



# Representative Alan Austerman

## *Alaska State Legislature*

### **Sponsor Statement for HCR 15**

HCR 15 is a resolution which requests the Legislative Council to contract with the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences for an independent assessment of the environmental and socioeconomic consequences of large-scale mineral extraction in the Bristol Bay area watershed.

The Pebble Partnership plans to submit applications to permit the Pebble prospect located in the Bristol Bay watershed in 2011. Although Pebble has been conducting multi-disciplinary environmental studies since 2004, and has spent over \$132 million in the effort, little of that information is available for agency or public review at this time. Given the scale and potential impacts of the mine, and the vast quantities of data that will have to be analyzed as part of the permitting process, it will be critical that policy makers and the public have a robust framework for analyzing the proposed project. Trusted, objective, third-party guidance on the issues of concern related to the proposed project itself, as well as the state's large-mine permitting process, will be an essential back drop to constructive dialogue throughout the permitting period.

The National Academy of Sciences was created in 1863 to investigate, examine, experiment, and report upon any subject of science or art. The mission of the academy is to provide policy guidance and scientific and technical analysis for governmental decision making. The academy provides independent advice; external sponsors have no control over the conduct of the study once the statement of task and budget is finalized.

The purpose of this study is to assess critical gaps in existing knowledge that might be necessary to adequately understand, predict, and manage the environmental and socioeconomic impacts that could be expected or anticipated from large-scale mineral extraction in the Bristol Bay area watershed.

The completed report would be made public and would identify pertinent questions to ask the Department of Natural Resources and the Pebble Partnership during each stage of the permitting process. It is important for the legislature to have the best possible information on which to base its policy decisions regarding the potential for development of the Pebble copper deposit, together with the potential environmental consequences of that development.