

Chefornak Opposes Donlin Mine

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The proposed Donlin mine would impact 3,500 acres of wetlands in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta.

CREDIT KATIE BASILE / KYUK

Chefornak is the 10th tribe to pass an anti-Donlin resolution. Its council passed the measure opposing the proposed Donlin gold mine on Tuesday.

The Council's Executive Director, Bernadette Lewis, says that the council members brought up concerns about the mine's impact to subsistence and health. Chefornak sits on the coast next to the Bering Sea, more than 200 miles west of the proposed site.

The mine could be one of the biggest gold mines in the world if completed, and many of its opponents worry that a mine accident could

release mercury and cyanide into the Kuskokwim River, where a lot of food for the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta comes from.

Donlin spokesman Kurt Parkan wrote in an email that "Donlin Gold and Calista's commitment, and the commitment of the government agencies issuing us permits, is that it be done safely."

Nine other tribes have opposed the mine in addition to Chefornak. They are the Bethel ONC tribe, Eek, Tuluksak, Tununak, Nunapitchuk, Chuloonawick, Kwigillingok, Kongiganak, and Napakiak.

It's unclear whether or not these resolutions will have an impact on an upcoming decision from the Army Corps of Engineers. The federal agency is scheduled to roll out its record of decision on the project next week, which will determine how the Donlin project proceeds.