

ARCTIC AUDUBON SOCIETY

P.O. Box 82098
Fairbanks, AK 99708

www.arcticaudubon.org
arcticaudubon@gmail.com



RESOLUTION TO OPPOSE AMBLER ROAD

WHEREAS: The Arctic Audubon Society, a chapter of National Audubon Society, is a group of about 200 members residing north of the Alaska Range in Alaska; and

WHEREAS: Our mission is to protect Alaskan ecosystems by encouraging research, education and management that will contribute to appreciation and good stewardship of our natural heritage and to encourage participation in public processes that affect the environment; and

WHEREAS: The Arctic Audubon Society has many concerns about the “Ambler Road,” the State of Alaska’s plans for building a 211 mile-long industrial gravel road from the Dalton Highway to the Ambler Mining District in northwestern Alaska as proposed by Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA); and

WHEREAS: We respect the wishes of the local inhabitants who actively use and protect the fish, wildlife and plant resources that contribute to their subsistence lifestyle and oppose the Ambler Road; and

WHEREAS: The proposed Ambler Road will traverse the southern slopes of the Brooks Range crossing 2,900 waterways from tributary streams to major rivers that lace their way through countless acres of wetlands in an intact Arctic ecosystem of remote wildlands; and

WHEREAS: The Ambler Road will directly cross public conservation lands including Gates of the Arctic National Preserve and Kobuk Wild and Scenic River and harm the adjacent Gates of the Arctic National Park Wilderness Area. It will cross tributaries of the North Fork of the Koyukuk, Tinayguk, Alatna, and John Wild & Scenic Rivers and other Koyukuk tributaries flowing into the Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge and supporting its resources. We believe that it is important to maintain the integrity of these Conservation System Units for the purposes that they were established and that the proposed Ambler Road is not consistent with these goals; and

WHEREAS: The Ambler Road would affect areas that all hold rich habitat for migratory birds, particularly nesting shorebirds and waterfowl such as white-fronted geese. This area is also rich in resident species from moose to beaver and other fur-bearers to fish, including salmon, sheefish, whitefish, and more. Three caribou herds use the area during migration. The road bisects the north/south migration pattern of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd as they pass to their wintering grounds and disturbance poses risks of significant long-term impacts to their routes and habitats; and

WHEREAS: The Ambler Road will have the impacts that any road will have as it cuts through an intact arctic ecosystem like this including disruption of bird, animal and plant habitats, introducing noxious weeds spreading out from the road corridor, introduction of foreign and potentially toxic materials in road construction and truck loads, potential for accidental spills, degradation of clean air and water, transported foreign soils and dust that can coat large areas robbing the vegetation of sunlight; and

WHEREAS: This Arctic region of Alaska is already experiencing rapid warming and is stressed by climate change. Melting permafrost, river and stream erosion, changes to lakes and waterways and fish and wildlife make the cumulative impacts of the Ambler Road and mine project difficult but necessary to quantify; and

WHEREAS: We are concerned that this proposed private road is to access mines that do not yet exist, and therefore public need is speculative. Nonetheless, the cumulative impacts of the mines and related infrastructure and activities (gravel mines, processing facilities, tailings disposal areas, ore/export terminals, gaslines, ports, and serious risks of acid rock drainage, spills, and other contamination from mining) need to be fully evaluated for the Ambler Road project; and

WHEREAS: The Dalton Highway was originally a private industrial road but did not remain so for long. Who will ultimately pay the price for the “private” part? The full past and future costs of the Ambler Road to the public interest and the State of Alaska in these times of declining budgets need to be evaluated for road planning, financing and debt liabilities, construction, maintenance, public safety, environmental and natural resource monitoring, restoration, rehabilitation, and removal; and

WHEREAS: In the long view, the Ambler road would be the beginning of opening many more road proposals and development schemes without a comprehensive plan for the future of the area. How would the mined ore be shipped? An additional road corridor to a Bering Sea port risks significant impacts to important fish and wildlife habitats and conservation units which could include Noatak National Preserve, Kobuk Valley National Park, Selawik National Wildlife Refuge, Selawik and Salmon Wild & Scenic Rivers, and Cape Krusenstern National Monument.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Arctic Audubon Society opposes building an industrial gravel road from the Dalton Highway to the Ambler Mining District in northwestern Alaska as proposed by Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA) for the State of Alaska; and.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Arctic Audubon Society will share this resolution and concerns about the Ambler Road in public processes and provide to affected federal land managers including Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, and Fish and Wildlife Service; the Governor of Alaska, Alaska legislators including the Interior Delegation and House Resources Committee Co-Chairs; and Alaska's Congressional delegation.

This resolution was adopted by the Arctic Audubon Society Board of Directors at its monthly meeting on January 10, 2018.

Gail Mayo, Conservation Committee

Sherry Lewis, Board President