

Honorable Gina McCarthy  
Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20460

Re: Water Docket # EPA-R10-OW-2014-0505  
Proposed Determination for the Bristol Bay, Alaska Watershed

Dear Ms. McCarthy:

Slow Food USA is a national, non-profit, membership organization with more than 200,000 members and followers around the nation. We are dedicated to good, clean, and fair food and food production. We believe that everyone, every day, must have access to sustainably produced food, including seafood, that is good for their health and well-being, the health of their communities, and the health of the planet and that food production must be good for those who labor to put it on our tables, including fishers.

I write to thank you for dedicating Agency time and resources necessary to thoroughly review the prospective effects of a large-scale mining operation in the Bristol Bay region and to support the agency's decision to move forward with a 404(c) determination aimed at protecting Bristol Bay and its world-class salmon fishery. Slow Food USA agrees with the agency's determination that the risks and potential costs to the Bristol Bay ecosystem, fisheries, and dependent communities are simply too high. We believe that the Bristol Bay Watershed Assessment, based on sound science and common-sense values, will be good for the health of Bristol Bay and its fishery, good for those who depend on the fishery, including Native Americans, who have relied on it for six thousand years, and good for the health of those who will continue to enjoy the unique bounty of Bristol Bay. Accordingly, we urge you to move forward, without delay, on the Final Determination under Section 404(c) of the Clean Water Act.

I am heartened by Bristol Bay fishery managers and fishers who help sustain one of the greatest fisheries on the planet. I am disheartened by the impossibly massive ecosystem alteration required by the proposed mineral extraction, including the unsustainable prospect of maintaining a sizable reservoir of toxic material forever. If we conceive of this fishery continuing its legacy of 6,000 years for 6,000 more and use the \$1.5 billion annually (in 2014 dollars) generated by the fishery, we can calculate a cumulative value of \$90 trillion dollars. This dwarfs the estimated one-time extractive mineral value of \$400 to 600 billion. Bristol Bay is a gift that just keeps on giving.

Biologists use the term "diversified portfolio" as a metaphor to describe the numerous life strategies afforded salmon to survive and thrive by Bristol Bay's

river and lake system and the North Pacific. Conversely, in the Pacific Northwest, we have seen the opposite in the unfortunate reduction of salmon to one “stock,” - diminished salmon runs that require millions of dollars annually to maintain. The maintenance of this “diversified portfolio,” threatened by the proposed mining operation, is likely to be very important as the salmon contend with the effects of climate change. We cannot reasonably expect the salmon fisheries to survive a diminished portfolio and the effects of climate change.

In closing, I repeat Slow Food USA’s support for a swift Final Determination under Section 404(c) of the Clean Water Act to maintain this healthy, high-performing natural ecosystem and the salmon fisheries it sustains and to support the human cultures and industries that thrive because of it.

Sincerely,

Richard McCarthy  
Executive Director  
Slow Food USA