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Brothers Bicycle from Alaska to Argentina to Protect Bristol Bay

ANCHORAGE, Alaska, August 5, 2009 – Two brothers are bicycling from Alaska to Argentina to draw attention to Bristol Bay wild salmon and the threat the fishery faces from a proposed open-pit copper and gold mine.

Seth and Parker Berling, of San Francisco and San Diego, Calif., left Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, in early July to begin a 17,000-mile journey to Tierra del Fuego, at the southernmost tip of South America. The Berling brothers are making the trip to raise awareness about the proposed Pebble mine and how it could harm the world's largest sockeye salmon fishery, located in Southwest Alaska's Bristol Bay. The Pebble deposit is located in the headwaters of the Nushagak and Kvichak Rivers, two of the major salmon-producing rivers of Bristol Bay. If developed, Pebble would be one of the world's largest open-pit mines. A diverse coalition of commercial and sport fishermen, Alaska Natives, lodge owners, guides, outfitters, scientists and others say the project is likely to expose the region to acid mine drainage, industrial discharges and habitat destruction.

The self-described "Pebble Pedalers" first became aware of the mine project and the threat it poses to Bristol Bay from watching a trailer of the award-winning documentary, Red Gold (www.redgoldfilm.com.) The movie depicts the vital role that wild salmon play in the Bristol Bay region and how the fish are a cornerstone of Alaska Native culture. The

film illustrates what how Alaska's most valuable fishery, and one of the world's last remaining wild salmon runs, could be lost if the massive open-pit mine gets built.

“Our Dad raised us fly-fishing and we'd always hear about California rivers and how great they once were before the salmon runs were destroyed. In Alaska, you still have an untouched working ecosystem right at your doorstep. It's unsurpassed for wild salmon. Why would you possibly consider jeopardizing it?” said Seth.

The bicycle journey is also a fundraiser for Trout Unlimited Alaska, a non-profit conservation organization based in Juneau that is organizing efforts to stop the Pebble mine and to protect the Bristol Bay watershed.

“We've fished all around the world but we had never been to Alaska before this summer. Bristol Bay blew us away. It totally surpassed our expectations. We caught huge rainbow trout, arctic char, Dolly Varden and grayling. We were a little early for the salmon but we plan to go back,” said Parker.

The brothers hope to complete the bike journey across 15 countries, two hemispheres and two continents in one-and-a-half to two years. As avid fishermen, their arrival in Argentina will depend on how much time they take to catch and release along the way.

“We're already a little behind schedule because of the fishing trips we did in Bristol Bay and in the Tangle Lakes area along the Denali Highway,” Seth said.

For more information about the Pebble Pedalers, go to: <http://pebblepedalers.com>.
Learn more about Bristol Bay and the Pebble mine at: www.savebristolbay.org.
Join Trout Unlimited at: www.tu.org

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