

WATER RIGHTS IN THE CHUITNA RIVER

Alaska's choice between Salmon or Coal

The State of Alaska is taking public comments on whether water should be left in a stream to protect wild Alaskan salmon, or whether it should be diverted out of the stream to allow coal exports to Asia.

Under state water law Alaskans can obtain two different types of water rights:

OUT-OF-STREAM:

Water can be removed from a stream for various purposes, including mining.

PacRim Coal, LLC, applied in late 2013 to take 100% of the water out of Middle Creek, an important tributary to the Chuitna River for its proposed coal strip mine.

PacRim's mining plans require dewatering over 13 miles of the stream so it can mine the underlying coal deposits.

IN-STREAM FLOW:

Water can be reserved in stream to protect salmon habitat, promote personal recreation and other uses.

The Chuitna Citizens Coalition applied for instream water rights to keep water in Middle Creek to protect wild salmon in 2009.

Water is for Salmon, Not Coal

Securing in-stream water rights is vital for Chuitna River salmon. PacRim plans will completely dewater the stream, destroying important spawning and rearing habitat.

The State is now processing Chuitna Citizens' instream flow application, and it will open a public comment period in the near future.

This case heralds a vital precedent for all of Alaska, and it will decide whether we protect our sustainable salmon populations in perpetuity, or trade them away for short-term development.



The State is taking public comments until March 30th. Tell them how important it is to keep water in salmon streams to protect valuable habitat. E-mail your comments to: david.w.schade@alaska.gov

Talking points & more info: www.chuitna.org

photos by: Paul Mainester