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**PacRim Coal Suspends Efforts to Strip Mine through 14 Miles of Salmon Stream at Chuitna River**

*Announcement a major victory for fishermen, locals and Alaska Natives*

Beluga, AK -- Local residents and fisherman breathed a long sigh of relief today after Outside company PacRim Coal announced it is suspending efforts to mine directly through 14 miles of wild salmon stream on the Chuitna River.

“Today is a victory for wild salmon in our state. Alaskans had nothing to gain and everything to lose from PacRim’s Chuitna Coal project,” said Judy Heilman, a founder of the Chuitna Citizens Coalition. “Trading Alaska’s wild salmon for coal to send overseas would have threatened our way of life on West Cook Inlet and set a dangerous precedent for wild salmon across the state. My husband and I will sleep easier tonight knowing the river where we taught our grandchildren to fish has a safer future.”

Owned by Texas billionaires and incorporated in Delaware, PacRim Coal sent a brief letter to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers dated March 30, 2017 saying the company had “decided to suspend pursuit of permitting efforts on the Chuitna Coal Project.”

Since the company again began pursuing permits in 2006, Alaskans have consistently and vocally opposed the Chuitna Coal Project and the precedent it would have set as the first-of-its-kind to mine directly through a wild salmon stream.

“In Alaska we eat, live and breathe wild salmon, which provide tens of thousands of jobs for fishermen,” said Ron Burnett, a founding member of the Chuitna Citizens Coalition.

“PacRim’s coal mine would have devastated the Chuitna River at a time when we need to be taking care of what we’ve got left. Properly taken care of, the Chuitna River will continue to produce wild salmon and sustain family-supporting jobs indefinitely. Today is a good day for our wild salmon.”

The land that PacRim Coal sought to mine was leased to the company by the Alaska Mental Health Trust.

“We hope the Alaska Mental Health Trust will finally recognize that coal is a resource of the 18th century, and not something to invest in for the future,” said Carly Wier, Executive Director of Cook Inletkeeper, a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting clean water and healthy salmon in the Cook Inlet watershed. “PacRim seems to be making calculations that coal companies all over the world are making, that times are changing and sub-bituminous coal is no longer a profitable commodity.”

The announcement comes as another hit to the U.S. coal industry and export market which has been in sharp decline throughout the country due in part to the rise of cleaner energy sources.

“We join thousands of Alaskans who have spoken up in opposition to this irresponsible project in celebrating this news,” said Polly Carr, Executive Director of The Alaska Center, “It’s time for Alaska to start looking at ways to diversify our economy and support sustainable industries, like our fisheries. This project would have taken us backwards, not forward.”

“We share this excitement and congratulate the Native Village of Tyonek on their decades-long fight against the threat of coal development on their ancestral home,” Wier added.

As Native Village of Tyonek President Arthur Standifer said, “Our salmon, our way of life, and our lands are safe.”

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