

From: Chrissy Harbin [CHarbin@afphq.org]
Sent: 1/27/2018 3:49:10 PM
To: Bennett, Tate [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=1fa92542f7ca4d01973b18b2f11b9141-Bennett, E]
Subject: Re: FYI

Thank you, will do

Sent from my iPhone

On Jan 26, 2018, at 6:48 PM, Bennett, Tate <Bennett.Tate@epa.gov> wrote:

Let me know if you have any questions. -Tate

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt Suspends Withdrawal of Proposed Determination in Bristol Bay Watershed, Will Solicit Additional Comments

WASHINGTON (January 26, 2018) – Today, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Scott Pruitt is following through on his promise to restore the rule of law and process to the previous Administration’s action to restrict mining in Bristol Bay, Alaska.

As a result of Administrator Pruitt’s actions last summer, proponents of mining in the region were allowed to apply for a permit with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Today, after hearing directly from stakeholders and the people of Alaska, EPA is suspending its process to withdraw those proposed restrictions, leaving them in place while the Agency receives more information on the potential mine’s impact on the region’s world-class fisheries and natural resources.

“We have restored process, reviewed comments, and heard from a variety of stakeholders on whether to withdraw the proposed restrictions in the Bristol Bay watershed,” Administrator Scott Pruitt said. “Based on that review, it is my judgment at this time that any mining projects in the region likely pose a risk to the abundant natural resources that exist there. Until we know the full extent of that risk, those natural resources and world-class fisheries deserve the utmost protection. Today’s action allows EPA to get the information needed to determine what specific impacts the proposed mining project will have on those critical resources.”

This decision neither deters nor derails the application process of Pebble Limited Partnership’s proposed project. The project proponents continue to enjoy the protection of

due process and the right to proceed. However, their permit application must clear a high bar, because EPA believes the risk to Bristol Bay may be unacceptable.

EPA intends to solicit additional public comment on the impact of the mining application on the existing proposed determination to better inform that analysis.

Background

In 2014, the Obama Administration issued what was widely considered a preemptive veto of the Pebble Limited Partnership mining project. This effectively brought the mine's application process and, more importantly, due process to a halt. Litigation resulted and continued into this Administration.

In May of 2017, Administrator Pruitt took the first step to rescind this due process denial and allow the Pebble mine proponents to proceed and progress through the process. EPA received over one million comments from interested stakeholders. Administrator Pruitt's action allowed the litigation to be resolved and the proponent's application was allowed to finally move forward. That application is proceeding through the Army Corps's permitting process.

Today's action is important for several reasons. First, EPA has serious concerns about the impacts of mining activity in the Bristol Bay Watershed. From public comments to community meetings, stakeholders stressed the importance of balancing a singular mine venture with the risk to one of the world's largest commercial fisheries. Second, for EPA not to express an environmental position at this stage would be disingenuous.

This action demonstrates the Agency's commitment to both the rule of law and process, and upholding the EPA's core mission of environmental stewardship.