October 26, 2020

550 West 7th Avenue,
Suite 1700
Anchorage, AK 99501

*Delivered electronically*

Governor Dunleavy,

I write to respond to your October 6 letter to Representatives Stutes and myself. I am joined in this letter by Bristol Bay Native Association, Bristol Bay Native Corporation, Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation and United Tribes of Bristol Bay, which collectively represent many of the Tribal, economic and social stakeholders of the Bristol Bay region.

We appreciate the clarity you provide as to your reasons for continuing to support the proposed Pebble mine, a position which frankly is puzzling given that Tom Collier and Ron Thiessen identify your Administration in the Pebble Tapes as complicit in the manipulation of the political and permitting processes tied to the project.

In that context, we openly applaud Senator Murkowski and Senator Sullivan’s direct statements against the project. They both have unequivocally stated that Pebble is the wrong mine in the wrong place and that it is an existential threat to the wellbeing of the world class salmon fisheries in Bristol Bay.

As history has shown, you cannot uplift a region by ignoring its people and undercutting their culture. The people of Bristol Bay have repeatedly and soundly rejected Pebble as the panacea you claim it would be. Regretfully, it appears that despite your insistence on local control and decision making on other matters, in this instance, despite overwhelming and unyielding opposition by areawide residents, you and your administration seem determined to give the project every benefit of the doubt. Further, the revelations from the Pebble Tapes greatly compromise the integrity of the project proposal that the Corps of Engineers is currently evaluating and that the state agencies will be expected to evaluate in the near future.

Through a thorough and transparent process, the people of Bristol Bay identified their economic vision for the region in the Bristol Bay Regional Vision Project. We defined that vision to include, among other things, that “[o]ur future includes diverse economic opportunities in businesses and industries based largely on renewable resources. Large development based on renewable and non-renewable resources must not threaten our land, our waters, or our way of life.” This vision “reflects
the shared values of the people of the region based on what residents in every community said.” Pebble clearly does not fit within it.

Unfortunately, we remain distracted in achieving this vision by the large opportunity cost of Pebble, and the necessity of participating in the skewed and exhausting administrative process which has kept the project proposal alive for far too long. An entire generation of children have now grown to adulthood under the specter of this flawed project—a cloud of uncertainty that must be lifted for the Bristol Bay region to reach its true potential. Your continued support for Pebble also contributes to this problem.

Notably, the Bristol Bay Regional Vision also emphasizes “the importance of local voices in managing our natural resources to continue our way of life.” The massive and long-term regional opposition to Pebble, which you did not address in your letter, speaks to this tenet as well. Pebble has no social license and will not get it. Please listen to the people and let us move on.

In our view, the American dream is not realized by top-down dictates, like those you espouse, that undercut local knowledge and ignore history. There is also hypocrisy in your insistence that regional dependence on the state government constrains opportunity while you simultaneously tout the state government’s support of Pebble as the answer to the region’s woes. Please consider that the social and economic challenges faced by the people of Bristol Bay are exacerbated by the insistence of people from elsewhere who think they know best what the people of Bristol Bay need and want.

We also note that your letter does not address Pebble’s blunt characterization of you and others within your administration as acting behind closed doors on Pebble’s compensatory mitigation plan. Similarly, we note that your letter does not address Tom Collier’s admissions that he interfered in Alaska’s election process. Silence on these points undercuts the integrity of state government in ways that go far beyond Pebble, and we urge you to speak to them.

Finally, you assert that Pebble “has the potential to improve our nation’s security.” Canadian mining company Northern Dynasty Minerals’ CEO Ron Thiessen said much the same thing in a recent opinion piece, in which he stated that Pebble

...must [ ] prevail when it comes to copper -- to ensure America is self-sufficient when it comes to a metal that's absolutely essential to achieving a lower carbon future, without relying on China.

Thiessen states the same with respect to Rhenium.

The idea that Pebble would enhance the nation’s security is simply wrong. Thiessen, and apparently you as well, ignore the fact that the Pebble Limited Partnership’s stated plan is to ship the ore concentrate to Asia where it gets refined and turned into a useable product. This is evident from PLP’s own documents (included in the Final EIS), and a recent admission by Mark Hamilton that the concentrate would be sent to the “Far East.” Given PLP’s history of misdirection and deception, it is no shock to us that a PLP talking point can so easily be discredited. It is, however, unfortunate that you continue to repeat these falsehoods.
Alaska brings many benefits to the nation, and indeed the world, with wild salmon high among them. The “Fish First” value of Bristol Bay is critical to Alaska’s ability to keep doing so, and we urge you to join us in supporting it, and not Pebble.

Sincerely,

Rep. Bryce Edgmon

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