

March 2013

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States of America
The White House
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. President:

We, the undersigned wildlife managers, natural resource biologists and administrators with extensive Alaskan experience thank you and the EPA for conducting a scientific assessment of the region's watershed as a first step in protecting Bristol Bay from the dangers of the proposed Pebble Mine. We look forward to working with the EPA and other decision makers during this public process to determine the fate of Bristol Bay, Alaska. We write today to ask you to use all the tools at your disposal to protect one of the world's most productive ecosystems.

The proposed Pebble Mine in Bristol Bay poses numerous significant and potentially long-lasting threats to one of the world's foremost sport fishing and hunting regions. Specifically, fish habitat (including spawning and rearing grounds), wildlife habitat and recreational areas are all threatened by several hard rock mining proposals - most notably, the Pebble Mine. The potential impact from this type of activity could be severe and permanent. It is estimated that the Pebble Mine would produce between 2.5 and 10 billion tons of waste containing elements, such as copper and other heavy metals, that would threaten several fishery areas including spawning and rearing grounds for world-renowned native populations of salmon and rainbow trout.

If this project moves forward, these toxins would have to be contained and potentially treated in perpetuity - in an area of high seismic activity, which increases the risks tremendously. Because the Pebble property straddles the Kvichak and Nushagak river drainages - two of the most productive salmon systems on the planet - any release of this waste into the surface or groundwater has the potential to severely harm Bristol Bay's salmon and the livelihoods of the sport fishing and hunting business owners, all of whom depend on them for their economic support.

Sport fishing in Bristol Bay generates \$60 million annually; anglers looking for "once in a lifetime" experiences on rivers such as the Nushagak, Mulchatna, Koktuli and Kvichak support more than 800 full- and part-time jobs. Mining activity and increased development associated with mining will detrimentally impact these areas by direct impacts to fish and habitat. Development will also negatively impact opportunities for sport fishing and hunting operations in the area by diminishing the quality of the experience. Despite the remote nature of the region and the costs associated with traveling to it, on a yearly basis up to 65,000 visitors come to Bristol Bay for recreational opportunities to fish, hunt, and view wildlife.

The intrinsic value of remarkable unimpaired ecosystems such as Bristol Bay is significant for all Americans whether or not they are sportsmen or women and whether or not they ever go there. In short, the continued existence of the functioning Bristol Bay ecosystem is part of the wonder of the nation's outdoor legacy. Its loss would diminish how American's think of our nation.

Secretary Salazar and your administration correctly recognized that oil and gas development in this area is simply not worth the risk. The same is true for mining operations in the headwaters of Bristol Bay. The fish and wildlife values in the region, its size and setting, and the national significance of its resources are, in your words, "a national treasure that we must protect." We agree.

We thank you and the EPA for doing an assessment of the Bristol Bay watershed to better understand how future large-scale development projects may affect Bristol Bay. Now it's time to do whatever is necessary to restrict the development of potentially harmful mines like the proposed Pebble mine from destroying the unique and incredible environmental and economic values of the Bristol Bay watershed. Please take timely action to give Bristol Bay the protection it needs from mining and other large-scale developments.

The undersigned natural resource professionals urge you to take appropriate action to conserve the unique fish and wildlife values and human health of Bristol Bay, AK by using your authority to restrict large-scale mining activities from degrading the watershed. We ask you to take this action to guarantee a future for Bristol Bay that will generate sustainable economic opportunities while also conserving sporting traditions for generations to come.

We look forward to working with you and all federal agencies with an interest and role in the future of Bristol Bay's extraordinarily productive lands and waters.

Sincerely,

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