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TRIBES OF BRISTOL BAY



Bristol Bay  
Reserve Association



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Bristol Bay organizations challenge Environmental Protection Agency's removal of Bristol Bay protections**

ANCHORAGE, AK – Today, Bristol Bay organizations initiated a legal challenge against the Trump Administration's effort to remove Clean Water Act science-based protections set in place to preserve the integrity of our salmon bearing streams. By removing those protections, the Administration not only broke the law, it made clear that local people will have no voice in the management of our rivers, streams, and wetlands.

The Bristol Bay Defense Alliance, consisting of Bristol Bay Native Association, United Tribes of Bristol Bay, Bristol Bay Regional Seafood Development Association, Bristol Bay Reserve Association and Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation, are taking legal action on behalf of the residents and fishermen who rely on the Bristol Bay fishery and all it sustains.

The proposed Clean Water Act protections were first requested by six Bristol Bay Tribes in 2010, and quickly supported by commercial and sport fishing groups. The EPA's multi-year public process and the resulting proposed determination included every stakeholder group – our organizations, state government representatives, scientific experts, Bristol Bay residents, and even the Pebble Partnership. All had seats at the table. The Administration's recent move to withdraw the protections runs counter to the best available science and is an effort to advance a foreign mining company's interests. The people of Bristol Bay have worked collectively for generations to protect our land and our fisheries, whether it was from fish traps, over fishing, and now even projects like the Pebble Mine. We will continue to do whatever is necessary to protect the waters and wild salmon that sustain the economy, commercial and sport fisheries, and traditional way of life in Bristol Bay.

Leaders from each organization made the following statements.

**Bristol Bay Native Association President/CEO Ralph Andersen:**

"For thousands of years, the indigenous people of Bristol Bay have been careful stewards of our lands and waters, ensuring that future generations will be able to live from the bounty of the region, just as our ancestors did before us. Protecting our resources is one of our important cultural values. Because of our careful stewardship, Bristol Bay is home to the last fully intact wild salmon fisheries and cultures in the world. The federal government has a trust responsibility to protect the resources that our cultures depend on, and eliminating the proposed protections violates that responsibility. Today we are here to state clearly that we will not allow this administration to ignore us, our way of life, and the future we have chosen for our region."

**United Tribes of Bristol Bay Deputy Director Lindsay Layland:**

“Salmon are more than just food for the people of Bristol Bay. Catching, preserving, and eating salmon are part of a genuine and treasured way of life. As sovereign Native nations, our member Tribes have worked in good faith with the U.S. government to protect our resources. Despite our efforts, however, a corrupt political landscape and a few backroom deals have resulted in the illegal withdrawal of peer-reviewed, science-based environmental protections for the world’s most pristine ecosystem and wild salmon habitat. We are calling out the Federal Administration for this wrongdoing, and we will stand with our partners and the people of Bristol Bay in the work to protect our home.”

**Bristol Bay Economic Development Corp. President/CEO Norm Van Vactor:**

“BBEDC’s 17 member communities continue to oppose the proposed Pebble Mine project because of the overwhelming scientific evidence of the devastating impacts of large-scale mining on salmon habitat. The fragile economy of our region is so dependent upon the continued success of the salmon fishery that we are obliged to oppose the improper, unlawful, and unnecessary action on the part of EPA with the litigation we filed today.”

**Bristol Bay Reserve Association Board Member Mike LaRussa:**

“The Bristol Bay Reserve Association is proud to join our friends in the Bristol Bay watershed and the Bristol Bay Regional Seafood Development Association in challenging the EPA’s recent decision making which threatens the Bristol Bay salmon resource. BBRA’s mission is to promote the interests of its 350 members who own commercial fishing vessels and participate in the Bristol Bay commercial salmon drift fishery. Like the other groups involved in this lawsuit, BBRA’s membership is deeply disturbed over the EPA’s withdrawal of its own proposed protections for Bristol Bay, which is not based on sound science.”

**Bristol Bay Regional Seafood Development Association Executive Director Andy Wink:**

“Bristol Bay is the crown jewel of Alaska’s salmon industry. It is the most valuable salmon fishery in the world, accounting for roughly half of the world’s sockeye salmon harvest. There is simply no precedent for open pit mining coexisting with sockeye salmon on the scale proposed by the Pebble Mine in Bristol Bay. The EPA’s Proposed Determination to enact 404C Clean Water Act protections is an important tool for safeguarding the world’s most productive salmon habitat, and we cannot allow it to be cast aside without due process.”

*The formal legal complaint, and video, audio and still photos of the groups’ announcement are available to interested media. Please contact UTBB Communications Director Molly Dischner at (907) 394-0117 or [mdischner@utbb.org](mailto:mdischner@utbb.org). The speakers are also available for follow up interviews at the numbers listed above.*

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**Bristol Bay Native Association** represents 31 Bristol Bay tribes & is the regional nonprofit tribal consortium providing social, economic, and educational opportunities to tribal members.

**Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation** represents 17 CDQ communities & exists to promote economic growth and opportunities for Bristol Bay residents through sustainable use of the Bering Sea fisheries.

**United Tribes of Bristol Bay** is a tribal consortium representing 15 Bristol Bay tribal governments (that represent over 80 percent of the region’s total population) working to protect the Yup’ik, Dena’ina, and Alutiiq way of life in Bristol Bay.

**Bristol Bay Reserve Association** is a non-profit corporation, which promotes the interests of its 350 members who own commercial fishing vessels and participate in the Bristol Bay commercial salmon drift fishery.

The mission of the **Bristol Bay Regional Seafood Development Association** is to increase the value of Bristol Bay seafood products for the benefit of fishermen. The organization funds activities that promote fishery products, elevate fish quality at the point of harvest, and support resource sustainability.