

A GLOBAL LOOK AT THE STAKES IN THE BRISTOL BAY PEBBLE MINE CONTROVERSY

Q & A with John J. Jackson, III, chairman
Conservation Force

By Tim Richardson, Wildlife Forever

John J. Jackson, III is in a class by himself when it comes to Alaska hunting, global hunting, and litigating CITES issues involving wild game. Jackson is a New Orleans based attorney and chairman of Conservation Force, an internationally focused conservation NGO he created in 1997. In 2012 he received the Peter Hathaway Capstick Hunting Heritage Award presented annually at Dallas Safari Club's convention. He is a life member of twenty hunting and fishing organizations in the U.S, Africa and internationally, including life membership in the Alaska Professional Hunters Association for nearly three decades. John is past president of Safari Club International and a fixture at U.S. and international wildlife conferences. He is an expert with unusual impact willing to cooperate with or challenge wildlife agencies and interest groups in national, multi-national, state, and provincial arenas anytime it matters. If there were an "Iron Man" award for jet lag, Jackson would be a finalist every year. His Christmas card photo, always taken with his wife Chrissie, a Capstick co-awardee with John, is a travelogue of passionate adventure. Below we ask John to put Alaska's Pebble Mine controversy in the global hunting context.



Q. Your many jousts over game management laws demonstrates that you recognize the importance of conflict resolution for the future of wildlife, including

hunting. Everyone wants “win-win” solutions for wildlife and socio-economic outcomes but knowing the proposed magnitude of the Pebble Mine and its location in Southwest Alaska at the heart of the Bristol Bay watershed, is there a “win-win” available for Pebble Mine and big game hunting there?

A. The answer is no. The uniqueness of Southwest Alaska and its big game hunting is inseparable from its remoteness and scenic grandeur and that appeal won't co-exist with the large-scale industrial development planned by Pebble Mine's backers.

Pebble Mine's development requires at least a 70-mile major haul road for heavy trucks from Cook Inlet to the Pebble site crossing 63 salmon bearing rivers and streams in the Iliamna Lake and Lake Clark drainages and requires a power source of a size needed for the City of Anchorage. That transportation and energy infrastructure will forever alter Alaska Department of Fish and Game's Game Management Unit (GMU) 9A and 9B. The prospect of water quality degradation through normal mine operations threatens the Kvichak, Nushagak, Multchatna and Naknek river drainages that flow to Bristol Bay through GMUs 9C, 17B, and 17C.

A catastrophic failure of the mine's enormous tailing pond would outright kill those awesome salmon runs which would directly ruin brown bear, black bear and wolf hunting in the region. There's no win-win possible in that scenario. Pebble Mine is in the wrong spot to co-exist with world class wilderness hunting. Could moose and caribou survive the water quality problems because they aren't salmon dependent? Maybe, moose are pretty plentiful in the Anchorage suburbs but the uniqueness of the region for hunting would be lost. The problem posed by Pebble is even larger because it would be only the first of many mines in that region and that would change Southwest Alaska forever.

The Yupik speaking tribes of the region know that the mine gravely threatens their entire lifestyle. The region's lodge owners, guides and outfitters know it, the commercial salmon industry knows it and big game hunters should know it. Pebble Mine poses a clear either-or divide for the region not a win-win.

Q: How would you characterize the hunting available in the Pebble Mine impact zone made up of GMUs 9A, 9B and 9C and 17B and 17C?

A. All told, I have spent more than three full years of my life in Alaska and many months hunting, fishing, hiking and exploring in the Pebble Mine impact zone. I know the area well. Southwest Alaska has been well known as the best brown bear, moose and caribou combination area in the state for many decades. Resident and non-resident hunters regularly get game tags for multiple species, adding wolves and in some places like GMU 17B adding black bear tags because they are likely to get multi-species opportunities. That's what normal big game hunting means in that region. Wolverines are mostly trapped but they are there in good numbers. Add waterfowl in season and you are clearly able to have an Alaskan hunting trip of a lifetime in that area. It's just remarkable and consistently great even though cycle declines in caribou have restricted non-resident hunters from that species.

GMUs 9A, 9B and 9C plus 17B and 17C cover roughly 20 million acres. Non-hunting areas such as Lake Clark National Park, Katmai National Park and the McNeil River Game Sanctuary reduce that acre total by 6.5 million acres leaving 13.5 million contiguous acres all open to public land hunting. However, Lake Clark Preserve at 1.4 million acres and Katmai Preserve at 700,000 acres are open to hunting. GMUs 17B and 17C have the Mulchatna and Nushagak river drainages. They allow two brown bear tags per year indicating very strong populations with an annual harvest of over 100 brown bears. Three black bears are also allowed in GMU 17.

Non-residents took 81% of GMU 9s brown bears which average 175 per year. Moose and caribou are available to resident Alaskans in GMU 17, while non-residents can hunt moose in GMU 17B but not 17C which is close to Dillingham. Dall Sheep are available to resident hunters while non-resident hunters need a registered guide, in GMU 9A.

Q: Given your international experience, how many hunting areas of this quality are threatened by development projects as massive as Pebble Mine?

A: Well, the world of big game hunting is clearly coming under increasing development threats in addition to political threats, continent by continent, nation by nation including wars and terrorism.

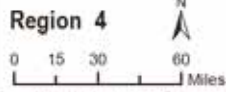
China's investments in Africa portend great change in some places. Witness the devastation of white rhino in Kruger National Park and elephant in the Selous Reserve in Tanzania. Thankfully, the road planned across the Serengeti is no longer a threat. Profits from the ivory of elephant and horn of rhino are like the gold of Pebble Mine; ivory is like white gold.

However, the size of Pebble Mine and the development of an even larger mining district in that region occurring in a location with the highest quality of wilderness hunting for multiple species in Alaska is the number one development vs hunting clash in North America and has to make the short list from a global perspective as well.

Look, let's face it: Alaska is the last, most pristine natural place on the face of the earth and mostly certainly here in the United States. We can't sacrifice what remains for corporate dividends for foreign investors. We must not let this happen.



Unit 9 Alaska Peninsula



Game Management Units / Special Management Areas



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