## <u>Cantwell Urges Full Review of Proposal to Drill next to Mt. St. Helens</u> Local News

Posted by: David Haviland

Posted on: December 20, 2011 at 6:20 pm

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) called for a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) analysis of a proposed drilling project next to Mount St. Helens in a letter sent today to the U.S. Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) director and Chief of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). Cantwell believes the public and federal agencies deserve, and would benefit from, the comprehensive EIS analysis of environmental risks and its extensive opportunities for public involvement. An EIS is the most thorough environmental review available to the agencies. &Idquo; Given the potential risk that drilling and mining in this location would have to clean water, abundant wildlife, and the unspoiled beauty that this region is known for, I believe a full environmental impact statement is needed to properly evaluate the merits of this application, " Cantwell wrote. The risks of exploratory drilling and eventually the potential of mining next to Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument – one of the state's most iconic and scenic areas – are significant. Pristine lands near the monument could be polluted with toxins that could contaminate drinking water for up to 50,000 people downstream and harm threatened fish runs. A mine could also impact ancient forests and popular recreation sites in the region. An EIS would provide a thorough analysis and disclosure of the project's environmental risks. Cantwell also believes the public deserves ample opportunity for involvement in the process.

Application for minerals located within the same deposit. Strong regional opposition resulted in over 33,000 public comments, and in April 2008 the Bureau of Land Management released a &Isquo;no decision' on this application," Cantwell wrote. In contrast to the project's potentially significant environmental costs, its potential to create jobs at this stage appears minimal. In its 2011 drilling proposal to the USFS, Ascot, the company behind the proposal, believed it would potentially hire just 18 people for the project – only three of which would be locally hired. In 2007 Cantwell led the fight to reconsider plans to build a mine near Mount St. Helens. The BLM issued a preliminary hardrock mineral lease to Idaho General Mines for land on the northeastern edge of Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument on March 14, 2007. During a two-month public comment period, Cantwell sent a letter to then BLM Acting Director Jim Hughes highlighting local opposition to the plan as well as its environmental impact for the area. She joined local stakeholders in convincing the BLM to rethink its decision to let Idaho General Mines operate in the area. The BLM is currently determining what level of environmental review and public involvement are necessary to evaluate the project. The full text of the letter is below.

http://kbkw.com 2013/5/19 19:32:05 - 1