

Unknown

From: Scott Heyworth [heyworth@gci.net]
Sent: Saturday, March 03, 2007 12:29 PM
To: Heyworth; Todd; Todd Palin
Subject: Northern Dynasty skeptical of survey methods, results

Web posted Friday, March 2, 2007

Northern Dynasty skeptical of survey methods, results ***Pebble poll shows support for habitat protection***

By HAL SPENCE
Peninsula Clarion

Opponents of Northern Dynasty's proposed Pebble Mine say a new opinion poll shows that provisions in Bristol Bay protection bills now before the Alaska Legislature are supported by a vast majority of Alaskans.

A spokesperson for Northern Dynasty Mines Inc. doubts the survey methods and the results, calling it part of a broad effort to raise fears and squelch the project before it gets a fair hearing.

The poll, commissioned by the Renewable Resources Coalition and conducted by Hellenthal and Associates, asked more than 400 registered voters statewide whether they favored or opposed legislation meant to protect Bristol Bay fisheries.

In a press release Wednesday, the coalition said Hellenthal found 83 percent of Alaskans supported salmon protections in House Bill 134. Among other things, that bill would prohibit draining and destruction of salmon spawning streams for industrial purposes.

Sixty-seven percent said they supported the habitat protection concepts at the heart of Senate Bill 67. That bill would establish a game refuge in the watersheds making up the headwaters of Bristol Bay — an area completely surrounding the proposed mine site. The refuge would be named after late Gov. Jay Hammond and is supported by his widow, Bella Hammond, and other family members, the coalition said.

Sixty-nine percent of respondents said creation of one of the world's largest open pit mines at the headwaters of the Bristol Bay watershed was a negative development for Alaska.

Scott Brennan, chief operating officer of the Renewable Resources Coalition, said sponsors of the measures, including Sen. Gary Stevens, R-Kodiak, and Rep. Bryce Edgmon, D-Dillingham, were putting people and fisheries first.

"Despite Northern Dynasty's corporate spin, these bills are widely supported in Alaska. Our Bristol Bay fisheries are too valuable to risk," Brennan said.

Reached in Juneau on Wednesday shortly after appearing at legislative hearings on House Bill 134, Brennan said it was clear Alaskans valued salmon habitat protection and

10/14/2009

ROSTON 00034

clean water.

"They've seen that the (regulatory) system has been weakened over the four-plus years under Gov. Frank Murkowski. That message has been heard in Juneau," he said. "My sense of the hearings today was that members of the committee heard the concerns of the commercial, sport and subsistence fisheries communities in Bristol Bay and will continue to discuss HB 134 and habitat protection in general."

Hellenthal's survey was conducted between Feb. 12 and Feb. 20 and had a 95-percent confidence level and a margin of error of plus or minus 4.9 percent.

Sean Magee, vice president for public affairs with Northern Dynasty Mines Inc., said it was no accident the release of the poll data was timed to coincide with the launch of hearings on the pending legislation in Juneau. He said Northern Dynasty suspects the Renewable Resources Coalition is engaging in push polling using questions designed to elicit desired results.

"I would want to see the entire poll and the questions before giving much credence to the results," he said.

Brennan said the Renewable Resources Coalition had no problem releasing the questions.

On the other hand, Magee acknowledged Northern Dynasty faces a daunting political reality.

When it comes to the environment and potential for harm represented by development, issues soon reach emotional "apple pie and motherhood" territory, he said.

Alaskans' expressions of concern were legitimate and understandable, he added, but easing those concerns was part and parcel of the company's efforts in focusing on good science, its environmental program and community education outreach.

"That's the traditional approach," Magee said. "But this is not a traditional project."

Having well-financed, professional activists running an orchestrated campaign of the scope exhibited by the Renewable Resources Coalition is not conventional, he said, likening it to the advertising power of a McDonalds.

"We have to compete with that message," he said.

From Northern Dynasty's perspective, a "fear campaign" is easier to produce than trying to communicate the complexities of a mine development and environmental protection plan.

"There is no doubt their advertising campaign is influencing peoples' perceptions of Pebble," Magee acknowledged. "It's a very significant campaign."

He said the Renewable Resources Coalition hasn't released figures on what they are spending, but Northern Dynasty professionals believe it to be in the range of \$2 million to \$3 million.

ROSTON 00035

10/14/2009

Brennan said the Renewable Resources Coalition is as 501-c corporation operating under federal requirements and to that degree its financing is a matter of public record.

"Our budget comes from our member organizations," he said. "We have over 300 individuals and businesses who support us and enable us to work to protect their interests in Bristol Bay. The members speak for themselves."

Brennan went on to say he saw it as ironic that a Canadian company raising money in Europe, the Middle East and other parts of the world would be critical of Alaskans joining forces "to protect one of the world's greatest salmon fisheries."

Magee said thanks to the Renewable Resources Coalition campaign, many Alaskans might now believe that Pebble will destroy the Bristol Bay fishery. However, Northern Dynasty claims its mine will touch only "two modest tributaries" of the eight rivers that comprise the Bristol Bay fishery system. Six of those rivers, he said, supply 80 percent of the sockeye production for Bristol Bay. The two tributaries represent "less than one-half percent," he said.

"Our commitment is that our project will cause no reduction to any fishery," Magee said.

The Pebble project is years away from production. The earliest permitting applications would be filed would be late 2008, he said, and more likely 2009. Given the controversy surrounding the project, the permit process could take three years, Magee said.

Brennan said, however, that Pebble was just "the tip of the iceberg."

There are more than 1,200 mining claims in the region around Pebble, he said, and a million more acres the Bureau of Land Management wants to open up to development.

Hal Spence can be reached at harold.spence@peninsulaclarion.com.

ROSTON 00036

10/14/2009