

Chairman Smith,

Texas is home to a proud sporting tradition, something we know you believe in just as deeply as we do. 2.7 million Texans hunt and fish. It's part of who we are and what we do – and just like we say “don't mess with Texas,” Texans don't want anyone messing with the special places where we hunt and fish, the places where we chase tarpon along the Gulf coast, stalk deer in the Hill Country, and hunker down in our waterfowl blinds for ducks and geese. We're a big state, with lots of variety and opportunity.

But, as much as we Texans might think we have a patent on "big," there's one place that's even bigger and wilder than Texas – and that's Alaska. Alaska draws many thousands of Texans north every year, because it represents some of the finest remote hunting and angling to be found not just in the United States, but in the entire world.

That's why we've been following and engaging in one of the sporting community's most important conservation battles for nearly a decade. The hunting and fishing community may have its differences -- but one thing that unites us is our commitment to protecting Bristol Bay, Alaska from the proposed Pebble Mine. That's why we're writing to you as a fellow Texan because we want you to hear directly from us what a fundamental issue this is to our community.

A great Republican Senator named Ted Stevens called this project “the wrong mine in the wrong place.” An unprecedented coalition of native tribes, commercial fishermen, anglers and hunters, conservationists, religious groups, restaurateurs and outdoor enthusiasts have been fighting this foreign-owned mine proposal trying to gain protections for the Bristol Bay region.

Why are we so committed? Because Bristol Bay supports one of the planet's best remaining salmon fisheries, which at an average run of 37.5 million fish, produces 46% of the world's sockeye salmon. On top of the incredible number of sockeye salmon, the watershed supports prized sport fish that result in more than 29,000 fishing trips per year. The area is also home to high densities of brown bear, moose, caribou, waterfowl, and ptarmigan that attract hunters from around the globe.

Economically speaking, sportfishing, hunting, and tourism alone generate more than \$160 million in local economic activity, creating nearly 2,500 local, sustainable jobs. The proposed Pebble Mine would create only about 1,000 temporary mining jobs while threatening 14,000 commercial and recreational fishery jobs in a \$1.5 billion annual salmon fishery that can last indefinitely.

Millions of anglers and hunters from Texas and across this country are asking you to recognize that Pebble Mine is too risky and the scientific record of the Bristol Bay Watershed Assessment proves the area must be protected for this and future generations to enjoy.

Thank you for considering our views as you lead the committee and as you weigh in on this important issue.

Sincerely,