

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



## REPRESENTATIVE LES GARA

February 2, 2012

Commissioner Dan Sullivan  
Department of Natural Resources  
550 W. 7th Ave, Suite 1260  
Anchorage, AK 99501-3557

Re: State Decision to Let Dredging Of Chuitna Watershed Move Forward

Dear Commissioner Sullivan:

As you know, your office recently rejected a petition that sought to protect the Chitna River from a proposal by Pac Rim to dredge 11 miles of a Chuitna tributary. That section, known as Middle Creek, is important wild Silver Salmon habitat, and as you know, the Chitna is an important King and Silver Salmon stream. Apart from destroying 11 miles of streambed, and the proposal to dig thirty feet below the streambed, there is the likelihood that this major disturbance will end silt into the main stem of the Chuitna, further degrading that river's salmon populations. It seems in your decision you disregard that actual proposal Pac Rim has presented.

I am asking that you withdraw that decision, and reconsider it.

It appears to us that in your decision declining to designate the Chuitna watershed as unsuitable for surface coal mining, you did not consider a significant aspect of PacRim's permit application. Your ruling disregards that PacRim's permit explicitly proposes to completely remove at least 11 miles of wild salmon spawning and rearing habitat for a period of 25 years, digging down at least 300 feet below the streambed, thereby destroying not only the streambed but also the underlying ecosystem functions that support a salmon stream and permanently impacting the water quality for the permit area and for all downstream reaches of the Chuitna River.

You have stated that you "found the permitting process should proceed because evidence in the record demonstrates that reclamation in the Chuitna watershed is, in fact feasible." But to reach that conclusion, DNR refused to consider PacRim's mining plans to remove 11 miles of salmon stream and the scientific realities of stream restoration, and would consider that at a later date. It seems that your department should not, and cannot ignore the actual proposal that was put before you, and claim that since you don't know this proposal will go forward, you don't have to assess its possible impacts.

I would ask you to fully review the scientific realities of the actual proposal Pac Rim has made, and not disregard them under the theory that an alternative plan may come forward in the future.

Thank you for your reconsideration.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Les Gara".

Rep. Les Gara