



# United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Alaska State Office  
701 C Street, Box 13  
Anchorage, Alaska 99513-0099



**R E C E I V E D** IN REPLY REFER TO:  
1700 (933)  
MAR 21 1988

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

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MAR 18 1988

Bill H. Lamoreaux  
Regional Supervisor  
Southcentral Regional Office  
3601 C St., Suite 1350  
Anchorage, AK 99503

Dear Mr. Lamoreaux:

This letter is to confirm your recent telephone conversation with Ron Huntsinger of my staff concerning the current situation at Red Devil mine. As was discussed, we have revised the information available on the mining site, including the reports prepared by the CPA and Tryck, Nyman and Hayes. As was discussed, we have a number of questions and concerns regarding the information presented in the reports and the actions recommended in your letter of November 16, 1987.

We feel that the data presented in the reports is insufficient to devise an appropriate course of action. While recognizably the stream is contributing mercury and arsenic to the Kuskokwim River, the exact source is uncertain, and the maps presented of the mine site layout do not include the source of the surface flow to the settling ponds. The data presented from the inspection conducted by the EPA in 1971, while the mine was in operation, confirms a high level of input of these elements to the river. However, the data from 1979 (seven years after cessation of operations) indicates that the settling ponds are now removing background levels of contamination. That data also indicates that the discharge from Red Devil Creek has a lower concentration of heavy metals than the Kuskokwim upstream of their confluence. In effect Red Devil Creek is now diluting the Kuskokwim. According to the Tryck report, investigations by mining interests indicate that elemental mercury is naturally present in the streams in the Red Devil area, and the area "contains many mercury mines and probably has the potential to become a major mercury producing district".

The situation is further complicated by the existence of valid mining claims in the drainage. Our records indicate that these claims are owned by William R. Magnuson, the Estate of Hans Halverson, and Nick and Katherin Mellick. While the individuals holding these claims would be responsible for any necessary actions, we are unable at this time to identify what actions to recommend. Also, while we regulate mining operations on Public Lands, we cannot jeopardize legitimate activities conducted in accordance with legislation and regulation.

In light of this situation, we propose to conduct a site inspection this spring after break-up to take sufficient samples to determine the source(s) of the contamination and evaluate the site to devise an appropriate course of action. Subsequent activities will be based on the results of this inspection.

If you have any questions regarding this site or any other aspect of the Bureau of Land Management hazardous materials program in Alaska, please contact Ron Huntsinger at 271-3356 at the above address.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Wayne A. Boden".

Wayne A. Boden  
Deputy State Director for  
Land and Renewable Resources