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Sport Fishing Industry Leaders Blast Pebble Mine Proposal

Full-Page Ads in 11 Magazines Urge Governor-Elect Palin To Protect Bristol Bay Watershed

Anchorage, Alaska—In an unprecedented move, 44 sport fishing industry leaders, including Scott Fly Rods, Orvis, and the American Fly Fishing Trade Association today urged Alaska Governor-elect Sarah Palin, the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, and the federal Bureau of Land Management to reject the Pebble mine and permanently protect the Bristol Bay watershed from industrial mineral development.

The fishing equipment manufacturers and suppliers' message, delivered in an open letter to Governor-elect Palin and agency officials, will be featured in full-page, four-color ads in issues of Fish Alaska, Fly Fisherman, Fly Rod & Reel, The Drake, Gray's Sporting Journal, Alaska Magazine, Fly Fish America, American Angler, Game Trails, Trout, and Flyfisher. The combined paid circulation of these magazines is more than 600,000. Trout Unlimited is paying for the ads, which prominently feature the logos of the 37 retailers and the industry's trade association. (For a copy of the letter and the ad, go to: www.renewableresourcescoalition.org/troutunlimited.pdf)

“The prospect of hard rock mining in the Bristol Bay area of Alaska scares the hell out of the world fly angling community and the businesses that serve it,” said Robert Ramsay, president of the American Fly Fishing Trade Association (AFFTA), which represents more than 400 fly-fishing manufacturers, sales representatives, retailers, outfitters and specialty media.

“These are some of the most cherished fly fishing waters on earth,” Ramsay said. “Prized not just for their fisheries, but recognized for their broad wilderness character here in America and across the world, Bristol Bay's public lands must continue to be protected from the devastation that would result from hard rock mine prospecting and development,” he added.

According to a recent joint University of Alaska/University of Montana study commissioned by Trout Unlimited, the Bristol Bay salmon fishery generates an estimated \$400 million per year with sport fishing contributing a whopping \$122 million to that total. Tens of thousands of anglers, hunters, and wildlife watchers from around the world visit the Bristol Bay watershed annually. In 2005 alone, the region boasted 65,000 recreational visitors, according to the study.

“Wild salmon and trout are the real gold mine in Bristol Bay,” said Tim Bristol, Alaska Director for Trout Unlimited. “When the Pebble promoters submitted their mining plans in September of this year, the prospect of dewatered salmon and trout streams, giant tailing dams, roads through the wilderness, and pipeline complexes sent shockwaves throughout the sportfishing world.”

To date, the proposed Pebble Mine has garnered a great deal of attention - and rightfully so. It would be the largest open pit gold and copper mine in North America, take water from critical salmon rearing streams of the Bristol Bay, and disturb core wildlife habitat for key game species.

“Nearly everyone who loves fish and fishing has a story of a river, a lake, a stretch of stream that was lost to pollution and irresponsible development. We are not going to stand idly by and let that happen to the Bristol Bay watershed, which is truly irreplaceable,” stated Jim Bartschi, President of Scott Fly Rods, on why the company chose to participate in the project.

In applications to the State of Alaska, Northern Dynasty Minerals, the Canadian mining company that owns the Pebble mine prospect, has detailed plans that include a 15 square-mile complex with an open pit measuring approximately two miles long, a mile and half wide, and 1,700 feet deep. To build the tailings storage facilities, Northern Dynasty proposes taking water from several critical salmon and trout streams and retaining the water and mine waste behind some of the largest dams on the planet, which would eliminate several miles of streams. Northern Dynasty is a junior mining company that has never actually constructed and operated a large mine.

Two earthen dams would be constructed in this earthquake prone zone, ranging from 740 feet high and 4.3 miles long, to 700 feet high and 2.9 miles long. The larger dam would be higher than the Hoover Dam or the Grand Coulee Dam which are made of much harder concrete. The water sought by the mining company each day amounts to three times the daily water usage of Anchorage, Alaska (pop. 277,000). Infrastructure, including a haul road and port, for the Pebble Mine also could pave the way for a massive mining district that includes BLM lands covered in the draft Resource Management Plan that is currently open for comment.

For more information, go to: www.tu.org/bristolbay

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