



Kensington Mine

Key Message

The Kensington Mine, run by Coeur Alaska, Inc., is an underground gold mine which has been in production since late June, 2010. Kensington provides approximately 200 jobs to Juneau and Southeast Alaska.

Background

The Kensington Mine is a historic underground gold mine located 45 miles north of Juneau, discovered in the late 1800s and operated into the early 1900s. In December of 2004, the Forest Service (lead agency), and cooperating agencies including the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Army Corps of Engineers (COE), and Alaska Department of Natural Resources, released the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision (ROD). The ROD approved the use of Lower Slate Lake for tailings disposal. Coeur began construction of the Kensington Gold Mine in 2005. Southeast Alaska Conservation Council brought a lawsuit alleging violations of the Clean Water Act against the COE and the Forest Service. The project was enjoined by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals pending a ruling by the Supreme Court. On 22 June 2009, the Supreme Court issued its decision in “Coeur Alaska, Inc. v. Southeast Alaska Conservation Council,” which allowed Coeur to complete development of the Kensington Gold Mine. During pre-injunction construction activities at Lower Slate Lake, Acid Rock Drainage (ARD) was discovered near the planned location of the tailings dam embankment. This resulted in a notice of violation issued to Coeur by the State of Alaska. Coeur continues to work with the State of Alaska and the Forest Service to protect water quality at that site.



Current Situation

Coeur plans to continue development of the Kensington Gold Mine in accordance with its approved Plan of Operation. Kensington continues to ramp up to full production of an estimated 2,000 tons per day through the mill, and full capability of the Tailings Treatment Facility Water Treatment Plant. Coeur continues to mitigate the ARD site at Lower Slate Lake with a water treatment plant and reducing rainfall infiltration at the source.



Photo from North end of Lower Slate Lake looking South towards Tailings Disposal Facility. 09/16/2010.

More Information

Marti Marshall, District Ranger, Tongass National Forest, (907) 789-6244

John Kato, Regional Geologist, Alaska Region, (907) 586-7869