JOHN A. KITZHABER, MD
Governor

December 15, 2011

Lisa Jackson, Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Ariel Rios Building
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Jackson:

I am writing in support of the Environmental Protection Agency's decision to conduct a scientific assessment to determine how future large-scale development projects could affect the Bristol Bay watershed. Bristol Bay is a true salmon stronghold—home to the most abundant wild salmon fishery in North America and the largest sockeye salmon fishery in the world. It is critically important to ensure that future land management decisions take into account the value of this globally significant resource.

Wild salmon are an iconic species for Oregonians. They are essential to the health of Oregon's economy, ecosystems, and culture. Due to the importance of salmon to our state, I have a longstanding commitment to protect and restore wild salmon populations for present and future generations. In 1997, I worked with the State Legislature to establish the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds, a collaborative effort that brought together government and private landowners to protect clean water and native salmon runs. I have also been engaged in issues affecting the health of Pacific salmon ecosystems through the Pacific Coast Collaborative, the Western Governor's Agreement on Oceans, and the Pacific Salmon Treaty.

Recently, I have heard from many Oregonians on the importance of the Bristol Bay salmon fishery to their livelihoods. In 2010, commercial salmon fishing in Bristol Bay directly supported 137 permit holders and their crews in Oregon and yielded $10 million in gross earnings (ex-vessel value from drift and set net). In addition, many Oregon seafood processors, restaurants, grocers, chefs, and sport fishing businesses depend on Bristol Bay's salmon fishery and have expressed their support for protecting it.

While decision-making on the approval of development projects in Bristol Bay resides outside of Oregon, those decisions will impact Oregonians. As a result, I remain interested in and affected by the outcome of your assessment, and I would support EPA's decision to initiate Clean Water Act 404(c) action should your office determine that large-scale mining would result in unacceptable impacts to Bristol Bay's environmental and economic values. I would greatly appreciate your office keeping me informed on your progress. Please feel free to contact me or my staff if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

John A. Kitzhaber, M.D.
Governor

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