

# **Chuitna Coal Project Status Update for February 2009**

## **Status of the Chuitna Coal Project**

At this time a complete permit application package for the Chuitna Coal Project has not been submitted to the Division of Mining, Land and Water and no formal review under AS 27.21 and 11 AAC 90 has been initiated. Once the entire permit application package has been submitted an evaluation of the completeness of the application and of the cumulative impacts of the project can be undertaken.

During the last month, PacRim Coal has submitted to the state and federal agencies two reports titled “Winter Freshwater Fish Habitat Baseline Report” by Oasis Environmental and “Movement and abundance of freshwater fish in the Chuit River drainage, Alaska, May through September 2008” by LGL Alaska Research Associates, Inc. Additional reports on hydrology and project water balance are expected in the upcoming months.

## **Chuitna Project Informational Meeting**

On January 28<sup>th</sup>, the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Environmental Conservation held an informal meeting with the residents of Beluga, Trustees for Alaska, Cook Inlet Keep, Alaskans for responsible Mining, and the Alaska Center for the Environment. The purpose of this meeting was to give an update on the status of the project including and estimate of when we expected addition project components and when we expect to start our official review. A date for the next formal meeting was postponed until additional information was received from the project.

Also during January, the Department, along with EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers met with traditional council for the Native Village of Tyonek. The purpose of this meeting was to inform member of the role of each agency, the status of the project and to listen to the communities’ concerns.

## **Health Impact Assessments**

As part of the federal NEPA process, the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency is preparing a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) as part of the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the Chuitna Coal Project. An HIA is used to systematically identify the potential, and sometimes unintended, effects of a policy, plan, decision, or project on the health of a population and the distribution of those effects within the population. HIA are relatively new to the United States and only recently have they been used as part of the NEPA process in Alaska. The scopes of health effects to be addressed in this HIA are limited to those that can be considered under NEPA to be reasonably linked directly, indirectly, or cumulatively to the proposed action.

Currently, the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, the State of Alaska and the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium are working on finalizing the scope of the HIA proposed for the Chuitna Coal Project.

### **DNR Website for the Chuitna Coal Project:**

<http://dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/mining/largemine/chuitna/index.htm>

This site contains information about the Chuitna Coal Project, copies of previous month's newsletters and presentations from informational meetings related to this project.

### **Other State and Federal Permits**

In addition to ASCMCRA permitting requirements, the Chuitna Coal Project must address the concerns of other state and federal agencies. As part of the Department of Natural Resources statutory role as lead agency in matters relating to exploration, development and management of mining activities, the DNR Office of Project Management and Permitting has developed a document describing some of the permits and approvals to help the public understand the permitting of mines in Alaska. This document and other useful information are available on the web at:

<http://dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/mining/largemine/index.htm>

### **Chuitna Project SEIS**

As part of the federal NEPA process the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) determined that a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) would be prepared for the Chuitna Coal Project. Scoping for the SEIS was completed in August of 2006. Currently agencies are reviewing the available baseline data in preparation to write the Draft SEIS. During March, EPA, the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, and Alaska Department of Natural Resources met with the company to discuss the status and timeline for the SEIS. Included in these discussions were updates to the companies proposed action and alternatives to be considered in the SEIS.

Information concerning the SEIS process can be found at:

<http://www.chuitnaseis.com/>