

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4705

COMMITTEES:
ENERGY AND NATURAL
RESOURCES
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION
FINANCE
INDIAN AFFAIRS
SMALL BUSINESS

May 31, 2018

The Honorable R.D. James
Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works)
108 Army Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20310-0108

Dear Assistant Secretary James,

I write to call on the Army Corps of Engineers to expand opportunities for public comment and testimony during the public scoping period and subsequent public comment periods in the Corps Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process for the proposed Pebble Mine in Bristol Bay, Alaska. It is critical that the Army Corps is as rigorous, transparent and thorough as possible to ensure that Bristol Bay salmon and the jobs that rely on them are protected from the potentially devastating impacts of the proposed Pebble Mine. Your agency's process must include stakeholders impacted by this decision, which includes Washington state fishermen and small businesses who rely on Bristol Bay and Bristol Bay salmon for their livelihood.

This year, more than 51 million sockeye salmon are expected to return to Bristol Bay, the world's largest sockeye fishery and one of the world's largest Chinook fisheries. Pacific Northwest fishermen, shipbuilders, suppliers, sportsmen and restaurants have built an economy around this one-of-a-kind sustainable fishery. The commercial sockeye fishery is valued at \$1.5 billion in annual economic output, including \$500 million in direct income. Bristol Bay supports 12,000 commercial fishing jobs and another 10,000 salmon-related industry jobs across the United States, including thousands of jobs in Washington state. In addition to commercial fisheries, private anglers take an estimated 37,000 fishing trips every year to Bristol Bay, generating \$60 million in economic activity and supporting another 850 full and part time jobs.

The Corps estimates the final Pebble Mine EIS will be completed as early as 2019, with a decision on the project expected in early 2020. I am extremely concerned about this expedited timeline, especially considering the magnitude of the proposed Pebble Mine. Comparatively, the proposed Donlin Gold Project in Western Alaska is in the midst of a six year permitting process. Public Scoping for Donlin Gold began in March of 2013 and the Preliminary Draft EIS was completed in June of 2015—a full two years later. The Draft EIS was then published in November of 2015 and was followed by a full six month comment period until May of 2016, allowing for thorough and repeated opportunities for public participation and technical comments on the project. This thorough environmental review is critical to ensuring best available science is used in public policy decision making, and to make certain all voices are heard.

EVERETT
2930 WETMORE AVENUE
SUITE 9B
EVERETT, WA 98201
(425) 303-0114
FAX: (425) 303-8351

RICHLAND
825 JADWIN AVENUE
SUITE 204/204A
RICHLAND, WA 99352
(509) 946-8106
FAX: (509) 946-6937

SEATTLE
JACKSON FEDERAL BUILDING
915 2ND AVENUE, SUITE 3206
SEATTLE, WA 98174-1003
(206) 220-6400
TOLL FREE: 1-888-648-7328
FAX: (206) 220-6404

SPOKANE
U.S. FEDERAL COURTHOUSE
WEST 920 RIVERSIDE, SUITE 697
SPOKANE, WA 99201
(509) 353-2507
FAX: (509) 353-2547

TACOMA
950 PACIFIC AVENUE
SUITE 615
TACOMA, WA 98402
(253) 572-2281
FAX: (253) 572-5879

VANCOUVER
MARSHALL HOUSE
1313 OFFICERS' ROW
FIRST FLOOR
VANCOUVER, WA 98661
(360) 696-7838
FAX: (360) 696-7844

WASHINGTON, DC
511 HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4705
(202) 224-3441
FAX: (202) 228-0514

In addition to the ongoing 90-day public comment period for the scoping process, the Corps had announced only nine public scoping meetings, all in the state of Alaska. There are no public meetings scheduled in Washington state. This expedited process is grossly insufficient, and does not allow my constituents the opportunity to participate in the permitting process in person. As Washington state residents are directly impacted by the permitting decision for the proposed Pebble Mine, I urge to the Corps hold public meetings in Washington state.

Due to the importance of Bristol Bay fisheries to our economy, Washington fishermen, suppliers and businesses have an enormous interest in ensuring that Bristol Bay salmon continue to thrive for generations. Washington state fishermen, sportsmen, and small business owners deserve to have a seat at the table as the Army Corps considers the proposed Pebble Mine. If permitted, the Pebble Mine would be one of the largest mines in our nation's history—located in the headwaters of one of the greatest salmon runs on earth. The stakes are too high to leave out these important voices.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Maria Cantwell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Maria Cantwell
United States Senator