



## Jimmy Carter Library & Museum News Release

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### **ENVIRONMENTALISTS PITTED AGAINST MINING INTERESTS IN SOUTHWEST ALASKA** *LEARN WHAT'S AT STAKE IN CARTER LIBRARY PHOTO EXHIBIT*

**Atlanta, GA.** - Mining interests and environmentalist are locked in a confrontation over the future of Southwest Alaska, nearly thirty years after President Jimmy Carter signed the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act.

Environmental photographer Robert Glenn Ketchum, who currently has an exhibit of his photographs of Southwest Alaska on display at the Carter Presidential Library, warns that mining interests in Alaska want the state to create the Pebble Mine, as it's known, which "could end up as the largest open pit copper mine in the world. And it will also create one of the largest cyanide-leach gold mines in the world."

According to Ketchum, "Cyanide-leach gold mining is the most lethal mining process ever visited on planet Earth. What it amounts to is that since nugget-size gold is pretty much all discovered at this point, the gold that's left is in the form of flake and it's suspended in compound rock. So they dig up tons and tons of rock, crush it, put it in a lined pit, pile it up on top of itself, and spray a cyanide solution over it. And as the cyanide trickles down through the rock, it extracts the gold."

Ketchum adds, "what you're left with is a toxic slurry that's primarily cyanide and can never be recycled. So it has to be contained forever in a lined pit. And with the Pebble Mine complex, the lined pit will be a slurry lagoon 20 miles square requiring an earthen dam -- not concrete, but unstable dirt and rock -- larger than the Three Gorges Dam in China."

The Anchorage Daily News has reported "The Bristol Bay region is already boiling with debate over potential development of the massive Pebble copper and gold prospect north of Iliamna Lake. Pebble is on state land not subject to Friday's decision. The controversial prospect lies in the headwaters of two of the five main rivers that feed the bay's world-class salmon and trout fisheries."

Steve Borell, the executive director of the Alaska Miners Association, sees the debate as a matter of jobs. "With a state this size and with the mineral endowment we have, there should be 50 mines here and obviously 50 times as many jobs," Borell said. "What the mining industry can do is provide jobs all over the state and it's proving to do that. There's absolutely nothing else that can provide jobs with that wide range of distribution across the state. There's probably something within 50 or 60 miles of every village in Alaska that could be mined and sold."

Learn more about this debate by viewing "**Southwest Alaska: A World of National Parks and Wildlife Refuges. The Photographs of Robert Glenn Ketchum.**" The exhibit is on display through April 13<sup>th</sup> at the Carter Presidential Library and Museum. For more information, visit [www.jimmycarterlibrary.org](http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.org) or call 404-865-7100.