

Where the Heck is Donlin?. The adventure continues.

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Ground Truth Trekking

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BJORN AND KIM PRESS RELEASE 2012 — Kim riding the Iditarod trail. — Get Photo (/photos/bjorn-and-kim-press-release-2012/)

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Chapter three: The Adventure Continues

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Where the Heck is Donlin? the film (/Journeys/Where-The-Heck-Is-Donlin-Movie.html);

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is an ongoing project about the proposed Donlin Gold Mine (/Issues/MetalsMining/Donlin-Creek-gold-mine-prospect.html) and a pair of Alaskan adventurers who travel through the potential footprint of this mine and look for some “ground truth”.

My partner Kim McNett and I have been working, for over a year, on Where the Heck is Donlin?. Donlin Gold is a very large open pit gold mine proposal (the largest gold mine in Alaska’s history and one of the largest undeveloped gold deposits in the world) in southwestern Alaska near the Kuskokwim River on Calista Native Corporation land. If this project happens it may bring both economic opportunities (http://www.labor.state.ak.us/trends/sep08.pdf) and environmental consequences (https://sites.google.com/site/donlincreekworkinggroup/mercury-overview)to this remote region. The goal of our film is to find out what Alaskans think, hope, and fear about this development in a balanced and honest documentary.

Last March we rode our fat bikes along the Iditarod Trail to McGrath (http://www.alaskadispatch.com/article/iditarod-highway), which is proximal to a proposed natural gas pipeline that may be built to supply energy to the mine. In the early summer we packrafted the length of the Kuskokwim river from The village of Nikolai to Bethel and engaged people on the topic of the mine. All told, we have traveled 850 miles entirely by** **human power.** **

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Now we plan on returning to the Kuskokwim River for our final chapter. The plan is to fly to the Village of Aniak and fat bike to Bethel in time for the Yupik dance festivalCama-I (http://bethelarts.com/). We hope to engage with residents, have a less hectic travel schedule and allow ourselves plenty of time. If the weather and trail conditions allow we hope to continue down river to Kuskokwim bay and out to the Bering Sea following the Cama-i festival.

We will be joined by Bethel resident and fat biker Martin Leonard (http://www.sustainruralalaska.net/) for this chapter and look forward to his company, experience and and insight of the region. Martin and I rode fat bikes (http://fatbikealaska.blogspot.com/) together in 2007 on the Kuskokwim River from Stony River to Aniak in an attempt to reach Bethel, but had to cut our trip short due to an early spring melt. We are excited to pick up where we left off.

Where the Heck is Donlin? the film, has been busy editing and we have an official trailer (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fS9mQzESWM8) of our project so far. We have also built a kickstarter (http://www.kickstarter.com/) trailer that will be posted when we return from the region in April. This has been a collaborative effort and we have received enormous support from the Northern Environmental Center (https://sites.google.com/site/donlincreekworkinggroup/home), Daniel Zatz (http://zatzworks.com/)cineflex footage, also incredible scoring from Seward musician Mark Teckenbrock. We would also like to thank George Overpeck for his editing and technical support.

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Stay tuned for updates and blog posts (/blog/) from the trail. You can also find us on Facebook (http://www.facebook.com/fatbikebjorn).

Thank you to everyone who has supported us in our effort to broaden the conversation about Alaska's second gold rush.

Bjørn Olson and Kim McNett.**

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