

# MUSICIANS UNITED TO PROTECT BRISTOL BAY 2016-2017 WORK PLAN

*"These waters are too special and too valuable to auction off to the highest bidder." --President Barack Obama*

## **SUMMARY**

Musicians United To Protect Bristol Bay (hereafter: Musicians United) is an international voluntary communications, education and mobilization network of over 500 performing musicians and music lovers. We use our music, audiences and media access to protect permanently Alaska's pristine Bristol Bay by helping to stop the proposed Pebble Mine, which if built would be the largest open pit gold and copper mine in history, with deadly impact on everything downstream, from Alaska Native villages to the richest wild salmon fishery in the world.

## **THE ISSUE**

According to National Geographic, an average of 46% of the world's wild sockeye salmon comes from Alaska's Bristol Bay, spawning in the many rivers that drain into the Bay. This pristine system of rivers and lakes supports the world's largest wild salmon runs, along with the brown bears and bald eagles that feed on the salmon. The area is home to pacific walrus and beluga whales, and is important habitat for a wide variety of birds, moose, lynx, wolverines and black bears.

These rivers, one of the world's great commercial and sport fisheries, support thousands of families, including several thousand Alaska Native families, whose lives and culture are sustained primarily by a subsistence lifestyle, living with the abundance of the land and waters. Alaska Natives in the region are the Yupik Eskimos (their own chosen term meaning 'real people'), who are among the only indigenous peoples in North America still living where they have always lived, along these rivers for over 10,000 years.

This same area has attracted developers who would put Bristol Bay's bounty in jeopardy. A Canadian company wants to build what would be the world's largest open-pit gold and copper mine next to the headwaters of the rivers that drain into Bristol Bay, where millions of salmon spawn every year.

But no open pit mine in the entire world has ever operated without causing serious and usually permanent environmental and human destruction to the surrounding area and beyond. If the Pebble Mine is built, it's very likely the end of everything Bristol Bay is and stands for.

While the Pebble Partnership is aggressively pushing Pebble's development, there is broad support among Alaskans for protecting this habitat, its rich fishery, its Native communities and cultures. Officials from the Bristol Bay Native Corporation and multiple Alaska Native tribal governments, current

and former Alaska governors, the commercial and sports fishing industries, seafood processors, sportswomen and men, the outdoor industry, renowned chefs and major jewelers including Tiffany and Zales have all raised concerns.

That is why it is so critical that Musicians United add the voices of hundreds of performing musicians and music lovers around the world to the campaign to stop the Pebble Mine, and to prevent the environmental, economic and cultural devastation of Bristol Bay.

### **HISTORY AND MISSION**

Musicians United To Protect Bristol Bay was launched on New Year's Day 2013 with a very specific mission: To use the power of music and performing musicians to build audience support to help stop the proposed Pebble Mine, and to help protect Alaska's Bristol Bay permanently.

Relying on the access musicians have to our audiences and to a wide variety of media, Musicians United has built an international communications, education and mobilization network that helps people become aware of the Bristol Bay/Pebble Mine issue, and lets them know when and how to take action.

Performing musicians are in a unique position to play this role. We have extensive access to large numbers of socially and environmentally concerned people through concerts, festivals, radio, television, newsletters, magazines, websites, print, electronic and social media.

As performing musicians we tend to have a great deal of credibility with the fans and followers who know and love our work. When a musician writes a song about Bristol Bay, sings it in front of her audience and says, "This is important to me. I ask you to search your heart to see if it could be important to you, too," it has an impact beyond that of any sound bite or paid ad.

While artists are often deeply involved in struggles for social justice, we believe what Musicians United To Protect Bristol Bay has built, which relies not on "stars" but on grassroots and community musicians acting collectively, is a modestly innovative model that can be replicated and used in many situations. We are happy to share what we've learned, and are available to help other communities and organizations use variations of the model we've developed for their own issues and campaigns.

For more about what Musicians United To Protect Bristol Bay has accomplished in our first three years, please see our 2013-2015 report.

## **2016-2017 WORK PLAN**

The work plan for 2016-2017, our fourth and fifth operating years, is our most ambitious yet. During these 24 months, we will:

- Add 500 new members, bringing our membership to at least 1,000, the original five-year goal we set for ourselves. We will do this through our presence at major music conferences, including Folk Music International, the International Bluegrass Music Association and the Americana Music Association, at music festivals, and through personal contact by our leadership team.
- Broaden our membership outside North America, in the process adding more original bilingual songs and songs in languages other than English, through international touring by several of our members.
- Launch our "Canada Campaign." Two of the three corporations that were originally invested in the Pebble Mine have dropped out under pressure. The sole investor left standing is Northern Dynasty Minerals Ltd., based in Vancouver, British Columbia. We will be working with our many Canadian members, as well as with First Nations and other environmental movement activists, to bring pressure on Northern Dynasty in their home territory.
- Build cooperative relationships with First Nations who are dealing with mining corporations linked to Northern Dynasty, primarily in British Columbia.
- Recruit more Alaska Native (Alaska), Native American (Lower 48) and First Nations (Canada) artists, the latter through performances and workshops at no less than three Canadian festivals each year, and through presentations at Folk Music Ontario, the largest gathering of folk musicians in that nation.
- Double the number of artists who've written original songs about Bristol Bay and the proposed Pebble Mine from 25 to 50. All these songs will be placed on our website, and we will expand the listings to include the song's lyrics, the artist's photo, a link to their website, and information on how to book them. In this way, we thank our members for their good work, and encourage them to write more songs about the issue.
- Continue and expand our "Featured Song" program, whereby a new song by one of our members is sent out to our email list of over 3,000.
- Expand our email list to over 6,000 names, with a focus on performing musicians and music lovers.
- Expand the number of artists who put songs they've written about Bristol Bay on their albums. Feminist music legend Tret Fure, who's President of Local 1000 of the American Federation of Musicians (AFM), an important Musicians United ally, put her original song titled "The Fishermen of Bristol Bay" on the album she released just last month. Two-time Grammy winner Tom Chapin put not one but two such songs on 70, his June CD release, "A Prayer

for Bristol Bay” and “Ride Out Any Storm.”

- Expand our YouTube presence through a new Musicians United music video project. Mp3s are fine, but videos are golden for spreading the word. We are working on a partnership that would result in helping our members create and promote videos to a wide audience.
- Expand our Facebook campaign capacity, including the development of a “Virtual Street Team” to help make our Facebook events reach more people.
- Expand our capacity to respond quickly to crises, as we did in response to the dam breach at the Mt. Polley Mine in British Columbia, which created the largest toxic waste spill in Canadian history.
- Continue our presence in Alaska, including our performances and Musicians United booth at Salmonfest, an annual educational music festival organized by one of our key allies to bring attention to the Bristol Bay/Pebble Mine issue.
- Continue to sponsor young Iditarod racer Monica Zappa and her “Mushing for Bristol Bay” project, as a part of which she distributes educational materials to youth in Native villages along the Iditarod route. Monica and her sled dogs wear Musicians United colors just like NASCAR racers wear the colors of their sponsors.
- Hire social media strategist Paul Nagle, who has worked with us for the past three years on a very part-time

contract basis, to work half-time as Musicians United’s first staff person, so we have the increased capacity needed to carry out the above work plan. All of our members, including co-founders Suzanne Little and Si Kahn, will continue to work completely *pro bono*.

- Increase the number of our individual donors from 294 to at least 400, so that we have the ability to maintain Paul Nagle as our half-time staff person, and can continue to be financed by grassroots fundraising.
- As part of the strategy for increasing our individual donor base, hold 10 house party fundraisers around the country and in Alaska.

While this is clearly an ambitious two-year work plan, over the past three years Musicians United To Protect Bristol Bay has established a solid track record of being able to accomplish a great deal with very limited financial resources, a tribute to what an all-volunteer network can do if it’s well-organized, and if the members are supported in their own efforts. By adding a half-time coordinator at the beginning of 2016, we will be able to do even more.

### **WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?**

With many Alaska-based, national and international organizations involved, we are winning the fight to stop the proposed Pebble Mine and to protect permanently the resources, communities, jobs, cultures, traditions, languages and wild salmon of Bristol Bay. Musicians United To Protect Bristol Bay is an important part of the campaign, reaching,

educating and mobilizing a constituency that is not always reached by other organizations.

But the fight is far from over. It will take determined vigilance over many years to make Bristol Bay a federally protected area under conditions that can't be undermined or overturned by a future national administration.

We need your help. Please join Musicians United To Protect Bristol Bay, our over 500 performing musician members, countless audience members and our 294 individual donors in helping to make sure Bristol Bay is there for all of us forever.

**For more information:**

**[www.MusiciansUnited.info](http://www.MusiciansUnited.info)**

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