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Groups appeal State of Alaska's decision to grant an easement for the Ambler industrial road

Seven groups [filed an appeal](#) in Alaska Superior Court yesterday challenging a State of Alaska decision to grant an easement on State lands for the Ambler industrial road. The appeal outlines how the Alaska Department of Natural Resources violated the Alaska Constitution when approving the easement by failing to protect the public interest and take a hard look at all of the project's impacts on land, water, wildlife, and local communities. The agency also failed to provide essential information about the project or its impacts when holding a public comment period, making it impossible for Alaskans to participate in a meaningful way.

"A project this large affects public lands, rivers, fish, subsistence, access, and communities across the region, and any decision must fully look at the entire project and all the impacts," **said Krystal Lapp, interim executive director of the Northern Alaska Environmental Center.** "Alaskans should have meaningful information before decisions this big are made about public lands and resources. We deserve more than a decision that puts narrow economic interests before the interest of all Alaskans."

The Department of Natural Resources first granted an easement on State land for the Ambler industrial road in April 2025. Shortly after that decision, groups asked for reconsideration of the approval based on the constitutional requirements that apply to agencies when making State land decisions. The department issued its first decision reapproving the easement in November 2025 but pulled it back after the Alaska Supreme Court issued a ruling reiterating that the Alaska Constitution requires that the use of Alaska's natural resources is "for the maximum benefit of its people" and that agencies must consider all of the impacts of a project. The court also found that agencies must look at the whole project and not just parts of it when assessing those impacts.

In its latest easement approval in early September 2026, the department reapproved the easement for the road, claiming it did not need to do any more work to analyze the impacts of the project to meet its constitutional obligations.

"This decision does not protect the public's interest in clean water, healthy fish, subsistence, public access, and much, much more," **said Suzanne Bostrom, senior staff attorney with Trustees for Alaska.** "The agency has simply rehashed its original decision with vague words and explanations and, in doing so, disregarded its responsibilities under the Alaska Constitution and to all Alaskans."

The 220-plus mile industrial gravel road known as the Ambler road would destroy and pollute Arctic land and water, disrupt and harm the health of wildlife and people across a broad region in the southern Brooks Range, and cut through Gates of the Arctic National Preserve. The industrial road would pose multiple threats to the people, water, and wildlife of Northwest Alaska through impacts on caribou migrations, thousands of rivers and streams, an array of wildlife, and to the ways of life of communities and people in the region.

Law firm Trustees for Alaska represents seven groups in the lawsuit: Northern Alaska Environmental Center, Alaska Community Action on Toxics, Alaska Wilderness League, Center for Biological Diversity, National Parks Conservation Association, Sierra Club, and Winter Wildlands Alliance.

In addition, numerous local communities have voiced opposition to the road, which would fragment caribou habitat, pollute water, and diminish access to hunting, fishing, and traditional activities.

CLIENT QUOTES

"We cannot allow the destruction of the precious lands, fish, and wildlife in one of the most fragile and culturally rich places in the world," **said Pamela Miller, executive director of Alaska Community Action on Toxics.** "The Department of Natural Resources has an obligation to protect the food security, sovereignty, health, and human rights of the Alaska Native communities that call this place home. We are opposed to the illegal action by the department to grant an easement to the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority for this industrial mining road without consideration of the public interest and in violation of our Constitution."

"You can't carve up the Ambler road into pieces and pretend the full impacts disappear," **said Andy Moderow, Senior Director of Policy for Alaska Wilderness League.** "Alaska's Constitution requires the state to consider the full impacts of a project to the public interest, and that's exactly what the department failed to do. The lands, waters, wildlife, and people deserved better from the state of Alaska, with so much at stake in a road decision."

"A project such as the Ambler Road cannot be evaluated in isolation; rather, it must consider what activities such a road would enable," **said Anneka Williams, policy director for Winter Wildlands Alliance.** "If constructed, the Ambler Road would not only fragment wildlife habitat, disrupt traditional hunting grounds for Alaska Native communities, and threaten the integrity of one of the largest wild, snowy landscapes out there, it would also open the door to numerous gravel mine sites and other infrastructure projects in this sensitive Arctic ecosystem. The public deserves a decision that accounts for the project in its entirety, including cumulative impacts."

"We've known for years that the proposed 211-mile Ambler Road would be a disaster for Gates of the Arctic National Preserve and the Western Arctic Caribou herd that crosses it," **said Naawéiyaa Tagaban, Alaska Campaign Director for the National Parks Conservation**

Association. “The road is opposed by Alaskans across the state, including over 80 Alaska Native communities. That’s why we’re fighting the Alaska Department of Natural Resources’ approval of this project without basic information on how this would impact fish and wildlife, or even a consistent plan to look at. It’s another terrible example of wasting state money to benefit foreign mining companies and hurt Alaskans.”

“The Ambler Road would cut through one of the wildest and most ecologically important landscapes left in the country, threatening clean water, wildlife, and the communities that depend on them,” **said Dan Ritzman, Director of Sierra Club's Director of Conservation.**

“Alaskans deserve a thorough and transparent review of the full consequences of a project this massive before the state grants away public lands for an industrial mining road. We’re going to court because decisions with consequences this significant must account for the public interest and the full scope of what’s at stake.”

“This private mining road would needlessly carve up one of our nation’s last great intact wild landscapes,” **said Cooper Freeman, Alaska director at the Center for Biological Diversity.** “By greenlighting this terrible project to serve foreign mining interests, the state of Alaska has silenced fierce local opposition to degrading invaluable state lands. That’s not the way to steward the spectacular Brooks Range and Alaska’s struggling fish and wildlife.”

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