

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 15

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY REPRESENTATIVES AUSTERMAN, Edgmon

Introduced: 4/10/09

Referred: House Special Committee on Fisheries, Resources, Finance

A RESOLUTION

1 **Directing the Legislative Council to contract for an assessment of environmental and**
2 **socioeconomic consequences of large-scale mineral extraction in the Bristol Bay area**
3 **watershed.**

4 **BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

5 **WHEREAS**, when Alaska achieved statehood in 1959, it was clear that the state's
6 small population needed to use renewable and nonrenewable resource development for
7 economic support; and

8 **WHEREAS** revenue derived from responsible mineral, timber, fish, and oil extraction
9 has provided employment and dramatically improved the quality of life in Alaska; and

10 **WHEREAS** the Constitution of the State of Alaska in art. VIII, secs. 2 and 4, requires
11 the legislature to provide for the utilization, development, and conservation of all natural
12 resources belonging to the state for the maximum benefit of its people; and requires that fish,
13 forests, wildlife, grasslands, and all other replenishable resources belonging to the state be
14 utilized, developed, and maintained on the sustained yield principle; and

15 **WHEREAS** the Pebble copper deposit is part of a much larger series of metal-rich,

1 coalescing hydrothermal sulfide systems estimated to contain 94,000,000 ounces of gold,
2 72,000,000,000 pounds of copper, and 48,000,000,000 pounds of molybdenum, the
3 development of which may require an open pit mine that is over two miles long, 1.75 miles
4 wide, and 1,600 feet deep, and a 100-mile pipeline and access road to Iniskin Bay; and

5 **WHEREAS** the river corridors draining the area encompassing the Pebble copper
6 deposit are central to commercial, subsistence, and recreational fish and wildlife resource
7 production and have been closed to mining entry for more than 20 years; the sparsely
8 populated Iliamna region is a spawning ground for the massive Bristol Bay salmon runs, is
9 one of the largest sockeye salmon returns in the world, and is known for its world-class trout
10 fishing; and

11 **WHEREAS** the area encompassing the Pebble copper deposit is located in an area of
12 significant seismic activity, adjacent to the Lake Clark National Park and Preserve near Lake
13 Iliamna, and open pit mining requires careful advance planning and consideration of potential
14 negative environmental consequences, including effects on fish habitat, acid mine drainage,
15 and other water quality issues resulting from mine tailings and exposed rock, that may require
16 ongoing remediation efforts for an indefinite period of time; and

17 **WHEREAS** the current debate over the development of the Pebble copper deposit in
18 the headwaters of Bristol Bay pits advocates for two of Alaska's greatest historic economic
19 mainstays in opposition, with both sides claiming that science will prove their position is
20 correct; and

21 **WHEREAS** the National Academy of Sciences is the premier source of objective
22 review of complex scientific questions; and

23 **WHEREAS** the legislature must have the best possible information on which to base
24 its policy decisions regarding the potential for development of the Pebble copper deposit
25 together with the potential environmental consequences of that development;

26 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature requests an independent review
27 by the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences to provide an
28 interdisciplinary assessment of the known and probable cumulative environmental and
29 socioeconomic consequences of large-scale mineral extraction in the Bristol Bay area
30 watershed, including hydrological systems and aquifers, biological resources, and
31 communities, and an assessment of critical gaps in existing knowledge necessary to

1 adequately understand, predict, and manage the environmental and socioeconomic
2 consequences of mineral extraction in the Bristol Bay area watershed, and be it

3 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that, under AS 24.20.060(4)(E), the legislature directs the
4 Alaska Legislative Council to contract for that independent review by the National Research
5 Council of the National Academy of Sciences and for a written report setting out the results of
6 that review.