

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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Senator Cathy Giessel Senate District P

Testimony on the Environmental Protection Agency's Bristol Bay Watershed Assessment June 4, 2012

I'm Cathy Giessel, lifelong Alaskan, born in the Territory of Alaska, and a State Senator. I am also a nurse practitioner, who has provided healthcare in both urban and rural Alaska. Rural Alaska...where there are few jobs and few paychecks. A local newspaper carried a story yesterday with the headline "Four more rural Alaska school slated to close next year". The article identifies the schools in SW, one in Bristol Bay, that have so few students that they must close. And this ripples out, as the health aide is moving out also; she has child that needs a school so she is moving...leaving the community without any healthcare. This is about people; we are not an invasive species, we belong here. The resources are here for us to use and conserve. Conserve means use what we need, just as we conserve energy by turning off lights when we leave a room, not that we don't ever turn the lights on. It is unconscionable that the EPA would hastily write a report like this and put it forth as science. Even worse, that the federal agency would insert itself into an issue that belongs to the State of Alaska. Alaska is not an "internal colony" of the US - Alaska is a sovereign state with a careful, credible and competent permitting process. The unprecedented preemptive action by the EPA will destroy Alaska's future as a resource utilization state. It will destroy our opportunity for jobs and an economy to support our people.