

For Immediate Release

April 12, 2024

Protecting a Fragile Ecosystem: A Unified Position to Protect the Safety Sound & Bonanza Channel Estuary near Nome, Alaska

The Village of Solomon, Solomon Native Corporation, Kawerak, Inc., Bering Straits Native Corporation, Sitnasuak Native Corporation, and Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation join together in opposition to IPOP, LLC's proposed mining activity near the Bonanza Channel.

The proposed mining activity poses a significant threat to The Clean Waters Act protections for essential fish habitats, resulting in irreversible impacts on the local aquatic ecosystem and fisheries resources. The Bonanza Channel provides fish and wildlife with an estuary to produce young, provides shelter from predators, and is a source of food. There are approximately 10 Native Allotments and over 100 campsites all along the Bonanza Channel area due to its prime location for hunting, fishing, and gathering, helping to ensure food security.

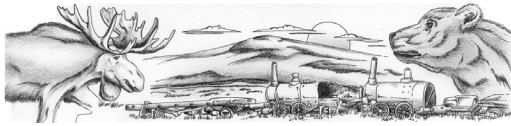
The Bonanza Channel serves as a vital hub for both non-consumption use (i.e. birdwatching) and subsistence activities. It is an area rich with migratory birds, protected marine mammals, fish and land resources such as moose, bears, plants and berries.

The Southern Seward Peninsula is in the midst of a salmon crisis that has lasted nearly five years. The majority of salmon that enter the Bonanza Channel and Safety Sound Estuary come through the eastern most outlet just past the Bonanza Bridge. If IPOP is allowed to dredge and mine these waters, their operations will impact salmon migration, further exacerbating salmon declines. The Bonanza Channel and Safety Sound are listed in the Anadromous Body of Water Catalog and chum salmon are noted by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to have spawning grounds in close proximity to the proposed dredging and mining operation. Further, Safety Sound has been documented as an important rearing and growth habitat for juvenile chum salmon as they migrate to the ocean.

The Army Corps of Engineers' Pacific Division's actions to overturn the Alaska Region's decision to deny IPOP's mining project fails to consider the opposition of local testimony and comments, is contrary to actions requested during Tribal Consultation with the Village of Solomon, and ignores the recommendations of the US Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA. The listed Tribe, Tribal organizations and non-governmental organizations within the Bering Straits region request Congressional intervention on this issue and ask you to obtain an Engineer Inspector General Report on the process that led to the reversal of the USACE's thoroughly and publicly considered initial permit denial. Additionally, we request that USACE Headquarters overrule the Pacific Division's flawed reversal of the Alaska Division's original permit denial.

For the protection of the pristine environment and subsistence resources of the Bonanza Channel and Safety Sound Estuary, we urge your intervention.

For more information on NSEDC, Kawerak, Inc, BSNC, Village of Solomon, Solomon Native Corporation opposition to mining in the Bonanza Channel, contact either NSEDC COO's Tyler Rhodes at 907.443.2477 or tyler@nsedc.com or Kawerak, Inc. Vice-President of Natural Resources Brandon Ahmasuk at 907.443.4265 or bahmasuk@kawerak.org or Village of Solomon President Kirsten Timbers at 907.443.4985 or tc.sol@kawerak.org or BSNC Larry Pederson, Vice-President of Nome Operations at LPederson@beringstraits.com.



Village of Solomon

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kirsten Timbers".

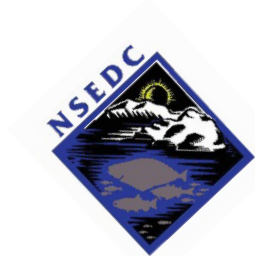
Kirsten Timbers, President



Melanie Bahnke

Melanie Bahnke (Apr 12, 2024 19:30 AKDT)

Melanie Bahnke, President



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Janis Ivanoff".

Janis Ivanoff, President & CEO



Liz Johnson

Elizabeth Johnson, President



Cindy Massie

Cindy Massie (Apr 22, 2024 09:15 AKDT)

Cindy Massie, President



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charles Fagerstrom".

Charles Fagerstrom, President/CEO