

CHUITNA CITIZENS COALITION

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Editors Note: A press kit including images, B-roll, and a fact sheet on instream flow reservations is available at: <http://bit.ly/ChuitnaPress>

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DNR Opens Public Comment Period on Water Rights for Chuitna River

Public invited to weigh in on choice between wild salmon or coal strip mining

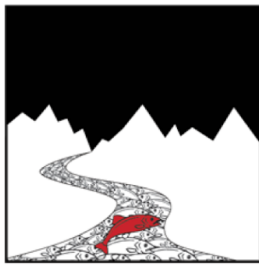
ANCHORAGE – The Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) opened a 15-day public comment period today on the Chuitna Citizens Coalition’s application to keep water in streams for salmon on Middle Creek. Middle Creek is an important salmon tributary of the Chuitna River watershed in Upper Cook Inlet where PacRim Coal proposes to strip mine through nearly 14 miles of salmon streams.

“The state of Alaska has a very simple choice to make between keeping water in streams for salmon or giving 100 percent of it to an Outside coal company to export coal to China,” said Judy Heilman, president and founding member of the Chuitna Citizens Coalition. “This application is a great opportunity for the Walker/Mallott Administration to stand with Alaskans and put fish first.”

The Chuitna Citizens Coalition and Cook Inletkeeper applied for the Instream Flow Reservation over 4 years ago; however, the Parnell administration failed to process the application until a October 2013 Superior Court ruling saying it must do so. At stake is whether the water in Middle Creek goes to protect wild Alaska salmon runs or to Delaware-based PacRim Coal, LLC. to mine and ship coal to Asian Markets.

“We were deeply disappointed in the Parnell Administration for drowning out the voices of Alaskans and failing to protect the salmon we rely on,” said Terry Jorgensen, a commercial fisherman who fishes a setnet lease near the mouth of the Chuitna River. “We’re encouraged Governor Walker’s commitments to include Alaskans in decision making and protect our invaluable wild salmon runs.”

Just 40 miles west of Anchorage, PacRim Coal’s proposed strip mine would be the first project in state history to mine directly through a wild salmon stream. Salmon habitat restoration after such intensive development has never been done before. Today’s announcement kicks off a 15-day public comment period where Alaskans can weigh in on



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whether water should be protected for salmon or given to an Outside company to export coal overseas..

“PacRim Coal’s first-of-its-kind proposal to mine through a salmon stream would set a dangerous precedent that would leave salmon streams across the state at risk,” said Jorgensen. “Do we leave water in streams for salmon, or do we give it to Outside companies to ship coal to China? For the next 15 days, Alaskans will have the opportunity to weigh in on this important decision.”

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The Chuitna Citizens Coalition is a diverse group of residents, landowners, sport and commercial fisherman, working to protect the beautiful Chuitna River from destruction by PacRim Coal.