EPA Action Hurts Alaska

PLP CEO John Shively made the following statement regarding the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) decision to preemptively veto the Pebble Project:

“Today’s action by the EPA to preemptively veto the proposed Pebble Project is unlawful and unprecedented. For well over a decade, we have argued that fair treatment under the rules and regulations of the U.S should be followed for Pebble or any other development project. Unfortunately, the Biden EPA continues to ignore fair and due process in favor of politics. This preemptive action against Pebble is not supported legally, technically, or environmentally. As such, the next step will likely be to take legal action to fight this injustice.

“The Pebble Deposit is an asset belonging to the people of Alaska. The land around Pebble was selected by the state for its mineral potential as part of the process in which Alaskans were granted statehood. EPA continues to blatantly ignore the state’s interest in this case. EPA’s actions preclude any development on over 300 square miles of Alaska land. This violates Alaska’s Statehood Compact and the ‘no-more’ clause of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, which requires congressional approval of any additional park land in Alaska. The EPA is violating the U.S. Constitution by taking away the State and the project’s legally protected property interests in the mineral rights underlying the land, without any just compensation.

“The state, as the landowner, has repeatedly demanded the federal agency follow the prescribed permitting process for Pebble. It is worth noting that the state permitting process was never initiated for Pebble nor was the state’s role in federal permitting allowed to conclude. In addition, no environmental harm will occur if EPA allows the federal permitting process to be completed. Work on the project cannot begin until both the Federal and state permitting processes are completed.

“The EIS for Pebble shows the jobs and revenue from Pebble development could be substantial. As such, the state has a significant interest in a full and fair evaluation of the project.

“Further, the communities closest to the project have also been ignored – repeatedly – by the EPA throughout this process. The EIS demonstrates the profound economic impact of Pebble development for the Iliamna Lake area communities through jobs, economic activity, revenue, and infrastructure. The EIS states Pebble development can be done in an environmentally responsible manner without harm to the Bristol Bay fishery. Unfortunately, EPA’s decision ignores their purported commitment to environmental justice as it dashes the hopes of hundreds of local Native Americans for a brighter economic future.
“The EPA decision to try to destroy the Pebble opportunity is just one more piece of the Biden administration's war on domestic natural resource development. It has attempted to stop mining, fossil fuels development and timber harvesting on many fronts in Alaska. The Biden strategy when it comes to securing the minerals required for its green energy goals seems to be to give some passing support for the development of boutique minerals such as lithium and rare earths in the U.S., but to seek the enormous supply of base metals such as copper needed for EV’s, solar panels, wind turbines, hydroelectric plants, and the associated infrastructure from other nations.

“We have seen what happens when our nation is dependent on others for our resources, for instance the Saudis for more oil production. When we go to China seeking the copper and other minerals we need for our green energy transition, the reaction will likely be more problematic and the cost more expensive.”