

July 30, 2013

Congressman Paul Broun  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Oversight  
House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology  
2321 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Broun:

It was with great disappointment that we read your letters to the Environmental Protection Agency regarding its watershed assessment of Bristol Bay, Alaska. While we disagree with the premise of your letters and your efforts to discredit the EPA's process for ensuring the protection of Bristol Bay, we were especially surprised to see you invoke your devotion to sportsmen's issues in your correspondence with the agency.

As you may know, protecting Bristol Bay is a top priority for hundreds of organizations associated with sportsmen's issues. In fact, over 950 sporting groups and businesses support EPA's watershed assessment as well as reasonable and proactive measures to protect the Bay from harmful mining development. The reason is simple: Bristol Bay is a true sportsmen's paradise, home to some of the best stores of trophy rainbow trout and wild Pacific salmon in the world and is a prime hunting location for caribou, moose, bear, waterfowl, and upland game birds. Bristol Bay remains a stronghold of jobs and industry, accounting for 14,000 sport and commercial fishing jobs and a \$1.5 billion annual economy.

Nearly three years ago, Alaska Native tribes and corporations, commercial fishermen, and sportsmen asked the EPA to step in and take a hard look at the proposed Pebble Mine. The EPA heeded our concerns, and is now in the process of finalizing its watershed assessment, including feedback from an independent peer review panel and hundreds of thousands of comments submitted by the public. The EPA should be lauded for its open and transparent process in its peer review of the Bristol Bay watershed, qualities made all the more apparent by its commitment to a second review of the watershed assessment before a final assessment is made.

In your correspondence, you make clear that one of your chief concerns with the draft watershed assessment is its reliance on a "hypothetical" mine proposal. We have particular concerns with this point, as the Pebble Limited Partnership (PLP) has intentionally obfuscated the fact that a mine scenario does indeed exist. PLP presented a mine plan to the Securities and Exchange Commission to secure investor support for the Pebble project, and has since touted the mine's potential benefits through an economic study based on reasonable mining scenarios in the Bristol Bay region. If Pebble does not have an actual plan, then it should immediately relinquish the water rights it filed in 2006 for 100 percent of the water of Upper Talarik Creek and the Kuktuli River – sensitive fish habitat containing some of the greatest trophy rainbow trout in the world.

In addition, one of the chief reasons that the EPA uses the phrase "hypothetical mining scenario" is that Pebble has not been forthcoming with its myriad data about the project, and the information it has provided is "virtually impossible to review," according to representatives of the Alaska

Department of Fish and Game. Even Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) has raised concerns that the Pebble's continued to delay and lack of a filed plans has promoted "anxiety, frustration, and confusion" in many Alaska communities.

Further, the State of Alaska has never said no to a large mine. Without the EPA's assessment, it is quite possible – if not probable – that Pebble would be green lighted without proper review. This would all come against the wishes of a majority of Alaskans, as well as a vast majority of Bristol Bay residents and shareholders of native organizations such as the Bristol Bay Native Corporation.

What we do know about Pebble is disconcerting for sportsmen across the country. Pebble would be built at the headwaters of Bristol Bay, on top of the streams where nearly 40 million wild sockeye salmon return each and every year to spawn. The draft watershed assessment projects that in a best case scenario Pebble would destroy up to 90 miles of salmon streams and 4,800 acres of salmon wetland habitat. The Pebble project would create up to 10 billion tons of toxic waste, which must be stored in perpetuity behind a series of earthen dams up to 700 feet tall and nine linear miles long. All of this would occur in an area prone to earthquakes. Even a small accident would jeopardize the approximately 29,000 trips made by sportsmen to Bristol Bay on an annual basis. Put simply, the Pebble Mine is the wrong mine in the wrong place.

The EPA draft watershed assessment provides more than enough justification for preserving one of our national treasures in Bristol Bay, Alaska. If there were ever a time to protect federal waters from "an unacceptable adverse impact" on fisheries and wildlife as defined by the Clean Water Act, this would be it. If the EPA acts, it will have the strong support of thousands of sportsmen from across the United States, including many across your home state of Georgia.

We do not doubt your passion for issues important to sportsmen. When it comes to Bristol Bay, however, your stance is at odds with likeminded sportsmen, the businesses they run, and organizations of which they are members. As you continue to perform your duties as Chairman of the Oversight Subcommittee for the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee, we hope that you will remember your sportsmen's roots and listen to our concerns about Bristol Bay, Alaska. The EPA's process is the only guaranteed way to ensure that Bristol Bay is protected through reasonable mining restrictions. It deserves your support, not derision.

Sincerely,

American Fly Fishing Trade Association  
American Rivers  
Backcountry Hunters and Anglers  
Bass Anglers Sportsman Society  
Berkley Conservation Institute  
Bull Moose Sportsmen's Alliance  
Campfire Club of America  
Dallas Safari Club

Delta Waterfowl  
Izaak Walton League of America  
North American Fishing Club  
North American Hunting Club  
Quality Deer Management Association  
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership  
Wildlife Forever  
Wildlife Management Institute