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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Nunamta Aulukestai condemns inadequate public process in Pebble permit review
Controversial mining project imperils Bristol Bay watershed and thriving salmon fisheries

Nunamta Aulukestai, a coalition of Alaska Native Village Corporations in the Bristol Bay region, condemned the U.S. Army Corps for initiating a rushed and inadequate review process for the proposed Pebble mine permit.

“This is the most controversial and opposed industrial mining proposal in the state, one that puts enduring and record-breaking salmon runs at stake,” said Myrtice Evalt, acting executive director for Nunamta Aulukestai. “The Army Corps has started its review process by shortchanging the knowledge and concerns of the people who live there. Failing to hold hearings in all but one downstream village in the Nushagak drainage excludes the very people who rely on that watershed, and have for thousands of years.”

The scoping process outlined by the Army Corps will include a scant 30-day comment period that begins this weekend, a much shorter period than with other major projects. Developments like the Donlin Mine and the Alaska Stand Alone Gas Project included comment periods that ranged from 75 days to over 3 months.

When the EPA released its watershed assessment in June 2012, Sen. Lisa Murkowski and Rep. Don Young sent a letter stating that the 60-day comment period was too short and that the agency should increase it to 120 days.

The Corps timeline further limits Alaska voices by limiting how and where Alaskans can make comments:

- The scoping period will include a mere seven hearings, with only one in the Nushagak drainage, which is at considerable risk of mining contamination.
- Hearings scheduled in hub cities such as Dillingham and Homer will prohibit public testimony and instead require Alaskans to give private input in a separate room.
- Canada's Northern Dynasty Minerals, operating in Alaska as Pebble Limited Partnership, will be allowed to open up the hearings with a presentation about its permit application, and essentially be able to promote its interest while many Alaskans will not be allowed to speak publically or to speak at all.

“The Army Corps has shown its true colors, here,” Evalt said. “It does not value local input in this review process, and it has made it clear it will willfully exclude Alaska voices while giving a foreign mining company a prominent platform for pushing its agenda.”

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Nunamta Aulukestai is a coalition of Alaska Native Village Corporations and tribes in the Bristol Bay region dedicated to protecting the Bristol Bay watershed from unsustainable development.