

Northern Dynasty responds to Renewable Resources Coalition report *Analysis of water rights application more politics than science*

Northern Dynasty Mines (NDM) Chief Operating Officer Bruce Jenkins responded today to the release of an “independent professional review” of its recent water rights applications, calling the Renewable Resources Coalition (RRC) report a cynical attempt to masquerade anti-development politics as science. The 4½-page report, entitled ‘*Report on Northern Dynasty Water Rights Claims in the Pebble Mine Area,*’ was prepared by Coble Geophysical Services of Anchorage.

In July, NDM submitted more than 600 pages of detailed technical and environmental data to the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to secure the future right to use water in three watersheds surrounding the Pebble Project. In September, the company submitted an additional 818 pages in response to DNR requests for further information on its water rights applications.

“In its rush to judgment, the RRC didn’t even see fit to look at the information contained in our most recent submission,” Jenkins said. “More to the point, they’re reviewing these preliminary applications as if they are intended to fully describe the copper mine that Northern Dynasty is proposing to build at Pebble.

“This is a patently false premise upon which to assess these documents, and the RRC and its consultant have taken the opportunity to reach unfounded conclusions that are calculated to mislead and alarm Alaskans.”

NDM’s water rights applications are intended to broadly describe the Pebble Project footprint and potential mine facilities, as well as the areas in which ground and surface water may be required to build and operate the mine. Information contained in the submissions addresses specific DNR requirements for water rights applications, and is not intended to provide for a full assessment of the Pebble Project’s potential impacts.

Notwithstanding the limited scope of the submissions, and the fact that NDM has yet to fully define its proposed mine plan and mitigation measures, the RRC analysis uses the water rights applications to assess Pebble’s potential impact on a wide range of issues – including fish habitat, downstream water flows, seismic risks, hydrostatic water pressure, water chemistry and seepage.

Northern Dynasty believes its water rights submissions are an inappropriate and incomplete basis upon which to assess the Pebble Project in its entirety.

“We have invested more than \$42 million on environmental studies to date in order to establish the scientific foundation necessary to design a mine that can operate safely while preserving clean water, healthy fisheries and other natural values that Alaskans value,” Jenkins said. “We will continue in those efforts with the goal of submitting a comprehensive mine plan proposal in 2008 for the review and scrutiny of government agencies and the people of Alaska.”

Jenkins noted that DNR will not immediately process NDM’s water rights applications. Rather, they will be reviewed as part of the broader agency and public review/permitting process for the Pebble Project – a rigorous, comprehensive and multi-year process expected to begin in 2008 and take an estimated three years to complete.

Applying for water rights now, in advance of developing a final mine plan for the Pebble Project, provides NDM engineers and environmental scientists with the greatest flexibility to avoid and manage potential impacts on fish and fish habitat.

Jenkins stressed that Northern Dynasty must satisfy strict state regulations concerning water quality and fish protection before the Pebble Project can be permitted. He said protecting the fish resources of the Bristol Bay region is the company’s number one priority in preparing its mine plan proposal.

“I think the vast majority of Alaskans welcome investment in the state’s natural resources, as well as the economic development and job opportunities that investment brings,” he said.

“People deserve to hear the whole story about the Pebble Project and the work we’re doing to develop it in a socially and environmentally responsible manner. I’m confident that once that information is provided, we will receive due consideration and a fair hearing from the people of Alaska.”