



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Alaska Native Tribes send joint letter to Bureau of Land Management**

*20 tribes sign letter stating Tribal concerns, ask BLM to collaborate with Tribes, provide balance and protections for Tribal watershed nominations*

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is currently undertaking a planning process to determine the allowable uses of over 13.5 million acres of Tribal land, now managed by the BLM. Once completed, the new plan will be in place for the next 20 to 30 years. Over 60 federally recognized Alaska Native tribes live within the Bering Sea-Western Interior planning area. Alaska Natives have thrived on and stewarded this land for thousands of years, and this symbiotic relationship is foundational to Alaska Native ways of life. Many tribes nominated local watersheds for protection from mining in the planning process, yet none of the nominated watersheds received protection from mining in BLM's preferred proposed plan.

"We don't own the land but we belong to the land, and what happens to the land happens to us," said Nathan Elswick, Anvik Tribe's Second Chief. The voices of tribal communities within the planning area, the only communities that will have to live with the results of the plan, deserve to be heard in the planning process. They are simply asking to be of primary consideration by BLM in the planning process. BLM's proposed plan, by not recommending significant protections for the tribes' nominated watersheds, clearly sends the message that planning area communities do not matter to the federal government.

Twenty tribes have signed a letter asking BLM for the following: to give serious consideration to tribal concerns, to collaborate better with tribes in the planning process, and to make changes in the final plan to create greater balance and provide protections for tribal watershed nominations.

Native Peoples Action is a non-profit organization whose mission is to take a stand, work together and mobilize action for the wellness and wellbeing of Alaska Natives. The collaborative action among these twenty tribes perfectly illustrates the mission of our work and we are proud to highlight their collective strength and advocacy work for tribal self-determination.

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#### **Native Peoples Action, Inc.**

is an Alaska Native non-profit organization. We strive to provide Alaska Native peoples, communities, and our traditional values with a voice at all levels of policy making.