

This is Casey Dolan with your local news for Tuesday, February 1, 2023 on KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington.

[Audio] “Mr. President, I rise today to applaud the Biden administration in their historic step to permanently protect Bristol Bay, Alaska. More than a decade after the Pebble Mine was proposed, the Environmental Protection Agency today is finalizing a Clean Water Act protection that will permanently protect Bristol Bay. No company will ever be able to stick a mine on top of some of the best salmon habitat in the world. Salmon fishermen from Alaska and from my home state of Washington will continue to earn their livelihoods from Bristol Bay salmon as they have for generations.”

In a stirring speech on the Senate floor yesterday, Senator Maria Cantwell celebrated the landmark decision of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to block the Pebble Mine proposal and support the Bristol Bay watershed in Alaska. If the Mine had been permitted to extract gold, copper, and molybdenum from the headwaters of the Kvichak and Nushagak Rivers – two of the eight rivers that feed into the watershed of Bristol Bay – the repercussions both environmentally and economically would have been devastating with, as Cantwell put it, “irreversible impacts on salmon.” The action taken by the EPA was taken in keeping with a failsafe Clean Water Act provision called Section 404(C). This provision says that if disposal of dredging in a waterway would destroy a fishery, municipal water, or other serious impacts, the EPA could step in to stop the project.

This has been a decade-long fight for Cantwell, who was the first U.S. Senator to publicly oppose the Pebble Mine. In 2011, Senator Cantwell called on the EPA to block the Pebble Mine proposal if the EPA found that the development would harm Bristol Bay salmon, which she called “economic lynchpins” for commercial fishermen in Alaska and the State of Washington. Bristol Bay is one of the most productive salmon runs in the world; 40-60 million salmon return to the watershed every year. Harvesting, processing, and selling Bristol Bay salmon generates \$1.5 billion in annual economic activity across the United States and at least \$500 million for commercial and recreational fisheries in the State of Washington. Bristol Bay salmon support over 5,000 fishery jobs in Washington state and 14,000 jobs globally.

As reported in the *Peninsula Daily News*, service rates for the Jefferson County Public Utility District (PUD) may change as the network upgrades and expands. The proposed changes to the utility’s wholesale rates – rates charged to internet service providers for using PUD’s network – were presented at a special meeting of the PUD’s commissioners Tuesday but have not been approved. Speaking to the *Peninsula Daily News*, Broadband and Communications Director Will O’Donnell said, “We just want to have one standardized product and speed. We’re only setting the wholesale price. What the ISP chooses to charge the end user is up to them.” For customers connected to the utility’s active ethernet system, the PUD is proposing charging a flat rate of \$80 a month for speeds of 1 gigabyte per second. Rates discussed Tuesday covered only access to the PUD’s network and not the cost of internet service, which can be provided by a private company.

Construction on US 101 will begin this Friday, February 3 on a one-year project that corrects culverts that are barriers to native fish at Leland Creek and two unnamed tributaries near Leland Valley Cut-Off Road. A temporary traffic signal on US 101 will be installed near the worksite, about five miles north of Quilcene. Once the signal is activated in mid-February, travelers will see around-the-clock one-way alternating traffic on US 101. This will continue until crews build a temporary bypass around the construction site. The construction is part of WSDOT’s program to remove barriers to fish under state highways. The new bridge at Leland Creek

will open 14 miles of upstream habitat to improve fish migration. The new box culverts at the north and southern tributaries will produce nearly four miles of upstream habitat. Construction is expected to complete in early 2024.

KPTZ 91.9 FM broadcasts your local news Monday through Friday at noon and 5pm and at noon on Saturday. You can contact us at news@kptz.org. I'm Casey Dolan and I thank you for listening.