

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Tribes, Fishermen & Conservation Groups Express “Deep Disappointment” In Delayed Protections for Bristol Bay, Urge EPA to Act Quickly to Veto Pebble Mine by Summer**

ANCHORAGE, AK — Today, [EPA announced](#) that the agency intends to further delay the process to protect Bristol Bay from Pebble Mine. A letter sent today indicates the EPA will issue a revised Clean Water Act Section 404(c) Proposed Determination (PD) for Alaska’s Bristol Bay watershed by May 31, 2022. This would be a significant step backward and threatens to delay the timeline beyond the long-standing request of Tribes, fishermen, and communities in the region to finalize protections by the start of the fishing season in June.

**In response, Tribes, Fishermen, national and local conservation groups issued the following statements:**

***Alannah Hurley, Executive Director of the United Tribes of Bristol Bay***

*“We are deeply disappointed that after months of outreach to EPA officials requesting robust Tribal consultation on the process moving forward, EPA’s announcement today further delayed the years-long effort to protect Bristol Bay without hearing our input. The Biden administration and the EPA have committed to consult Tribes in their decision-making process, but this should have taken place before today’s announcement.. Now, at least one more fishing season could be imperiled by uncertainty.*

*Not only does this move delay long-overdue and urgently needed protections, it also flies in the face of Administrator Regan’s stated commitment to environmental justice, which he recently touted on his Journey to Justice Tour,” said Hurley. “Our Tribes deserve better. The EPA must provide Tribes, fishermen, and communities in the region the certainty that their way of life, cultural and spiritual identity, and the local economies are protected. That means, first and foremost, upholding their trust responsibility to the Tribes of Bristol Bay. EPA can and must work quickly to get back on track, the science is clear and they must finalize protections for our region. As the EPA’s process moves forward, EPA must advance a science-based and transparent process that includes true Tribal consultation and opportunities for public input. We hope the agency will clarify this timeline so that we can finally achieve permanent protections for Bristol Bay, our Tribes, and way of life as soon as this summer.”*

**Joel Reynolds, Senior Attorney and Western Director for the Natural Resource Defense Council**

*“With the people of Bristol Bay, NRDC and other organizations representing over ten million supporters nationally have asked, and we expect, EPA to move its process to protect Bristol Bay forward to a Final Determination by summer. The letter today is dismaying and unacceptable if it suggests the agency hasn’t gotten that message – or, if it has, is ignoring it. We strongly hope that isn’t the case.”*

**Tim Bristol, Executive Director of SalmonState**

*“Along with tribes, fisherman, and communities across Bristol Bay, we’ve been calling on EPA to conclude the Clean Water Act 404(c) process by the summer. More delays defy economic and environmental common sense. The EPA must finish the job and finally end the threat of large-scale mining to the world’s most productive and valuable wild salmon fishery.”*

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