

## Sport Fishing in Bristol Bay

The rivers and streams in the Bristol Bay watershed are paradise for sportsmen and women, home to some of the premier sport fishing destinations on the globe: the Nushagak, Mulchatna, Koktuli and Kvichak Rivers, Upper and Lower Talarik Creeks and many more. These are places that anglers from all over the world travel to for that “once in a lifetime” experience, home to rivers and streams that are as productive now as they were thousands of years ago.

### A SPORTFISHING PARADISE

“UK anglers see Alaska as the great untouched wilderness and to many it is the ‘once in a lifetime’ dream to fish its pristine waters,” said Peter Cockwill of [Albury Game Angling](#) in Surrey, who has been guiding anglers in Alaska for 21 years. “Some achieve that dream and others possibly never will. But destroy Bristol Bay, and the dream no longer exists. Why take the risk, however small, of ruining nature’s perfection in the quest of short term personal gain for a very few?”



King salmon catch

Bristol Bay supports the world’s largest runs of wild salmon, trophy rainbow trout, grizzlies, caribou and a strong commercial and sport-fishing economy. The Kvichak River is home to the world’s largest sockeye salmon run and is also within Alaska’s designated trophy wild rainbow trout area. The Nushagak and Mulchatna Rivers support the largest Chinook (king) salmon runs in Alaska, and perhaps the world. Other species found in these drainages include Arctic Char, Arctic grayling, rainbow trout, lake trout, Dolly Varden, northern pike and whitefish.

Lake Iliamna, which drains into the Kvichak River, is Alaska’s largest lake and America’s last undeveloped “great lake” as it is the same size as Lake Erie. It is home to one of only two freshwater seal populations in the world, as well as all five species of Pacific salmon. The Pebble mine site is located in the headwaters of these mighty salmon-spawning drainages.

### SPORT FISHING BUSINESSES OPPOSE PEBBLE

Nearly 200 leading companies in the fly fishing industry, including Albury Game Angling and Farlow’s, and outdoor gear icons Orvis and Patagonia, have rallied to help protect Bristol Bay salmon habitat from destructive, large-scale metal mines, namely the Pebble mine. They have voiced their concerns publicly with [ads like this one](#), designed by the Sportsman’s Alliance for Alaska, which have been running in major fly-fishing publications since 2007.

The local sport fishing industry boasts about 40 commercial fishing lodges on the rivers connected to Bristol Bay, offering everything from a rustic wilderness experience to world-class luxury. Most of them have stated opposition to the proposed Pebble Mine.

“There has never been a successful recreation of wild salmon runs once they have been decimated, making the potential risks and uncertainties of Pebble too great,” said Brian Kraft, owner of [Alaska Sportsman's Lodge](#) and two other Bristol Bay fishing lodges. “This region is the Serengeti of Alaska. Here, snow fed streams flow crystal clear from the mountains, through rolling tundra and to the sea. Anglers from around the world see this as the pinnacle of fishing opportunities. There are not many, if any, places like this left in the world.”

### BRISTOL BAY SPORTFISHING IS BIG BUSINESS

Sport fishing and hunting are key components of the local and state economies.

- Recreation and tourism spending in Bristol Bay brings in \$90 million annually to the state in the form of taxes and fishing fees and licenses.
- Sport fishing accounts for roughly \$60 million of that spending, with nonresidents and high-end lodge clients contributing the most.
- In 2007, anglers fishing in Alaska spent nearly \$1.4 billion on fishing trips, fishing equipment, and development and maintenance of land used primarily for the pursuit of sport fishing in Alaska.
- Resident spending was \$733 million and nonresident spending was \$652 million.
- 15,879 full- and part-time jobs were supported by money spent on sport fishing in 2007 and accounted for \$545 million in total wages and benefits paid to employees and proprietors.
- In total, an estimated 37,000 fishing trips are taken annually to Bristol Bay freshwater fisheries. Tourists from outside of Alaska comprised about one-third of those trips.

<b>Bristol Bay Angler Rating of Selected Attributes of Fishing Trip</b>		
<b>Statement</b>	<b>% of respondents who either "agree" or "strongly agree"</b>	
	<b>Nonresidents</b>	<b>Local Residents</b>
Fishing conditions were un-crowded	87.2%	75.4%
There was a reasonable opportunity to catch fish	96.5%	93.0%
There was minimal conflict with other anglers	93.3%	90.7%
Fishing was in a wilderness setting	92.4%	95.0%
There was opportunity to catch trophy sized fish	81.4%	70.0%
There was opportunity to catch and release large # of fish	87.3%	76.6%
Sample Size	235	47

### References:

Economics of Wild Salmon Watersheds: Bristol Bay, Alaska, February 2007, John Duffield and David Patterson, Department of Mathematical Sciences, The University of Montana

<http://www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/statewide/economics/>

2005 angler Internet survey administered by the University of Montana, Bureau of Business and Economic Research