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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bristol Bay Tribes oppose EPA move to eliminate protections for Bristol Bay

DILLINGHAM— During the middle of a strong fishing run, the Environmental Protection Agency is proposing to withdraw the protections for Bristol Bay that the region's tribal governments and others have been working toward for years.

The announcement is the result of a behind-closed doors settlement in May between Trump's new leadership at EPA and the Pebble Limited Partnership in response to a 2015 lawsuit Pebble filed against EPA. The settlement rolled back the proposed protections for Bristol Bay's fishery. Pebble had filed multiple lawsuits because in 2014, at the request of Tribes, commercial fishermen, sport fishermen and individuals from across the political spectrum, EPA proposed to protect Bristol Bay using its authority under the Clean Water Act, which would have limited the development of the Pebble deposit.

United Tribes of Bristol Bay Executive Director Alannah Hurley said the EPA's action is a stab in the back for the overwhelming majority of the people of Bristol Bay who have fought for years to secure protections for the Bristol Bay watershed.

"The new administration is making it clear that they care more about international mining companies than the Alaskans and Americans who are dependent on Bristol Bay's global fishery," Hurley said. "By withdrawing the proposed protections for Bristol Bay, the EPA is turning its back on scientific fact, the region's indigenous people, and the millions of people who supported EPA's action in Bristol Bay. This is a clear violation of the federal government's trust responsibility to our tribal governments and shows shameless support for a profit-at-all-costs foreign mining company. As we have said for over a decade, Bristol Bay will not sit by and watch this happen. This announcement comes as Bristol Bay is breaking harvest records in the millions, catching salmon that not only feed our people but the world. We have vehemently opposed this mine since day one, and we will continue to do whatever it takes to protect Bristol Bay from mines like Pebble."

While the federal government is making deals to turn its back on Bristol Bay, salmon are being caught at record rates. By the end of the summer, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game forecasts that more than 40 million salmon will have returned to the

watershed, as salmon have for thousands of years. The fishery has sustained an ancient indigenous way of life, thousands of jobs, and a sustainable economy for more than 130 years.

Bristol Bay leadership has been steadfast in their opposition to the Pebble Mine and have communicated repeatedly that the region will not back down. Before the EPA can formally remove the proposed designations, Americans have 90 days to comment. Hundreds of Bristol Bay residents and fishermen have already said they disagree with EPA's withdrawal of the protections and thousands more are expected to follow.

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United Tribes of Bristol Bay is a tribal consortium working to protect the Yup'ik, Denai'na, and Alutiq way of life and the Bristol Bay watershed from large-scale mining. Learn more about our work at www.utbb.org.