Official Recinds Report Critical of Mining Industry, 'Just Assumed' It Said Otherwise

BECKY BOHRER, Associated Press

JUNEAU, Alaska (AP) — The president of the Iliamna Village Council said Wednesday that she did not review a report submitted on the council's behalf that backed up conclusions by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency about the potentially negative impacts of large-scale mining in the Bristol Bay region.

In a brief interview, Lorene Anelon, who also goes by Sue, said she "just assumed" the analysis by Donald Macalady "was all on the same page as the village."

Macalady is a professor emeritus of chemistry and geochemistry at the Colorado School of Mines, whose analysis suggested broader impacts than what the EPA looked at in its revised watershed assessment. His review was submitted to EPA with a letter from Anelon, dated June 29, in which she expressed frustration with the EPA process. The cover letter for the package was signed by Macalady's son, Todd, who identified himself as representing the council.

Days later, Anelon submitted a council resolution, dated July 2, rescinding the review and directing that it not be made part of the official record as the council's position. The resolution said the council "inadvertently" sent in written testimony signed by Anelon and that Anelon hired Donald Macalady "without full authority of the Council" to submit testimony for the EPA comment period. A letter accompanying the resolution from Anelon said the council does not support keeping lands in the watershed area off limits to exploration and development.

In her statement Wednesday, Anelon said Todd Macalady commissioned the review from his father, and said the council at no time had any contact with Donald Macalady.

She said Todd Macalady was asked to prepare submission materials for the EPA comment period that reflected concerns the council had with the agency's watershed assessment. Those included a one-on-one consultation with EPA and concerns that the EPA process not limit the ability of the proposed Pebble Mine to get a "full and impartial review" by regulatory agencies, she said.

The materials he submitted "stray a significant distance from these positions," she said.

Messages for Todd and Donald Macalady were not immediately returned Wednesday.

June 30 was the deadline for comments on EPA's revised assessment, which found construction of a large-scale mine near the headwaters of a world-premier salmon

fishery could have major impacts on streams and wetlands even without an accident or failure. A final report is expected later this year and could affect permitting decisions for the proposed mine.

On Tuesday, Donald Macalady said his son told him the council was interested in having someone evaluate and interpret the EPA report in a more understandable way. He said he sent in his resume and was hired on an hourly contract.

Donald Macalady, in his review, said build-out from the mine "will change forever the cultural and social environment of the region."

"Economic survival in the post-mining environment could be much more difficult than it is at present," he said.

Anelon said it was inappropriate for Macalady to comment on potential future impacts of the proposed Pebble Mine on social and community development in the village of Iliamna.

EPA said the comments will remain part of the public record.

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