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Tribes, Fishermen, Businesses, Conservation Groups Respond to New Potential Mineral Exploration in Bristol Bay Watershed, Urge Congress to Pursue Watershed-Wide Protections Now

ANCHORAGE, AK — Bristol Bay Tribes, fishermen, businesses, and allies again reiterated their opposition to mining that jeopardizes Bristol Bay’s cultures and economies in response to the latest mineral exploration efforts in the region.

The Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) on February 28 [issued a public notice](#) of an application from Stuy Mines LLC for mineral exploration activities along Kaskanak Creek in the Bristol Bay watershed, located southwest of the Pebble deposit. The public notice from the DNR on this proposal for mining exploration (which was submitted in June 2022) in the watershed triggered a two week public comment period ending March 14. The Stuy Mines project at Kaskanak is one of 20 projects in exploration in the Bristol Bay watershed, and this notice comes just weeks after the EPA ended the threat of the Pebble Mine using their authority under section 404(c) of the Clean Water Act, heeding the calls of Tribes, commercial fishermen, and people in the region who have spoken out and urged the EPA to act for decades.

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

“This is yet another dangerous proposal that willfully ignores the science and demands of the people across Bristol Bay who have fought to protect this pristine watershed from large-scale mining development for decades. Bristol Bay’s tribes have been clear, this type of toxic development is not welcome in our watershed,” **said Alannah Hurley, Executive Director of the United Tribes of Bristol Bay.** “The EPA’s action to stop the Pebble Mine was a step in the right direction, recognizing that the science and the public are staunchly on the side of protecting our home. These ongoing threats highlight exactly why this fight isn’t over and we need our leaders in Congress to take action to establish permanent protections for the entire Bristol Bay watershed.”

“Kaskanak Creek is home to our ancient villages, and still the most productive creek for subsistence hunting and fishing closest to our village,” **said AlexAnna Salmon, President of the Igiugig Village Council.** “We have always opposed mining around Kaskanak Creek and will continue to be vocal in our opposition to projects like this that threaten our pristine waters, salmon, landscapes, and way of life. We’re counting on our leaders in Washington to enact

watershed-wide protections so we don't have to continue fighting off dangerous mining proposals left and right.”

“As the President of an organization that represents 65 Alaska businesses, I am deeply disappointed to see this dangerous proposal moving forward,” **said Brian Kraft, Owner of Alaska Sportsman's Lodge and President of Katmai Service Providers, Inc.** “We should still be celebrating the EPA's decision to stop Pebble Mine, but instead, we are forced to be back on defense. We shouldn't have to live like this anymore, in fear that our businesses, local economy, and pristine salmon runs could be destroyed by a risky mining project. Our leaders in Congress must step up and permanently protect Bristol Bay.”

“This proposal for new mineral exploration in the Bristol Bay Watershed is out of touch with what Alaskans, and most importantly the people of Bristol Bay, want for the future of this irreplaceable watershed,” **said Tim Bristol, Executive Director of SalmonState.** “This action is a waste of time and ignores the work the Tribes, commercial and sport fishers, and conservation groups have done over the last two decades leading up to the EPA's recent decision to end the threat of the Pebble Mine in the region. The Bristol Bay watershed is home to one of the last intact salmon ecosystems in the world; it's more important than ever that our leaders champion watershed-wide, permanent protections for this special place before it's too late.”

“It is extremely disappointing to see efforts to continue mineral exploration in the Bristol Bay watershed, just a month after the EPA ended the threat of Pebble Mine using their Clean Water Act authority,” **said Katherine Carscallen, Director of Commercial Fishermen for Bristol Bay.** “The majority of Alaskans support permanently protecting the Bristol Bay watershed from all threats of mining. It is clear that we cannot stop until these pristine waters, which support tens of thousands of jobs, a \$2.2 billion dollar annual commercial fishery, and feeds people from coast to coast, are permanently protected through an act of Congress.”

“The ink is barely dry on EPA's decision to stop the Pebble Mine yet inexplicably mineral exploration in Bristol Bay continues,” **said Taryn Kiekow Heimer, Senior Advocate and Deputy Director of Marine Mammal Protection at NRDC (Natural Resources Defense Council).** “Until Bristol Bay is permanently protected through legislation, we will continue playing whack-a-mole with exploitative mining companies.”

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