



September 19, 2014

Water Docket # EPA-R10-OW-2014-0505
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Mail Code: 2822T
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator McCarthy:

At the Downeast Lobstermen's Association, we thank you for considering the impacts of large-scale mining on the Bristol Bay, AK salmon fishery -- one of our nation's most productive fisheries. We applaud your proposed 404(c) determination and feel that finalizing this determination is a necessary step to bestow on Bristol Bay the protection it needs from the type of large-scale developments that can devastate fisheries, either through catastrophic events or chronic habitat degradation over time.

Downeast Lobstermen's Association (DELA) represents Maine fishermen and their families to sustain traditional lobstering as it has been upheld for generations. We are a 501(c)3 organization whose members include lobstermen from Kittery to Eastport, as well as New Hampshire and Massachusetts -- and supporting members from as far away as the west coast. We are involved in policy, promotion, and education around Maine's important lobster resource.

Many Maine fishermen have connections to Alaska's fisheries, including the Bristol Bay salmon fishery. As skilled mariners, our fishermen are sought after by Alaska boat owners to work as captains and crew in Alaska fisheries. That connection helps sustain some of our fishermen during down times.

As members of the U.S. commercial fishing and seafood industries, we know what happens when fisheries and watersheds are not cared for. We have watched the decline of too many fisheries in our country due to loss of habitat and we have seen that even billions of dollars cannot fully restore most of those fisheries following inappropriate development.

The Bristol Bay salmon fishery is acknowledged across the world as a premier example of sustainable fisheries management. Mining like the proposed Pebble Mine has no place in this salmon watershed.

We support the EPA's proposed determination and believe the agency is more than justified in its decision to restrict dredge and fill material at the Pebble deposit. Furthermore, in light of the value of the Bristol Bay fishery, the sensitivity of its habitat, and the impossibility of guaranteeing against a catastrophic accident in open-pit mining, it is clear that large-scale mining activity poses unacceptable risks to the Bristol Bay watershed and should be prohibited. Please promptly issue a final 404(c) determination that will guarantee that large-scale mining will not have adverse impacts on the world's largest sockeye salmon fishery and the jobs and communities that it sustains.

Sincerely,

Sheila Dassatt
Executive Director
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