



PRESS RELEASE

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Chuitna Citizens NO-COALition

Bush Administration Rollbacks Target Alaska Fish & Game Habitat *Gift to Coal Industry Will Allow Salmon Stream Destruction*

ANCHORAGE, AK – Local homesteaders and fishermen today condemned a new federal rule that will allow coal strip mines to destroy important fish and game habitat in Alaska. The new rule, rushed through in the waning days of the Bush Administration as a gift to the coal industry, now allows coal corporations to mine in and around sensitive salmon and other stream habitats. The previous rule, adopted in 1983, prohibited coal strip mining and waste dumping within 100 feet of streams and other waterbodies.

The new so-called “Stream Buffer Rule” raises special concerns for residents in Upper Cook Inlet, where the proposed Chuitna coal strip mine would be the first project in Alaska allowed to mine directly through an active salmon stream.

“We’re staring down the barrel of a massive coal strip mine that will directly destroy 11 miles of salmon streams, and dump billions of gallons of mine waste into our fisheries each year,” said commercial set net fisherman Terry Jorgensen. “Our Alaskan businesses and livelihoods are directly threatened by this federal intervention.”

Various Alaska groups submitted detailed comments on the proposed rule in November 2007, calling for protections to Alaska fisheries. The Bush Administration, however, chose to ignore those comments, as well as the opinions of scientists at the Environmental Protection Agency. Instead, they rammed

through a final rule that gives federal agencies the discretion to allow coal waste dumping and coal mining in sensitive stream habitats.

“Fishing and hunting are part of what makes us Alaskans, said Judy Heilman, who lives in Beluga near the proposed Chuitna coal mine site. “With this new rule, the coal company will be allowed to take away our moose, bear and salmon habitat. That’s just not fair - there’s no balance in this decision at all.”

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