Who's Scaring Who In Measure 4 Debate?

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Casey Kelly/KMXT

Depending on who or what you believe, there’s a lot to be scared of when it comes to Ballot Measure 4--the Clean Water Initiative--on this month’s primary ballot. The Kodiak Chamber of Commerce sponsored a lunchtime forum on the topic today at the Best Western Kodiak Inn. KMXT’s Casey Kelly has more.

A lot of money is being spent by both proponents and opponents of Ballot Measure 4. But both sides agree that the initiative is ostensibly about the proposed Pebble Mine, a large copper, gold and molybdenum deposit that developers Anglo American and Northern Dynasty are hoping to turn into one of the world’s largest open pit mines. The problem is, the proposed site of the mine is at the headwaters of the world’s richest sockeye salmon run in Bristol Bay. Aurah Landau is with Alaskans For Clean Water, which was founded specifically to back measure four.

(Clean Water 1 :21s “…against that kind of disaster.”)

Landau argues that the measure’s main effect would be to reinstate rules against mixing zones in salmon streams for any new large scale mines developed in Alaska. Mixing zones are areas where water is used to dilute pollution. Landau says the use of them was made easier under the administration of former Governor Frank Murkowski.

(Clean Water 2 :14s “…cyanide, mercury and arsenic.”)

She said the mining industry and others are using “scare tactics” to make people think

that measure four will shut down mining in the state.

(Clean Water 3 :43s “…affects to salmon and clean water.”)

But Jason Brune with the Resource Development Council, which opposes ballot measure four, said the scare tactics are being used by pro-Clean Water Initiative groups.

(Clean Water 4 :36s “…down mining throughout the state.”)

If the initiative is passed, Brune warned that it would cost thousands of jobs and send the wrong message to businesses that want to operate in the state.

(Clean Water 5 :29s “…regulations they have around the world.”)

Brune took exception to claims that the permitting process for mining in Alaska is somehow weak or needs to be strengthened. Using the Red Dog Mine near Kotzebue as an example, he said mining has actually been beneficial to the state’s environment.

(Clean Water 6 :26s “…because of mining at the Red Dog Mine.”)

Voters will have a chance to decide for themselves which side they believe when they go to the polls August 26th.

I’m Casey Kelly.

HOST TAG: You can hear longer versions of both the pro and con Ballot Measure 4 presentations on the new Talk of the Rock, Tuesday (this) afternoon at 12:30 on KMXT.

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