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Securing a future for fishing communities

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September 19, 2014

Water Docket # EPA-R10-OW-2014-0505

Dear Administrator McCarthy:

I am writing in support of your agency's recent decision to move forward with a 404(c) determination aimed to protect Bristol Bay, Alaska and its valuable salmon industry. Thank you for the time you took to review this issue through the *Bristol Bay Watershed Assessment*. 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.

Penobscot East Resource Center is a 501(C) (3) organization in Stonington, Maine with a mission to secure a sustainable future for fishing communities in eastern Maine and beyond. Hancock and Washington Counties in Maine where we work are the two most fishing dependent counties on the east coast. Many Maine fishermen also fish in Alaska. The decisions that impact the health of our natural resources and fishing livelihoods affect us all, directly or indirectly, as fishermen, consumers, and community members.

New England fishermen are left in the position of having to rebuild depleted fisheries, an exceptionally difficult and painful task. Bristol Bay has the privilege of incredible abundance and a thriving fishing economy, and these virtues need to be protected from the threats posed by mineral extraction.

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 due to loss of habitat and we have seen that even billions of dollars cannot fully restore most of those fisheries following inappropriate development.

Furthermore, with the recent Mt. Polley tailings dam collapse we have sadly seen the result of allowing open-pit copper and gold mining within

essential salmon habitat, with no way to guarantee against unplanned outcomes. This very mine has been held up as an example of modern mining practices, co-existing with another great wild fishery. Sadly, it is the fishermen and communities downstream who will be left to carry the burden of rebuilding something that never should have been put at risk.

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robin Alden". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Robin Alden
Executive Director