



Press Release

Lummi Nation Announces Opposition to the Pebble Mine in Bristol Bay

March 21, 2019

On this upcoming thirtieth anniversary of the Exxon Valdez oil spill in traditional Alaskan Native territory, the Lummi Nation wishes to express sorrow for the irreparable damage that was caused, and hope that we might yet learn from this lesson and prevent similar disasters, such as the proposed Pebble Mine in Bristol Bay. The cultural and spiritual obligation Lummi has to protect our waters, as stated in the Salish Sea Manifesto, extends to Alaskan waters.

When the Exxon Valdez supertanker crashed and spilled 10.8 million gallons of oil into Prince William Sound, the life of the waters was crippled almost beyond repair. 22 killer whales died as an immediate result of the spill. We recognize killer whales as part of our family. Our word for them is qwe 'lhol mechen, which means "our relations under the waves." Untold numbers of herring and salmon died as an immediate result of the spill, and untold numbers of those fish will never be born because we know that even the tiniest amount of oil toxins are fatal to salmon and herring eggs.

"The Salish Sea and the Alaskan waters flow as one. We are connected by the herring, the salmon, and the killer whales. We have fishers who harvest Alaskan waters. Like qwe 'lhol mechen, we depend on salmon, who depend on herring," said Lummi Nation Council Secretary Lawrence Solomon.

If the Pebble Mine project goes forward, it will threaten the largest wild sockeye salmon run in the world. What we learned from the Exxon Valdez is that "failsafe" technologies sometimes fail, and to disastrous effect. The Pebble Mine has promised to be "failsafe," despite being located in earthquake country.

We must stand together in protecting our herring, our salmon, our killer whales, our traditional lifeways, and the waters that sustain us. Lummi Nation will continue to stand in solidarity with all Alaska Natives, fisherman, and conservationists who are protesting the Pebble Mine in Bristol Bay.