

## **KSM BRIEFER #2: GOLD IS THE PRIORITY**

The gigantic Kerr-Sulphurets-Mitchell (KSM) project being advanced by Seabridge Gold, Inc. (Seabridge), a Toronto-based junior exploration company, is a proposed low-grade open pit and underground gold-silver-copper mine.

If developed, KSM would be one of the world's largest gold-copper mines. While this mine, as with other mines, will produce copper and other metals along with gold, make no mistake, the KSM Project's primary target metal is gold. The proposal has always been promoted as a gold mine and is described by Seabridge Gold, Inc. as "One of the world's largest undeveloped gold-copper projects measured by reserves." However, Seabridge has recently been referencing the mine's principal metal of importance as copper and is now calling the project a proposed "copper-gold mine." Seabridge Gold, Inc. appears to have first spotlighted KSM's copper aspect (rather than gold) in a May 29, 2023 [letter](#) to Alaska's U.S. congressional representative extolling the "virtues" of the KSM Project.

To be clear, while it is now very much in vogue for the mining industry to tout its products as critical for addressing climate change, KSM has never really been about helping the world transition to a low-carbon future. In fact, based on the most recent mine plan, the KSM project is drifting even further away from a critical minerals source (copper) than what was presented in earlier mine plans. The most recent KSM project's plan proposes to actually reduce copper production by 28% and increase gold production by 22% from what was proposed in the previous plan for the first 33-years of the proposed 52-year life of mine.

Given the projected increased length of time before KSM's most copper-rich deposits would be mined, Seabridge's recent attempts to redefine the KSM project from a gold mine into a source for providing critical green energy minerals rings hollow. The delay and reduction in copper production also appears to refute Seabridge Gold's claim in its *2020 Inaugural Sustainability Report* that "the transition to a green economy will require large amounts of responsibly produced copper and we believe that Seabridge is uniquely positioned to contribute meaningfully to this supply" (p. 66).

It is also interesting to note that the actual emphasis on copper production is not planned until after the gold-rich deposits are mined-out. Which will likely not happen for at least four decades in the future regardless of how quickly Seabridge can sell its mine plan to a major mining company, if that even happens at all. This is hardly a strong indication to believe that Seabridge

Gold, Inc. has a genuine intention of prioritizing the development of the KSM Project into a meaningful contributor to the world's supply of copper at any time soon.

So, do we really need another low-grade open-pit gold mine? In a further feeble attempt to justify development of this massive gold mine, Seabridge Gold points out in its *2022 Sustainability Report* that gold also plays a role in the green transition (p. 12).

While this is marginally true, gold is not a critical material that necessitates additional mining. There are already sufficient above ground gold reserves to supply plenty of the metal for the green transition and globally. Only about eight percent of [gold demand](#) is used for technology while the rest of the annual gold production is driven by jewelry and investment demand. It is also interesting to note that the United States actually curtailed gold mining during WWII because it was not considered critical to the [war effort](#). Considering that we are now on a virtual “war footing” in our fight against anthropogenic climate change, reusing and recycling gold rather than digging more out of the ground would seem to be a much more environmentally and economically sound method for aiding the transition to a low-carbon future as opposed to developing giant gold mines in major salmon producing watersheds.

The construction and operation of a massive low-grade gold-copper mine in the headwaters of two renown salmon systems – the Unuk and Nass – that are of profound economic and cultural importance to downstream communities and that will also require intensive water treatment for centuries to come seems to be an extremely risky and unnecessary endeavor at best.



*Mitchell Creek below the KSM mine site (Bo Meredith, Alaska Department of Fish and Game)*

