

January 12, 2021

Mental Health Land Trust  
mhtlo@alaska.gov

RE: Notice under 11 AAC 99.050 of Decision to Issue a Negotiated Mineral Lease -Amanita Project - Fairbanks MHT #94007 43

I am writing to voice objection to the proposed mining exploration described in the Notice under 11 AAC 99.050 of Decision to Issue a Negotiated Mineral Lease -Amanita Project - Fairbanks MHT #94007 43. As a person who was in the founding group of the Fairbanks Alliance for the Mentally Ill (now NAMI Fairbanks), I testified and worked to restore the Mental Health Trust Lands that had been diverted by the Alaska Legislature. Because of this involvement, I understand well the duties of the Mental Health Trust Board and the difficulties it has faced in carrying out these duties because of the period when mental trust lands were dispersed. I fought for the restoration of those lands and the establishment of the Mental Trust Lands Board, so it is very difficult for me to testify against an opportunity for the Board to realize financial gain on behalf of trust beneficiaries, but today I must.

According to the notice posted on the Mental Health Trust website:

*E.Adjacent Land Use Trends. Adjacent land use trends are almost exclusively mineral exploration and development and public recreation. The applicant leases a 14.6 km block of State of Alaska Mining Claims and an Upland Mining Lease. Beyond Avidian's share, the Fort Knox Mine is located contiguously just to the north.*

This notice fails to recognize that immediately to the south are a bird sanctuary and an established residential neighborhood.

As a retiree and resident of that neighborhood, I cannot fathom what the proposal's result in plummeting property values will do to my future. Beside the probable economic impact to me personally, I oppose the proposal on three major grounds: 1) the resulting change in the nature and use of the neighborhood in which I have owned a house since 1995, 2) the endangerment of the integrity of Amanita Road, which our whole neighborhood uses to reach our homes from Chena Hot Springs Road and which we maintain independent of any service area, and 3) the impossibility of noise abatement given the topography of the area.

#### Nature of the Neighborhood

I am sure I speak for the whole neighborhood when I say that we purchased our property in this area for the benefit of a quiet woodland setting and for the advantages of little traffic, privacy, quiet surroundings, and a "wilderburbs" life in the Fairbanks area. We live out of the delivery area of many town services, with no home mail delivery, a 13+-mile one-way commute to town facilities, no public transportation service, no polling place within our area, no commercial establishments (bars, grocery stores, shops of any kind) because, in purchasing our land, we valued a rural lifestyle in an undeveloped area. To establish an active mine within a mile or less of our homes and abutting some of our neighbors' properties where people have been living for decades, will fundamentally change the nature of our neighborhood, which is not as stated in the announcement "almost exclusively mineral exploration and development" in nature. Furthermore, the proposed mining activity would impinge and change the nature of established recreational trails and an Audubon bird sanctuary, other attractive features of the neighborhood as it is now.

### Amanita Road

Amanita Road is the main access to all our homes. It is maintained by voluntary labor and periodic collections from neighbors. It is a hilly, winding dirt road with drainage problems and challenges that exists outside a recognized service area or state maintenance. Even though the proposal describes preliminary access through what is now a recreational trail off Gilmore Trail, the challenges of establishing and maintaining a road suitable for heavy equipment from that direction make it very unlikely that there will not be additional traffic on Amanita, an established road more developed and, in parts, less steep, and that Amanita will not be used by intention or default. One doesn't need to be an engineer to understand that Amanita Road cannot bear any extended or additional traffic by heavy trucks or equipment. I challenge representatives of the Board to visit the road and find it suitable for any sort of industrial use, either primary or secondary.

### Noise

Because of the topography of the land in question between two parallel ridges, there is no way that noise from normal mining operation and even the proposed exploratory drilling and trenching will not carry throughout the Amanita neighborhood and likely extend to those living along Haida and possibly even Risse and Alice Roads, all to the south of the area. In a neighborhood where there are retirees like myself and self-employed individuals, there is no way that that noise will not be a constant in our homes. Now that I spend more daytime hours at my cabin on the top of the first, lower ridge, I have realized that the normal sounds of Alaska life here carry well summer and winter. There are daytime sounds of dog teams, construction, drilling, shooting, and other loud activities from the whole neighborhood that sound like they are nearby and then on closer investigation, I find that they are half a mile to a mile away in the bowl formed by the various ridges. Because these noises are intermittent, they are merely startling in an otherwise very quiet neighborhood. To have a constant backdrop of drilling operations, heavy equipment and trucks operating in and echoing through the area will fundamentally change living conditions here.

I do not have a well, so cannot speak to the effect of a mining operation on my water supply, but I join my neighbors who will be affected in that way with their concern.

Because I am a proponent of development of Mental Trust Lands for the benefit of the beneficiaries, I write fully realizing that my testimony sounds very much like a typical "Not in My Backyard" complaint. However, I challenge the Board to reflect on how they would react, even in their roles as trustees, if exploratory drilling or a mining operation were suddenly proposed adjoining or within a mile or less of their own homes. I count on the fact that the Board is not unreasonable and may not have been fully informed of the nature and location of the land proposed for development and will give our objections a fair and favorable hearing.

Sincerely,

Sue Sherif, Property Owner