Action Alert
Canyon Creek Coal Lease Sale (Exploration)
Comments Needed by December 21, 2012; 5 PM

Alaska DNR has prepared a Preliminary Best Interest Finding for a coal lease sale near Canyon Creek. The 13,175-acre lease sale area is in the foothills of the Alaska Range, approximately 18 miles southwest of Skwentna, within the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. DNR reports that based on drilling in the 1970s the lease area holds approximately 258 million tons of low sulfur content coal.

The coal lease area is not in critical habitat for any species; it does not have any known trails or lakes large enough to land a floatplane. It has few wetlands. Anadromous streams affect only two small portions of the large area. The main river to the area, Contact Creek, is not navigable or boatable. There are no close neighbors. The area is not a particularly sensitive location, it is difficult to get to, and it receives little use by Alaskans.

Alaskan and national environmental groups are flooding DNR with scare-tactic anti-development propaganda. One says that development would "destroy Cook Inlet salmon habitat." Another says that it "will threaten already-imperiled Cook Inlet salmon runs, pollute our air and water, accelerate climate change, and sacrifice our way of life." In fact, it will do none of these. It is a low-value area that can provide employment and tax revenue to the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. Alaska's stringent laws protect the limited fish and wildlife values in the area.

The First Step is Exploration — *not* mining. DNR is not asking for comments on a proposed mine. They are proposing a lease sale ONLY. The leased lands will then require years of exploration before, and if, a mine may be proposed. A mine proposal, years in the future, will have to pass stringent requirements with many protections for fish, wildlife and other resources as part of a public permitting process before it ever becomes a mine.

Even if a mine is eventually proposed: *Mining then reclaiming the area will not decrease the population of fish, wildlife, nor eliminate economic opportunities for Alaskans. If Alaska cannot develop resources here —an area with no close neighbors, limited public use, and no unusual habitat values —we will never be able to develop resources in Southcentral Alaska.*

Your action is needed. Please write or e-mail DNR that ***you support the proposed Canyon Creek Coal lease sale***. Comments are needed by **5 PM, Friday, December 21, 2012.** Comments should be sent to:

Bill Cole
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Anchorage, Alaska 99501
E-mail: william.cole@alaska.gov

Points to Use in Your E-mail or Comment Letter

The Benefits Are Large

- ***The largest taxpayer in the Mat-Su Borough.*** In every Alaska Borough with a large mine, the mine is the largest taxpayer. Preliminary estimates of tax revenue from a mine at Canyon Creek show that it would be the largest or one of the largest taxpayers in the Mat-Su Borough. It would increase money available for schools and other Borough services.

- ***Good long-term jobs at excellent wages for our neighbors.*** The average annual wage in the mining industry is $100,000, over twice the average for all sectors of the economy. While there is no guarantee of wages this high, wages for the 100-200+ jobs that a mine would require would be greater than the average wage paid elsewhere in the Borough.

- ***Taxes and Royalties to the State.*** Coal mines pay the state a 5% gross royalty, a 7% mining license tax, and a 9.4% corporate income tax. They also pay federal income taxes.

If Ever A Mine is Developed, The Costs Are Small

- ***Alaska's permitting system protects fish habitat and water quality.*** Coal exploration is a low impact process. Coal mining uses no chemicals, and strict state laws protect water quality and fish habitat. In addition the federal government can impose additional standards.

- ***Affects on wildlife are limited and temporary.*** DNR's land use plans do not recognize any particular habitat in this area different than elsewhere in the region. The area contains no legislatively designated critical habitat or refuge. The lease area has few wetlands. A mine will, of course, displace wildlife from the area being mined, but coal mines reclaim land back to replacement wildlife habitat within a year or two of mining. The wildlife affects are limited to temporary displacement from the mined area. The wildlife returns after reclamation.

- ***There is only limited public use of the lease area.*** The Borough trail maps shows no trails into or near the lease area; the nearest, is 4 miles away at its closest point. The rivers that run into the lease area are not navigable and not boatable. There are no public landing strips, and no lakes in the lease area large enough to land a floatplane. Because there is no easy access, no particularly valuable wildlife habitat, no easy access to streams, there is limited public use of the area.

No Affect on Global Warming. Mining coal from the Canyon Creek Lease Area will not increase the amount of coal burned in the world. The coal would most likely be shipped to Asia and would displace coal that would otherwise be used there. Mining this coal does not create an increase in coal power use in Asia or elsewhere.

Clean Coal to Decrease International Air Pollution. Preliminary results from drilling in the 1970s shows that the Canyon Creek coal is a low sulfur deposit. It is the type of coal power companies and industrial users need to decrease air pollution.