



**COMMERCIAL FISHERMEN  
FOR  
BRISTOL BAY**



**united**  
TRIBES OF BRISTOL BAY

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Congressional spending debate ends with bipartisan opinion: Army Corps of Engineers' Draft EIS for Pebble Project is inadequate and underestimates potential impacts**

*Revised Draft EIS is necessary; current data gaps and Federal agency recommendations must be addressed, or Army Corps faces potential EPA veto*

**DILLINGHAM, AK** - Congress yesterday completed a spending deal that includes a stern warning to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regarding its rushed and flawed permitting process for the proposed Pebble Mine in Bristol Bay, Alaska. The warning, included in a report to the appropriations bill that covers the Department of Interior's spending, states that "*the Committee shares the agencies' concerns that the DEIS lacks certain critical information about the proposed project and related mitigation and therefore likely underestimates its potential risks and impacts.*" The report language also states that "sound science must guide Federal decision making," and further "*encourages*" the Environmental Protection Agency to use its authority under the Clean Water Act to veto the Pebble project "if these problems are not resolved."

The oversight language was originally drafted by Alaska Senator Lisa Murkowski, Chairwoman of the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee, who [stated](#) recently, "I will use my seat on the Appropriations Committee to make sure that the EPA and the Corps hear clearly that they must address these, and if they fail to do so then a permit should not be issued."

The inclusion of language about the Pebble project in yesterday's spending deal is the latest congressional action to raise significant concerns about the Army Corps' rushed environmental assessment and permitting process for the proposed Pebble Mine. If developed, Pebble would be one of the largest open-pit mines in the world threatening more than 14,000 renewable American commercial fishing industry or related jobs, Alaska Native communities, and \$1.5 billion in annual economic activity.

Robin Samuelson, a lifelong resident, Tribal leader and fisherman stated: “The Army Corps has done such a poor job of assessing and remedying the threats posed by the proposed Pebble mine in their rushed Environmental Impact Statement process that even Republicans and Democrats in Congress agree on this one! If the Army Corps does not produce a revised EIS, we agree with our senior Senator and Congress — EPA must step in and use its authority under the Clean Water Act to defend our nation’s largest wild sockeye salmon resource, Bristol Bay.”

Comments on the Army Corps’ Draft EIS from state and federal agencies, as well as independent experts, detail severe deficiencies in the legally required review process being undertaken by the Army Corps, and call for significantly more work, including summer field work, to be done before a Final EIS is released and permit decisions are made.

- The **Department of the Interior** said the DEIS is so deficient that it “precludes meaningful analysis” and calls for a complete do-over of the DEIS. ([Expert reviews](#), page 227)
- The **National Marine Fisheries Service** said Pebble’s salmon work is “limited, sparse, lack[s] scientific rigor, and do[es] not fully assess all salmon life stages,” and calls for an independent third party review of Pebble’s fish work, as well as additional salmon fieldwork. ([Expert reviews](#), page 576)
- The **State of Alaska** said “further work is necessary to ensure potential effects to the human environment from each alternative are adequately evaluated and described in the (final EIS)”, and calls for a wide assortment of additional studies. ([Expert reviews](#), page 440)
- The **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service** said “we recommend that a permit not be issued for the project as currently proposed.” USFWS also recommended significant additional study, and said “We recommend more robust analysis be conducted to thoroughly identify, analyze, and reduce risks to these resources.” ([Expert reviews](#), page 370)

“The fact Congress is finally stepping in is much needed and long overdue,” said Alannah Hurley, Executive Director of the United Tribes of Bristol Bay. “The people of Bristol Bay were promised a fair, transparent and science-based process for over a decade and instead the process has been so inadequate it’s been universally condemned by scientists, local communities, Tribes across America, federal agencies, and now the US Congress. The Army Corps shows no signs of taking these grave concerns about the Pebble project and permitting process seriously and our elected leaders need to take further steps to hold them accountable to protect the Bristol Bay fishery. ”

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**Bristol Bay Native Corporation** is a responsible Alaska Native corporation dedicated to the mission of “Enriching Our Native Way of Life.” Established through the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971, BBNC works to protect the land in Bristol Bay, celebrate the legacy of its people, and enhance the lives of its shareholders.

**Commercial Fishermen for Bristol Bay** is a national coalition of fishermen working to protect Bristol Bay, Alaska and the 14,000 jobs, \$500 million in annual income, and \$1.5 billion in economic activity that Bristol Bay’s wild salmon provide.

**Bristol Bay Native Association** represents 31 Bristol Bay tribes & is the regional nonprofit tribal consortium providing social, economic, and educational opportunities to tribal members.

**Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation** represents 17 CDQ communities & exists to promote economic growth and opportunities for Bristol Bay residents through sustainable use of the Bering Sea fisheries.

**United Tribes of Bristol Bay** is a tribal consortium representing 15 Bristol Bay tribal governments (that represent over 80 percent of the region's total population) working to protect the Yup'ik, Dena'ina, and Alutiiq way of life in Bristol Bay.

**Bristol Bay Regional Seafood Development Association** is a fisherman-funded, non-profit organization whose mission is to increase the value of the Bristol Bay commercial fishery through education, quality outreach, and marketing activities.