



An artist's version of what awaits some headwaters of Bristol Bay if a mining plan goes ahead.

## It's time for you to write EPA about Pebble Mine folly

by Peter Andrew

Throughout the world, one great salmon fishery remains: my home fishing grounds of Bristol Bay, Alaska. Here, a combination of isolation and wise management have so far protected our fish from the poisons and obstructions that have killed and compromised other salmon runs. The very root of Alaska's statehood is tied directly to salmon preservation.

Right now, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has the power to make sure Bristol Bay's rivers don't join the sad list of great rivers that once were filled with healthy salmon.

It goes without saying that when fishermen and the EPA sit at a table, it's not always on the same side, and it's rare that the fishermen do the inviting. But right now in Bristol Bay, it makes sense: Salmon need clean water and a healthy environment to live, and currently our water is threatened by a proposal to build the largest open pit mine on our continent, directly on top of, and within, productive salmon habitat.

**Necessary tools:** The Clean Water Act provides the public with the necessary tools to ensure that our water is protected. We just have to ask the EPA to use them.

The tool we've asked the EPA to use goes by the name "404c." Short for section 404c of the Clean Water Act, this tool authorizes the EPA to prohibit, restrict, or deny the discharge of dredged or fill material whenever it determines that discharge could have an unacceptable adverse impact on various resources, including fisheries, wildlife, municipal water supplies, or recreational areas.

The proposed Pebble Mine calls for up to 10 billion tons of toxic mine waste to be contained behind massive dams in an earthquake-prone region above Bristol Bay's rivers. Salmon are rearing in hundreds of miles of streams at and directly downstream from the mine site. To prevent harm to our water and fish, waste from the mine would need to be treated and contained *forever*. There is no question that this mine would pose an unacceptable and adverse risk to our resources.

**Not lightly:** I think it's important to know that this isn't a tool the EPA uses lightly. In fact, 404c has rarely been invoked. The agency has used it just 13 times in the Clean Water Act's history, and never before the permitting process has begun. Then again, never before have they

been asked to protect the greatest sustainable salmon fishery left on the planet. We're asking EPA to make history by putting renewable resources first. So far, EPA is listening.

After receiving petitions from federally recognized local tribal governments, local city governments, thousands of sport fishing and commercial fishing business owners, and chefs and restaurant owners across the country who are marketing Bristol Bay's pristine wild salmon, and many more concerned salmon lovers, EPA has responded.

This spring, the EPA began a scientific assessment of the Bristol Bay watershed and the potential threats to our fishery. The review process will provide objective information on the value of the Bristol Bay fishery and the risk posed by large-scale development in the region. The agency sees this assessment as a first step in gathering the necessary information to drive future development decisions.

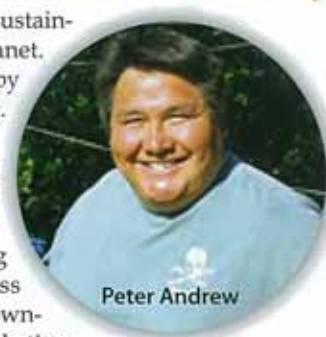
**Wrong mine, wrong place:** Those of us who depend on clean water for our livelihoods hope this assessment will prove to the EPA what we here already know: This is absolutely the wrong mine in the wrong place.

I have commercial fished for Bristol Bay salmon all of my life, and I come from a family that has fished for generations. My family depends on our annual subsistence harvest, much as my ancestors have for thousands of years. I share our river's subsistence catch with guided and commercial sport fishermen who come here from all corners of the world to land the trophy fish that swim our rivers. So, I know the thousands of jobs and livelihoods that rely on these fisheries.

We can't afford to throw this all away on a short-term gamble. Section 404c of the Clean Water Act was designed for situations like ours. The EPA has a chance to act now and help us proactively defend our jobs and way of life.

So whether you live in Anchorage, Naknek, Dillingham, a village in Bristol Bay, or anywhere in the U.S.: *Before you head to the fishing grounds this year, write or call your congressman, your two senators, and the EPA. Tell them to stand up for fishermen and thousands of Bristol Bay jobs and use 404c.* ↓

*Peter Andrew is a commercial fisherman who lives in Dillingham. He serves on the boards of Nushagak Cooperatives, American Seafood's community advisory board, and the Bristol Bay Native Corp.*



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Territory that would be forever scarred if Pebble Mine is dug.



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