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Media Release

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**NEW REPORT POINTS TO RED DOG MINE AS SOURCE OF LEAD AND OTHER
TOXINS IN SUBSISTENCE FOODS:
Report Faults State for Falsely Assuring Villagers About Food Safety**

Anchorage—A report released today by Alaska Community Action on Toxics (ACAT) documents that locations used by residents of Kivalina for subsistence gathering of greens and berries have higher than normal levels of lead and cadmium. The report also found evidence that Red Dog Mine, the world's largest zinc mining operation, is the source of the high levels.

The levels of metals found in the foods that Kivalina residents gather and eat are not acceptable, according to Dr. Fred Youngs, an environmental research chemist at the University of Massachusetts Lowell who conducted the analysis that led to the report. "The levels of lead and cadmium exceed safe levels in areas where people are gathering berries and greens. It is evident that those who consume these berries and vegetation may be at risk for adverse health effects," stated Dr. Youngs. "The State needs to act now to educate and protect the subsistence communities potentially affected by the mining operations."

Lead has been widely proven to affect the central nervous system and cause irreversible brain, kidney and reproductive organ damage, especially in children and pregnant women. Long-term exposure to lower levels of cadmium can result in kidney disease, lung damage, fragile bones and damage to liver and blood. As well, it can cause children to become hyperactive and reduce their verbal skills and IQ scores.

The report summarizes Dr. Youngs' analysis of two studies that examined levels of heavy metals in plants used for subsistence. The first study was done by Ecology and Environment, Inc. for the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC). The second was done by Exponent, a private firm contracted by Teck Cominco, the owner and operator of Red Dog Mine. The data for both studies were collected in the area of Red Dog Mine during the summer of 2001. The sampling of subsistence vegetation focused on salmonberry and sourdock. Dr. Youngs compared the levels of lead and cadmium found in the plants samples to standards set by the World Health Organization (WHO) and U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for safe levels in foods. Dr. Youngs found the levels reported in subsistence foods collected near Red Dog Mine exceeded safe levels determined by WHO and FDA.

Dr. Youngs also reviewed an evaluation of exposure of Noatak and Kivalina residents to heavy metals from Red Dog Mine completed by the Alaska Environmental Public Health Program (EHPH). EPHP concluded that the lead found in sampled vegetation did not pose a health threat to wildlife or people. This conclusion was based in great part on the results of blood tests the agency conducted of villagers in 1990, less than a year after mining operations began at Red Dog. It has not conducted any blood lead level tests of villagers since that time. Contrary to EPHP's conclusion, Dr. Youngs recommends that villagers be advised to limit the areas in which they collect berries and other edible vegetation in order to protect their health.

ACAT recommends immediate action to protect Kivalina residents from the potential health risks caused by unsafe levels of lead and cadmium in their food, including:

- The state should make new tests for blood lead levels immediately available to residents of Kivalina, Noatak and Point Hope and to the mine's employees.
- The state should conduct additional sampling of vegetation in subsistence harvest areas.
- An education program should be implemented immediately to advise all local residents to limit or completely restrict the areas in which they collect berries and other edible vegetation.
- Areas identified as containing contaminated berries or other subsistence foods should be identified by posted notices.
- Local people should be given the opportunity for meaningful involvement in the design and review of ongoing monitoring programs related to contamination by heavy metals and in public policy decisions regarding operations at Red Dog Mine.

The economy of Kivalina is based on subsistence. Since the mine began operating in 1989, villagers have noticed a serious decline in their quality of their drinking water, as well as fish kills and changes in the abundance and patterns of caribou, beluga and bearded seal migrations. On March 8, 2004, residents of Kivalina filed a lawsuit against Teck Cominco alleging nearly 4,000 violations of the federal Clean Water Act.

The Red Dog Mine is located in Northwest Alaska. Every 15 minutes around the clock, trucks carrying up to 100 tons of lead and zinc ore from the mine travel 52 miles overland to the port site on the Chukchi Sea. These transport operations generate a large amount of dust, both from the roadbed and also from ore truck surfaces. The National Park Service, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation and Teck Cominco undertook studies to evaluate the effects of the dust emissions on the surrounding vegetation.

“Teck Cominco should not consider this level of pollution to be just a cost of doing business in Alaska. They should be willing to be good neighbors,” said Pam Miller, Executive Director of Alaska Community Action on Toxics. “Alaskans have the right to expect that operations at Red Dog do not harm nearby communities, and that the State will protect community not corporate interests.”

For a full copy of the report or more information, please call Alaska Community Action of Toxics, (907)222-7714, or go to www.akaction.org. Dr. Fred Youngs of the University of Massachusetts is available for interviews at (978) 934-4859.

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