Litigant Status needs to be limited. The Legislature should modify existing State Statutes to specifically provide for any party bringing a civil action seeking judicial review of Administrative Agency decisions, in which they were afforded an opportunity for public input and administrative appeal, not be awarded “public interest litigant” status. Furthermore, the prevailing party in such civil action shall be entitled to an award of attorney fees and costs as in other civil actions.
  
- 1a.2) Funding Sources need to be disclosed. The Legislature should modify existing State Statutes to require that a condition of obtaining litigant status and/or of filing an Administrative Appeal, under regulations, is the initial and supplemental disclosure of the identity of those who provide funding to the entity who seeks litigant status and/or initiates an Administrative appeal and the amount of such funds during the past two years and during the term of the Administrative Appeal.

### 1b) PERMIT EFFICIENCY

**FINDING:** A key element in marketing Alaska as an attractive and competitive place to do business is the ability to process permit applications in a responsible, consistent and expeditious manner.

In the 2001 legislative session, funding was provided for the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) to reconstitute the qualified core of water quality permitting staff. Equally important to adequate funding, the agencies need the flexible management tools necessary to provide responsive, effective, and efficient management of permitting issues.

Permitting delays negatively impact business in Alaska. Delays are often due to staffing shortages which creates backlogs for industry project permit review.

To help resolve this problem, ADEC has recently utilized the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) authority for third party contracting through the Large Mine Permit process, and has contracted directly with third party contractors to assist with permit review. ADEC is also planning to select one or more individuals/firms that would be available on-call to provide technical assistance to a permitting team regarding risk assessments and monitoring requirements for National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) discharges, and mixing zones for placer miners.

Supplementing permanent staff during permit development is a positive step that will allow agencies to respond more readily to the intermittent demands associated with industry growth. Further, it will support the limited number of permanent staff personnel via access to the varied technical and scientific expertise required for responsible permitting.

In some circumstances, permitting delay has been characterized by industry as “procedural duress.” Industry recognizes that permitting review is an iterative process through discussion and supplementing of relative information, public review, comment and response to comment. However, an unreasonable extension of any of these elements can lead to costly and unnecessary delay. At present there are instances where State requests for additional information, and subsequent time extensions, appear to be based on a partial or cursory review. This results in additional time delay through multiple information requests. Further concern is often

raised regarding extension of public review and comment periods. This practice is detrimental to the agency, to the industry, and ultimately to economic development within Alaska, potentially leading to the loss of millions of dollars in revenue, and related monetary losses in taxes and royalties.

Permitting agencies need to ensure that the permitting process is not unnecessarily extended. Initial permit review should result in a single and complete list of information deficiencies. Additional requests for information should be limited to questions arising out of new information.

The Alaskan industries, agencies, Administration, and Legislature can work together to provide responsible and reliable permitting that ensures the protection of the environment and a sound future. For this to happen, we cannot be complacent in trying to improve permitting efficiency through funding alone. All of the recommendations provided must occur in concert for Alaska to fulfill its potential for sustainable and attractive resource development.

#### **THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT:**

- 1b.1) The Administration must continue to aggressively search for and find means to accommodate the use of third-party contractors who will work under the core managers to provide permit development support on an as-needed basis and extend these efforts to all types of environmental and resource permitting. The Legislature needs to encourage and support the Administration in this effort.
- 1b.2) The Legislature should require a periodic permitting status report accounting for agency staff and management.
- 1b.3) Salary scales for public workers must be improved relative to the private sector in order to retain competent staff.

### **1c) WATER QUALITY STANDARDS**

**FINDING:** When municipal water treatment plants or industrial projects require water discharge permits, the Department of Environmental Conservation must insure that the proposed discharge will meet the State of Alaska water quality standards for various parameters. Due to the rapidly advancing science on both the potential environmental effects of these parameters and the changing technology for detecting the very low concentrations, the most appropriate numerical criteria for these parameters keeps advancing.

In 1999, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved a new list of water quality criteria that updated many of the numerical criteria. The EPA also responded to the environmental science that had developed over the years and replaced the old total recoverable values with new dissolved criteria.

In recognition of this advancing science, the Department of Environmental Conservation proposed revisions to the Alaska water quality standards on August 2, 2002. The public comment period on these proposed changes was completed in October, 2002. These revisions need to be adopted by the State immediately, and forwarded to the EPA for review and approval.

**THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT:**

The Governor should instruct the Department of Environmental Conservation to adopt the revisions to the Alaska water quality standards as proposed on August 2, 2002.

## 1d) MIXING ZONES

**FINDING:** State water quality regulations that became effective in November 1997 contain a prohibition against mixing zones in anadromous or resident fish spawning areas. This language makes it more difficult to consider site specific conditions, such as the productivity of the spawning area compared to the potential benefit of a municipal waste treatment plant or industrial project that might require a mixing zone. Without flexibility in the regulation, many projects that could significantly improve the health and welfare of people throughout Alaska may be precluded due to the widespread presence of spawning fish, including resident fish. Prior to promulgation of the latest mixing zone regulations, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) considered language that could have allowed mixing zones, if either the discharge had no adverse effect on spawning or if all reasonably anticipated adverse impacts were mitigated to the satisfaction of the Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G). This type of discretionary flexibility needs to be incorporated in the regulations so future projects that may be beneficial are not automatically prohibited.

**THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT:**

The Governor should direct the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation and the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) to work with user groups to develop mixing zone regulations that will, at the department's discretion, authorize mixing zones in spawning areas if:

- (a) The discharge is not reasonably anticipated to adversely affect the capacity of the area to support present or future spawning activities; or
- (b) The discharge is reasonably anticipated to adversely affect the capacity of the area to support present and future spawning activities and the ADF&G has approved a plan to mitigate all reasonably anticipated adverse impacts.

## 1e) ALASKA'S CLEAN WATER ACTIONS

**FINDING:** In 2001 the Alaska Division of Governmental Coordination (ADGC) began an initiative called the Alaska's Clean Water Actions (ACWA). Members of the Commission expressed concern that ACWA was a new state regulatory program without basis in Alaska law. Further, members were concerned that this 'new program' overlapped other agency programs as well as creating new obligations. Industries or other users of water could be seriously and adversely affected if their business-based use of waters, such as placer mining, became restricted via the ADGC listing of water bodies as "polluted" or "at risk".

Through meetings with ADGC, other resource agencies, miners, and recently with the Minerals Commission, it was clarified that the ACWA initiative is a collaboration among the resource agencies. The collaboration is important to prioritize its water based management functions, to better align the priority work of the state agencies, and to use a ranking mechanism to prioritize

external grant or contract funded in-water field projects. In addition, the agencies report that they refined their ranking and decision making process in response to concerns raised by Commission members about how waters get listed or de-listed as “polluted” or “at risk”. Although, the Commission remains cautious until the day-to-day practice becomes more evident, it appears ADGC and the other resource agencies have been responsive to concerns that have been raised. If ACWA actually works as the agencies intend - resulting in cohesive prioritization of water related functions among Fish & Game, Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation - the Minerals Commission would applaud this effort as long overdue efficiency building within state government.

#### THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT:

The Governor’s office conduct a review of the Alaska’s Clean Water Action initiative to ascertain if it can deliver on the promises the Alaska Minerals Commission heard from the agencies. Those promises were to improve efficiency and build a common agreement on the water management priorities of the resources agencies and Alaska Division of Governmental Coordination.

## 2) ACCESS & INFRASTRUCTURE

The lack of infrastructure, including roads, airports, and power transmission networks, increases the costs of exploration, development, and operation of mineral deposits and limits the potential for this industry to grow and help diversify Alaska’s economy.

Many regions of Alaska have experienced significant improvements in their economic opportunities and standard of living when infrastructure improvements were completed.

If there is to be no development in the extensive areas of Alaska that have already been set aside as parks and refuges, then the other areas of Alaska that are not designated as wilderness constitute the land base that must support our society. Even though these non-wilderness areas are often beautiful or wild in their own right, they were not the crown jewels that justified prior withdrawal. Infrastructure development in these areas must be supported and projects that have the potential to significantly enhance the viability of local communities should be encouraged first.

### 2a) ROADS TO RESOURCES

**FINDING:** Many of the major mineral and coal deposits in Alaska are “stranded” because there is no road access to the major rivers or to tidewater. The last major road built in the state was the 52-mile road from the Red Dog Mine to the DeLong Mountain Transportation System port near Kivalina in 1988.

Notable areas that could benefit from road access include the Ambler mineral belt, the north-west Arctic and Beluga coalfields, the area around and west of Iliamna, the Flat-Iditarod area, and the Goodpaster mining district.

Although Alaska Statutes AS 19.30.020 and 19.30.030 address development access roads, the funding available, even if inflation adjusted, would probably not even cover the costs of permitting.

During the next few years it is possible that significant funding for access improvement might be available through GARVEE (Grant Anticipation Revenue Vehicle) bonds, the Denali Commission, and special federal appropriations similar to those used in Appalachia.

**THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT:**

The Governor direct the Department of Transportation & Public Facilities to prepare a prioritized list of potential “Roads to Resources”, and investigate mechanisms whereby funds can be made available in a long-term program to link potential resource development to tidewater.

## **2b) RESTRICTING THE USE OF MINING AIRSTRIPS**

**FINDING:** In many remote mining camps, the only feasible summer access is by use of an airstrip on, or adjacent to, the mining operation. Unauthorized use of these strips, often by commercial operations, can result in potentially unsafe conditions, and the attendant threat of liability, both to the miner and to the State.

**THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT:**

The Governor and the Legislature should direct the Division of Mining, Land & Water to amend the mining regulations so that when an airstrip is required for access to a specific mining operation, the Plan of Operations will allow the permit holder to restrict the use of the airstrip.

## **2c) POWER SUPPLIES**

**FINDING:** Major mines require substantial power supplies, in the order of 20-50 megawatts (Mw). Any additional processing will increase that demand manyfold.

Many remote mines choose to generate their own power using modular diesel generating sets, but as evidenced by Red Dog, the permitting of on-site generation can become a limiting factor.

An alternative would be to use mines as a “base-load” to justify extending interties and/or building new off-site power plants to slowly extend power-by-wire to many of the remote villages that presently rely upon the Power Cost Equalization funds to reduce the high cost of electrical energy.

Activity at Donlin Creek, Shotgun, and Pebble Copper might justify an intertie from the Cook Inlet area to Bethel and the villages of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. Likewise in southeast Alaska planned interties from Tyee to Ketchikan and from Juneau to Hoonah could provide affordable power to mines and communities.

**THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT:**

The Governor and Legislature should continue to support the Alaska Industrial Development & Export Authority/Alaska Energy Authority, Alaska Village Electric Cooperative, and the South-east Intertie in extending electrical grids into areas where mineral development is occurring or anticipated.

### 3) STATE'S RIGHTS ISSUES

These issues have been separated because although they are also about ownership and access, both of which are fundamentally important in mineral investment decisions, two of them are not exclusively Alaskan issues, and allow for cooperative efforts with other states at the federal level.

RS 2477 trails may offer the only access across lands in Alaska where ownership patterns have changed and become more complex since statehood. Similarly, navigable waterways can provide the cheapest form of transportation for some mineralized areas, and some are inherently important gold placer deposits.

Western States have as much of a vested interest in RS 2477 access as does Alaska, and all states have an interest in ownership of the riverbeds and watercolumns of navigable rivers and lakes.

#### 3a) RS 2477 TRAILS

**FINDING:** In 1993 the Legislature appropriated funds for a task force to create an RS2477 trail inventory. Since 1993 there has been no funding to pursue Alaska's RS2477 trails through 'quiet title' action. The Alaska Division of Land has researched 1,950 trails proposed as RS2477 rights-of-way. Of these, 620 routes appear to qualify, about 250 need more information, and the remainder may not qualify due to circumstances such as lack of evidence, duplication of existing rights-of-way, or failure to meet the requirements of the RS2477 law.

The State has achieved Quiet Title to the Harrison Creek – Portage Creek Trail (RST 8) in the Circle Mining District. Because the original trail has been moved many times to accommodate active mining since 1976, (the deadline for identification of existing rights-of-way), the State has entered into a consent decree accepting a mutually agreeable 60-foot right-of-way to substitute for abandonment of portions of the existing trail.

This was one of 11 of the 620 "Qualified" trails that was "Certified" as a test case, and was selected for litigation because it had the broadest potential for setting precedent.

The Department of Law and the Division of Mining, Land & Water require funds for this legal effort to file "quiet title" actions in court to determine the validity of the routes.

#### THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT:

- 3a.1) The Legislature should fund a multi-year, multi-agency Capital Project of \$300,000 annually for the Division of Mining, Land & Water to work with the Department of Law and other agencies to aggressively pursue precedent-setting "quiet title" actions, and to preserve the State's rights.
- 3a.2) The Governor should aggressively assert "quiet title" to the routes with the best documentation. Furthermore, the State should assert an access route pursuant to Title XI of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act to test the process and set a precedent.

#### 3b) NAVIGABILITY

**FINDING:** State ownership of the beds of navigable waters is an inherent attribute of State sovereignty protected by the United States Constitution.

The State of Alaska owns all watercolumns and the land under most navigable waterways in Alaska. The Submerged Lands Act of 1953, the Alaska Statehood Act of 1958, and the Alaska State Constitution establish State ownership of watercolumns (actual water that is in a lake or river) and shorelands (the beds of navigable rivers). The courts have defined navigable waters as those used or susceptible to use for travel, trade, and commerce at the time of statehood.” (Emphasis added).

This interpretation would include not only the obviously navigable waterways such as the Yukon, Kuskokwim, Tanana, Fortymile, and Kobuk Rivers, but many smaller rivers used for travel. Some of the rivers that could be considered navigable, such as Birch Creek and the Fortymile River, contain important placer gold deposits.

While title to the beds of navigable waters vested in the state at Statehood, the federal courts have only ruled on the navigability of 13 waterways in Alaska. Alaska faces two types of legal hurdles in establishing its ownership of lands under navigable waters. The first is to determine what rivers and lakes are navigable under federal law. The second is to establish that the United States did not defeat the state’s title to navigable waters through pre-statehood federal reservations. The state has used the court action (quiet title) to address both of these hurdles by defining the types of rivers and lakes that are navigable under federal law, and to determine whether or not certain pre-statehood federal reservations defeated the state’s title.

In 1980, the State established a comprehensive navigability program within the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). This program was designed to respond to federal land conveyances and land management activities under the Alaska Statehood Act, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, and the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. The basic purpose of the program was to protect the public rights associated with navigable waters, including the State’s title to the submerged lands. The program also included monitoring of federal land conveyance and management programs to identify navigability disputes, seeking cooperative resolution of navigability problems through negotiation and legislation, and preparing for navigability litigation.

Budget cuts have greatly reduced the ability of State agencies to respond to navigability issues, and to pursue assertions of State ownership of navigable waters.

**THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT:**

The Legislature should make funding available to reinstate a centralized, systematic navigability program within the Department of Natural Resources. Additionally, funding should continue to be made available to the Department of Law to support any “quiet title” actions necessary to secure ownership of submerged lands. Further, the state and federal governments should establish more efficient methods for determining what waterbodies are navigable and therefore are state owned.

### **3c) EXPEDITED LAND TRANSFERS**

**FINDING:** Because of the high mineral potential proximal to existing transportation, in 1994 the Commission recommended that the State should seek expedited transfer of State-selected lands along the Denali Highway.

Subsequently, about 3,000 mining claims have been staked in this area during the last five years for the copper, nickel, and platinum-group element potential, and over \$3 million has been spent in exploration, including detailed airborne geophysical surveys and limited drilling. However, because of the uncertain ownership of State-selected land, the companies involved cannot justify further expensive evaluation of the area.

On October 4<sup>th</sup> 2000, the Division of Mining, Land & Water (DMLW) recognized the potential of this block, and requested that 235,000 acres of State-selected land between the Richardson Highway and the Maclaren River be added to the Land Conveyance Priority List (CPL). In June 2002 the State received final Tentative Approval (TA) to 6 of the 10 Townships selected, and the TA to the final 4 Townships was received in December, 2002.

Furthermore, on September 9, 2002, a request was made to add an additional 25 Townships to the CPL. These 576,000 acres are predominantly north of the Denali Highway between the Maclaren and Susitna Rivers.

**THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT:**

The Governor and the Legislature should direct the Division of Mining, Land & Water to aggressively pursue expedited transfer of State-selected lands along the Denali Highway where there is demonstrated potential for mineral development.

## **4) DATA ACQUISITION**

Many potential investors in Alaska's mineral industry are discouraged by the lack of detailed geologic information, and choose to invest in areas that have more public data to guide grassroots exploration. Those companies that have been successful in exploration, and identified prospects worthy of development, find that they are expected to fully define the baseline data of the whole area surrounding their discovery, because no such database exists.

### **4a) GEOPHYSICAL AND GEOLOGICAL MAPPING**

**FINDING:** Since 1993, State-funded airborne geophysical surveys have covered approximately 8,500 square miles of the State of Alaska's 162,500 square mile land entitlement, at a total cost of \$ 3.69 million. Additional funding has been invested by the State to complete the geologic mapping on the ground that is necessary to allow interpretation of the airborne surveys.

An additional \$1.57 million has been invested by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and other entities to survey about 3,800 square miles of predominantly federal land in the state.

During this same period, the mining industry has invested \$367 million in exploration in the state, and has staked thousands of new claims based on the results of the surveys.

This increased activity was the intent of the surveys and will accelerate discovery of new Alaskan mineral deposits. However, with a land base of 162,500 square miles, much of it chosen for its mineral potential, it will take the State of Alaska another 150 years to survey its land endowment at the present rate of funding.

The costs for the surveys have increased in recent years due to consolidation in the industry, and increased fuel and insurance costs.

**THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT:**

The Governor and the Legislature should invest \$5 million per year (approximately 21% of what industry spent on exploration in 2001) for the next decade, preferably through foundation funding, in airborne geophysical surveys and complementary geological and geochemical surveys.

#### **4b) BASELINE DATA**

**FINDING:** Water quality regulation in Alaska is growing increasingly complex. Often, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) is required to make decisions about water quality regulations without Alaska-specific data. Many Alaskans recognize the need to develop sound environmental baseline information. This research should extend to development of appropriate aquatic life criteria for acute and chronic toxicity under Alaska conditions.

**THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT:**

The Governor should direct the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation to work with industry to develop priorities for basic research on topics important to Alaska, such as total dissolved solids and pH.

### **5) REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**FINDING:** In many regions of Alaska, mineral development is one of the few sectors that might offer the opportunity for a sustainable economy, to provide family wage jobs, and add significantly to the local tax base (e.g. Red Dog in the Northwest Arctic Borough, Usibelli Coal Mine in the Denali Borough, Fort Knox in the Fairbanks North Star Borough, and Greens Creek in the City & Borough of Juneau).

The following is a specific regional project, which is recommended to stimulate mineral development. If successful, such an integrated approach will have application throughout Alaska.

To stimulate investment by the private sector, the mineral potential, land status, infrastructure, and the constraints on development such as archeological sites or essential fish habitat, should be clearly identified in a GIS (Geographic Information System) database. In addition, communities in southeast Alaska which have been severely impacted by the decline in the timber industry have expressed interest in how they might be able to benefit from the minerals industry.

Based upon the economic deterioration in the region, excellent potential for mineral discovery, and a well-developed infrastructure, good candidates would be Prince of Wales Island, the Duncan Canal/Stikine mining districts, and the Haines region.

**THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT:**

The Governor and Legislature should appropriate \$250,000 for a two-year Capital Improvement Project. This project, administered by the Department of Community & Economic Development, would make relevant information available regarding mineral development opportunities in the economically depressed areas around the Porcupine district near Haines, the Duncan Canal and Bradfield regions in the Stikine mining district, and Prince of Wales Island, in a marketing format.

## 6) EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

### 6a) AMEREF

**FINDING:** The “Alaska Resource Kit” which is being used in the statewide public school system, is an excellent program for educating Alaska’s students in the issues and fundamentals of resource development. The Kit incorporates technical, economic, and environmental aspects into a balanced program that addresses mineral, timber, and energy development. Future kits will be developed to address our fishing resources as well.

The Program is a cooperative and successful effort between the Department of Education, and the Alaska Minerals and Energy Resource Education Fund (AMEREF).

The Department of Education develops the curriculum and is responsible for its implementation into the school system through funding provided for teacher training.

AMEREF is presently supported by the resource industries. AMEREF funds the production and replacement of teaching materials, ensures the technical accuracy of the material, and organizes and distributes the education kits. AMEREF is looking to expand the program by incurring additional funding through various grant programs.

The program provides a broad-based resource education for Alaska’s student’s which is critical to their future ability to make well reasoned decisions about the use and protection of Alaska’s wealth of natural resources.

#### THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT:

The Governor and the Legislature should appropriate \$50,000 to the Division of Teaching and Learning Support, Minerals and Energy Education Program, as the State’s share of supporting the Alaska Mineral and Energy Resource Education Fund.

### 6b) SCHOOL OF MINERAL ENGINEERING

**FINDING:** The University of Alaska Fairbanks’ School of Mineral Engineering offers accredited degree programs for educating mining, geological, and petroleum engineers and conducts applied research through the Mineral Industry Research Laboratory and Petroleum Development Laboratory.

These professional degree and research programs are vital to the continued development of the State’s mineral and energy industries, to the jobs and incomes of its residents, and to the public revenues used to support education and other public services.

#### THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT:

The Governor and Legislature should provide adequate budgetary support to the UAF School of Mineral Engineering.

## 7) EXTENDING THE LIFE OF THE MINERALS COMMISSION

**FINDING.** The charge of the Alaska Minerals Commission is to make recommendations to the Governor and Legislature on ways to mitigate the constraints on the development of the minerals industry in Alaska. The 1986 Act creating the Alaska Minerals Commission has been amended twice to extend its life through February 1, 2004.

Since 1986, several pieces of legislation have passed that have helped foster the recent growth of this important industry (see Executive Summary of this report).

Now more than ever, it is important to diversify the Alaskan economy. The Commission serves to focus the ideas of the many industry volunteers who contribute recommendations, and the annual budget of \$10,000 is a good investment for the State.

### THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT:

The Governor and the Legislature should extend the term of the Alaska Minerals Commission and provide funding through February 1, 2014.

## PART B. FEDERAL ISSUES OF STATE CONCERN

### B1) MARINE TRANSPORTATION TASK FORCE

**FINDING:** Requirements of the Jones Act continue to impede reasonable resource development opportunities in Alaska. Originally the Merchant Marine Act of 1920, the Jones Act requires that ships operating within the United States be built at U. S. shipyards, and that they be owned and crewed by Americans. Drafted shortly after World War I, this legislation grew out of the belief that a strong U.S. merchant marine was essential to maintaining the security of our country.

Several recent studies have concluded that the Jones Act impedes commerce in the U.S. and hampers the development of an efficient intermodal transportation system. However, overwhelming support by Congress and carrier industry as recently as 2000 to maintain the Act in its present form resulted in a collapse of any organized efforts to change the law.

The one sector that is clearly under-served due to the Jones Act is bulk carriage. Bulk shipping by ocean is a service practically nonexistent in the domestic market, and commodity shippers such as mineral companies in Alaska seeking new markets for their products are especially affected.

### THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT:

The Governor and Alaska Legislature fund a marine transportation task force. The task force will identify and provide recommendations on key coastwise shipping questions related to transporting bulk resources like rock, sand, and gravel, coal, and other Alaska resources to regional and domestic markets. Associated infrastructure issues would include West Coast port facility support; markets (local, national and international); backhaul opportunities, a listing of available vessels in compliance, and potential solutions within the constraints of the Jones Act.

## **B2) DETAILED GEOLOGICAL MAPPING**

**FINDING:** Although the U. S. Geological Survey (USGS) has produced many regional geological maps at the 1:250,000 scale, there have been very few bedrock and surficial geologic maps, and almost no engineering geologic maps, produced at the 1:63,360 (1 inch = 1 mile) scale for Alaska. Given that the regional maps are compiled from 1:63,360 maps, it would be very useful if the USGS published more detailed maps, and supplemented existing data with more field mapping programs including surficial and engineering geologic maps

### **THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT:**

The Governor and Legislature should encourage the Congressional delegation to seek funding for the U. S. Geological Survey specifically for detailed mapping, including surficial and engineering, as well as bedrock geological mapping of the State of Alaska. Such funding should include cooperative programs between the University of Alaska, the Alaska Division of Geological & Geophysical Surveys and the U. S. Geological Survey.

## **B3) RESOLUTION OF OUTDATED SEGREGATIONS**

**FINDING:** Large tracts of land in Alaska that were “temporarily” withdrawn from public entry more than 30 years ago remain unnecessarily closed. These Outdated Segregations preclude mineral development, deny access to other lands and resources, and prohibit transfer of land selections to the State of Alaska and Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) corporations.

The land segregations were originally set aside for three primary purposes:

1. Selection and conveyance to ANCSA corporations;
2. Possible inclusion within federal conservation units; and
3. Industrial developments such as alternate candidates for a Trans-Alaska Pipeline corridor.

Until recently, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) was not motivated or funded to create the land management plans that are required before the land withdrawals can be removed by Congressional action.

In its January 2002 report, the Commission recommended that the Legislature urge the Congressional Delegation to expedite the process of removing the Outdated Segregations. House Joint Resolution No. 48 was drafted for this purpose, and it was passed on June 21, 2002. This resolution appears to have accomplished its intended purpose. The BLM has expressed its support for an accelerated program to address this issue. On November 18, 2002, the BLM Resources Advisory Council (RAC) unanimously passed Resolution 03-01. As a result the BLM RAC will form a working group that will prioritize pilot areas for fast-track resolution. The group will prepare findings and recommendations by May of 2003. The Alaska Minerals Commission applauds the Legislature for its action on this issue.

**THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT:**

The Governor and Legislature should direct the Department of Natural Resources to participate, monitor, encourage, and assist the BLM, to the extent necessary and possible, as the federal agency goes about the process of creating land management plans, removing outdated segregations, and completing conveyance of lands to the State and ANCSA corporations.

## **B4) ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT**

**FINDING:** Protection of “Essential Fish Habitat” (EFH) is a key component of the 1996 Sustainable Fisheries Act (SFA), which amended the 1976 Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act (MSFCMA).

Under the SFA, eight Regional Fisheries Management Councils develop Fisheries Management Plans for important fish species, and provide this information to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). The NMFS has defined essential fish habitats very broadly, and throughout the western states has included all waters currently accessible to salmon. All federal agencies involved in any kind of development are required to consult NMFS if their actions “may adversely affect EFHs.”

This broad mandate will, at best, slow permitting with a complex consultative process, or in the worst case result in project denial or modifications that effectively prohibit resource development. Thus “Essential Fish Habitat” has the potential to be at least as onerous as the Corps of Engineers 404 “Wetlands” permitting.

**THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT:**

The Governor and Legislature should work with the Congressional Delegation to limit the authority of the National Marine Fisheries Service to marine waters, and leave management of anadromous fish within state waters to the Alaska Department of Fish & Game.

## **B5) ANILCA PROVISIONS**

**FINDING:** In order to assure passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) in 1980, there were several sections included to protect pre-existing rights. Several provisions would allow mineral development on or near otherwise withdrawn land. Title XI addressed access across the Conservation System Units (CSU). Sections 101d and 1326b assured that no more land in Alaska would be considered for new CSU or similar designations. Sections 103b and 1302h provided mechanisms for the Secretary of the Interior to adjust the boundaries of CSU or to exchange lands within them to exclude mineralized areas.

**THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT:**

The Governor and Legislature, through the Attorney General's office, the State's Washington D.C. office, and the Congressional Delegation should insist that the federal administration:

- B5a) Provide access across Conservation System Units (CSU) as required by Title XI of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA);
- B5b) Prohibit the creation of additional CSU lands in Alaska as required by Sections 101d and 1326b of ANILCA; and
- B5c) Exchange mineralized areas from existing CSU under the authority of Sections 103b and 1302h of ANILCA.

# **APPENDIX A ENABLING LEGISLATION**

## **CHAPTER 98 SESSION LAWS OF ALASKA, 1986 AS AMENDED BY CHAPTER 12 SESSION LAWS OF ALASKA, 1998**

### **AN ACT**

Relating to the Alaska Minerals Commission; and providing for an effective date.

Section 1. (a) The legislature finds that the minerals industries, including metallic minerals, industrial minerals, and hydrocarbons, have traditionally and continue to be the major source of wealth and income in the state.

(b) The legislature further finds that there are major constraints on the continued development of a diverse mineral industry in the state, including the Environmental Protection Agency's effluent guidelines, state water quality standards and improperly classified streams and rivers, restriction on surface access, complex and numerous permitting requirements, and limited access to minerals through mineral closing orders and restrictions on multiple use through state and federal land use plans.

Section 2. ALASKA MINERALS COMMISSION ESTABLISHED. (a) The Alaska Minerals Commission is established in the Department of Commerce and Economic Development.

(b) The Commission is composed of 11 members. The Commission shall be composed of individuals who have at least five years' experience in the various aspects of the minerals industries in the state. The Governor shall appoint five members of the Commission, one of whom must reside in a rural community. The President of the Senate shall appoint three members of the Commission. The Speaker of the House of Representatives shall appoint three members of the Commission. Each member serves at the pleasure of the appointing authority.

(c) The Commission shall make recommendations to the Governor and to the Legislature on ways to mitigate the constraints, including governmental constraints, on development of minerals, including coal, in the State.

(d) The Commission shall report its recommendations each year to the Governor and the Legislature during the first 10 days of the regular session of the Legislature.

Sec. 3. This Act is repealed February 1, 1994.\*

Sec. 4. This Act takes effect immediately in accordance with AS 01.10.070(c)

\*Note: The Act was amended to extend the life of the Commission to February 1, 2004.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **ALASKA MINERALS COMMISSION STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

The Alaska Minerals Commission was created by the 14th Legislature in Chapter 38 of the Session Laws of 1986 and was established to make recommendations to the Governor and to the Legislature on ways to mitigate constraints on the development of minerals in the State.

The minerals industry offers the greatest potential of any Alaska industry for expanding and diversifying the State's economic base; for increasing Statewide employment; and for generating new wealth to create businesses and provide revenues for State and local governments.

However, Alaska has a complex pattern of land ownership and management; has overlapping and uncertain regulatory requirements; has unique geographic, geologic and climatic conditions; and has an undeveloped transportation system.

To attract the capital necessary for the exploration and development of new mines; to ensure that mines can be developed feasibly and in a timely fashion; and to ensure that producing mines remain viable—constraints on the industry must be mitigated.

The Alaska Minerals Commission will prepare reports for the First and Second Sessions of the 15th Legislature and the First Session of the 16th Legislature, recommending to the Governor and to the Legislature the adoption of legislation and the implementation of administrative policy that will best accomplish the statement of policy found in Article VIII, of the Constitution of Alaska:

“It is the policy of the State to encourage the settlement of its land and development of its resources by making them available for maximum use consistent with the public interest.”

And the statement of policy found in the President's National Materials and Minerals Report to Congress of April 5, 1982:

“It is the policy of this administration to decrease America's mineral vulnerability by taking positive action that will promote our national security, help ensure a healthy and vigorous economy, create American jobs, and protect America's national resources and environment.”

The goals and recommendations of the Alaska Minerals Commission are to assure that the Legislature and the State administration endorse and promote development of a viable mining industry in the State.

# APPENDIX C

## MINERAL POLICY ACT

Sec. 44.99.110. Declaration of state mineral policy. The Legislature, acting under art. VIII, sec. 1 of the Constitution of the State of Alaska, in an effort to further the economic development of the state, to maintain a sound economy and stable employment, and to encourage responsible economic development within the state for the benefit of present and future generations through the proper conservation and development of the abundant mineral resources within the state, including metals, industrial minerals, and coal, declares as the mineral policy of the state that

(1) mineral exploration and development be given fair and equitable consideration with other resource use in the multiple use management of state land;

(2) mineral development be encouraged through reasonable and consistent non-duplicative regulations and administrative stipulations;

(3) mineral development and the entry into the marketplace of mineral products be considered in developing a statewide transportation infrastructure system;

(4) mineral development be encouraged through appropriate public information and education, scientific research, technical studies, and the University of Alaska program involvement;

(5) economic development with respect to the state mineral industry be encouraged with Pacific Rim nations (Sec.1 Ch. 138 SLA 1988).

# APPENDIX D

## RECOMMENDATIONS IMPLEMENTED

During 2002 several of the recommendations from the January 2002 Alaska Minerals Commission report were effected, or substantial progress was made in their implementation.

- Funding was provided for the airborne geophysical surveys and for Alaska Mineral and Energy Education Fund (AMEREF).
- Several changes in the Water Quality Standards were proposed for implementation by the Department of Environmental Conservation.
- Funding was provided to study the effects of the State assuming primacy for the NPDES (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System) process.
- Parts of the “Denali Block” were tentatively approved for State ownership.

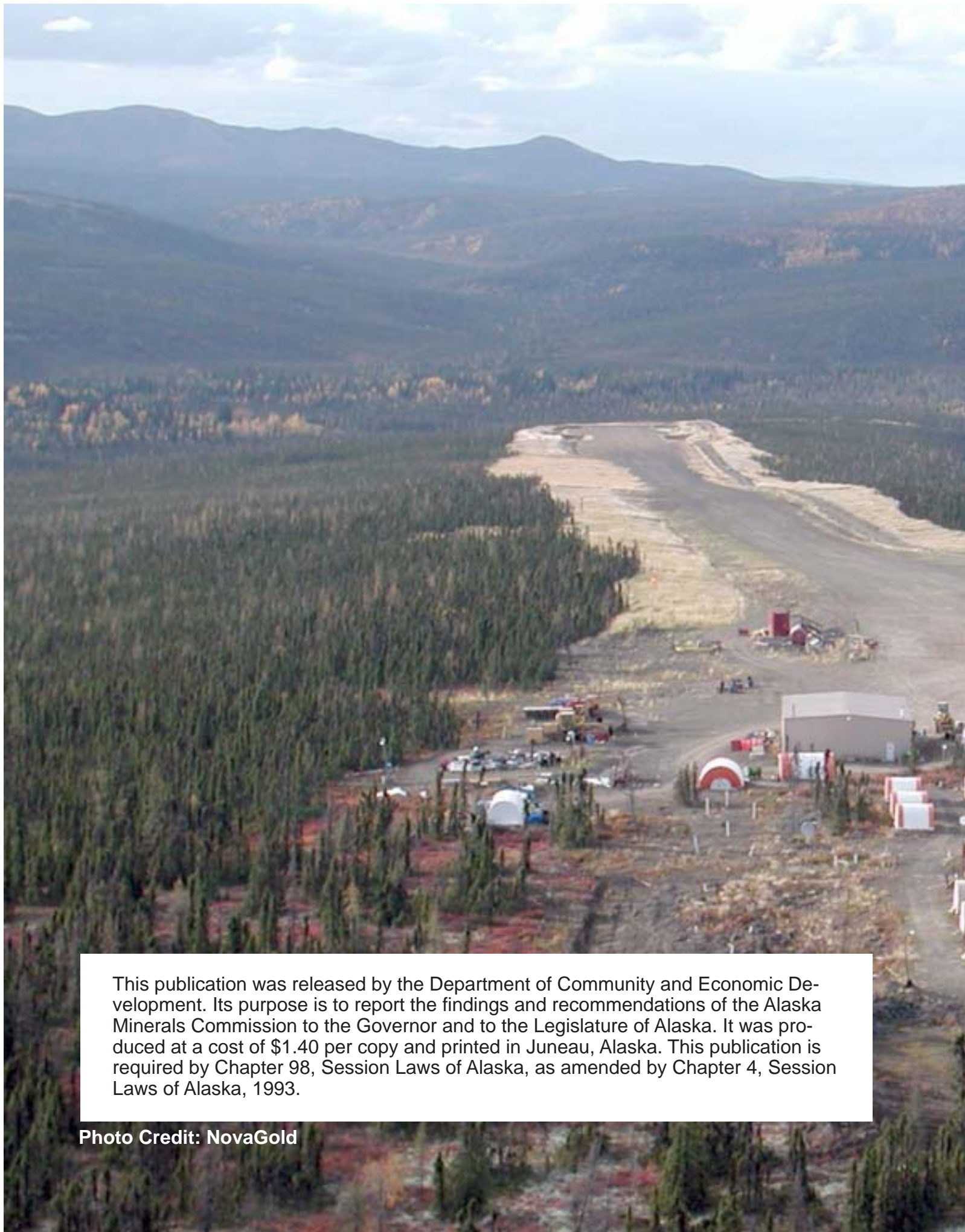
Since the first report in 1987 there have been numerous implemented recommendations of the Alaska Minerals Commission, including:

- Passage of Alaska Mineral Policy Act (1988);
- Funding for the AMEREF program (1987-2002);
- Funding for the Citizen’s Advisory Commission on Federal Areas (1991-1998);
- Addition of the Department of Commerce to the Resource Cabinet (1992);
- Exemption of minerals from municipal in-situ taxation (1992);
- Funding for airborne geophysical surveys (1992-2002);
- Creation of a task force for RS2477 trail inventory (1993);
- Restriction of Mineral Closing Orders (1993);
- Protection for claimants on state-selected land (1994);
- Extending terms of permits when legal impediments prevent use (1994);
- Selection of lands with high mineral potential (1994);
- Passage of the Exploration Incentives Act (1995);
- Passage of the Diminutive Discharge Bill (1995);
- Providing more flexible work hours for miners (1996);
- Allowing coal mines access to the state bonding pool (1996);
- Assertion of RS2477 rights-of-way (1997);
- Legislative Resolution 31 was passed opposing International Parks, World Heritage Sites, and Marine Biosphere Reserves in western Alaska, and supporting the federal American Lands Sovereignty Protection Act (1997);
- Resolution of the Mental Health Lands issue (1997);
- Funding was provided to update equipment in the Records Offices (1998);
- Establishment of a rational State water quality standard for arsenic (1998);
- The Alaska Minerals Commission was authorized to continue until February 2004 (1998);
- Baseline water quality studies by the U. S. Geological Survey and the Division of Mining, Land and Water continued in the Fortymile and Goodpaster watersheds (1998-2001);

- The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) received funds for a core permitting team (2001);
- Some State-selected lands in the Denali Highway area were tentatively approved for State ownership (2002);
- The DEC proposed necessary changes to the State's Water Quality Standards (2002);
- Funds were appropriated to study the desirability of the State assuming primacy for the NPDES (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination Discharge System) process (2002).
- Funding was provided for the airborne geophysical surveys and for Alaska Mineral and Energy Education Fund (AMEREF), and
- Several changes in the Water Quality Standards were proposed for implementation by the Department of Environmental Conservation (2002).

Obviously the Commission cannot take sole credit for the resolution of many of these issues, but it is encouraging to note the success of Commission recommendations, thanks to the efforts of the Legislators and Governors in recent years.





This publication was released by the Department of Community and Economic Development. Its purpose is to report the findings and recommendations of the Alaska Minerals Commission to the Governor and to the Legislature of Alaska. It was produced at a cost of \$1.40 per copy and printed in Juneau, Alaska. This publication is required by Chapter 98, Session Laws of Alaska, as amended by Chapter 4, Session Laws of Alaska, 1993.

**Photo Credit: NovaGold**