

Doniece Gott

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, April 24, 2023 3:43 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Support Clean Water Act 404 Program

Good afternoon,

I am emailing asking that you please support funding for the State's assumption of the Clean Water Act 404 Program.

I grew up in a mining family and am now working in the family business operating a small placer mining beginning it's 34th year of production. I am well versed in both State and Federal permitting processes. On the federal level we've have had to work with people who either don't/have never lived in Alaska or who are fairly new to the state and not familiar with the uniqueness of our environment/remoteness and logistics involved with operating in our state. In addition, Alaska has a very unique legal structure with Alaska National Interest Lands and Conservation and the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, and we're constantly having to educate those people.

The State assumption of the 404 program will not weaken the regulatory oversight. The State of Alaska's program will have to be at least as stringent or more stringent that the federal regulations. The State has successfully done this before with the assumption of the federal National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) now called the Alaska Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (APDES). Having Alaska assume the 404 program will create some stability and predictability to the process since we will be working with regulators that understand the uniqueness of Alaska and can better manage the environmental protection policy for Alaska.

I also support the States process of trying to secure some federal funding for the program. But, I also know that miners are not seeking a free ride and are open the process of establishing reasonable and appropriate fees to help cover the costs to administer the 404 program.

I ask that you please support funding the State's assumption of the Clean Water Act 404 program. It will strengthen and stabilize Alaska's regulatory system.

Regards,
Ben Birch

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