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**Tribes, Commercial Fishermen, Conservation Groups Respond to  
EPA's Next Step Forward to Protect Bristol Bay**

*EPA Announcement Comes Before the Start of Fishing Season, Groups Eager to Urge EPA to  
Finish the Job During Comment Period*

**(Dillingham, Alaska)** – Today, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) [noticed](#) its publication of a Proposed Determination (PD) regarding the Pebble deposit for Bristol Bay the next step in the process that brings EPA one step closer to enacting 404(c) Clean Water Act protections for the region.

This announcement is an important step forward in the 20-year tribally-led fight to protect Bristol Bay. When the full draft of the PD is published in the Federal Register tomorrow, Tribes, commercial fisherman, and conservation groups will review the substance of EPA's proposal to ensure it aligns with the requests of the region to provide full and lasting protections for Bristol Bay.

Next, EPA will begin a comment period today that will run through July 5th and will also host public hearings to gather feedback from the region on June 16th and 17th, providing the public an opportunity to weigh in on their proposal.

Bristol Bay is home to the most ecologically and economically important remaining salmon fishery on Earth – providing half the world's wild sockeye salmon. The lands and waters of the region sustain the cultural and spiritual identity of tribes in the area, support an economy valued at over \$2.2 billion and employ tens of thousands of people in commercial fishing, hunting and sportfishing, outdoor recreation, and tourism.

**In response to EPA's announcement, Tribes, commercial fishermen, and conservation groups issued the following statements:**

“As stewards of these lands and waters since time immemorial, our people welcome this step towards permanent protections for our waters and way of life,” **said Alannah Hurley, Executive Director for the United Tribes of Bristol Bay.** “Today's announcement by the EPA is a good start in this effort. It's clear the science supports the need for our region's headwaters to be protected from a mine like Pebble's impacts, at the site and downstream. We appreciate EPA's efforts to address the threat Pebble poses to our lands, waters, and way of life in Bristol Bay, and hope to see the agency finalize strong protections this year.”

“This is great news for all those preparing for what should be another incredible fishing season in Bristol Bay,” **said Tim Bristol, Executive Director of SalmonState.** “Today’s announcement is a key step towards what can and should be one of the Biden Administration’s signature achievements, protection of the world’s most productive and profitable wild salmon fishery.

“We welcome this essential step by EPA toward the protection of Bristol Bay from the threat of Pebble Mine. But make no mistake: We won’t rest until EPA has completed the process and stopped this uniquely destructive project forever,” **said Joel Reynolds, Western Director and Senior Attorney for the Natural Resources Defense Council.** “NRDC and its 3 million members and activists are eager to continue working with the Biden administration and EPA Administrator Regan to finally finish the job of protecting Bristol Bay this year.”

“Today’s announcement is an important step toward protecting Bristol Bay from the Pebble Mine for good and we hope EPA will move quickly to finalize the 404(c) Clean Water Act process to enact durable, long-lasting protections for the region, as we have requested, as soon as possible,” **said Katherine Carscallen, Director of Commercial Fishermen for Bristol Bay.** “With a predicted record-breaking fishing season kicking off shortly, it couldn’t be more clear what is at stake if Pebble Mine were built: thousands of jobs, a sustainable economy, and an irreplaceable way of life are all on the line. For years Bristol Bay’s fishermen have been asking the EPA to finalize Clean Water Act protections for our fishery and stop the Pebble Mine. Before we head out on our boats, we’ll weigh in once again and urge the EPA to protect Bristol Bay’s 2.2 billion dollar sustainable economy and the 15,000 jobs imperiled by the Pebble Mine.”

Once the comment period concludes, EPA will take public input into account and release a Revised Determination (RD), before ultimately issuing their Final Determination— putting in place 404(c) Clean Water Act protections for Bristol Bay.

**Additional Background:**

Bristol Bay plays a central role in the cultural and spiritual identity of tribes in the area, employs tens of thousands of people, and generates billions of dollars in economic activity annually. Yet, for decades, the region has been threatened by the proposed Pebble Mine—a large open pit mine intended to extract copper, gold, and molybdenum. If fully built, the mine would produce up to 10.2 billion tons of toxic waste that would remain on site forever.

Earlier this year, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game released its 2022 Bristol Bay Commercial Salmon Fishing Outlook. The report projects that more than [73.4 million](#) sockeye salmon will return to Bristol Bay this season—far exceeding last year’s record-breaking

numbers. These record projections are due to thousands of years of Indigenous stewardship and sustainable management that has kept Bristol Bay's watershed unpolluted and pristine.

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