



# Chickaloon Village

*Traditional Council*

*(Nay'dini'aa Na')*

**For Immediate Release**

## **Chickaloon Village Traditional Council Appeal Forces DNR to Withdraw Jonesville Coal Mine Decision**

July 5, 2011

**Gary Harrison,**  
*Traditional Chief*

**Doug Wade,**  
*Chairman/Elder*

**Rick Harrison,**  
*Vice-Chairman*

**Penny Westing,**  
*Secretary*

**Albert Harrison,**  
*Treasurer/Elder*

**Jess Lanman,**  
*Elder Member*

**Burt Shaginoff,**  
*Elder Member*

**Larry Wade,**  
*Elder Member*

**Jennifer Harrison,**  
*Executive Director*

In response to appeals filed by the Chickaloon Village Traditional Council (CVTC), Castle Mountain Coalition, Pacific Environment, and other community groups, on Friday, July 1, 2011, the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) announced it would withdraw a Decision allowing Ranger Alaska, LLC (a wholly-owned subsidiary of the foreign mining company Black Range Minerals, Ltd.) to operate a surface strip and underground coal mine in the headwaters of critical salmon habitat.

CVTC's appeal focused on DNR's failure to respond to public comments and its failure to require mine owners to meet statutory deadlines. "State law requires DNR to respond to issues raised through the public comment process and that didn't happen here," said Lisa Wade, a Chickaloon Tribal citizen and Health and Social Services Director. "It was irresponsible for DNR to issue this permit, and instead they should have required Ranger Alaska to submit a new application for coal mining at Jonesville," stated Traditional Chief Gary Harrison. "But we are happy the permit has been withdrawn and hope DNR will fully take our concerns into account in the future when considering coal developments in sensitive and traditional Tribal areas," he added. Written Tribal public comments had noted that water pollution and reclamation failures from near the coal mine site persist, despite the mine having closed operations more than four decades ago. CVTC also commented about safety issues that plagued the coal mine when it last operated, including deadly explosions from pockets of gas in the mountain. Recognizing it did not respond to Tribal comments, DNR announced it would withdraw its Decision.

Salmon are a critical cultural and food resources for the Tribe and the Tribe has heavily invested in salmon habitat restoration work in the region, including projects on Eska Creek—which the Jonesville coal mine area drains into. Restoring the once prolific salmon runs attracts jobs and fishing opportunities to the area. "The information in the current permit is just so terribly outdated—the vital importance of salmon to our culture and community and our cooperative work with the Borough, State and Federal Governments to restore salmon runs in Matanuska River tributaries needs to be fully considered," said Shawna Larson, a Chickaloon Tribal citizen and Co-Director of Pacific Environment.

CVTC vowed to continue to vigilantly protect and exercise stewardship over its traditional waters, lands and resources. This includes challenging any project or decision that could negatively impact the health and welfare of the Tribe and local communities. For more information on CVTC's appeal, please contact CVTC Council Secretary Penny Westing at 907-745-0794, Executive Director Jennifer Harrison at 907-745-0749, or Tribal attorney Geoffery Stauffer at 907-868-1859.