

Search **GO**



[Mining Reform](#) [Int'l Mining](#) [Oil and Gas](#) [Press Room](#) [Issues](#) [Publications](#) [About Us](#) [@Home](#) [Connections](#)

PRESS ROOM

2008 Releases

01.25

02.12

02.22

04.15

2007 Releases

2006 Releases

2005 Releases

2004 Releases

In The News

TAKE ACTION

SUPPORT EARTHWORKS

CAMPAIGNS



2008 PRESS RELEASES

Jewelry Retailers Urge Protection for Alaska's Bristol Bay

New Report Highlights Concern Over Mining's Impacts in Bristol Bay and Globally

Washington, DC, February 12, 2008 - As shoppers rush to buy last-minute Valentine's gifts, five of the nation's leading jewelry retailers -- Tiffany & Co., Ben Bridge Jeweler, Helzberg Diamonds, Fortunoff, and Leber Jeweler, Inc. -- today pledged their support to permanently protect Alaska's Bristol Bay watershed from large-scale metal mining, including the massive proposed Pebble gold mine. The retailers, who had \$2.2 billion in sales in 2006, took this step at the invitation of local Alaskans, who seek to protect wild salmon, clean water, and traditional Alaskan ways of life from the damaging effects of industrial metal mines.

"I am pleased to stand with others in the jewelry industry today in announcing our support for protecting Alaska's Bristol Bay watershed from large-scale mining," said Jon Bridge, Co-CEO/General Counsel of Seattle-based Ben Bridge Jeweler. "As retail jewelers, we want to be able to tell our customers that the precious metals we use are mined responsibly -- that the materials used in the jewelry they purchase have been mined in environmentally friendly ways, respectful of the Bristol Bay salmon fishery and the communities that depend on it."

The controversial Pebble mine is highlighted in a new report released today by the No Dirty Gold consumer campaign led by EARTHWORKS and Oxfam America. The report, "Golden Rules: Making the Case for Responsible Mining," documents the toll of irresponsible mining on people, water, and wildlife at a time when soaring metals prices are driving new mining development globally. The report describes human rights violations and environmental concerns at metals mines in the United States and around the world. (To download a copy of the report, visit www.nodirtygold.org)

The retailers are among a group of 28 jewelry retailers, representing 23 percent of US jewelry sales, who have endorsed the No Dirty Gold campaign's "Golden Rules" -- human rights and environmental criteria for mining. Today's announcement takes those commitments a step further.

"Some of the world's leading jewelers have recognized that the Bristol Bay watershed is a treasure worth protecting. We applaud their principled position and commitment to not source metals from areas of high conservation value," said Payal Sampat of EARTHWORKS.

The proposed Pebble mine is backed by the UK-based Anglo American, one of the world's largest metal mining companies, and Canadian firm Northern Dynasty Minerals. The Bristol Bay watershed, where the proposed mine would be located, supports the world's most productive wild salmon fishery -- which is critical to the state's economy and to the livelihood of many Alaska Native communities.

"We want to express a sincere thank you to these jewelry companies," said Bobby Andrew, a spokesperson for Nunamta Aulukestai (Caretakers of the Land), an association of eight Alaska Native corporations. "The proposed Pebble mine threatens the wild salmon fishery that has sustained the region's economy and our people for generations."

Last year, Nunamta Aulukestai and a diverse group of Alaska Native communities, commercial fishermen, businesses, and sportsmen publicly invited jewelry retailers to express support for the protection of Alaska's Bristol Bay watershed from large-scale mining. The invitation ran as a full-page ad in National Jeweler magazine. (For a copy of the ad and jeweler pledge, see www.protectbristolbay.org.)

Consumers today are more aware of the human and environmental costs of the goods and services they purchase than ever before. While other business sectors have responded to demand for cleaner, ethically produced goods and services -- such as sustainably harvested wood products and fair trade coffee -- the mining sector lags behind in terms of embracing an independent system for standards and verification. Some 100,000 consumers in more than 100 countries have signed on to the No Dirty Gold pledge, urging mining companies to provide alternatives to "dirty" gold.

"Consumers and jewelry retailers across the country have clearly signaled their desire for certified, more ethically produced metals," noted Raymond C. Offenheiser of Oxfam America. "The question is: when will mining companies step up to meet this obvious demand?"

The No Dirty Gold campaign urges mining companies to find solutions and implement best practices that can be independently verified -- at both existing and new operations. According to the campaign's new report, mining practices in places like Ghana, Indonesia, Nevada, and other parts of the world continue to pollute air and water, damage farmland and forests, and, in some parts of the world, fuel violent conflict. The report describes damaging practices at 17 metals mines around the

COMMUNITY VOICES

Custer National Forest, MT

"Rancher Not Informed about Mineral Leasing" is Jeanie Alderson's story about what it means when the federal government owns the minerals below private land - mainly, that surface owners have little or no input into the leasing process or decisions that will greatly affect their lives and livelihoods.

AFFILIATES

Alaskans for Responsible Mining



Ethical Metalsmiths



Great Basin Resource Watch

PARTNERS



Bikes for the World



Center for Science in Public Participation



SkyTruth

world. These mines include:

- Grasberg mine in West Papua, owned by U.S.-based Freeport McMoRan, which has been linked to human rights abuses and extensive water pollution.
- Jerritt Canyon mine in Nevada, owned by Yukon-Nevada Gold Corporation, which is a leading source of airborne mercury pollution in the U.S.
- Bogoso/Prestea Mine in Ghana, owned by Canadian firm Golden Star Resources, which has contaminated drinking water and local fisheries with cyanide spills in violation of the industry’s voluntary "Cyanide Code."

There are promising signs within the industry that some operations are responding to community concerns and consumer demands for more responsibly mined gold. For example, a number of firms have adopted a policy against dumping mine wastes in rivers, while others have publicly committed to disclosing payments made to foreign governments.

Fact sheets, report, and press-ready photos available at: www.nodirtygold.org . Photos of Bristol Bay at: http://media.earthworksaction.org/objects/view.acs?object_id=11088.

U.S. Jewelry Sales, 2006

Company	Sales (millions of US \$)
Wal-Mart*	2,800
Sterling*	2,652
Zale Corp*	2,202
QVC*	1,500
Tiffany*	1,326
JCPenney*	1,300
Sears	1,100
Finlay Fine Jewelry	920
Helzberg Diamonds*	525
Fred Meyer Jewelers*	495

Note: * indicates signatory to the No Dirty Gold campaign's "Golden Rules"

2006 U.S. Jewelry Sales of Retailers Supporting Bristol Bay Protection

Retailer	Sales in million \$	Rank in U.S. Sales
Tiffany	1,326	5
Helzberg	525	9
Ben Bridge	250	24
Fortunoff	160	30
Leber	n/a	n/a

Note: These retailers represent \$2.26 billion in US jewelry sales. Total US sales in 2006 were \$62 billion.

-- ### --

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Harlin Savage, Resource Media, (720) 564-0500 x11
- Maura Hart, Oxfam America (202) 496-1196
- Payal Sampat, EARTHWORKS (202) 247-1180

EARTHWORKS | 1612 K St., NW, Suite 808 | Washington, D.C., USA 20006
 202.887.1872 | info@earthworksaction.org | [Privacy Policy](#)