



Protecting the livelihood of the people who fish for a living

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:

Although we are located far away from Alaska, North Carolina watermen share with our Alaska peers a common commitment to fisheries livelihoods and the health of coastal ecosystems. We were devastated to hear about the proposal to build the destructive Pebble Mine at the headwaters of two of Alaska's richest salmon-bearing rivers, and we fully support your proposed 404(c) determination that would limit the extent of allowable mining there.

North Carolina Watermen United is an organization comprised of commercial fishermen, recreational fishermen, and charter/head boat operators. Our mission is to represent the needs of our coastal communities by protecting the livelihood of the people who fish for a living and providing a voice for fair regulations. We promote enactment of laws and regulations that ensure the rights of watermen to continue harvesting fishery resources, engage in public relations efforts to educate North Carolina citizens about the issues facing professional watermen, and assure that watermen, are adequately represented on decision-making boards and commissions. We are ever diligent in the evaluation of changes that affect watermen: changes in the health of our resources; changes in the political climate in which we exist, and changes in the economic realities affecting our industry.

We know that Bristol Bay, Alaska fishermen have been similarly dedicated to making their industry profitable and sustainable, which is why it would be a tragedy if their fishery was degraded by a massive open-pit mine at the headwaters of their watershed. That is why we at North Carolina Watermen United stand with our colleagues in Alaska and support your agency's recent decision to move forward with a 404(c) determination aimed to protect Bristol Bay, Alaska and its valuable salmon industry. 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.

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 believe 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,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ernie Foster".

Ernie Foster
North Carolina Watermen United
P.O. Box 536 Hatteras, NC 27943