

# WASHINGTON SENATOR JOINS BATTLE AGAINST GIANT PEBBLE MINE

**CANTWELL URGES EPA TO USE REGULATORY AUTHORITY IF SCIENTIFIC REVIEW FINDS PROPOSED PROJECT IN HEADWATERS OF BRISTOL BAY COULD HARM AREA'S RICH SALMON FISHERY.**

**Developers also face October vote by locals that could 'hobble' mine.**

**BY ANDY WALGAMOTT**

**F**or years now, fishing and environmental groups in the Lower 48 have been vociferously opposing development of the massive Pebble Mine, and while Alaskan lawmakers have been taking up sides too, it wasn't until recently that a Congressman from outside the state stepped into the fray.

In September, U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell of Washington said she would oppose the mine if scientific review finds that it could harm Bristol Bay's salmon fishery.

The project, billed by the Democrat in her second term as "the world's largest hard rock mine," could impact salmon anglers from the Evergreen State who fish the watershed recreationally and commercially, her office said. And she expressed support for the Environmental Protection Agency and its analysis of the effects such a large-scale development would have.

Washington is inextricably linked with Alaska, from outfitting the gold miners of the late 1800s to homeporting the crab boats in the famed Deadliest Catch series to being the southern terminus of the Alaska Marine Highway.

"Bristol Bay, one of the only remaining undeveloped salmon habitats, supports the world's largest sockeye salmon

fisheries, one of the largest king salmon runs, and abundant trophy rainbow trout," said Cantwell. "Nearly a thousand Washingtonians hold commercial fishing permits in Bristol Bay, supporting thousands more fishery jobs in my state."

The watershed generates around a half billion dollars annually in economic activity for both fleets, and while salmon camps on the famed Nushagak River are 1,600 miles from Washington, recreational anglers headed there yielded \$75 million to the coffers of Evergreen State businesses alone, Cantwell's office said.

The senator said she'd support using parts of the Clean Water Act known as Section 404(c) to prohibit or restrict mining at Pebble, which is in the Nush's headwaters, if science determines it would cause "unacceptable adverse impacts on water quality and the fish stocks that depend on it."

On Oct. 4, residents of the Lake and Peninsula Borough, which encompasses the proposed mine and upper Nushagak watershed, will get a chance to "hobble" the mine when they vote on an initiative that would basically ban projects that could harm salmon runs.

Britain's Anglo-American, PLC and Canada's Northern Dynasty Minerals, Ltd. have been working on a prefeasibility study of the mine site this year. While fabulously rich in gold, molybdenum and

copper, it would also produce billions of tons of waste rock and require huge containment lagoons. Fishermen worry the "toxic stew," as Cantwell's office put it, could seep into the watershed and threaten the otherwise pristine headwaters and run downstream.

"Hunters and anglers in Alaska and Washington applaud Senator Cantwell's strong position on Bristol Bay," said Tim Bristol, Alaska Program Director for Trout Unlimited, in a press release. "The commercial fishing and sport fishing resources in this area are an economic engine that have far reaching positive impacts and we need to make sure that the hard working families and businesses who make a living in Bristol Bay are protected."

The president and CEO of the company which owns Sage Fly Rods, based on Puget Sound's Bainbridge Island, also thanked Cantwell for her support. Travis Campbell also termed protecting the area's salmonids from Pebble "one of the top priorities for anglers across the country, and especially for many right here in Washington."

As the sides await EPA's analysis, expected out this fall, Alaska's U.S. House Representative, Republican Don Young, has introduced legislation that would strip the federal agency's ability to bring a stop to the project.

Stay tuned. **ASJ**