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With mining operations looming pristine watersheds and wild rainbows in Bristol Bay will be only a memory in a short amount of time.

BRISTOL BAY: FISH vs MINING

Americans have a critical decision to make in one of our last remaining salmon strongholds

If you've ever fished in Alaska's Bristol Bay region, you know it's unforgettable. Trophy rainbows, abundant kings, and the biggest run of sockeye "red gold" on the planet pour through this massive watershed. Recently, I found myself standing in the headwaters of this fishing paradise with a red beauty dancing on the end of my line. I was on the remote Koktuli River, and to get there I had to fly over endless miles of rolling tundra, dense forests, and criss-crossing streams and rivers. For the moment, I only shared this place with grizzlies, caribou, and millions of salmon. However, if foreign-based mining companies have their way, this salmon stronghold will also be the home to the largest gold and copper mine in North America. I'm referring to the notorious Pebble Mine.

If the Pebble Mine is ever built, the Koktuli River will be no more. The mine, requiring millions of gallons of water a day for operations, will siphon off most of this river, along with its amazing fishery. The toxic slurry created by the mine will have to be contained forever behind two dams of epic proportions, dwarfing Hoover Dam, Grand Coulee Dam, and even the Three Gorges Dam in China. Instead of concrete, these toxic lagoons will be held back only by dirt in an area known for its high seismic activity. Given the mining industry's track record on contamination, and the fact that even the smallest amounts of copper impact a salmon's olfactory senses, I knelt down wondering about the future of the sockeye I held in my hands.

As Pebble Mine proponents work to get approvals for the mine, roads, and power generation required for an operation of this size, another threat looms over this great place.



BRIAN O'KEEFE PHOTO

One million acres of prime salmon rearing grounds in lower Bristol Bay have been recommended to be opened to future mining operations like Pebble. In contrast to the Pebble Mine, which would be on state lands, these lands are owned by the federal government and the final decision lies in the hands of the Bureau of Land Management. It is my hope that the Department of Interior will reconsider this recommendation and establish a future for Bristol Bay that is based on its sustainable natural resources, instead of on short-term gains from minerals extraction.

Anyone who catches or eats wild

salmon should be concerned about these developments. The Bristol Bay fishery generates over \$400 million per year and thousands of jobs to the economy in Alaska, and supports a subsistence way of life for native communities that have shared this watershed for many generations. Bristol Bay also provides sportsmen with a place where we can get away from it all and enjoy nature in its original state—an experience worth preserving for our children and grandchildren.

We have a unique opportunity to stop these threats now before it's too late. Please write to Robert Abbey, the Director of the Bureau of Land Management, at Director@BLM.gov and urge him to reconsider his agency's recommendation to open up Bristol Bay to mining. Instead, ask Director Abbey to protect these prolific fisheries, just as they are, for future generations.

If you live in Alaska, you have a unique opportunity to prevent the Pebble Mine proposal because it is on state lands and your elected representatives have the power to create a different future for Bristol Bay. Contact your representatives, get involved in the race for your next Governor, and make sure that all candidates take a position to protect Bristol Bay.

Finally, support a conservation group involved in the fight. There are many organizations working at the local and federal level to save the places you love, and these efforts take funding and membership support from volunteers like you. Please consider supporting groups like the Renewable Resources Coalition, Trout Unlimited, World Wildlife Fund, and National Wildlife Federation.

The time to act is now. If we wait any longer this precious resource will be gone.

— Matt Little



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