



Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation  
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

## FRIENDS OF ADMIRALTY STUDY IS MISLEADING

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 14, 2023

CONTACT: [Randy Bates](#), Director of Water, 907-465-5307 and [Kelly Rawalt](#), PIO, 907-465-5009

JUNEAU, AK — The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) reviewed the Friends of Admiralty's recent study on butter clam shells in Hawk Inlet and Young Bay. Although the clam shell data from the Friends of Admiralty's study are generally consistent with data previously reviewed, DEC does not agree with many of the report's conclusions. The report generates false concern that Hawk Inlet is impaired and that nearby food resources are harmed. Since lead levels in shells do not relate to a toxicity threat for any predator that consumes the soft tissue part of a clam shell, such a conclusion is vastly overstated and in conflict with State's over 30-years of environmental data.

The Friends of Admiralty's report compares lead concentrations in butter clam shells taken from Hawk Inlet and Young Bay. The report's conclusion suggests lead concentrations have increased over time and attributes recent lead concentration spikes around Hawk Inlet to the Greens Creek Mine. Friends of Admiralty also assert the mine is causing irreparable harm to the Admiralty Island National Monument.

Greens Creek Mine is required, through the State of Alaska permits, to monitor the Hawk Inlet ecosystem to evaluate the effect the mine has on the nearby environment, including lead concentration in Hawk Inlet water, marine sediment, and sea worm and mussel tissue. Data from these intensive State monitoring programs indicate that the vast majority of Hawk Inlet meets the Alaska water quality standards. The area near the historic ore spill in 1989 is currently listed as impaired and data from State monitoring programs and new data reviewed from Friends of Admiralty confirm this area is the only impairment in Hawk Inlet.

"We have been proactive in adapting our management strategies as we gather new information, and Greens Creek Mine has been more than willing to meet our expectations throughout the years," **said Director of Water Randy Bates**. "DEC has and will continue to take a strong role regulating Greens Creek Mine to protect the health of Alaskans and the environment."

The State monitoring programs have been well received and sustained for decades as an adaptable management system to evaluate and address the effects of the permitted discharges from the Greens Creek Mine and the health of Hawk Inlet. Citizen-provided environmental information, like this clam shell study, provides additional data for the department to consider when evaluating the efficacy and completeness of permitting and monitoring programs. DEC reviews this information, considers its quality and application, and uses it as appropriate to ensure the protection of human health and the environment. DEC has compiled its interpretation of the report and additional relevant information on Hawk Inlet at <https://dec.alaska.gov/water/hawk-inlet>.

Department of Environmental Conservation

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 111800

Juneau, Alaska 99811

Location: 410 Willoughby Avenue, Juneau

© 2023 STATE OF ALASKA • [DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION](#) • [EMAIL THE WEBMASTER](#)