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Col. Michael Brooks
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – Alaska District
P.O. Box 6898
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As the Army Corps of Engineers Alaska District (“Corps”) begins scoping the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed Pebble mine in southwest Alaska, I write to urge you to conduct a measured, fully inclusive, and transparent process that ensures local, community, and stakeholder input and involvement at every step. Many Alaskans have shared concerns with me that a 30-day scoping period may be insufficient for a project of this magnitude and potential impact. I strongly encourage you to consider their concerns not just in the context of the initial scoping period, but holistically as you conduct the various stages of the process.

As you may know, I have consistently remained neutral on large-scale mineral development in the Bristol Bay region, but have supported the idea that the Pebble Limited Partnership (PLP) should be allowed to apply for a Clean Water Act (CWA) permit from the Corps without preemptive restrictions from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). I have repeatedly noted that preemptive action by the EPA – without a completed permit application – would have been based at least in part on speculation and conjecture. This, in turn, would have deprived stakeholders of the ability to analyze the specifics of the project and make an informed decision.

Now that the federal review process has begun, however, we must ensure that all relevant stakeholders are given ample opportunity to consider the information provided, as well as sufficient opportunity and forum to provide comment on it. In Alaska, this oftentimes requires allowing public testimony at all meetings, and I accordingly encourage the Corps to reconsider its decision to exclude public testimony at its Dillingham, Homer, and Anchorage meetings. I further ask that the Corps consider expanding its outreach to additional communities on the Nushagak River watershed, which has the highest probability of impact.

I applaud the Corps’ significant outreach to tribes in the Bristol Bay region. It is my understanding that 35 tribes have been invited to consult throughout the review and decision making processes. However, it is also my understanding that no Alaska Native Corporation (ANC) consultations have been initiated. While the Corps is not required to make such consultations, in this instance it would be valuable given the scope of the proposal and the ability of the ANCs to offer regional perspective and voice to indigenous Alaskans who may not be tribal members.

I appreciate the work that you and your staff are doing to properly evaluate this high-profile proposal in a fair, rigorous, and transparent manner, and encourage you to contact my office if you have any updates or questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lisa Murkowski". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "L" and "M".

Lisa Murkowski