

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE RESOURCES STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 25, 2019

6:33 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative John Lincoln, Co-Chair
Representative Geran Tarr, Co-Chair
Representative Sara Hannan
Representative Ivy Spohnholz
Representative Chris Tuck
Representative Dave Talerico
Representative Sara Rasmussen

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Grier Hopkins, Vice Chair
Representative George Rauscher

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) :

Commissioner, Department of Environmental Conservation

Jason Brune - Anchorage

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

CARL PORTMAN

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

SYLVIA PANZARELLA

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

KRISTEN ULERY

King Salmon, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

MAUREEN KNUTSEN

Naknek, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

SUE GOODGLICK

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

TOBIAS SCHWOERER

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

JOE BENUCCI

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

DIANNA GARFIELD

Ketchikan, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

DALE BANKS

Homer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

SUE CHRISTIANSEN

Homer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

DEANTHA CROCKETT

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Speaking on her own behalf, testified in support during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

BILL JEFFRIES

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

MIKE LITZOW
Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

SHAWN DOCHTERMANN
Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

HARRY MOORE
Palmer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

KATIE GAVENUS
Homer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

SHERYL WASSILLIE
Igiugig, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

KYLE WILLINGHAM
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

ERIC FJELSTAD
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

MELISSA HEUER
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

KAYE HOLOWATCH
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

CHRISTY FRY
Homer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

AMANDA JOHNSTON
Homer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

DAVID SAM
Sitka, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

ALISHA SIRRA
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

TIMOTHY GERVAIS
Ruby, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

KONRAD SHAAD
Homer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

MARK BEAUDIN
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

WESTON MCKENZIE
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

JENNIFER TAYLOR
No city provided, British Columbia

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

ERIC BEEMAN

Homer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

IAN BLAKE

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

CAROLYN NICHOLS

Sitka, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

ELLEN VANDEVISSE

Palmer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

PAUL GLAVINOVICH

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

LACI MICHAUD, Projects Manager

Alaska Miners Association

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

RENE LIMERE

Alaska Range, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

CATHY JOHNSON

Homer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

MYRA SCHOLZE

Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

GRIFFIN PLUSH

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

KIRSA HUGHES-SKENDIJS
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

ROCHELLE HARRISON
Bristol Bay, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

COLE DEAL
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

TYLER HENEGAN
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

JAMES SELVOG
Soldotna/Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

SHERYL BAECHLER
Homer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

MARK NIVER, President
Commercial Fishermen for Bristol Bay
Wasilla, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

SUE SPRINKLE
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

JOE MACKENZIE
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

ERICA MADISON
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

BRIAN BURKE
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

KRYSTA WATTERS
Naknek, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

LAURA WRIGHT
Talkeetna, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

NOELLE CARBONE
Talkeetna, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

CRAWFORD PARR
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

MELISSA GOOZEN
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

JONATHON HOYSOCK
Orwigsburg, Pennsylvania

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

BERNIE HOFFMAN
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

SCOTT BARTLETT

Homer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

PAM MILLER, Executive Director
Alaska Community Action on Toxics
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Jason Brune.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[6:33:30 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR GERAN TARR called the House Resources Standing Committee meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. Representatives Tuck, Hannan, Talerico, Spohnholz, Rasmussen, Lincoln, and Tarr were present at the call to order.

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S):

Commissioner, Department of Environmental Conservation

[6:33:35 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR TARR announced the only order of business would be public testimony on the confirmation hearing of the commissioner designee to the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).

[6:36:37 PM](#)

CARL PORTMAN said he was speaking in support of the confirmation of Mr. Brune to the [position of] commissioner of DEC. He said he has known Mr. Brune for 20 years and has high regard for his honesty, intelligence, integrity, fairness, and competence. Mr. Brune is passionate about Alaska and performs with energy and fairness, therefore, he is an excellent choice for commissioner. Mr. Brune will follow the law and due process will serve as an impartial commissioner to carry out the mission of the department.

[6:38:16 PM](#)

SYLVIA PANZARELLA said she was speaking for herself and her husband and they have lived in Alaska for almost 20 years. She spoke in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Brune, noting that

his previous position as a spokesperson for Pebble mine and other activities should disqualify him. Ms. Panzarella cautioned there could be lawsuits due to Mr. Brune's conflict of interest.

[6:39:31 PM](#)

KRISTEN ULERY said she was representing herself and fish and wildlife. She said she is a resident of Bristol Bay, a subsistence fisher, and a public lands employee, all of which rely on clean water and strong salmon runs. Ms. Ulery spoke in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Brune because he has expressed bias in favor of Pebble mine; his appointment is unethical and would undermine Bristol Bay's opportunity to remain unspoiled and the world's strongest wild sockeye salmon run. In addition, his appointment reaffirms concerns that the corporate price tag on the state's resources is more important to state government than the conservation of resources for future generations.

[6:41:20 PM](#)

MAUREEN KNUTSEN said she a resident of Naknek and is representing herself and her husband. She said salmon are the most important thing in Bristol Bay and spoke in strong opposition to the appointment of Mr. Brune because of his conflict of interest based on his affiliation with Pebble mine and Anglo American. She opined his appointment is unethical.

[6:43:19 PM](#)

SUE GOODGLICK expressed her opposition to the appointment of Mr. Brune. She gave an example of Mr. Brune's stated effort to get rid of the Ocean Rangers program which was implemented because cruise ships were found dumping pollutants in the Inside Passage and elsewhere. The program was formed by ballot initiative and is self-supported by cruise ship fees at no cost to the state. Ms. Goodglick opined Mr. Brune's statement showed a bias towards industry and shortsightedness.

[6:44:31 PM](#)

TOBIAS SCHWOERER said he has been a resident of Anchorage for over 20 years and strongly opposes the appointment of Mr. Brune. He urged the committee to consider there has been a huge erosion of trust in the government of Alaska with the new administration. Mr. Brune's bias and conflict of interest is

proven by his one-sided debate related to state environmental regulations.

[6:45:54 PM](#)

JOE BENUCCI said he is a resident of Anchorage, a father, husband, and 24-year military veteran. He spoke in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Brune because his appointment will result in the regulatory capture of DEC, a department that is supposed to protect the state and its people, air, water, and land. Mr. Brune has expressed support of resource extraction projects such as Pebble, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Donlin, and Chuitna, and he has little to no public record in support of any environmental issues. Mr. Benucci opined degradation of the sport fishing industry and increased restrictions on Alaskans are indicative of the impacts of change in the environment. Mr. Brune would be less restrictive on industry. He urged the committee to invoke the will of the people.

[6:48:17 PM](#)

DIANNA GARFIELD said she is a resident of Ketchikan, active duty military, and a salmon fisherman, and is speaking on behalf of her family. She said she supports protecting renewable resources and effective salmon management in Alaska; she opined Mr. Brune's appointment does not support sustainable salmon runs for the future. Mr. Brune's conflict of interest is clear and documented and she questioned whether he stands to gain any personal financial benefits from Pebble mine. She said a commissioner must take a holistic view of all of Alaska's resources and manage them for future generations.

[6:49:22 PM](#)

DALE BANKS said he is a small business owner in Homer. He read the DEC mission statement. He stated Mr. Brune's resume is silent on what DEC is supposed to be doing, such as protecting the environment, protecting air quality, spill prevention and response, protecting and assessing water quality, protecting safe drinking water, food safety, sanitation, and solid waste. Mr. Brune's experience is solely with resource extraction, and the resource industry is pleased with his appointment. Mr. Brune is a poorly qualified candidate, and he urged the committee to request the nomination of a qualified candidate.

[6:52:14 PM](#)

SUE CHRISTIANSEN said she has been a resident for over 40 years and expressed opposition to the appointment of Mr. Brune. As a former advocate for Pebble mine, he is not impartial, and the commissioner of DEC is tasked with conserving, improving, and protecting Alaska's natural resources and environment. Mr. Brune seeks to advance a project that could destroy the world's largest remaining salmon run, which has happened throughout the world. She urged the committee to use integrity and conscience. The job of the DEC commissioner is not to be focused on local development, but to focus on protecting the environment. Ms. Christiansen agreed with the previous speaker related to Alaskan's faith in elected officials.

[6:55:02 PM](#)

DEANTHA CROCKETT disclosed her professional experience in industry but said she was speaking on her own behalf. She said she began her career working with Mr. Brune at the Resource Development Council and found him to be extremely knowledgeable and passionate about science. Mr. Brune caused her to become more knowledgeable about how the resource industry can coexist with the environment. She said Mr. Brune will be an amazing DEC commissioner and urged for his confirmation.

[6:56:58 PM](#)

BILL JEFFRIES spoke in support of the confirmation of Mr. Brune and against the character assassination of political appointees. He said he has known Mr. Brune for over 20 years and would not question his integrity or his commitment to his family, his profession, or to Alaska. He referred to previous testimony intended to undermine a good and competent candidate for commissioner. Mr. Brune's scientific background and objective approach will serve as an asset to the administration and to the state. He urged the committee to advance the confirmation.

[6:58:33 PM](#)

MIKE LITZOW expressed his opposition to the confirmation of Mr. Brune. Mr. Litzow said society and the state have a responsibility to pass along a healthy Alaska environment to the next generation; a DEC commissioner who is an honest advocate for environmental conservation is critical to that responsibility. Mr. Brune's involvement with Pebble mine disqualifies him as a representative of the public interest in important decisions that come before DEC. Further, Mr. Brune's

claims of impartiality are belied by his public comments toward providing relief for polluters in Alaska.

[6:59:35 PM](#)

SHAWN DOCHTERMANN said he has been a resident for 40 years in Kodiak. He said he is opposed to the confirmation of Mr. Brune. As a Bristol Bay fisherman for 34 years, he said it is impossible to think that a former spokesperson for the Pebble project would be put into the position of commissioner, because Mr. Brune cannot be impartial and has a conflict of interest. He read a quote from Mr. Brune, and suggested a commissioner would seek to protect the environment with conservation.

[7:00:53 PM](#)

HARRY MOORE said he is a lifetime fisherman in Bristol Bay and his family came to Alaska in the 1940s. He expressed his surprise at Mr. Brune's appointment because Mr. Brune has a strong conflict of interest; on March 21, Mr. Brune asked how to remove regulations to ease the pressure on industry that is represented by the Resource Development Council. He read the DEC mission statement and expressed his concern about Mr. Brune's choices and motivation.

[7:03:12 PM](#)

KATIE GAVENUS said she is a lifelong resident of Homer and expressed her opposition to the confirmation of Mr. Brune. She pointed out there is a clear conflict of interest, ethical questions of his appointment, and, due to his comments on social media, a question of his impartiality even though he is an intelligent and well-educated person. Also, the appointment creates an erosion of trust, and people and the ecosystems of Alaska deserve a commissioner who is aware of long-term impacts.

[7:05:20 PM](#)

SHERYL WASSILLIE said she lives in Igiugig, a village downstream of the proposed Pebble mine, and expressed her opposition to the confirmation of Mr. Brune. Mr. Brune's past position with Anglo American is reason to believe Mr. Brune will have a biased approach to issuing permits for the Pebble mine to move forward. Mr. Brune also worked as executive director of the Resource Development Council which is also a supporter of Pebble mine. This experience does not reflect DEC's mission statement, and she read the mission statement. Ms. Wassillie urged the

committee to make the right and moral choice to not advance the confirmation.

7:06:43 PM

KYLE WILLINGHAM said he is a lifelong resident and is a fisherman. He recalled 30 years today his father worked for DEC and was cleaning oil off the beaches in Prince William Sound. He urged the committee to learn from the [Exxon Valdez oil spill of 3/24/89] which was a terrible event. He opined Mr. Brune is clearly biased and one-sided, although he is smart and capable. The confirmation of Mr. Brune would cause a loss of faith in DEC, and he urged the committee to make the right choice. Mr. Willingham cautioned against the possibility that if the mine is built something can go wrong.

7:08:51 PM

ERIC FJELSTAD said he is an attorney speaking on his own behalf. He has known Mr. Brune for almost 20 years in many capacities and as a client. Mr. Brune is a good person and is well-liked, which is an attribute for the commissioner of DEC. He pointed out that in addition to the one resource development issue which has been talked about, there are many challenges ahead for rural Alaska which Mr. Brune can address. He urged people to look at Mr. Brune as an individual and noted his many qualities.

7:10:33 PM

MELISSA HEUER said she was speaking on behalf of herself, her family, and 14,000 members of the Susitna River Coalition in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Brune. At the time that Alaska needs to diversify its economy, the state needs a balanced and unbiased commissioner; Mr. Brune's background and work history show he is in favor of all development, regardless of benefits to the people of Alaska or the long-term environmental impacts to communities, economies, and food security. For example, Mr. Brune has worked to advance the Pebble mine and the Susitna-Wantana dam projects, both against the strong opposition of Alaska residents. The commissioner of DEC should balance the environmental and economic priorities of residents and focus on long-term benefits for the state. She opined Mr. Brune is not qualified to make balanced decisions.

7:11:50 PM

KAYE HOLOWATCH said she has been in Alaska for 32 years and is strongly opposed to the confirmation of Mr. Brune. Although Mr. Brune may be a nice guy, his close ties with Pebble, mining, oil and gas organizations, and resource development would bring a different perspective to DEC in direct odds with the mission of DEC. Supporting Pebble mine, while guiding DEC, is a clear conflict of interest. She said the quality of life for future generations depends on decisions made today and urged the committee not to advance the confirmation of Mr. Brune.

[7:13:28 PM](#)

CHRISTY FRY said the appointment of Mr. Brune reeks of backroom deals. To put someone in charge of mining permits who has clear ties to an ill-conceived mine is just wrong, just as the Pebble mine project is wrong. She made further comments about Pebble mine. Her hope is that her descendants will have access to sustainable healthy salmon runs as did the people in Bristol Bay 2,000 years ago.

[7:14:40 PM](#)

AMANDA JOHNSTON said she is a small business owner in Homer who is strongly opposed to the confirmation of Mr. Brune, and asked members of the committee to listen to the testimony of their constituents. The appointment of Mr. Brune is very important, and he has a blatant conflict of interest to be in a position to grant the Pebble mine key permits. Unlike earlier testimony in support of Mr. Brune, the appointment is not about character or personality, but at looking at the facts, his statements, and his inability to be an unbiased commissioner of Alaska's environment.

[7:16:40 PM](#)

DAVID SAM spoke in opposition to the confirmation of Mr. Brune, not only because of Pebble mine, but other environmental issues in Sitka. In Sitka, the environment has affected the herring industry and the cultural and traditional use of herring. He said he opposes a nominee who has supported Pebble mine because after 100 years tailings leach into the environment. After the tailings leach out, they are there forever, and people and fish suffer; for example, tailings and mining have affected Southeast Alaska. He stressed someone who has worked with Native organizations doesn't have added clout, because a number of shareholders have problems with development in their region, including oil and gold. He restated his opposition.

[7:18:42 PM](#)

ALISHA SIRRA said she is a lifelong Alaskan who has had the pleasure of knowing Mr. Brune professionally and personally for many years, and he is the right person to lead DEC. In her work experience, Mr. Brune served as a mentor and friend. Mr. Brune thoughtfully and thoroughly examines all sides of a problem and listens before making decisions. He is considerate and professional and has always done what is right for Alaska. Mr. Brune takes a scientific approach, respects the regulatory process, and believes Alaska should have the highest environmental standards in the world. He cares about the environment, the economy, and has the best interests of the state in mind for future generations.

[7:20:37 PM](#)

TIMOTHY GERVAIS said he was speaking on behalf of his family fishing business and expressed his opposition to the confirmation of Mr. Brune. Mr. Brune is [too] closely aligned with the Pebble Partnership to be an impartial regulator and will not hold development companies to a high enough standard to protect watersheds and environment, thus we will not be able to maintain sustainable salmon runs. Once the watersheds are destroyed, they will be ruined for centuries. This is an opportunity for the legislature to protect the last great salmon habitat in the world. His family is asking the committee to not advance the confirmation of Mr. Brune.

[7:22:01 PM](#)

KONRAD SHAAD said he is a 39-year resident of Alaska who strongly opposes the appointment of Mr. Brune. He asked for the purpose of a permitting process and suggested there should be "check and balance" for the industry seeking a permit. A prominent person should not be in charge of issuing permits for mining, or in keeping regulations for mining. Mr. Brune offered to get rid of regulations before he was appointed. Mr. Shaad urged the committee not to advance the confirmation.

[7:23:05 PM](#)

MARK BEAUDIN said he was representing himself and his children. He suggested the purpose of Mr. Brune's appointment is not to protect the environment but to advance the Pebble mine. He said proponents of the mine fail to report that gold is worth more

than the salmon fishery, and say no harm would come to the fishery; however, everyone working at or benefitting from the mine should sign a document that puts their net worth at risk along with the fishery. Signatories should include mining companies and corporate officers, lenders, mineworkers, engineers, and security guards. Mr. Beaudin opined if a disaster occurred mine proponents should accept the risk along with the fisherman. Further, if the fishery were destroyed by climate change, the mine could proceed.

[7:25:01 PM](#)

WESTON MCKENZIE said he is a student at the University of Alaska Anchorage and strongly opposes the confirmation of Mr. Brune. Mr. Brune has worked for mining companies, is biased, has a major conflict of interest, and is not working for the interest of the majority of Alaskans. Mr. McKenzie said Mr. Brune wants to advance the Pebble mine which is not compatible with the world's last wild sustainable fishery that provides thousands of jobs for Alaskans and Americans. Mines that the Pebble corporation has worked with before have failed with catastrophic results. The federal permitting process has not been fair and shortened the review period for citizens and elected officials. Mr. McKenzie said this is not a personal attack on Mr. Brune, but he is a poor choice for the job as commissioner of DEC.

[7:26:45 PM](#)

JENNIFER TAYLOR said she is a 30-year resident who has lived and worked in Alaska and who seeks to come home to a safe environment that can support a subsistence lifestyle, which is the lifeblood of Alaska, and which should survive far beyond the life of the mining industry. She spoke in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Brune based upon his promotion of the mining industry, which would interfere with ensuring compliance in enforcement activities. Ms. Taylor referred to money paid by the residents of British Columbia, Canada, to the government to pay the mining closure liability from the Mount Polley tailings dam failure in 2014. She compared the Mount Polley disaster to that of the [Exxon Valdez oil spill of 1989]. She urged Alaskans to research the mining industry in British Columbia.

[7:29:54 PM](#)

ERIC BEEMAN said he is a 50-year Alaska setnetter and president of the Nushagak Setnet Association. He spoke in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Brune. As a former spokesman for the

Pebble Partnership and a staunch mining advocate, Mr. Brune's nomination as commissioner to the department that regulates mining permitting would be the antithesis of fair process, and his nomination is insulting to some. Mr. Beeman acknowledged he does not personally know Mr. Brune, but Mr. Brune's public stance has revealed where his loyalties lie.

[7:31:23 PM](#)

IAN BLAKE said he was representing himself and his family and spoke in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Brune. Because he doesn't know Mr. Brune personally, Mr. Blake said he must judge him by his public statements that have raised concern. Mr. Brune has a history of public advocacy for a large mining project and Mr. Blake questioned Mr. Brune's statement that he can evaluate it like any other. Further, Mr. Brune's stated personal philosophy that leans towards developing locally is incongruent with the mission statement of DEC. Mr. Blake said he is a former employee of DEC and mining development was not a priority of his public service.

[7:33:15 PM](#)

CAROLYN NICHOLS said she has lived in Sitka for 35 years and spoke in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Brune. She opined Mr. Brune is biased towards mining and has conflicts of interest. She suggested the state would not benefit from a leader who would have to recuse himself from many issues due to conflicts of interest. Ms. Nichols urged the committee not to advance the confirmation.

[7:34:06 PM](#)

ELLEN VANDEVISSE expressed her fear that hearings are disregarded. She said she strongly oppose the nomination of Mr. Brune because DEC needs an impartial person to head a protection agency, not a "promote pollution" agency. She urged the committee to consider the serious erosion of trust in government and to make a good faith decision as to whether the nomination is in the best interests of clean water, clean air, health, salmon, renewable resources, and the future of Alaska, and not in the interest of outside extraction industries.

[7:36:14 PM](#)

PAUL GLAVINOVICH expressed his support of the appointment of Mr. Brune, stating Mr. Brune's credentials are impeccable. Mr.

Glavinovich said many Alaskans think the DEC commissioner can unilaterally make a decision relating to the permitting of a resource development project; however, such decisions represent the product of multiple state agencies that are staffed with competent scientists.

[7:37:37 PM](#)

LACI MICHAUD, on behalf of the Alaska Miners Association (AMA), expressed her support for the confirmation of Mr. Burne. She informed the committee AMA is a membership trade association representing large and small mines, sand, gravel, and rock quarry operations, exploration projects, and vendors and contractors who make a living from a healthy mining industry. Alaska miners have worked with Mr. Brune for many years and he has a reputation within the regulating community as having extensive knowledge of Alaska biology and on any issue, Mr. Brune has always focused on science and that the resource development must be responsible. Mr. Brune has worked in Alaska in many sectors and has always focused on science above politics. She said DEC will benefit from Mr. Brune's technical expertise and AMA supports his confirmation.

[7:39:20 PM](#)

RENE LIMERE said he is representing his business, Ultimate Rivers, and has been an Alaska resident for almost 40 years. He gave a short personal history. Mr. Limere said he is joining the overwhelming testimony in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Brune for his conflict of interest and his public comments. He described the rivers in Bristol Bay, and opined people in charge need to have an understanding and background in conservation.

[7:41:34 PM](#)

CATHY JOHNSON said she has lived in Alaska over 50 years and is speaking on behalf of her family. Her family commercial fishes in Bristol Bay and she spoke in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Brune. Mr. Brune has a conflict of interest in issuing permits and regulating mines. She said her family needs someone to protect and represent the salmon industry. The Exxon Valdez oil spill killed many species of sea life and Exxon's response was to write everyone checks; Alaska cannot take that type of disaster again but let us leave a beautiful Alaska for our children. Ms. Johnson urged the committee to not advance the confirmation.

7:43:30 PM

MYRA SCHOLZE said she is a lifelong Alaskan from Kodiak Island speaking in strong opposition to the appointment of Mr. Brune. The Department of Environmental Conservation is responsible for protecting Alaska's environment, including permitting mines, and because of Mr. Brune's history as a Pebble mine spokesman for Anglo American, his appointment represents a grave conflict of interest. Pebble mine threatens Bristol Bay, which is one of the world's last natural salmon runs but is also a place of economic, cultural, and ecological importance. She urged the committee not to advance the confirmation.

7:44:41 PM

GRIFFIN PLUSH said he is a student originally from Seward speaking in opposition to the confirmation of Mr. Brune. Young Alaskans trust elected officials to ensure the processes of government and permitting are due process, fair, and that all voices are heard. Mr. Plush expressed his concern that Mr. Brune is more friendly to transnational developers than to young Alaskans who oppose dangerous extraction. Mr. Brune's support for one specific industry should be a disqualifier, and could undermine the future of Alaskans. He pointed out in Seward after the Exxon Valdez oil spill there was massive devastation that had been preceded by many promises that not one drop of oil would be spilled, but the industry was not held accountable and there was oil on the coast. Mr. Plush said it is the job of the state to hold industry accountable.

7:47:08 PM

KIRSA HUGHES-SKENDIJS recalled one of Mr. Brune's "highly inflammatory tweets" regarding [2018 Alaska Ballot Measure 1] and she read a quote. She acknowledged Mr. Brune has some conservation background, but his actions have been to support getting rid of the Ocean Ranger program, which does not cost the state money, primarily to show Alaska is open for business. Ms. Hughes-Skendijs said Mr. Brune's actions have disqualified him as acting in a nonpartisan function. She pointed out the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has observers on trawlers and electronic monitoring, and questioned why the head of DEC would resist a safeguard for pollution from outside corporations. She equated "open for business" with "open for exploitation."

[7:49:53 PM](#)

ROCHELLE HARRISON said she lives in Bristol Bay and spoke in opposition to the nomination of Mr. Brune. She and her family own a small fishing business in Bristol Bay and depend upon natural resources and a healthy fish population. The local residents oppose the Pebble mine and Mr. Brune has shown a bias toward the mine and the mining industry, at the cost of the natural resources needed to continue her lifestyle in Alaska. She urged the committee to not advance the confirmation.

[7:51:08 PM](#)

COLE DEAL spoke in opposition to the confirmation of Mr. Brune. In this position, Mr. Brune cannot be objective in reviewing the applications Pebble needs to submit to DEC to develop a large copper and gold mine. Mr. Brune's previous work history dictates that he cannot be held accountable for decisions on the ongoing Pebble process that are important environmental decisions regarding Alaska's wild resources.

[7:52:06 PM](#)

TYLER HENEGAN said he finds it unfathomable to consider the nomination of Mr. Brune. In the interests of Alaskans and the future of children, he stressed the importance of promoting the health of Alaska's ecosystem which Mr. Brune cannot do. Mr. Brune's history and public statements show he is not in favor of promoting a healthy ecosystem, and Mr. Henegan urged the committee not to advance the confirmation.

[7:53:04 PM](#)

JAMES SELVOG said he is from Kodiak and lives in Soldotna. His family members have all fished commercially in Bristol Bay and two generations depend upon salmon for their livelihoods. He recalled the effects of the Exxon Valdez oil spill and expressed his strong opposition to the appointment of Mr. Brune.

[7:54:34 PM](#)

SHERYL BAECHLER, speaking for herself and her family, expressed her strong opposition to the nomination of Mr. Brune because he cannot make decisions in the best interests of Alaskans and the environment. She said she is concerned about the Pebble mine because she is a landowner in the Bristol Bay area, and restated her opposition.

[7:55:39 PM](#)

MARK NIVER President, Commercial Fishermen for Bristol Bay, said he is a 42-year resident of Alaska and 39-year fisherman in Bristol Bay and is speaking on behalf of 1,400 permit holders in Bristol Bay who oppose the nomination of Mr. Brune. He recalled Mr. Brune's previous statements and said his organization seeks a nominee who leans toward conservation and not development. Many Alaskans have testified who want a conservationist at DEC. He described features of the Pebble mine and said it will affect the Bristol Bay watershed.

[7:57:46 PM](#)

SUE SPRINKLE said Mr. Brune has a credibility issue and questioned how a person who loves Alaska would support a project that could go wrong. She stated Alaska needs to protect its air and water and stated her opposition to the appointment of Mr. Brune.

[7:59:18 PM](#)

JOE MACKENZIE said he is a business owner speaking on his own behalf and on behalf his family in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Brune. He is a harvester of renewable resources, that have sustained his family for three generations, and noted Mr. Brune has a conflict of interest with those who utilize renewable resources. He said legislators represent many like himself, and can decide to look forward and realize a potential biased opinion at DEC could jeopardize many constituents.

[8:00:34 PM](#)

ERICA MADISON said she is a Bristol Bay fisherman and a small business owner speaking in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Brune. She urged the committee to seek an unbiased, neutral appointee who will fairly evaluate resource extraction, and one who will search for safe and inventive economic opportunities for the state while protecting profitable industries such as commercial fishing. She said Mr. Brune has supported development companies and the Pebble mine, and thus cannot support conserving and protecting Alaska's natural resources.

[8:01:31 PM](#)

BRIAN BURKE said he is a 40-year Alaska resident and expressed his opposition to Mr. Brune's nomination. He said Mr. Brune stated his support of the Pebble mine - and that the mine can coexist with salmon fisheries - in 2018, before the scope of the project was presented. Further, the Alaska Mining Association supports his nomination. Mr. Burke restated his strong opposition.

[8:03:00 PM](#)

KRYSTA WATTERS said she is a resident and fisherman of Bristol Bay speaking in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Brune. She opined Mr. Brune is anti-Bristol Bay because of his support of Pebble mine, a gold and copper mine, and his support of a "pushed through" environmental impact statement (EIS). She said she did not support someone associated with the mine.

[8:05:32 PM](#)

LAURA WRIGHT spoke in strong opposition to the confirmation of Mr. Brune. She questioned whether Mr. Brune could use science to contain a tailings pile forever and prevent a tailings dam failure. She urged for a more balanced representative as commissioner for DEC. Ms. Wright noted the challenges of declining salmon populations and climate change and stated Alaska needs to protect what it currently has.

[8:06:57 PM](#)

NOELLE CARBONE said she is a small business owner in the upper Susitna valley speaking in strong opposition to the confirmation of Mr. Brune. She said Mr. Brune has an obvious bias for mining, megaprojects, and Outside interests. Ms. Carbone stressed the importance of balance and the need for a commissioner to accomplish the hard work of conserving, protecting, and improving Alaska's natural resources for all Alaskans. Mr. Brune has a conflict of interest, and although he may be of good character and intelligent, the commissioner should represent all Alaskans.

[8:08:27 PM](#)

CRAWFORD PARR said he is a pilot speaking for himself and his family in opposition to the confirmation of Mr. Brune because one with a background in advancing mining interests is unqualified due to a conflict of interest. Mr. Parr provided a

quote from Mr. Brune related to eliminating mining regulations. Mr. Parr said he stands for clean water and wild salmon.

[8:10:01 PM](#)

MELISSA GOOZEN said she opposes Mr. Brune's appointment due to his obvious and extreme conflict of interest. She said she has lived in Alaska for 46 years, grew up on the Copper River, and lived in many places in the state. She expressed her support for previous testimony in opposition to Mr. Brune, and for clean water and wild salmon statewide.

[8:10:50 PM](#)

JONATHON HOYSOCK stated his opposition to the appointment of Mr. Brune. He said he is calling from the coal mining region of Pennsylvania, which is the home region of Governor Dunleavy. Mr. Hoysock opined Mr. Brune has a conflict of interest due to his support of Pebble mine.

[8:12:06 PM](#)

BERNIE HOFFMAN said she has lived in Fairbanks for 30 years and spoke in strong opposition to the confirmation of Mr. Brune. Mr. Brune carries a lot of pro-industry baggage and could not represent all Alaskans fairly. A majority of Alaskans want clean air and renewable resources, such as Bristol Bay salmon, and support the regulations that make them so. She said Mr. Brune seeks to gut regulations and allow for the extraction of resources and leave toxic waste behind, which is the wrong attitude for the Alaska state government. Alaska needs to focus on climate change.

[8:14:22 PM](#)

SCOTT BARTLETT, speaking for himself and his family, expressed his strong opposition to the confirmation of Mr. Brune. He noted DEC has a broad mission and purview over many projects; however, Mr. Brune was nominated for the single issue to impact the regulation process of Pebble mine. Mr. Brune's nomination is inappropriate for Alaska and displays cronyism. Mr. Bartlett urged for a conservatist or an impartial individual who could be trusted to evaluate what the Bristol Bay region offers Alaska and the world.

[8:16:20 PM](#)

PAM MILLER, Executive Director, Alaska Community Action on Toxics (ACAT), informed the committee ACAT is a public interest environmental health and justice research and advocacy organization. Ms. Miller recalled she has met with Mr. Brune in his position as commissioner designee and noted he is personable and friendly. Her opposition to his appointment is based upon his work experience and she questioned his objectivity due to his alliance with mining and oil and gas industries. Further, she is concerned about his leadership protecting public health in complex issues such as the contamination of drinking water sources by perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances found in firefighting foam in dozens of communities around Alaska. For example, DEC proposed cleanup standards for remediation of contaminated water and soil which are not health-protective. Unlike other states, DEC has not moved toward establishing enforceable drinking water standards for the protection of public health. Ms. Miller also expressed concerns about Mr. Brune's ability to represent the public interest in issues of complex permitting decisions, and in addressing climate change and the industrial contamination of the Arctic. She urged the committee not to advance the nomination.

[8:18:12 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR TARR closed public testimony on the confirmation of Mr. Brune.

The committee took a brief at-ease.

[8:21:38 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Resources Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 8:21 p.m.