

Agency extends deadline for placer miners

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Alaska miners and other interested parties now have until June 25 to comment on the Environmental Protection Agency's new draft effluent guidelines for placer mining, the Alaska Congressional Delegation announced recently.

The delegation was informed by the EPA that its request for a 45-day extension had been approved. In April, the delegation requested the EPA to extend its comment period to enable the delegation, the State of Alaska and miners to comment on the new regulation. The previous deadline for comments was May 8.

The regulation proposed by EPA would require placer miners in the state to recycle wastewater. EPA proposed the recycling requirement following a lengthy reassessment of mining technologies and their economics. The agency concluded that recycling is the best, economically feasible technology available to placer miners to meet Clean Water Act standards.

"Although this extension falls in the middle of the mining season, I urge all miners to stay involved during the comment period on the regulation," Sen. Frank Murkowski said. "It's essential that their views are considered by the EPA before any final decisions are made."

"This is likely to be our last chance to be heard before the regulation is finalized," Sen. Ted Stevens said. "If there are errors in the EPA analysis, this is our opportunity to set the record straight and help ensure the guidelines reflect the real economics of placer mining in Alaska."

Copies of the new regulations may be obtained by writing: Environmental Protection Agency, Alaska Operations Office, 701 C Street, Anchorage 99513. Comments may also be sent to this address.