

## To the Alaska Legislature:

For years, Alaskans have made it clear that the Tangle Lakes region deserves better, and now we're making our voices a bit louder before it's too late. People have enjoyed the area for generations just as it is – wildlife rich and scenic – and we want to keep it that way for our children and theirs too. Hunting, fishing, hiking, canoeing, camping, and just enjoying the getaway is what the Tangles are all about. It's a unique, easily accessible and irreplaceable area; the type of place that should be left alone, for us and the wildlife – especially the Nelchina Caribou herd – that prefer Tangle Lakes over many nearby areas.

Unfortunately, we're not convinced that the status quo will manage the area consistently with our vision for its future. That's why we're calling upon you and your colleagues to create a State Game Refuge for the portion of the area most important to both wildlife and people. As you know, exploration for a mine is being conducted now and, if developed, will take away the experiences that we've come to appreciate. Instead of scenic vistas, excellent recreation, hunting, and a bit of solitude, we could be facing an industrial operation with haul roads, power lines, pits, tailings ponds and waste rock piles – not to mention the constant drone of a mill, supply trucks and powerhouses, or the chance that water pollution will jeopardize the fish. There are places where mining has acceptable impacts, but this is certainly not one of them.

Ideally, places that matter to Alaskans would be left alone, and ones suitable for mining would be responsibly developed. But in this case, the laws are not working in our favor, and our interests are being cast aside. Tangle Lakes are at stake, and the foreign corporation that staked the claims never consulted any of us first. Regardless, we're not against them – we're just for Tangle Lakes. This is a big region, and our proposal only covers half of the area where mining could occur – about 142,000 acres; not much in the grand scheme of things but enough to better protect our favorite parts. We believe both interests will need to compromise here. By supporting a proposal that takes both into account – rather than one at the expense of the other – we think we've already done so.

Let's not forget that we are not the first to make this case. The local office of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, as well as the Board of Game, have clearly said that the value of intact wildlife habitat far exceeds that of mining at the Tangles, as has the Alaska Chapter of the Backcountry Hunters and Anglers. Biologists, business owners, and hundreds of citizens statewide have all advocated for a Refuge. Editorials supporting a Refuge have graced the pages of our newspapers. Now, we add our voices to this growing movement, and we trust that you will do what's right.