

Where Water is Gold

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Bristol Bay and the Pebble Mine

A proposal for a comprehensive photo-essay book project highlighting the Bristol Bay region of Alaska.

This is the working title for the project until a final title is chosen for the book.



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Project Overview

This photo essay project will examine the perspectives of commercial, recreational, and subsistence users who use the resources of the Bristol Bay region for their livelihood. It will examine the science of the area and the various factors that contribute to the vitality of the Bristol Bay salmon fishery. It will also explore the history of the Pebble exploration and the perspective of those who hope to develop the Pebble Mine, including regional economic benefits. The project will result in a book and speaking tour. But most importantly, the purpose of this project is to create a product that can be part of a continued campaign to discuss these issues and the future of the region.

About the Photographer and Principal Writer

The project will be photographed and written, in part, by Anchorage photographer, Carl Johnson, whose work focuses on highlighting the values of wilderness and public lands. Carl has served as the Artist-in-Residence for Gates of the Arctic National Park & Preserve, Badlands National Park, and Rocky Mountain National Park. He was a 2010 recipient of a Rasmuson Foundation Artist Fellowship and a 2009 recipient of an Alaska State Council on the Arts grant. He recently was named the “Environmental Issues” category winner for the Windland Smith Rice International Awards sponsored by Nature’s Best Photography. His winning piece, “Wolf Tracks on Ice,” highlights the challenges of aggressive wolf predator control programs and was on display at the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C. in 2011. Carl has also published several articles ranging on subjects from photography to tribal sovereignty.

For the last eight years, Carl has provided images to various conservation organizations to promote Alaskan conservation issues. These partners include The Wilderness Society, the Alaska Center on the Environment, the Sierra Club, Trustees for Alaska, and the Alaska Conservation Foundation. He has also partnered with the Great Land Trust to photograph properties to aid in fundraising to set aside those properties for conservation. Carl’s photos were considered crucial in securing the funding to create the new 60-acre Campbell Creek estuary park in Anchorage.

Approach to the Project

There is a vast amount of information available to assist a person in making informed decisions about the potential impact of the Pebble Mine on the various resources of the Bristol Bay region. But that information is widely dispersed and not available in one, easily-accessible location. The goal of this book is to alleviate that problem.

This project will combine interviews, photos and the extensive science gathered on the area – both from opponents and proponents of the mine – to explore several subjects that will fully inform the reader on the various natural resources in the Bristol Bay region and the relationship that people have with those resources. In particular, the book will explore the following subjects through essays written by various authors:

- The interconnectedness of the waterways that contribute to Bristol Bay, highlighting the particular waterways that would be impacted by the proposed Pebble Mine.
- The cultural history of the region.
- The history of commercial fishing in the region and current issues with commercial fisheries as reflected in the boat operators, seafood processors, and the value of the fishery.
- The subsistence use of the Pebble area and the Bristol Bay area for fishing, hunting, and gathering.
- The recreation use of the area as reflected by fishing lodges and guided hunting.
- A detailed background of the exploration of the Pebble prospect, including the Pebble Partnership's perspective and explanation of how PLP believes the proposed mine would not hurt the Bristol Bay fishery and would enhance the regional economy.

The project and book will explore the issues in more detail and urgency than the two existing books on Bristol Bay. With *Rivers of Life*, Robert Glenn Ketchum highlighted the beauty of the area and the importance of the waters to salmon and focused on salmon and fishing. With *Hidden Alaska*, Dave Atcheson and Michael Melford spend about half of their book discussing Bristol Bay, but only tangentially refer to the Pebble Mine. *Hidden Alaska* offers only two short essays on the area, one generally describing the Bristol Bay region and the other discussing fish.

Most importantly, this project seeks to do what no other photo-essay project has yet done: to provide within one binding the important historical, cultural, scientific, and factual context to discuss the inherent tension between conservation and development of natural resources among conflicting users. The issue of conservation in competition with development is part of the Alaskan identity and was a focus of the debates at the founding of the State, but can no more clearly be found than in the issues associated with the proposed Pebble Mine. By focusing on what makes the area unique and special, Carl hopes to guide the discussion on the future of the Bristol Bay region as the public processes move forward regarding any potential mine development.

In order for this project to be successful, Carl seeks partners who have knowledge, experience, wisdom, and expertise in the history, science, and facts relevant to the issues. These partners can be regional resource users, business owners, scientists, conservation organizations, coalitions active in the Bristol Bay region, regional economic organizations, and, most importantly, the people of the Bristol Bay region and their representative organizations.

Project Tasks and Schedule

Task 1: Fieldwork

Field work will consist of trips to Dillingham, Iliamna, Naknek, Newhalen, and Nondalton to visit commercial fishing boat operators, seafood processors, subsistence users, lodge owners, and hunting guides to learn their stories and photograph their land and way of life. There will be some backcountry trips to simply document the fauna and flora of the area, including a possible trip along the proposed road corridor from the mine to Cook Inlet. Carl will also seek a tour of the Pebble exploration activities from the Pebble Limited Partnership to gain access to the drilling rigs and activities of the exploration.

Fieldwork will consist of site visits, backcountry travel, and aerial photography. Most trips will occur in summer and autumn, with one or two trips in the winter. Fieldwork on the project commenced in early July 2011 and will be mostly completed by early October 2012. The present fieldwork schedule assumes some delays due to weather.

- Subtask 1-1: Scenic and wildlife photography of the areas that could specifically be impacted by the Pebble Mine. This includes the Kaktuli, Malchatna, and Nushagak River, along with Tularik Creek, Lake Iliamna, and the Kvichak River. It also includes the proposed road corridor and planned port facility in Iniskin Bay. Additional photography will highlight the general resources of the region.
- Subtask 1-2: Photographing commercial fishing in the west and east side of Bristol Bay.
- Subtask 1-3: Photographing year-round subsistence activities related to fish harvesting and preparing, gathering of plants, eggs, and berries, and hunting.
- Subtask 1-4: Photographing recreational activities, primarily recreational fishing at remote fishing lodges.
- Subtask 1-5: Photographing Pebble activities out in the exploration area and in Iliamna.
- Subtask 1-6: Conducting fieldwork such as interviews and photos of case studies in the Lower 48 of areas with depleted salmon runs and open pit metals mines, and to highlight the connection between Seattle and the Bristol Bay region.

Task 2: Photo Editing

Following each fieldwork trip, Carl will edit and organize photos from the trip. Editing will consist of basic digital workflow, key wording, captioning, basic adjustments, selection of best images, and preparation of best images for print use.

Task 3: Research & Writing

The first step toward writing will be to finalize a list of essay subjects to be covered with the publisher. Then, individuals will be selected to write specific pieces, working in coordination with Carl and the publisher's development editor. Essay writers will be paid directly by the publisher in a work-for-hire capacity. It is preferred that writers will either be from the Bristol Bay region or Alaska in general. During off-time between fieldwork trips, Carl will also be compiling data and information to be used in drafting the book. Carl will also write two or three of the essays in the book.

Task 4: Book Publishing

The Mountaineers Books, specifically its non-profit division, Braided Rivers, has agreed to publish the book, which is scheduled for release in the fall of 2013. The Mountaineer Books has published several notable pieces focusing on issues in Alaska, notably *Seasons of Life and Land* by Subhankar Banerjee, *Salmon in the Trees* by Amy Gulick and *A Long Trek Home* by Erin McKittrick.

Task 5: Marketing & Outreach

The key to any successful, focused project like this is constant engagement with partners in the project and a continuous flow of information to the public about the project. As a former member of the Knik Board of the Alaska Chapter for the Sierra Club and a former attorney at Trustees for Alaska, Carl has many contacts in the conservation community and is accustomed to the work required for project-related outreach. He is also a well-versed communicator, having posted a photo blog for three years and a Facebook fan site for over a year.

The goal will be to use these tools to develop and keep in touch with an ever-expanding group of project partners and to communicate regularly to the public the progress on the project. This would consist of regular blog posts providing photos and narratives of fieldwork, regular updates to a dedicated Facebook site for the project (which would also serve as a clearinghouse for a variety of information related to Bristol Bay and the Pebble project), Tweets, and highlighting the project on a dedicated website for the project. Ultimately, the goal is to create products, including images and short articles as well as the book, for partners to use effectively in their information campaigns regarding Bristol Bay.

Potential for reaching a broad audience using the website, blog, Facebook, and Twitter are considerable. Carl has already made arrangements to receive some material support from other organizations with significant traffic to their websites. Carl currently has nearly 1,500 fans on his Facebook site and will promote the project Facebook site to that audience. He also currently receives an average of 1,000 unique visits per month to his main website. Carl is also partnering with Ground Truth Trekking, which receives approximately 8,000 visitors to its website each month. The publisher will also be engaging in a vigorous marketing and outreach program in advance of and following publication of the book. Additionally, the project is featured on the new USA Projects website, a crowd funding site established by United States Artists and funded through the USA Fellows program.

Task 6: Photo Exhibit

Photo exhibits provide excellent opportunities to reach wide audiences and leave a lasting impression with key, powerful pieces. Photos in a well-designed book may be stunning, but they are far more powerful when printed to 24x36 or larger and leap out at the viewer from the walls. Carl has already made contact with Fine Print Imaging, which is a Colorado-based company with a history of supporting conservation projects. It is anticipated that the photo exhibit would travel throughout Alaska and the United States and compliment the speaking tour.

Task 7: Speaking Tour

Once the book is complete, it is not enough to merely have a book on the shelves for sale or to give away books to donors. The book has to become a tool for a meaningful dialogue not only about this Alaskan issue but the broader implications in an era of dwindling resources and competition for those resources. It also needs to be used as a tool for placing information in the hands of key decision makers.

The key will be to make contacts with local groups or chapters and to partner with those groups in scheduling the engagements. These groups will cover the expense of the trip whenever possible. Decisions will not be made as to specific locations for the speaking tour at this time, but contacts have already begun that could lead to speaking locations.

Project Budget

TASK No.	TASK DESCRIPTION	ESTIMATED COST
1	Fieldwork	\$ 53,793.00
1-1	Scenic and wildlife photography	\$ 21,467.00
1-2	Commercial fishing photography	\$ 5,880.00
1-3	Subsistence and recreational photography	\$ 12,850.00
1-4	Recreational activities photography	\$ 2,000.00
1-5	Pebble activities photography	\$ 2,255.00
1-6	Case study photography	\$ 9,341.00
2	Photo Editing	\$ 15,750.00
3	Research & Writing	\$ 5,500.00
4	Editing & Publishing	Publisher
5	Marketing & Outreach	\$ 13,750.00
6	Photo Exhibit	\$ 13,225.00
7	Speaking Tour	TBD

Project Budget Total: \$ 102,018.00