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Legal filing challenges Trump and Interior approvals of the Ambler mining road

Agencies violated numerous laws and acted beyond their legal authority

ANCHORAGE, Alaska—Ten groups [filed an amended and supplemental complaint](#) today challenging the Trump administration’s 2025 decisions to reinstate unlawful permits for the proposed Ambler road. These groups, represented by Trustees for Alaska, have spent years in court fighting the proposed Ambler road because of the profound threat this 200-mile-plus industrial road would pose to the people, water, and wildlife of Northwest Alaska.

“Protecting Interior and Arctic Alaska requires thoughtful, lawful decision-making grounded in conservation and sustainable stewardship,” **said Krystal Lapp, president of the Northern Alaska Environmental Center.** “This administration’s decisions on the Ambler road proposal do the opposite by advancing an industrial project with lasting environmental consequences without fully addressing the risks to public lands, wildlife habitat, and the subsistence resources that local people have relied on and stewarded for millennia.”

The industrial gravel road would cut through Gates of the Arctic National Preserve and slice through one of the longest wildlife migration paths in the world, cross nearly 3,000 rivers and streams, dam tundra wetlands, and interrupt traditional Alaska Native ways of life. The road would fragment caribou habitat, and diminish food security, water quality, and access to hunting, fishing, and traditional activities.

Groups originally sued the Trump administration in 2020 for illegally approving the proposed road. Trustees filed their opening brief with the court in December 2021, but the court never ruled on the merits of the case. Instead, the Department of the Interior asked the court to allow it to address several legal errors and prepare a supplemental environmental impact statement. The lawsuit was paused during that process.

In 2024, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management determined the impacts of the proposed Ambler road to communities, food resources, and the land would be too significant and denied the requested right-of-way across Bureau lands. The agency took into account the numerous communities and community members along the road corridor who expressed their concerns and strong opposition to the project.

Despite those concerns, the Trump administration reinstated the permits in October 2025, with agencies making no effort to fix the original legal problems or address the major harmful impacts. Instead, the President focused on access to critical minerals, though critical mineral resources in the area remain largely unproven. When reinstating the permits, Trump also announced that the federal government was buying a 10 percent share of Trilogy Metals, one of the mining companies operating in the region.

The project proponent, the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority, a state agency, continues to throw millions of dollars at this project. The road is projected to cost over a billion dollars or more and require regular maintenance, yet AIDEA has yet to put forward a viable financial plan for mining companies to pay back the state. Alaskans could be on the hook to fund a private industrial access road for a foreign mining company.

“Ramming through approvals for this destructive industrial road without even trying to address the harms it will do to communities, and the lands and waters across a vast stretch of the Arctic shows just how reckless this administration is,” **said Suzanne Bostrom, senior staff attorney with Trustees for Alaska.** “This administration prioritizes the bank accounts of foreign mining companies over standing up for local communities and Alaskans. We’ll continue doing everything we can to protect clean water and air, local ways of life, and the health of the region.”

Today’s supplemental complaint raises arguments that the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, U.S. National Park Service, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers acted beyond their legal authority and broke numerous laws, including the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, National Environmental Policy Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. It also raises an argument that President Trump acted beyond the bounds of the law in directing the agencies to reapprove the project.

Trustees for Alaska represents the Northern Alaska Environmental Center, Alaska Community Action on Toxics, Alaska Wildlife Alliance, Alaska Wilderness League, Center for Biological Diversity, Earthworks, National Parks Conservation Association, Sierra Club, The Wilderness Society, and Winter Wildlands Alliance.

Group statements

“The Ambler Road isn't just a path of gravel; it is an industrial knife through the heart of the Brooks Range and the migratory paths of thousands of caribou,” **said Nicole Schmitt, executive director of Alaska Wildlife Alliance.** “The plan involves thousands of river and stream crossings, risking irreversible pollution to the watersheds that fuel our state’s fisheries. We cannot allow the short-term profits of foreign mining companies to sacrifice the long-term survival of Alaska’s most iconic wildlife and the people who depend on them.”

“We are opposed to the illegal action by the Trump administration to steamroll permitting for this industrial mining road,” **said Pamela Miller, executive director of Alaska Community Action on Toxics.** “We cannot allow the destruction of the lands, fish, and wildlife in one of the most fragile and culturally rich places in the world. The Administration has an obligation to protect the food security, sovereignty, health, and human rights of the Alaska Native communities that call this place home.”

“The Ambler road project is a perfect example of the Trump administration getting Alaska land and water policy backwards, and we are proud to continue this effort to hold them accountable,” **said Maddie Halloran, Alaska state director for the Alaska Wilderness League.** “Now that the federal government has directly invested in a mining company that depends on this road to profit from public lands, it’s clearer than ever that this venture prioritizes polluters over people.”

“The fact that the president has taken an unprecedented action to overturn a scientifically based decision protecting the region from a destructive road, which was supported by tens of thousands of public comments, including many from Alaska Native voices, undermines the whole public process,” **said Anneka Williams, Winter Wildlands Alliance policy director.** “The Ambler road will threaten sensitive Arctic landscapes and Native livelihoods, destroying public lands for the benefit of foreign mining interests. This action is completely unacceptable and that's why we're going to court.”

“We are opposed to any attempt to undermine the protection of Gates of the Arctic National Park and for the Alaska Native communities that rely on the Western Arctic caribou herd for their sustained way of life here,” **said Jim Adams, Alaska regional director for the National Parks Conservation Association.** “Overturning these rules upends half a century of commonsense protection and management of America’s public lands in Northwest Alaska that exist for all Americans. We’re in this fight to ensure this protected park landscape and all that depend on it, remain intact now and for generations from now.”

“This administration used taxpayer funds to buy shares in a mining corporation that wants public lands for a road to their nonexistent mine,” **said Aaron Mintzes, deputy policy director with Earthworks.** “These permits are not just unlawful, they reveal decision making that smacks of conflicts of interest and risks taxpayer money on a speculative investment.”

“Trump is trying to bypass the law to get the Ambler road built in one of the largest and most remarkable roadless areas left on Earth,” **said Cooper Freeman, Alaska director at the Center**

for Biological Diversity. “By reinstating these permits, the Trump administration is ignoring the catastrophic harm the road would inflict on the untrammelled Brooks Range and majestic wildlife like the Western Arctic caribou herd. We’re fully committed to ensuring our public lands aren’t sacrificed for speculative corporate mining.”

"This administration’s actions on the proposed Ambler road have exceeded its authority and are recklessly and illegally intended to push this destructive project forward despite thousands of Alaskans and dozens of local Tribes voicing strong opposition,” said **Matt Jackson, Alaska senior manager for The Wilderness Society.** “Future generations of Alaskans should have the same freedom to hunt for caribou, fish for salmon and experience the wilderness as we do. We have no choice but to fight for them and the wild landscape of this region.”

“The Ambler road will lead to irreparable harm to fragile landscapes in Alaska, the local communities that rely on them, and the Western Arctic Caribou herd,” said **Dan Ritzman, director of conservation for the Sierra Club.** “The Trump Administration dismissed local voices and flouted its obligations to enable the construction of this industrial corridor through intact forests. We are taking the administration to court, because they can’t ignore the law to benefit their wealthy friends.”

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