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The Honorable Neil Kornze
Principal Deputy Director
Bureau of Land Management
U.S. Department of the Interior
4401 Fairfax Drive, Room 5655
Arlington, Virginia 22203-1610

Dear Principal Deputy Director Kornze:

I write to express serious concern over law enforcement actions that occurred in the Fortymile Mining District near Chicken, Alaska in August. This controversial incident has drawn an understandable amount of scrutiny in Alaska and nationwide, but to date, most of the focus has been on the Environmental Protection Agency's participation. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) had a significant role in both the planning and execution of this operation. I request a meeting with you to discuss your agency's role in this exercise.

As you know, during the third week of August the Alaska Environmental Crimes Task Force conducted a series of unannounced site visits on placer mines within the Fortymile Mining District for purported violations of the Clean Water Act. These mines operate in an area around the Fortymile National Wild and Scenic River, which is administered by the Bureau of Land Management. I think we can all agree that ensuring that Alaska's mining operations are in compliance with all State and Federal law is a worthy endeavor and goal, but I question the need for what we have learned was a heavy-handed and heavy-armored approach.

In order to better understand the background, justification and decision-making process which led to this enforcement action, I would like these specific questions answered:

- 1) What was the BLM's role in the background planning for this enforcement action? When was the Bureau first notified of this enforcement action?
- 2) My understanding is compliance exams are standard for the mine operators in this area, and are usually administered by the BLM or the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation. Why was this enforcement action taken in such an aggressive manner?
- 3) What was the clear and eminent public health threat that justified aggressive criminal enforcement tactics be used in lieu of normal infield compliance exams? How many miners were cited or arrested during the raid?

- 4) One of the justifications given for the heavy-handed approach was the alleged presence of illegal narcotics and human trafficking. Where was this information obtained? Was evidence of either activity detected during the raid?

I have long strived to improve the relations between the citizens of Alaska and our Federal agencies, who many believe to be out of touch and overreaching. I fear actions such as this incident will further damage such efforts. I look forward to discussing this matter, and how we can avoid such situations in the future with you.

To schedule a meeting please contact my scheduler Kristen Daimler at Kristen_daimler@murkowski.senate.gov or by calling (202) 224-6665. Thank you for your prompt consideration to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lisa Murkowski", is positioned above the printed name.

Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator