

RED GOLD

Considering The Future of Bristol Bay, Alaska...



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A study guide for your own screening or classroom.

We greatly appreciate you sharing *Red Gold* and raising awareness of the controversial development threatening the future of our world-renowned fishery resources in Bristol Bay. We hope this guide will answer questions following screening of the documentary *Red Gold* and inspire viewers to take action and help protect one of our last great salmon strongholds.

We send tremendous thanks to Felt Soul Media for bringing us the real stories of the commercial, sport, and subsistence fishermen who depend on Bristol Bay's resources.

- Trout Unlimited Alaska

Red Gold synopsis...

The Bristol Bay region of Southwest Alaska is home to the Kvichak and Nushagak rivers, the two most prolific sockeye salmon runs left in the world. Foreign mining companies Northern Dynasty Minerals and Anglo American have partnered to propose development of what could be one of the world's largest open-pit and underground mines at the headwaters of the two river systems. Mine backers claim the Pebble exploration site is the second largest combined deposit of copper, gold, and molybdenum ever discovered, and has an estimated value of more than \$300 billion.

Despite promises of a clean project by officials, the accident-plagued history of hard rock mining has sparked deep concern from Alaskans who love and depend upon Bristol Bay's incredible wild salmon fishery. *Red Gold* documents the growing unrest among Alaska Native, commercial, and sport-fishermen. It's a portrait of a unique way of life that will not survive if the salmon don't return with Bristol Bay's tide.

What people are saying...

This documentary makes clear what people who have never been to Alaska may not understand: the world still works here, fertile and abundant as it once was everywhere. The idea that we'd risk that health for some more dead gold is a sad irony, and well worth the great fight that locals are putting up to keep the moneychangers out of this particular temple. --Bill McKibben, Author, Educator, Environmentalist

"Red Gold is a truly important film in so many ways. At its core, the documentary focuses on a searing local issue but it really is exploring a much larger, essential topic of our times: how sustainable and indigenous ways of life are being trampled by invasive corporate interests. What sets Red Gold apart is its stunning artistry. From the opening sequence, you know you are in the hands of extremely talented filmmakers who care enormously about their craft." --David Holbrooke, Filmmaker, Director of Mountainfilm

Commonly asked questions to consider...

1. What is the current status of the proposed Pebble Mine and other mining developments in Bristol Bay?

The Pebble Project is in the exploration, planning, and baseline study phases of project development. Predominantly comprised of mining companies Anglo America and Northern Dynasty Mines, the Pebble Partnership has already invested roughly \$360 million on drilling and scientific study at the site. The information provided from these stages will be used in permit applications filed with the State of Alaska. Although Pebble will require upwards of 50 permits from the State and extensive review by State and Federal agencies, there has never been a mine project rejected in the State of Alaska, once it had entered the permitting process. We anticipate Pebble's permit filing to begin in 2009 or 2010.

2. What organizations are working on the campaign to protect the Bristol Bay watershed from mining development, and what current strategies are underway?

Key organizations leading the campaign in Alaska are Trout Unlimited, Renewable Resources Coalition, and Nunamta Aulukestai, "Caretakers of our Lands," an association of 13 Bristol Bay village corporations. The effort to protect Bristol Bay has also drawn together non-traditional allies. Earthworks and the NoDirtyGold campaign are working at the national level to build a base of support with the jewelry industry to source metals from mines in less sensitive places. Trout Unlimited is working to increase salmon consumer awareness of the key pristine, freshwater habitat wild salmon need to survive. This WhyWild program educates restaurants, markets, and individual consumers around the globe on the need for habitat protection and encourages them to vote with their fork by consuming wild salmon. Furthermore, Bristol Bay protection campaign members are actively working with the Alaska State Legislature in hopes of passing legislation to create a fisheries reserve on state land in the Bristol Bay watershed now threatened by Pebble. In 2010, Alaskans may also have an opportunity to protect Bristol Bay's fisheries via citizen's initiative. We are also engaged in critical science and habitat science research that will be used to inform the public and decision makers.

3. How can the citizens of Alaska, the United States, and countries around the world get involved in this controversial development issue?

Write. Donate. And spread the word. Vote with your fork (and salmon dollars) for Bristol Bay wild salmon. Write members of congress today and express your support for protecting the watershed from mining development. Ask the new administration, specifically Secretary of the Interior Salazar, to keep Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands closed to mineral development. Write Alaska Governor Sarah Palin, and tell her why the Bristol Bay watershed and its astounding fishery resources are important to American citizens beyond Alaska and deserve higher standards of protection. Donate to the cause. Trout Unlimited and other non-



profits rely upon your support to continue efforts to protect Bristol Bay. Raise more awareness by sharing this information and Red Gold (HYPERLINK "<http://www.redgoldfilm.com>" ~~www.redgoldfilm.com~~) at your own screening. If you have the opportunity to buy salmon, ask if it's wild Alaskan or Bristol Bay salmon. By demanding Bristol Bay wild salmon, you are investing your dollars in Alaska's renewable industries. Doing so reinforces the economic incentive to protect Bristol Bay.

4. What are the sentiments within the local communities and across the state? What kind of political support is there for protecting these fishery resources?

Recent polling shows more than 80% of locals in Bristol Bay oppose mining development in their wild salmon watershed. The campaign to protect these fishery resources is gaining momentum across the state and the nation. Because salmon are so important to so many people, this controversial development project has brought together commercial, sport and subsistence fisherman who are concerned for the future of wild salmon fisheries. Support for protection covers the political spectrum with prominent conservatives as well as conservationists expressing opposition to the proposed Pebble Mine. How have non-traditional allies in environmental conservation like Tiffany and Company joined this effort?

Wal-mart is now sourcing sockeye salmon directly from Bristol Bay. Some of the world's largest seafood processing corporations, such as Trident Seafoods, have spoken out in opposition to the mine. Over 140 outdoor industry leaders, including Patagonia, Sage, Redington, and Rio, have also or stepped up to oppose Pebble. Jewelry industry leader Tiffany and Co., along with other major jewelers have signed on to the Bristol Bay Protection Pledge vowing never to source any minerals from Pebble because of the severe impact it will have on this salmon fishery.



6. How has the current economic crash affected investments in mining development, metals prices, as well as support for development of the Pebble Mine?

Due to the decline in metals prices and investments in mining, Anglo American has backed out of plans for a number of international projects. However, there are no signs of the company backing out of Bristol Bay, and in fact, it seems this project remains among Anglo's top priorities.

7. Does the money generated by the mine come back to benefit state and federal governments?

Northern Dynasty and its partner Anglo American are foreign mining companies that will take most of their profit out of the state and the country. Because antiquated 1872 mining law still governs U.S. operations, the state of Alaska will receive less than 1% of the resource's mined value. In fact, many argue that the hardrock industry goes against the State of Alaska's Constitutional mandate that resource development provide maximum benefit to all Alaskans.

8. On local, state, and national levels, what kind of political support exists for the development of the proposed Pebble Mine?

The international mining industry carries a lot of weight supporting this development. Some Alaskans believe the mine will bring added jobs to Bristol Bay communities. However, projections show that although Pebble might require up to 2000 workers during construction, most of the jobs during operation require a minimum of 3-5 years mining experience and training which the majority of Bristol Bay residents do not have. The State Legislature has a number of pro-development, pro-Pebble members who have been less than sympathetic to the concerns of fisheries stakeholders.

9. How have farmed salmon impacted wild salmon stocks, habitat, and the fishing industries in Alaska?

Although they are illegal in Alaska, the aquaculture industry around the country and globe has had numerous negative impacts on Alaska's fisheries, specifically Alaska's wild-caught salmon fishery. The flood of farmed salmon in the seafood marketplace has drastically decreased the ex-vessel value of Alaska's wild salmon, meaning that salmon fishermen are making less for their fish. Farmed salmon is often sold at a much lower price than wild salmon, which is attractive to consumers who want a cheap source of protein and healthy Omega-3's. What most consumers don't know, however, is that farmed salmon also comes along with a whole host of environmental threats and a long list of pesticides, color additives and other questionable chemicals added to the salmon net pens. Recent sea lice outbreaks in some of British Columbia's salmon farms have directly contributed to the rapid decline of wild pink salmon in the region as well, with farmed salmon escapes posing another direct threat to wild fish.

If consumers stop choosing wild salmon and investing their salmon dollars into sustainable, renewable salmon fisheries (such as Alaska's), then we lose the economic incentive for habitat protection. You can support environmental health and your own human health by choosing Wild.

10. What is the permitting process like in Alaska? What does the timeline for permitting look like in regards to the Pebble Mine?

The Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) primarily governs the permitting system in Alaska. Because DNR's mandate is to facilitate the permitting of development projects, the agency has never turned down a large mine proposal, though stages of review and revision are often part of the process. There are key issues that Pebble will need to address and prove, such as no lasting water damage, no lasting impact on the fish and wildlife of the area, etc. However, recent studies concluded that well over 70% of mines violate the clean water standards they agree to meet during permitting. Pebble is currently in the pre-permitting phase and will likely initiate the permitting process this year next year. A decision can be made in less than two years time, and construction can begin 2012. Because of the remoteness of the watershed and cost of funding research, there is very little long-term scientific data to inform decisions. The majority of base-line studies are paid for by the mining companies themselves without appropriate checks and balances or third-party oversight of scientific research.



11. Considering the Bureau of Land Management recently opened 1.9 million acres of federal land to mineral extraction in Southwestern Alaska, if Pebble proceeds to mine construction and operation, what effects would it have on other mining claims within the Bristol Bay watershed?

If Pebble proceeds through permitting and construction the infrastructure created such as roads and power will literally pave the way for other mining development. The watershed could turn into a much larger Bristol Bay mining district.

12. Why isn't this watershed already protected given its importance to Bristol Bay fisheries and Alaska's economy? What steps need to be taken for protection?

Many environmental standards critical to maintaining sustainable fisheries in Alaska have not been modified for decades, if at all, and the laws have simply not kept up with science and research regarding the risks of mining development. Alaska State law says the government must act in the "Best Public Interest," and many argue for the very short-term benefits of mining over long-term benefits of renewable fisheries. Some proponents of Pebble development also argue that protecting this area in advance of the permitting process would be a preemptive strike at development before proposals are even finalized. However, the track record of hard rock mining shows the industry cannot coexist with fisheries without tremendous risk and detriment.

The State of Alaska needs to acknowledge the track record of hard-rock mining, understand that this kind of development is incompatible with healthy fisheries, and support special designation of this area. The federal government also needs to value Bristol Bay's fisheries as a global resource and ensure protection by keeping federal lands closed to mining. People around the State, the Country and the World, need to support protection of this area to push policymakers to act.

For discussion...

1. How can we consider the Bristol Bay fisheries as global resources?
2. How does the term sustainable development relate to the issues addressed in this film?
3. How do you think the intrinsic and ecological values of an ecosystem compare to the economic value of a gold and copper mine?
4. Given the track record of hard rock mining, are you concerned for the water resources that could also be impacted by this development?
5. How do you define risk? What kinds of risk are you willing to take in considering your position on development projects and why?
6. Is there a way to support mining in less ecologically sensitive areas to ensure protection of the Bristol Bay watershed?
7. How do you value wild fisheries and clean, freshwater access in your life?
8. What does Northern Dynasty mean by "No Net Loss" as it pertains to Bristol Bay?
9. Why would this mine be more environmentally sound than other open pit and large scale mines already operating?
10. How could a mine in Bristol Bay alter the character of the region?
11. Would the mine help diversify the local economy and provide much needed infrastructure? Do you think that the Pebble Project would increase the quality of life for local/native residents, or decrease?
12. Does Alaska in fact have one of the world's most rigorous permitting processes? What is the track record of mining in Alaska?
13. Do you believe sustainable mining is possible?



About the Filmmakers

Colorado Filmmakers Travis Rummel and Ben Knight of Felt Soul Media teamed up with Trout Unlimited Alaska's Lauren Oakes to produce *Red Gold*. With the support of many locals in Bristol Bay, the crew of three spent 10 weeks in the field during the summer of 2007, gathering footage for film and interviewing people for and against the mine. Trout Unlimited is North America's largest coldwater fisheries conservation organization with programs based around the nation. The Alaska program is deeply engaged in the campaign to protect the world-renowned fisheries in this watershed.

Travis Rummel, Co-Director, Producer, Second Camera: Travis Rummel grew up within the confines of suburban NJ within the shadow of New York City. Exposed to the grandeur and open spaces of the western U.S. throughout childhood, he knew he needed to move that way. He attended Colorado College and graduated in 2001 with a degree in International Political Economy. Moving to Telluride to pursue guiding white water rafting and fly fishing after college, he met Ben Knight while shooting still photographs for the local newspaper. After witnessing the power of film to inspire and affect change at the Telluride Mountainfilm Festival, Rummel decided to partner with Ben Knight and Felt Soul Media was born. The two began to shoot, produce and edit short films. With the success of their initial effort, *The Hatch*, they continued making films and four years later produced their first feature - *Red Gold*.



Ben Knight, Co-Director, Director of Photography, Editor: Ben Knight headed westward from his home in North Carolina at the age of 17 to follow his dream of documentary work and photojournalism. For 10 years, he worked as the Photo Editor for the Daily Planet in Telluride, Colorado. His still photography, video, and editing skills are entirely self-taught. For years he operated the projector at the Telluride Mountainfilm, soaking in the style of the films that showed from around the globe. In 2008 Knight stood upon the stage at the Mountainfilm Awards to accept the Director's Choice Award as well as Audience Choice for Best Film for *Red Gold*. What a journey.

Lauren Oakes, Associate Producer: Lauren Oakes worked for two and half years as the Conservation Programs Officer for Trout Unlimited Alaska, leading their campaign science and policy efforts to protect Bristol Bay. Lauren graduated from Brown University in 2004 with an A.B. in Environmental Studies, focusing in land management, and Visual Arts, focusing in Photography and Film at the Rhode Island School of Design. She has consistently strived to combine these interests on land use projects throughout the American West and South America. She is a geographer at heart, captivated by the social and political drivers directing resource extraction and land use and the human and ecological health implications of changing ecosystems. Her passion for rivers was born on the Salmon River in Idaho, where she has guided for years.



For More Information

Red Gold Film:
www.redgoldfilm.com

Trout Unlimited Alaska
www.savebristolbay.org

Why Wild
www.whywild.org

Renewable Resources Coalition
www.renewableresourcescoalition.org

Earthworks
www.earthworksaction.org

No Dirty Gold
www.nodirtygold.org

The Pebble Partnership
www.pebblepartnership.com

Anchorage Daily News
www.adn.com

Anchorage Daily News, Pebble Blog
<http://community.adn.com/adn/blog/61223>