



April 26, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

CC: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Council on Environmental Quality, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

RE: Support America's sporting heritage through permanent protections for the Bristol Bay region, Alaska.

Dear Mr. President:

Congratulations on your inauguration as 46<sup>th</sup> President of the United States. We look forward to working with your administration on a host of conservation issues that America's hunters and anglers care about. One of our most pressing concerns is the future of the Bristol Bay region of southwest Alaska. The undersigned entities—representing outdoor recreation businesses and hundreds of thousands of American hunters, anglers, and outdoor enthusiasts—respectfully request that you uphold the November, 2020, decision by the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to deny a Clean Water Act permit for the proposed Pebble mine, and that your administration finalize strong protections for the Bristol Bay region through the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) use of Section 404(c) of the Clean Water Act, and work with Congress to permanently protect the Bristol Bay watershed. Local Tribes, commercial and sport fishing businesses, hunters and anglers, and Alaskans from all walks of life have long voiced support for permanent protections for Bristol Bay's unique waters and world-class fisheries.

After nearly two decades of the proposed Pebble mine threatening the fish, people, and fish-based industries of the Bristol Bay region, we applauded the Corps' recent decision to deny a Clean Water Act 404 permit for the project. The permit-review process reaffirmed what the EPA first concluded back in 2014 when it initially proposed protections for the Bristol Bay watershed and what we have known for years: industrial hard rock mining in Bristol Bay's headwaters is incompatible with the world's best wild salmon fishery; the proposed Pebble mine cannot meet Clean Water Act standards; and the project is inconsistent with the public interest and the desires of local Bristol Bay residents, Alaskans, and outdoor recreationalists nationwide.

Without permanent protections for the region, the Bristol Bay region's world-class fisheries, waters, and fish-based cultures will remain at great risk. Therefore, we ask for your support for the following priorities:

**1. Defend the Corps' decision to deny the permit application.**

The Pebble Limited Partnership (PLP) has administratively appealed the Corps' decision and will likely appeal to the courts once the agency's decision is final. Although the Environmental Impact Statement was rushed, the administrative record is replete with studies and analysis, including the EPA's own Bristol Bay Watershed Assessment, adequate to support the Corps' conclusion that the project fails to meet Clean Water Act standards and is not in the public interest. We encourage your administration to uphold the Corps' decision and vigorously oppose any future legal claims PLP might bring.

**2. Direct the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to restrict mining in Bristol Bay under Section 404(c) of the Clean Water Act.**

After completing the Bristol Bay Watershed Assessment in 2014, the Obama Administration used its authority under Section 404(c) of the Clean Water Act to propose restrictions on dredge and fill activities in waters at the Pebble deposit. While the 2014 proposed determination was never finalized, it was supported by more than a million Americans from the Bristol Bay region and beyond. Although the Trump Administration withdrew the 2014 proposed determination, that decision is subject to ongoing litigation before the Ninth Circuit (*Trout Unlimited v. Hladick, et al.*, Case No. 20-35504). The EPA should complete a final determination under Section 404(c) that provides appropriately strict limits on dredge and fill permits within the broader Bristol Bay watershed so hard rock mining at the Pebble deposit and in adjacent areas cannot cause unacceptable adverse effects to the region's fish, wildlife, and waters. Using the EPA's authority to finalize durable protections for the Bristol Bay region will help ensure the vitality and productivity of North America's best remaining wild salmon fishery and help secure this important cultural and traditional resource for generations to come.

Southwest Alaska's Bristol Bay region is our nation's most valuable wild salmon fishery, sustaining vibrant salmon-based communities, indigenous cultures, and robust renewable commercial and sport-fishing economies. Science has clearly shown large-scale mining operations like the proposed Pebble

mine are incompatible with the region's sensitive and important fish and water resources, and it is now time to establish long-term protections for this iconic, productive landscape. Thank you for your commitment and leadership on this nationally important conservation issue.

Sincerely,

American Fly Fishing Trade Association  
Whitney Tilt  
Bozeman, MT

Izaak Walton League of America  
Jared Mott  
Gaithersburg, MD

American Sport Fishing Association  
Mike Leonard  
Alexandria, VA

Katmai Service Providers  
Brian Kraft  
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Backcountry Hunters & Anglers  
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International Game Fish Association  
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RIO Products  
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Sage Fly Fishing  
Tag Kleiner  
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Scott Fly Rod Company  
Jim Bartschi  
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Simms Fishing Products  
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