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Congressmen James Moran and Norm Dicks Call to Prohibit Hard Rock Mining in 1M Acres in Bristol Bay

Congressmen ask for prohibition on hard rock mining until further analyses is complete

WASHINGTON, DC – The current and former leaders of the House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee, Congressman James Moran (D-VA) and Norm Dicks (D-WA), sent a letter this week to the Bureau of Land Management Director Bob Abbey asking for a prohibition on hard rock mining in the Bristol Bay region until further analysis is completed. The congressmen raised concerns about potential long-term impacts resulting from the Bristol Bay Resource Management Plan (RMP) which was finalized under former President Bush's Administration, but not yet implemented.

The plan includes management of more than one million acres of public lands in the Bristol Bay areas, including important watersheds – such as the Nushagak and Kvichak Rivers. The letter called these rivers “two of the most productive wild salmon producing rivers in the world.” Jennifer Hillman, BLM Policy Analyst of the Alaska Wilderness League said, “We applaud Congressmen James Moran and Norm Dicks leadership in ensuring protections for the crucial watersheds, a world-class fishery, and an economic engine to local communities.”

Bobby Andrew, spokesman for Nunamta Aulukestai (Caretakers of our land) an association of eight Bristol Bay Native corporations, welcomed the strong leadership position taken by the congressmen stating, “Our renewable resources support our families and communities and must be protected. We will not allow a mining district to destroy our way of life. This action is a positive step toward addressing the issues on federal lands we have worked so hard to resolve.”

The letter estimated that “the fishery provides approximately \$440 million each year and provides jobs for approximately 12,500 people in Southwestern Alaska.” Given the high value of these lands, the congressmen requested that BLM conduct supplemental work on the Bristol Bay RMP to ensure that “long-term health” of the fishery. The letter comes at a time when the administration has just taken decisive action to protect federal waters in Bristol Bay from off-shore drilling.

The letter went on to say that the RMP “unnecessarily jeopardizes a world-class fishery and sporting destination.” Jennifer Hillman was in agreement of this statement and was supportive of the additional supplemental work. She said, “The existing plan is missing vital science and information to justify making such drastic decisions to open these lands to development interests. We need to take the necessary steps to preserve the onshore fisheries habitat. Now is the right time to build strong management of these lands and ensure durable protections for our world's largest wild salmon fishery both on and off-shore.”

To view the letter, please follow this link: http://www.alaskawild.org/wp-content/files/BLM_BristolBay_Moran-Dicks.pdf.

About Alaska Wilderness League:

Alaska Wilderness League is the only organization dedicated solely to the preservation of Alaska's wilderness in the nation's capital. Go to www.alaskawild.org to find out more.

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