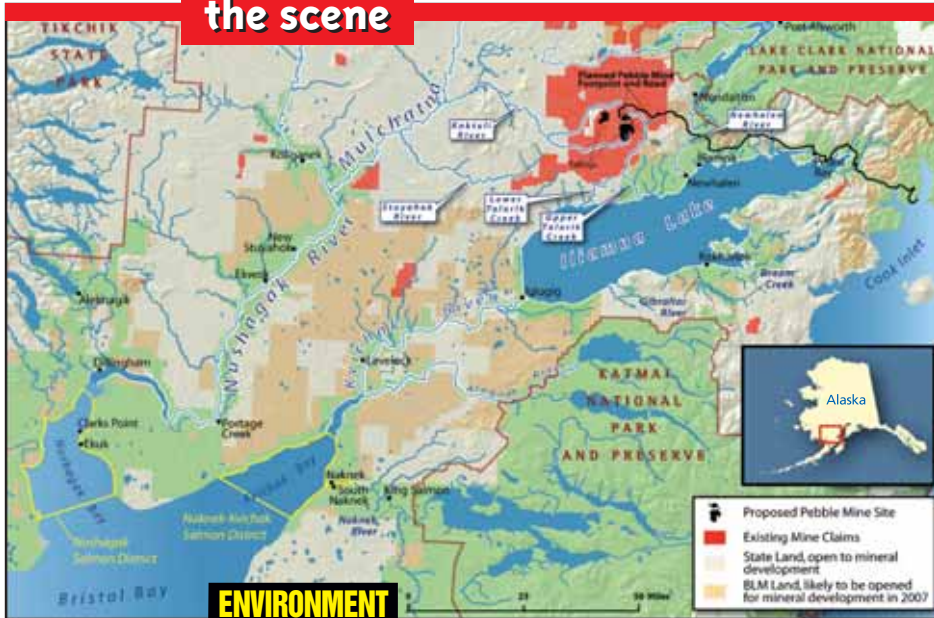


## the scene



## ENVIRONMENT

# The Pebble Mine Nightmare

## A Summary Update on the Massive Mining Threat to Bristol Bay, Alaska

By Joseph E. Daniel

*Editor's Note: Trout Unlimited recently funded an in-depth study entitled The Economics of Wild Salmon Watersheds: Bristol Bay, Alaska produced by researchers John Duffield and David Patterson from the University of Montana in Missoula, and by Chris Neher of Bioeconomics, Inc. also in Missoula. Much of the hard data presented below comes from that research.*

If you have never witnessed the spectacle of Pacific salmon migration, it is difficult to truly appreciate the natural and commercial impact of these fish on the rivers of Alaska's Bristol Bay drainage. Imagine glacial blue waters streaked with veins of blood red salmon as literally millions of fish respond to a primordial urge to return from the sea and inexplicably

re-enter the very river of their birth to replicate their spawn. This annual fervor compels five species of *Salmonidae Oncorhynchus* to battle their way miles upstream, morphing along the journey from the silver perfection of their oceanic forms into grotesque anamorous drag of garish cherry and port-wine stain, hideously humped backs, frayed fins and twisted, toothy kypes, eventually afflicted with a leprosy of decay, and finally to lay strewn and spent like fallen soldiers, sometimes within mere yards of the same gravel bed from which they themselves were hatched years before.

But if you've had the privilege of boating on a wild, southwestern Alaskan river and upon rounding a bend seen a dozen salmon-sated eagles decorating the bare branches of a shoreline tree like feathered Christmas ornaments, or witnessed a brown bear literally chomp a sockeye mid-air from the determined arc of its upstream leap, or spotted a leopard trout

in almost perfect camouflage with the pebbly river bottom sipping individual salmon eggs as they drift in the current, dislodged from the vigorous procreation in the redds above; then perhaps it's easier to understand how salmon are not simply a vital part of this riparian ecosystem, they ARE the ecosystem.

And if you have been fortunate enough to coax a smashing surface take from a nuclear-hot Coho, or survive the punishing, pounding pull of a 40-pound Chinook or catch endless pinks on a lightweight stick until your arm simply quits working... If you've grilled minutes-old sockeye steaks on an alder fire for shore lunch, or made caviar from the eggs of a bull-dogging chum after a half-hour battle... If you've argued the taxonomy of char versus Dolly while marveling at their incredible colors, only to scorn their numbers after the 50th fish in lieu of the trophy rainbow trout you've come to catch... And if, after all that nature, that wildness and wilderness, you finally hooked one of those legendary 'bows, 30-inches long and as big

around as a football, while drifting a flesh fly – yes, a “fly” designed to mimic the final, ultimate contribution of salmon (and the very reason that monster rainbow even exists) – you might then appreciate, in some small way, what is at stake if we were to lose or degrade this environment.

Sadly, and inconceivably, that threat exists for real. For readers not already familiar with the peril at hand, a quick review: The Canadian mining-development company Northern Dynasty Minerals, Ltd. has proposed a gigantic two-mile-long, one-and-a-half-mile wide, 1,700-foot-deep, open pit gold, copper and molybdenum mine – and its attendant 20-square mile toxic waste lagoon – right smack in the middle of America's premier wild salmon and trout fishery. Seeking estimated mineral deposits valued in the hundreds of billions of dollars, the Pebble Mine development directly impacts Upper Talarik Creek and the lower Koktuli River in the Nushagak and Kvichak drainages, as well as Lake Clark and Iliamna Lake (see map).

But that's only the tip of the iceberg. At least eight additional mining claims have been staked in anticipation of the successful licensing of Pebble Mine, opening up the potential of an almost 1,000 square-mile industrialized mining zone within the Bristol Bay watershed (this does not include the additional and adjacent 3.6 million acres within which the Bureau of Land Management is considering also allowing mining claims). It's been dubbed “Alaska's second Gold Rush” and it directly threatens the area's estimated annual \$320 million (\$95 million earned from harvest, \$225 million earned from processing) commercial wild salmon fishery, its \$60 million recreational sport fishing industry and the very sanctity of Alaska's wilderness.

Pebble Mine's environmental studies won't be complete until sometime in 2009 and acquiring the dozens of required state and federal permits could take two or three years longer, but already the issue is being hotly contested. Pitted against each other is potentially the largest (if fully developed) hard rock mining complex in the world versus the largest commercial salmon fishery in the world. The implications are mind boggling.

Here is what you should know...

### ENVIRONMENTALLY

Salmon harvested from the Bristol Bay drainage represent one-third of the total annual commercial salmon harvest in Alaska and

one-fourth of all those caught worldwide. Average annual catches in Bristol Bay include nearly 24 million sockeye, 69,000 Chinook, 971,000 chum, 133,000 Coho and 593,000 pink. The sockeye run in the Kvichak River is the largest in the world. The Chinook run in the Nushagak may also represent the largest in the world.

Despite claims by Northern Dynasty that mining processes have improved dramatically over the last 25 years and that Pebble Mine can be constructed and operated safely, the track record for open-pit, hard-rock mines suggests differently. Almost every extraction project of this magnitude has encountered severe pollution problems that have led to sometimes calamitous results. Opponents fear the proposed Pebble Mine will dry up critical spawning streams by diverting flow, will poison groundwater with acid runoff, and will pose the threat of an even greater catastrophic event should the toxic-waste lagoon down slope from the mine ever fail. This soup of cyanide, sulfuric acid, arsenic, lead, mercury and sundry other decidedly eco-unfriendly by-products will supposedly be held in check by one of the largest earthen dams ever built, stretching four-miles across one of the most seismically active areas on earth, with several active volcanoes and frequent earthquakes.

Should the prolific salmon runs of Bristol Bay be threatened, so too will the world's largest brown bear population, the abundant bald eagles and all of the other assorted wildlife from caribou to wolverines whose very existence depends, if not on the salmon directly, at least on clean water. American Rivers named the entire Bristol Bay watershed one of its top ten endangered rivers for 2006, and the Federation of Fly Fishers named Upper Talarik Creek and the Koktuli River as the FFF's “Endangered Fishery of 2007.”

### SOCIALLY

Approximately 7,500 people live in the Bristol Bay area, 66% of whom are Alaskan natives. 2,800 people hold permits to harvest salmon. Beyond the subsistence value of the fish – residents of Bristol Bay communities annually harvest an average of 315 pounds of salmon per person as their main source of food – the commercial and sport fishing industries provide 75% of the jobs (over 12,500 during seasonal fishing peaks) in the area. Total annual economic value of fishing and wildlife related industries in Bristol Bay is estimated at \$450 million.

In contrast Northern Dynasty plans to employ 2,000 people during the Pebble Mine construction phase and 1,000 during regular operation. Many of these jobs will likely require skill sets not currently held by Bristol Bay residents.

Recent polls conducted by the Renewable Resource Coalition show an 80% public opposition to Pebble Mine in the Bristol Bay area as compared with a 56% opposition in Alaska at large. Trout Unlimited's outreach program seems to have been very successful on a regional level but they believe many Alaska residents still maintain a gross misconception of how much Pebble Mine will contribute to the state economy, particularly when they hear the projected revenue figures.

### ECONOMICALLY

According to a September 1, 2007 article in the *Los Angeles Times* by Margot Roosevelt, if the full resource of Pebble Mine were to be developed, “as much as 12 billion tons of earth would be excavated and milled to extract the tiny flecks of metal: about 82 million ounces of gold, 67 billion pounds of copper and 4 billion pounds of molybdenum.” The total value could reach a staggering \$300 billion based on today's soaring commodities markets.

Unfortunately the people of Alaska will realize but a tiny fraction of that windfall as state tax revenue generally amounts to less than 1% of mined resource value, with an additional 1% paid to municipalities. In comparison, state revenue from oil and gas amounts to about 20% of total production value, with an additional 2% paid to municipalities, and state revenue from fisheries amounts to about 2.8% of the total production value, with an additional 2.5% paid to municipalities, excluding property tax, vessel and license fees.

Northern Dynasty Minerals, Ltd. is considered a “junior” in the parlance of the mining industry. That means it is really only an exploration and speculation company and rarely if ever actually operates its own mines, choosing instead to sell off or form partnerships with an industry “major.” On August 1, 2007 Northern Dynasty announced that it had formed a fifty-fifty partnership with London-based Anglo American, one of the world's largest mining companies. The agreement calls for Anglo to contribute up to \$1.4 billion in stages until the decision to ultimately develop the mine is made, estimated in 2011, with production targeted to begin in 2015.

(continued on page 22)



Photo: Ben Knight



# What You Can Do To SAVE BRISTOL BAY

## BE INFORMED

Almost five centuries ago Sir Francis Bacon penned the phrase, "Knowledge is power." Nothing could be more apropos today in the battle to save Bristol Bay from the threat of the Pebble Mine development, except perhaps the wisdom of Chinese General Sun Tzu in the 6th Century BC treatise *The Art of War* to "Know thy enemy..." If you want to join this grass-roots battle to preserve the last great wild American fishery, then arm yourself with information. Here's where to start:

### IMPORTANT WEBSITES

**Save Bristol Bay**  
Special Trout Unlimited site  
[www.savebristolbay.org](http://www.savebristolbay.org)

**Sportsman's Alliance for Alaska**  
Hunters and Fishermen Protecting Public Lands  
[www.sportsmansalliance4ak.org](http://www.sportsmansalliance4ak.org)

**Bristol Bay Alliance**  
Commercial fishermen, business owners and local citizens protecting Bristol Bay  
[www.bristolbayalliance.com](http://www.bristolbayalliance.com)

**Renewable Resources Coalition**  
Commercial fishermen, natives and lodge owners protecting resources  
[www.renewableresourcescoalition.org](http://www.renewableresourcescoalition.org)

**Bristol Bay Native Association**  
Site for the Bristol Bay Native Association  
[www.bbna.com/index.htm](http://www.bbna.com/index.htm)

**Pure Bristol Bay**  
BBNA Environmental Program and Nushagak Mulchatna Watershed Council  
[www.purebristolbay.com](http://www.purebristolbay.com)

### PRO-PEBBLE MINE WEB SITES

**Alaska Department of Natural Resources**  
Pebble Mine section of the DNR site  
[www.dnr.state.ak.us/mlw/mining/largemine/pebble/index.htm](http://www.dnr.state.ak.us/mlw/mining/largemine/pebble/index.htm)

**Northern Dynasty Minerals**  
Site for Northern Dynasty Minerals Pebble Mine Project  
[www.ndmpebblemine.com](http://www.ndmpebblemine.com)

**Anglo American Mining Company**  
Corporate Site for Anglo American  
[www.angloamerican.co.uk](http://www.angloamerican.co.uk)

**Truth About Pebble**  
Citizen organization for Pebble Mine  
[www.truthaboutpebble.org](http://www.truthaboutpebble.org)

### REQUIRED READING

**Alaskan Economy Faces a Fork in the River**, by Margot Roosevelt, Sept. 1, 2007, *Los Angeles Times*  
[www.latimes.com/news/la-na-mine1sep01\\_1\\_4193793\\_story?ctrack=2&cs=t=28&cs=2](http://www.latimes.com/news/la-na-mine1sep01_1_4193793_story?ctrack=2&cs=t=28&cs=2)

**Ground Zero: Where Water is More Precious Than Gold**, by Bill Moore, Sept. 2007, *Fly Fish America*  
[www.flyfishamerica.com](http://www.flyfishamerica.com)

**Economics of Wild Salmon Watersheds: Bristol Bay, Alaska**  
Executive Summary Prepared for Trout Unlimited Alaska, February 2007  
By John Duffield and David Patterson, Department of Mathematical Sciences, University of Montana, and Chris Neher, Bioeconomics, Inc.  
<http://www.savebristolbay.org/att/cf%7BE729E68D-22F3-4596-9503-54FE676F2264%7D/REVISED%20Executive%20Summary%20Final%20Economic%20B8%20%202-23-2007.pdf>

**Pits in the Crown Jewels** by Ted Williams, Nov/Dec 2006, *Fly Rod & Reel*  
[www.flyrodreel.com/Fly-Rod-and-Reel-Online/November-December-2006/Pits-in-the-Crown-Jewels](http://www.flyrodreel.com/Fly-Rod-and-Reel-Online/November-December-2006/Pits-in-the-Crown-Jewels)

**PEBBLE MINE**

**The Midas Touch** by Kenneth Miller, May/June 2008, *Mother Jones Magazine*  
[http://motherjones.com/news/features/2006/05/midas\\_touch.html](http://motherjones.com/news/features/2006/05/midas_touch.html)

**Good selection of newspaper articles and editorials about Pebble Mine**  
<http://renewableresourcescoalition.org/newsroom.htm>

### MAPS

**Map of the Bristol Bay Watershed and Pebble Mining Claims**  
[www.renewableresourcescoalition.org/images/BBMap10\\_26.jpg](http://www.renewableresourcescoalition.org/images/BBMap10_26.jpg)

**Map of Fish Distribution Within the Proposed Pebble Mining Area**  
[www.renewableresourcescoalition.org/fish\\_distribution\\_allspecies.pdf](http://www.renewableresourcescoalition.org/fish_distribution_allspecies.pdf)

### CURRENT LEGISLATION REGARDING BRISTOL BAY

**SB 67, Create game refuge to protect 6 million acres in Bristol Bay area**  
[www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get\\_bill.asp?session=25&bill=SB-67](http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?session=25&bill=SB-67)

**HB 134, Prohibit pumping and/or pollution of surface water in Bristol Bay area**  
[www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get\\_bill.asp?session=25&bill=HB-134](http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?session=25&bill=HB-134)

**HB 156, Change mining licenses, taxes, royalties and rent**  
[housemajority.org/spon.php?id=25HB156](http://housemajority.org/spon.php?id=25HB156)

**HB 152, Pay for development of renewable energy**  
[housemajority.org/spon.php?id=25HB152](http://housemajority.org/spon.php?id=25HB152)

## SPEAK OUT

Lend your voice to the cause. Tell those who can do something about it that you are unhappy about the pending situation in Bristol Bay and that you hope they will see clear to do the right thing.

**FIRST, SIGN THE PETITION!** Read and sign the Sporting Conservation Petition for Bristol Bay facilitated by the Sportsman's Alliance for Alaska and sent digitally to major Alaskan politicians. Available at: [www.sportsmansalliance4ak.org/Petition\\_BristolBay.html](http://www.sportsmansalliance4ak.org/Petition_BristolBay.html)

**THEN SHARPEN YOUR QUILL** and unleash the power of the written word. Letter writing is a virtually cost free way to contribute to the campaign, and the traditional approach of a signed, hard copy delivered in an envelope has a certain personality and permanence over e-mail. Your first assignment may be your most important. Alaska Governor Sarah Palin has so far remained uncommitted to the Pebble Mine issue, despite her own personal connection to Bristol Bay and the commercial fishing industry. Drop her a line appealing to her experience and knowledge. Also ask her to consider using her power of Executive Order to move the Habitat Division (where decisions are made on the impact of development on critical habitats) from the Division of Natural Resources back to the Division of Wildlife where it was previously and properly administered before former Governor Frank Murkowski moved it in an attempt to influence the outcome of its recommendations.

**• Governor Sarah Palin, P.O. Box 110001, Juneau, AK 99811**

Then send a note to the U.S. Bureau of Land Management requesting that they maintain the current prohibition on hard rock mine prospecting and development on the publicly-owned land it manages in the Bristol Bay area.

**• Bureau of Land Management - Alaska State Office**  
222 W 7th Avenue #13, Anchorage, Alaska 99513

Next, send a similar missive to the Alaska DNR requesting the State of Alaska reject any water withdrawal, dam construction, and other permit applications submitted by mining companies that in any way threaten critical salmon rivers and trophy trout streams.

**• Tom Irwin, Alaska Department of Natural Resources**  
550 W. 7th Ave., Ste. 1260, Anchorage, Alaska 99501-3557

Then send a note to the U.S. Bureau of Land Management requesting that they maintain the current prohibition on hard rock mine prospecting and development on the publicly-owned land it manages in the Bristol Bay area.

**• Homer News**  
[letters@homernews.com](mailto:letters@homernews.com)

**• Bristol Bay Times**  
[bbtimes@nushetel.com](mailto:bbtimes@nushetel.com)

**• Kenai Peninsula Clarion**  
<http://www.peninsulaclearion.com/lettertoeditorform.shtml>

**• Juneau Empire (400 words or fewer)**  
[editor@juneauempire.com](mailto:editor@juneauempire.com)

**• Fairbanks Daily Newsminer**  
<http://www.newsminer.com/submit/letters>

**• Anchorage Daily News (250 words or less)**  
[letters@adn.com](mailto:letters@adn.com)

**• Anchorage Daily News - Compass (675 words or less)**  
[compass@adn.com](mailto:compass@adn.com)

**• Fairbanks Daily Newsminer**  
<http://www.newsminer.com/submit/letters>

**• Juneau Empire (400 words or fewer)**  
[editor@juneauempire.com](mailto:editor@juneauempire.com)

**• Homer News**  
[letters@homernews.com](mailto:letters@homernews.com)

**• Bristol Bay Times**  
[bbtimes@nushetel.com](mailto:bbtimes@nushetel.com)

**• Kenai Peninsula Clarion**  
<http://www.peninsulaclearion.com/lettertoeditorform.shtml>

**• Juneau Empire (400 words or fewer)**  
[editor@juneauempire.com](mailto:editor@juneauempire.com)

**• Homer News**  
[letters@homernews.com](mailto:letters@homernews.com)

**• Bristol Bay Times**  
[bbtimes@nushetel.com](mailto:bbtimes@nushetel.com)

**• Kenai Peninsula Clarion**  
<http://www.peninsulaclearion.com/lettertoeditorform.shtml>

**• Juneau Empire (400 words or fewer)**  
[editor@juneauempire.com](mailto:editor@juneauempire.com)

**• Homer News**  
[letters@homernews.com](mailto:letters@homernews.com)

**• Bristol Bay Times**  
[bbtimes@nushetel.com](mailto:bbtimes@nushetel.com)

## DONATE

Then if you feel you really have your persuasive juices flowing make a stab at a heartfelt plea to Northern Dynasty and its new partner Anglo American. Let them know that your concern is not an attack on them, or on mining in general, but rather your sincere conviction that Bristol Bay simply cannot be subjected to such risk.

**• Ron Thiesen, President and Chief Executive Officer**  
Northern Dynasty Minerals, Ltd., 1020-800 West Pender Street  
Vancouver, BC Canada V6C 2V6  
E-mail: [pebbleproject@northerndynasty.com](mailto:pebbleproject@northerndynasty.com)

**• Cynthia Carroll, Chief Executive Officer**  
Anglo American plc, 20 Carlton House Terrace  
London SW1Y 5AN  
Email: [corporateaffairs@angloamerican.co.uk](mailto:corporateaffairs@angloamerican.co.uk)

Then let it rip with your best arguments to the editors of Alaska's newspapers. Let them know how much you've spent in the past to fish in Alaska, why you choose their state over other premier fisheries and how this could change if Pebble Mine is approved.

**• Anchorage Daily News (250 words or less)**  
[letters@adn.com](mailto:letters@adn.com)

**• Anchorage Daily News - Compass (675 words or less)**  
[compass@adn.com](mailto:compass@adn.com)

**• Fairbanks Daily Newsminer**  
<http://www.newsminer.com/submit/letters>

**• Juneau Empire (400 words or fewer)**  
[editor@juneauempire.com](mailto:editor@juneauempire.com)

**• Homer News**  
[letters@homernews.com](mailto:letters@homernews.com)

**• Bristol Bay Times**  
[bbtimes@nushetel.com](mailto:bbtimes@nushetel.com)

**• Kenai Peninsula Clarion**  
<http://www.peninsulaclearion.com/lettertoeditorform.shtml>

And finally, visit [www.savebristolbay.com](http://www.savebristolbay.com) and click "spread the word" under the "take action" menu item for a cool e-card you can send all your friends to get them involved.

Once you've exhausted your powers of persuasion, your voice has gone hoarse and your writing hand has cramps, put your money where your mouth is and pony up for the cause. Think of this as "fishing insurance," a necessary and prudent expense to ensure that you, your kids and future generations still have a last, great wilderness in which to cast a fly. Here are some exciting and effective ways to use your money:

**RED GOLD** - Produced by Ben Knight and Travis Rummel of Felt Soul Media (The Hatch, Running Down the Man) and in partnership with Trout Unlimited, this feature length documentary will follow the world's largest commercially fished sockeye salmon run as they move to their spawning grounds within the footprint of the largest proposed open-pit gold mine in North America. Told through the voices of commercial, subsistence and sport fishermen, the film is due for release in late spring 2008 with plans for distribution to include film festivals, television and DVD sales. Felt Soul Media's blog, *The Wire*, <http://feltsoulmedia.wordpress.com> features informative and entertaining updates on the production of the film. To donate towards the production of this film visit [www.savebristolbay.com](http://www.savebristolbay.com) and click on "donate" in the menu items. Donations over \$500 will include your name listed in the film's credits! **Digital readers can view a trailer on page 19**

**EQUILIBRIUM** - Produced by Grant Wiswell of Castaway Films (*The World is Flat, Bristol Bay Sportfishing*) and in association with the Federation of Fly Fishers, this 22-minute documentary is a celebration of the incredible angling diversity of Bristol Bay's famed salmon and trout rivers, featuring some of the greatest fly fishing sequences ever filmed in Alaska. Shot entirely on 1080 HD, the expansive beauty and grandeur of Bristol Bay explodes on the screen making even more poignant the exclusive on-camera interviews with Gary Loomis, Gary Borger and Jerry Jacques as they discuss the impending threat of Pebble Mine. Scheduled to tour the fly fishing consumer show circuit, January through March, *Equilibrium* was released in December 2007. To donate to the production of this film and to buy copies on DVD, visit [www.fedflyfishers.org](http://www.fedflyfishers.org) or [www.castawayfilms.com](http://www.castawayfilms.com). **Digital readers can view a trailer on page 22**

**WHY WILD** - Now you can have your salmon and eat it too! The more consumers choose wild salmon in stores and restaurants (over farmed-raised fish), the more we're ensuring a strong future for wild Pacific salmon. Trout Unlimited is utilizing its new Why Wild Program to maintain the credibility of the Wild Alaska Salmon brand in the Bristol Bay area. This is critical as the commercial fish farmers' industry association, Washington Fishgrowers, has already seized on the Pebble Mine situation as a marketing ploy and at one point even featured a banner on its web site announcing that "a massive open-pit gold mine, proposed upstream from Alaska's most productive sockeye salmon waters could undercut the reputation for purity that has become wild salmon's key selling point." TU's Why Wild Program will be used to create new markets for Bristol Bay's world-renowned sockeye salmon as well as increase public awareness about the need to protect this irreplaceable watershed. For more information on how to "Vote with your fork!" visit [www.whyyild.org](http://www.whyyild.org). To donate to the campaign's effort in Bristol Bay contact Trout Unlimited Alaska via email: [LOakes@tu.org](mailto:LOakes@tu.org)

**LOCAL GUIDE TRAINING PROGRAM** - While there are lodges operating locally in Bristol Bay, as well as lodges owned and run by locals, the sheer majority of the nearly 50 sport-fishing lodges in the area are owned by Alaskans outside the region or Americans from the lower 48. Trout Unlimited is working with lodge owners and operators in the region as well as industry sponsors to develop a Local Guide Training Program out in Bristol Bay. The program would offer training to a certain number of native Alaskans and provide them direct opportunity to work in the guiding industry. Beyond the obvious value of leveraging generations of local fishing knowledge and the attractiveness to visiting anglers of being guided by a native Alaskan, the Bristol Bay Guiding Training Program would also provide new, seasonal jobs to locals, diffuse class and cultural prejudices and would strengthen the overall sport fishing industry in the area. If you wish to contribute to the formation and funding of this project contact Trout Unlimited Alaska via email: [LOakes@tu.org](mailto:LOakes@tu.org)

**FILLING THE SCIENCE GAP** - There is very high public and expert concern about the lack of scientific understanding of the hydrology (water quality and water quantity) and fish habitat throughout the Bristol Bay watershed. When Pebble Mine files for permits, it will be advocating for decisions made off of three to five years of data collected by its own independent contractors. Remote field research in Alaska is very costly for state agencies like The Department of Fish and Game and federal agencies like the U.S. Geological Society. Trout Unlimited is developing partnerships with other non-profits as well as regional native associations in Bristol Bay to work to fund third-party science in this area. They are currently looking at studying water flows in relation to fish habitat in a few critical areas and are also trying to fund research on the implications of certain metals on salmon - like the speculation that minute particles of copper dust may actually ruin a salmon's genetic radar and impair its ability to return to its home stream to spawn. Many of these projects can be performed by matching grants between non-profits like TU and state and federal agencies. To lend your support, contact Trout Unlimited Alaska via email: [LOakes@tu.org](mailto:LOakes@tu.org)

**ONE DAY FOR BRISTOL BAY** - Sage Manufacturing, Redington Tackle & Apparel and RIO Products International are creating a special ready-to-fish premium outfit that will be available in April 2008. Only 300 limited edition outfits will be produced (Sage will commit one entire production day to manufacture the 300 rods for the outfits, hence the name of the campaign). The outfit will come with a Sage Z-Axis 9-foot 8-weight rod and a Redington moss-colored CD 7/8 reel pre-spooled with RIO Gold fly line. An embroidered case will also be included bearing the unique graphical slogan, "More Precious Than Gold - Save Bristol Bay." Purchased separately, this outfit would retail for more than \$875 but will be offered for just \$600. It will be available for purchase directly from Sage, through Redington.com and through their authorized dealer network. From each outfit sold, Sage, Redington and RIO will donate \$200 to Trout Unlimited Alaska. A special retailer program will provide authorized dealers the opportunity to match the corporate donation. Total anticipated donation is between \$60,000 - \$120,000. You can reserve your rod and reel outfit beginning January 1, 2008 on [www.redington.com](http://www.redington.com), or by calling Sage Customer Service at 800-533-3004.

**GO THERE AND SEE FOR YOURSELF!** - Sweetwater Travel, the exclusive booking agent for the Copper River Lodge (one of Bristol Bay's finest), is auctioning off a week-long Alaska fly fishing adventure to the highest bidder. ALL of the proceeds will be donated to the buyer's choice of several pro-Bristol Bay conservation programs. Bidding starts at \$4,100 and can be done over the phone at 888-347-4286 or by email to [info@copperriverlodge.com](mailto:info@copperriverlodge.com) (all bidders will receive email notice if their bid price has been trumped in plenty of time to bid again). Auction closes January 31, 2008. Travel dates are by availability. So if you've ever wanted to experience the heart and soul of wild Alaska, or if you're a seasoned veteran, you can spend your travel money in a better way. Go fish the Holy Water of Bristol Bay and contribute to its salvation at the same time! For more information on Copper River Lodge visit [www.copperriverlodge.com](http://www.copperriverlodge.com)





## POLITICALLY

Although development of Pebble Mine is now in the court of public opinion it still remains a very real possibility. Because the Pebble Mine claim sits on state land, key decisions in the permitting process will come from the Alaska Department of Natural Resources – its Commissioner, Tom Irwin, is a former mining executive who is decidedly pro development.

Alaska's former Governor, Frank Murkowski, was also a big proponent of the Pebble Mine project but his recent successor, Governor Sarah Palin, has so far remained neutral on the issue. This is surprising since she comes from a fishing family – her fisherman husband maintains a set-net site in Bristol Bay – and she even named her daughter Bristol. Efforts to gain Palin's support with an ad placed in 11 fly fishing publications (funded by Trout Unlimited) featuring an open letter urging the protection of Bristol Bay and signed by 44 fly fishing industry members have not yet succeeded. Over 50 more companies have recently signed the letter which has been resented to the Governor.

At the Alaska State Legislature level, two bills were introduced last year that would have created game refuges and prohibited pumping or pollution of surface water in the Bristol Bay area, but both were defeated due to the efforts of Northern Dynasty lobbyists. Trout Unlimited is supporting reintroduction of these bills in the 2008 legislative session. Two additional bills proposing changes to mining license tax rates and requirements on renewable energy products are also in the works.

As *Fly Fish America* Magazine publisher Bill Battles succinctly put it in a recent editorial, "The combination of a fence-sitting governor, a pro-mining DNR commissioner and a legislature that bends to the will of the mining lobby makes the fight to stop the Pebble Mine at the state level a decidedly uphill battle."

## COMMERCIALY

Forget for a moment the unconscionable loss of a priceless natural resource. Let's talk marketing. At risk is the iconic image of Alaska as America's (if not the world's) premier wild fishery – the Holy Water, if you will. Bristol Bay is not the mud flats of Prudhoe Bay or the frozen tundra of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, this is a far sexier sell, even as a conservation cause. Glaciers, grizzly bears, salmon. This is the Alaska we all know of from the Discovery Channel. Pure, wild,

and sacrosanct. That the state would even consider losing it is hard to fathom.

Bristol Bay is also the crown jewel of the fly fishing industry. Degrading it would be a massive PR *faux pas* for the sport, tantamount to the destruction of Aspen or Vail for the skiing industry, Maui for the surfing industry, Augusta for golf, Yosemite for climbing, Masai Mara for game viewing, Palancar for scuba diving; you get the picture.

It takes a lot to unite the fly fishing industry in a cause; its members tend to be more the independent types. But over the past year Pebble Mine has touched a deep nerve and galvanized a real movement amongst manufacturers, travel companies and lodges, with a few key players taking the lead. Beyond the many Trout Unlimited initiatives, and the efforts to utilize industry and sportsman consortiums like the Bristol Bay Alliance, the Sportsman's Alliance for Alaska and the Renewable Resources Coalition, companies like Patagonia, Sage, Redington, RIO, Scott and The Fly Shop have made cash contributions to help fund the documentary film project *Red Gold*, by Felt Soul Media, due out this spring. Another documentary entitled *Equilibrium* by Castaway Films will be released this December. Both films were produced to increase public awareness of the Pebble Mine threat. Digital subscribers to this magazine can view trailers to both by clicking on the flashing video icons on these pages.

## ETHICALLY

This is going to be a dirty fight. Make no mistake about it. Northern Dynasty is in the game to win and they know how to play hardball. Already allegations are flying from the Alaska House Judiciary Committee that Northern Dynasty is paying off local officials in the Dillingham area to support its controversial mine project. Refuting these specific charges, Northern Dynasty spokesman Sean Magee freely admits in a September 18, 2007 *Fairbanks News Miner* article by Stefan Milkowski, "to paying as many as 50 community leaders at a time to attend educational meetings in Anchorage and generally compensates them \$200 per day [average of 3 days] for their time away from home and work."

In Ted Williams' original "Pits in the Crown Jewels" article for the Nov/Dec 2006 issue of *Fly Rod and Reel*, Williams describes the "Mr. Bean-style" solution Alaska regulatory agencies have developed to fund themselves. "Allow the companies that re-


quire regulation to pay the state officials who regulate them, a cozy arrangement that has spawned the mine regulators' shibboleth of "Sure; go ahead." *Mother Jones Magazine* reports that Northern Dynasty has signed a legal memorandum pledging to contribute to the salaries of 13 state employees who oversee the [Pebble Mine] permitting process and that, by the time the mine is completed, it will have shelled out \$700,000 to hire its own regulators. Then, to see if the mine meets federal muster, the US Environmental Protection Agency will consult the state regulators paid by Northern Dynasty."

Even recent newspaper ads in Alaska paid for by the mining industry attempt to misrepresent the efforts of specific Citizen Ballot Initiative petitions as being anti-mining in general. This "the sky is falling..." approach is intended to mislead voters to think that signing any petition against Pebble Mine will really be a signature to end all mining in Alaska.

## MORALLY

Worse part is this isn't even a truly controversial extraction issue involving oil or gas, or as Senator Ted Stevens (R-AK), put it, "some essential commodity that we absolutely had to have to run our economy." [Stevens, normally one of the shrillest anti-environmentalists in the U.S. Congress, and who according to Ted Williams, "never saw a mine he didn't like," is opposed to Pebble Mine.] No, this is just an outside, foreign company hoping to avoid environmental responsibility (in its prospectus Northern Dynasty claims it cannot be held liable for environmental damages because it is not a U.S. company) while amassing an inconceivable fortune in gold, a non-essential luxury commodity of which 75% mined is used in the jewelry industry.

Even if Pebble Mine was to realize some significant portion of its estimated value over the proposed 50-year lifespan of the mine, and even if it was successful in generating a greater return in state tax revenue than the Bristol Bay commercial fishing industry, could that possibly justify the loss of such a unique ecosystem, a local indigenous culture, an unparalleled recreational venue, a visual tableau of national civic pride and a renewable and economically-feasible natural resource capable of feeding millions of people a delicious, healthy, natural food?

Think about it. Then peruse the previous two pages to see what you can do. 

Digital readers click on the video icon above to view a trailer for *Equilibrium*.



Alaska's Pebble Mine is the most controversial, and perhaps the most important issue facing today's anglers.

The Fly Shop has joined with countless conservation groups, Trout Unlimited, and Patagonia, to question a threat to the world's largest population of sockeye salmon.

The Pebble Mine, (an open pit two miles wide and several thousand feet deep) has been described by proponents as "Alaska's second Gold Rush."

If approved, it could create a 1,000-square-mile industrial mining zone within the Bristol Bay watershed and be mined for the next 40 to 50 years, producing some of hard-rock mining's most toxic continental wastes.

This is a question of values that will shape the future of Alaska's landscape and American eco-politics.

Log on to: [www.tu.org/BristolBay](http://www.tu.org/BristolBay)  
Learn more. Get involved.

PEBBLE

# There aren't many roads in the 49<sup>th</sup> state to rainbows char or salmon

The only reliable way to get to great fishing is by boat or plane and with the help of experts

There are no freeways in our 49th state and you can count the highways on your fingers. Distances are huge in a state that's five times the size of Texas. It's much farther from Dutch Harbor to Anchorage than from San Francisco to Denver. Good or bad, the cold, harsh winters have retarded most urban expansion and development (though that may be about to change).

All that translates into relatively unspoiled rivers and streams. Those that drain the bush are certainly the most prolific trout and salmon streams in the Americas, but the only practical way to get to most is by boat or float plane.

The Fly Shop now represents, hands down, the very best lodges and camps in Alaska!

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ALASKA



THERE ARE HUNDREDS OF ALASKA CAMPS AND LODGES.

The list of great ones is short, and the list of bad lodges is just as short. The trick is finding the spot that best fits your idea of a really great fly fishing vacation. By applying our experience, travellers can quickly come to grips with an Alaskan lodge or camp that will help define their own trip of a lifetime.