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Hunters, anglers, sportsmen call on Obama administration and federal Environmental Protection Agency to protect Bristol Bay, Alaska

More than 360 outdoor organizations join forces and ask the EPA and White House to stand up for sportsmen and protect Bristol Bay

Washington, D.C. – A united coalition of fishing, hunting and sporting organizations from nearly every U.S. state joined together on Thursday to ask the federal Environmental Protection Agency to use its authority to protect Bristol Bay, Alaska from the dangers of the proposed Pebble Mine.

More than 360 organizations, ranging from fly fishing groups to big game hunters, signed a letter to EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson, urging her to use the agency's authority under the Clean Water Act to protect Bristol Bay from large-scale mining and development. Next week, representatives of these groups will meet with legislators and agency members in Washington, D.C. to ask for support.

"A huge open-pit mine in the Bristol Bay region could destroy one of the world's most productive fish and game habitats, kill tourism to this international hunting and fishing mecca, and eliminate jobs from the United States," said **Brian Kraft**, owner, Alaska Sportsman's Lodge and Alaska Sportsman's Bear Trail Lodge.

The EPA took the first step toward protecting the Southwestern Alaskan region on Feb. 7, when the agency announced plans to assess the Bristol Bay watershed to better understand how future large-scale development projects may affect water quality and Bristol Bay's salmon fishery.

"Hunters and anglers commend the EPA for taking this first important step," said **Chris Wood**, President and CEO of Trout Unlimited. "Bristol Bay is the single most important wild salmon fishery in the world. It generates roughly \$450 million a year in economic impact and sustains about 12,000 jobs. We are confident that after the science and other public input are considered, the EPA and the Obama Administration will stand with sport and commercial fishermen and the people of Alaska to protect the extraordinary ecological, economic and cultural value of this place and this fishery."

Bristol Bay is a 40,000 square mile region with nine major rivers, and is home to the world's largest sockeye salmon run. Pebble Mine would create an open-pit mine up to two miles wide and 1,700 feet deep. Operated by multi-national mining interests, this mine could dump up to 10 billion tons of perpetually toxic waste in the heart of the Bristol Bay watershed. This area is

known for frequent earthquakes, which puts the watershed – and all its fish and wildlife - at an even greater risk for long term toxic pollution and severe damage to the fishery.

“Protecting Bristol Bay is currently the number one conservation issue for the United States fly fishing industry,” said **Jim Klug**, Chairman of the American Fly Fishing Trade Association.

“More than 150 sport fishing product companies have directly signed on to support protecting Bristol Bay’s fish and game habitat and economic resources, and hundreds more have voiced their opposition to Pebble Mine. We strongly urge the EPA and Obama administration to protect this amazing place.”

Sport fishing in Bristol Bay generates \$60 million annually, and supports more than 800 full- and part-time jobs. Despite the remote nature of the region and the costs to travel there, up to 65,000 visitors journey to Bristol Bay for recreational opportunities to fish, hunt, and view wildlife every year.

“This unique, wild country stands today as God intended, and a mine in the heart of Bristol Bay would cause irrevocable harm,” said **Dr. Richard Allen**, Past President of the Dallas Safari Club. “The real gold mine is already in Bristol Bay – it’s the salmon, trout, wildlife and the jobs and American families that those fish support.”

Whit Fosburgh, President and CEO of the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, said: “Over the last century, we have watched our great salmon fisheries sacrificed for development, including the Sacramento, the Klamath, and the Columbia rivers and many in between. Bristol Bay is our last great stronghold for wild salmon – salmon that will support regional economies and provide protein for the world forever if we protect them.”

In the letter to Administrator Jackson, the organizations thank the EPA for the first step, but urge stronger action to protect Bristol Bay. The EPA has the authority under the Clean Water Act to invoke Section 404(c), which would give Bristol Bay the protection it needs from mining and other large-scale developments.

The letter to the EPA is attached, or go to: www.SaveBristolBay.org

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