



Fortymile Mining District
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US Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
Bronk Jorgensen – Board of Trustees
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I would like to thank the Committee for letting the Mining District testify today.

The Fortymile Mining District is currently made up of about 100 miners and was established on the Fortymile Bar of the Fortymile River on March 25th, 1898 under the 1866 Mining Act and the 1872 General Mining Act, making the district 118 years old this week. The District is approximately six thousand square miles and is the oldest and longest standing Mining District in the State of Alaska. Since 1898, the District has been actively engaged with Governmental agencies to promote family placer mines and create a healthy and vibrant environment for all user groups of the Fortymile River watershed.

Placer mining in the Fortymile is a clean process, no acid leaching or other chemicals are used, just water and hard work. The overall footprint is minimal to the extent that the 1986 Environmental impact statement showed that collectively all placer mining in the Fortymile District would have no significant impact. The number of acres that the EIS assumed in 1986 would be mined by 1996 hasn't even been reached today and we are 30 years out. Total all placer activity in the Fortymile is smaller than an Iowa Farm.

Clearly, gold is a critical part of our society, needed in the assembly of vehicles, computers, cell phones and all kinds of other necessities. The gold produced by our operations is used for these and other items, without the environmental impact caused by other forms of mining.

All placer miners in the state are currently facing an unprecedented obstacle in dealing with regulatory agencies like the BLM, EPA, DEC, and US Army Core of Engineers, in spite of the fact that there is no history of any environmental damage done by any members of our District.

We are inundated by Instructional Memoranda's, reinterpretation of regulations and a "REM Policy" for reclamation.

BLM has failed to provide adequate funding and staffing for the 3809 mining program but at the same time has spend hundreds of thousands on the REM policy.

The BLM's use of Area's of Critical Environmental Concern will close off access and lock up over 700,000 federal acres and essentially landlocking thousands of more acres owned by Doyon and the State of Alaska in the Fortymile alone. This will remove any possibility of critical

strategic mineral prospecting in these areas. The ACEC's are also clearly contrary to the "no more" clause of ANILCA.

In 2008 the BLM started a scoping process to replace the individual resource management plans for the Fortymile Rivers, White Mountains and the Steese National Conservation Area. The BLM has claimed that they are only amending, consolidating and updating these Resource Management Plans for each area. This is incorrect; the BLM is "replacing" these plans with the proposed Eastern Interior Management Plan which includes ACEC's.

The current Fortymile Rivers Management Plan was required by and was approved by Congress in 1982. The BLM does have the ability to update the plan but not "replace" it as stated on the BLM's website.

Sitting in front of me is the old plan and the new proposed plan. There is something fundamentally wrong with what is happening when you look at these two piles. The BLM is treating the Fortymile District as if it were some evil entity that needs to be governed with an iron fist, if not destroyed entirely, without any basis whatsoever for doing so.

Currently in the Fortymile, BLM will not allow any new claims to be staked because of land withdrawals. This is in direct conflict with the 1872 Mining Law which gives the citizens of this country the right to mine and ANILCA specifically granted prior existing rights to the users of resource and the rights they had.

The Fortymile District would like to be positive and what we need to be doing is helping family placer operations so they can be successful which will help the economy and strengthen national security. But with the current regulatory scheme it is tough to be positive.

In essence this boils down to federal overreach that goes against the Statehood Act, ANCSA, and ANILCA.

We need to lift the federal land withdrawals so that federal ground is again as it was supposed to be, is open to staking.

As a multi use agency, BLM should be helping to develop placer mines and access to private, native and state land. Not rolling out hundreds of pages of new regulations, Instructional Memoranda's and in house policy.

Let's try to work on reducing the regulatory paperwork and encourage more people to go out and develop small placer operations.

Thank you for giving me the time to address the committee.