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March 2, 2021

Mr. Richard Dudek  
Minerals Administrator  
Tongass National Minerals Forest Group  
8510 Mendenhall Loop Road  
Juneau, AK. 99801  
[richard.e.dudek@usda.gov](mailto:richard.e.dudek@usda.gov)

Dear Mr. Dudek,

The Alaska Miners Association (AMA) is writing to support the US Forest Service's approval of Grande Portage's 2021 exploration drilling program at the Herbert Gold Project. The project is an important contributor to the local and state economies, and will not have significant negative impacts on the quality of the human environment.

AMA is a professional membership trade organization established in 1939 to represent the mining industry in Alaska. We are composed of more than 1,400 members that come from eight statewide branches: Anchorage, Denali, Fairbanks, Haines, Juneau, Kenai, Ketchikan/Prince of Wales, and Nome. Our members include individual prospectors, geologists, engineers, suction dredge miners, small family mines, junior mining companies, major mining companies, Alaska Native Corporations, and the contracting sector that supports Alaska's mining industry.

Grande Portage has been successfully conducting exploration activities at the Herbert Gold Project since 2010 and the proposed program for 2021 is similar in scale to all the prior year's programs, which have all been conducted with minimal disturbance and properly reclaimed. For the 2021 exploration program, Grande Portage will conduct all activities subject to strict Forest Service guidelines, and has retained a professional wildlife biologist to ensure that all activities follow a mitigation plan to protect the winter goat habitat near the project area.

The contribution of projects such as the Herbert Gold Project are critical to the local economy, now more than ever considering the recent blows to the economy of Southeast Alaska from the pandemic and loss of cruise ship traffic. We must continue to encourage this type of new economic activity in this region of the state. The Greens Creek and Kensington mines are the largest and second largest taxpayers in the City and Borough of Juneau, and together employ over 800 workers.

We urge the Forest Service to approve Grande Portage's 2021 exploration program, and allow them to start operations as soon as possible in March. Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Deantha Skibinski  
Executive Director