SOUTHWEST ALASKA AND PEBBLE MINE: THE STORY OF A NOT-SO-GOLDEN FUTURE

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Introduction
Today the approach of Pebble Mine, North America’s largest proposed gold, second largest proposed copper, and multi-billion pound molybdenum mine, threatens to disrupt southwest Alaska. With a $300 billion value, the case is strong, but there is mounting evidence that Pebble should not be allowed to mine. Essentially, Pebble is too much of a risk as it will adversely effect watersheds, endanger salmon, and jeopardize a subsistence lifestyle. An active solution to stop Pebble stems from local Native Alaskans influencing Alaska Governor Sarah Palin to support anti-Pebble legislation.

Location of Pebble Mine

Southwest Alaska Ecology
Southwest Alaska’s rich ecosystem is home to grizzly, and black bear, wolverine, wolf, fox, lynx, moose, caribou, beaver, salmon, trout, osprey, eagle, and people – all in peril at the hands of a multi-national company’s need for precious metals.

Pebble’s Risk: Water, Salmon, and Subsistence

Water: In order to fill tailing’s pond necessary to contain contaminated waste, Pebble plans to dewater three rivers, covering 18,000 acres in 28 square miles across the region. Salmon: Twenty-four streams in this dewatered region have been documented to support up to 552,000 spawning salmon. Specifically, habitat will be lost as average river flows will be reduced. As a result, not much organic, life sustaining material will be carried. Subsistence: An average of 152,778 subsistence salmon are caught each year in Bristol Bay, equating to around 315 pounds per person. Residents dry, smoke, freeze, can, salt, pickle, ferment, and eat salmon fresh.

Affected Water and Fish in Pebble’s Footprint Zone

Pebble’s Owners
Pebble Mine is owned by two multi-national companies, Northern Dynasty Minerals (NDM) (Canada) and Anglo American (UK). Both are marked with unsuccessful track records. Still, they claim impressive amounts of metals – $300 billion, especially molybdenum, gold, and copper found in two projects, West and East, on the mine site.

Native Resistance at the Mercy of Governor Palin
Caretakers of the Land: Thirteen Alaskan Native Groups throughout Bristol Bay have joined forces trying to stop Pebble. Ultimately, the group’s actions rest on influencing Alaskan Governor Sarah Palin to support three key pieces of Alaska Legislation: The Bristol Bay Fisheries Reserve, the Jay Hammond Sate Game Refuge, and the Alaska Clean Water Initiative. This legislation and subsequent law will protect southwest Alaska from mining for generations to come.

Precious Metals Contained in Pebble Mine

Science on Pebble
“One dilemma for the public is that mining companies, NDM included, routinely claim that they can operate a modern metal mine without environmental impacts. This is simply false. It is inevitable that an operation of this magnitude will have some negative impacts... I have never seen a comparable metal mine operated, long-term, that has not produced such negative impacts.” (Robert Moran, Ph. D. Geology).

Pebble flag (Photo courtesy of Renewable Resource Coalition).

Bristol Bay commercial fishing boat displays an anti-Pebble flag (Photo Courtesy of Renewable Resource Coalition).

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