

Norton Bay Inter-Tribal Watershed Council

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Bureau of Land Management Puts Breaks on Alaska Land Give Away *Biden Administration puts hold on opening Alaska to mining at the expense of local communities, water and subsistence resources*

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One week before Earth Day, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) announces that it will put the breaks on one of the largest extraction industry land grabs in U.S. history, by stopping the former Trump administration's efforts to quietly open millions of acres of Alaska's public land—known as D1 lands—to future mining and oil and gas development. The Trump administration ignored repeated requests from Alaska's tribal leaders, local communities, businesses, and conservation organizations for a fair and transparent planning process, in order to rush through opening of the lands through lifting of Public Land Orders (PLOs) that prevent mining and other development on over 50 million acres of public lands in the state, almost half of which are located in the Arctic.

Mining and other extractive development in these vast and unique areas will impact multiple biologically rich salmon bearing watersheds that are critical for subsistence uses to nearby Native villages and communities. According to Doug Katchatag, the President of the Norton Bay Inter-Tribal Watershed Council, "The effects of warming temperatures are already killing fish in the North and Golsovia Rivers that we rely on for fishing. If mining also takes place at the head of these rivers it will turn them into dead zones."

After failing with the Trump BLM, the NBITWC along with other tribal and conservation organizations, asked the Biden administration to place the land transfers on hold and require BLM to analyze the potential impacts to sensitive rivers and streams, conduct proper consultation with tribes and conduct a legal review. Today, the BLM responded with a notice in the Federal Register that solidifies the agency's new commitment to inclusive processes and holistic analyses before completing broad agency actions on lands that are important to the food security and livelihoods for Alaskans around the state. The announcement also upholds the ability of Alaska tribal Vietnam Veterans to make land selections as provided under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act and the Dingell Act authorizations.

According to Carol Oliver who is on the Chinik Eskimo Community Tribal Council in Golovin, "We applaud BLM for showing understanding and cooperation in the conservation and protections of our subsistence resources that the previous administration did not."

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