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Office of Governor Sean Parnell
STATE OF ALASKA

December 2, 2011

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Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email to Governor Sean Parnell expressing your concerns over the decision by Department of Natural Resources Commissioner (DNR), Dan Sullivan, not to designate the Chuitna watershed as unsuitable for coal mining as requested by the Trustees for Alaska (petitioners). Please know that Governor Parnell's administration takes the sustainability of Alaska's salmon very seriously.

While a petition of this type is a legal and legitimate course of action, such a petition has never been granted before in Alaska. Had the Chuitna watershed been designated by this petition alone as unsuitable for coal mining, any type of surface coal development project of any size by any entity in the area would have been prevented from seeking permits in the future. Instead, this project, and everyone like it, will go through the State's extensive and rigorous permitting process to evaluate each project on the merits.

Commissioner Sullivan's decision is consistent with a similar decision made by former Commissioner Tom Irwin in 2007, and is also consistent with the extensive regulatory, legal, and judicial record for the Chuitna watershed. The assertion that reclamation in this area is technically feasible has been consistently upheld by Alaska's courts.

The decision to not designate lands as unsuitable for coal mining does not mean that a mine will automatically be permitted in the Chuitna watershed. It simply allows the project to undergo evaluation through the State's permitting process, which considers a wide variety of environmental concerns, many of which are expressed in the petition, and also allows numerous opportunities for public comment and input. The law and permitting processes must be allowed to function as intended to ensure a consistent regulatory policy that protects our environment while providing for responsible development of our natural resources.

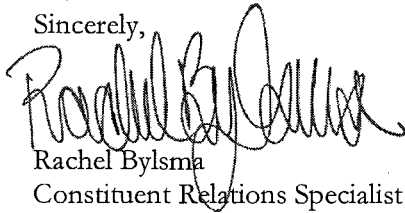
Governor Parnell understands the importance of sustainable fisheries to all Alaskans. The Governor will ensure that if and when development permit applications are received for mining in the Chuitna watershed, they are subjected to Alaska's rigorous permitting process that, as stated above, will provide multiple opportunities for public review and comments.

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We appreciate you sharing your concerns about the Chuitna watershed. For a copy of the Commissioner's decision please visit http://dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/mining/coal/chuit/pdfs/Chuitna_River_LUM_Decision_Final_102411.pdf. If you have any further questions or comments feel free to contact the DNR Commissioner's office at 907-269-8400, or our office at 907-269-7450.

Sincerely,



Rachel Bylsma
Constituent Relations Specialist