

# DC Gastronomer

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2009

## You oughta know



*Photo courtesy of Equinox / Chef Todd Gray*

The great state of Alaska has given DC more to talk about than Sarah Palin. October Marks Alaska Wild Salmon Month in DC, and chefs and restaurants are helping Trout Unlimited promote and protect Alaska's Bristol Bay, in an effort to spotlight the Bay's wild salmon and the risks they face from the proposed Pebble mine, the world's largest open-pit gold and copper mine. The proposed Pebble mine threatens to pollute the pristine habitat of this iconic watershed which produces the world's largest sockeye salmon run.

As part of Alaska Wild Salmon Month, a number of prominent D.C.-area restaurants will feature Bristol Bay salmon on their menus throughout October. Wild sockeye salmon from Bristol Bay, Alaska, are one of the tastiest, most plentiful and yet threatened fish on the planet. Tens of millions of ruby-red sockeye salmon return from the Pacific Ocean to their natal rivers in the wilds of Southwest Alaska each summer, to the same place where mining companies are planning to build one of the world's largest open-pit gold and copper mines.

During the week of Oct. 19-23, Trout Unlimited will host several Bristol Bay wild salmon events in Washington, D.C. to celebrate Alaska Wild Salmon Month, including the Red Gold Screening and Panel Discussion on October, 22, 2009, from 7:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the National Geographic Society (1145 17th Street NW, Washington, D.C., 20036).

Participating restaurants include:

Blue Ridge Restaurant

Bon Appetit Management Co. cafes & restaurants

Coppi's Organic Restaurant

Equinox Restaurant

Granville Moore's

Harry's Tap Room

Hook Restaurant

Kaz Sushi Bistro

Poste Moderne Brasserie


Provence Cafe and Market (Bridgeport, WV)

Redwood Restaurant and Bar

Rock Creek Mazza

Singapore Bistro

Sonoma Restaurant

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It sounds like a culinary twist on the famous Vietnam-era statement — “It became necessary to destroy the village in order to save it.” — but there’s some logic behind **Trout Unlimited**’s campaign this week to save Bristol Bay’s wild salmon.

Trout Unlimited is, according to this story in the *Anchorage Press* (<http://www.anchoragepress.com/articles/2009/10/21/news/doc4adfb4a579464825576931.txt>), a national non-profit of fly-fishermen, and the group has hit the streets of D.C. like a school of piranha. They’ve been here all week for meetings on the Hill and to prove to Washingtonians that Bristol’s wild sockeye salmon is both tasty and worth protecting from the proposed Pebble mine, which according to Trout Unlimited, is “the world’s largest open-pit gold and copper mine in the headwaters of Bristol Bay, Alaska.”

Maybe you’ve sampled the salmon this week? The fish has been on plates at such restaurants as Blue Ridge, Coppi’s Organic, Equinox, Granville Moore’s, Harry’s Tap Room, Hook, Kaz Sushi Bistro, Poste Moderne Brasserie, Redwood, Rock Creek Mazza, and Sonoma.

Y&H asked **Paula Dobbyn**, the director of communications and co-director of policy for Trout Unlimited, why they’re targeting Washington diners in the campaign to save the Bristol Bay salmon. What, after all, can a diner do?

Her response is after the jump:

As far as the focus on D.C., we recognize that the nation's seat of power is there and that many folks in the district and surrounding suburbs have the influence and connections needed to help shape the debate.

We're trying to put Bristol Bay on the radar screens of Americans in general and get it the national recognition that it deserves. Many Americans know about oil drilling and caribou in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, or about the timber wars in the Tongass National Forest in Southeast Alaska. Or they've heard of Denali or Glacier Bay. But Bristol Bay is still largely unknown, even though it produces most of the wild salmon left on the planet and it's an incredibly gorgeous place. It's also largely unprotected from development, unlike the national parks and forests.

We're trying to get permanent protection for the Bristol Bay watershed so that a massive mine like Pebble could never be built there. That's why we're bringing the issue to DC. And instead of just lobbying Congress, we think it's important to engage people through their taste buds. There are millions of seafood lovers out there. We feel that if they know what's at stake in Bristol Bay, they will "vote with their forks" and insist that this incredible area and resource be protected. (see <http://www.whywild.org/> for more on Trout Unlimited's Vote With Your Fork campaign.)



## Stacked salad, sprinkled with issues

By Scott Christiansen

Anchorage Press

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Anyone who thought a Pebble Mine bumper sticker, pro or con, would lose its timeliness after the clean water initiative took a drubbing at the polls in August of 2008 just didn't know how many fronts a war over Alaska resources can have. Besides bumpers and ballot boxes, current battles are waged in quasi-judicial hearings at the Alaska Public Office Commission and through the quasi-truth-telling image advertisements on TV.

Trout Unlimited, the national nonprofit of fly-fisherman, has another front: the quasi-cultured environs known as restaurant dining rooms.

This week the fisherman are promoting wild salmon at the dinner table in 14 restaurants in Washington D.C., where diners near the center of U.S. political power can get a slab of grilled salmon with a side-order of anti-Pebble propaganda. (Similar strategies have been used in Washington State and California to boost Trout Unlimited causes.)

Flashlight hadn't heard of any of the 14 D.C.-area dining rooms, so we contacted Tim Carman, food writer at *Washington City Paper* and author of the blog *Young & Hungry*, which claims to be "the dish on D.C. eats." Carman says Trout Unlimited's list of 14 is representative of the area. He'd also felt the Pebble campaign push at his desk. Carman cautioned that he doesn't pay attention to politicos while he's dining out—his mind is on other stuff, like tastes, atmosphere and service—but he did offer a few insights into the list.

### Advertisement

An advertisement for "RV SALE Autumn RV Blowout!" featuring a white motorhome. The text includes: "Our 2009 Chalets that have been retired from our rental fleet are available now for immediate sale and delivery. Sparkling and ready for autumn camping fun!" and "Visit us online: www.Fun2RV.com/thePress". The logo for "Great Alaskan Holidays" is at the bottom, along with the address "9800 Old Seward Highway, Anchorage (907) 248-7777".

**RV SALE**  
**Autumn RV Blowout!**

Our 2009 Chalets that have been retired from our rental fleet are available now for immediate sale and delivery. Sparkling and ready for autumn camping fun!

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**Great Alaskan Holidays**  
9800 Old Seward Highway, Anchorage (907) 248-7777

Tom Seaver, the chef at Blue Ridge Restaurant, is known for doing his homework on fisheries and seems to be fittingly paired with the Trout Unlimited campaign, says Carman. “He’s been certainly the local face for sustainable seafood,” Carmen says about Seaver.

Equinox Restaurant, a fine dining joint owned by Todd and Ellen Gray, seems like a natural because it’s connected by its location to the very seat of power. “It’s literally two or three blocks from the White House, I think it’s the first restaurant that Obama went to besides Ben’s Chili Bowl,” Carman says. “Politicians probably go to that, but I don’t keep track of those things.” He added that Todd Gray has won a few foodie awards but also has a date with Michele Obama to discuss nutrition for schoolchildren.

The fisherman and Poste Moderne Brassiere also seem to be a complimentary pair. The restaurant is inside the Monaco Hotel, a boutique hotel inside a building from 1839 that once housed D.C.’s General Post Office. There’s simply no counting the number of hopeful messages to the empowered elite that have traveled through that place.

Carman says Poste Moderne is a natural because it’s so environmentally friendly. The restaurant boasts its own chef’s garden on the patio—so locavore—and even installed a water filter system so plastic, glass and bottled water shipped around the world is absent from the menu. “Their chef actually rides his bike to work,” Carman says.

Conspicuously absent from the Trout list is Tosca, the Italian restaurant featured in the *Washington Post* last month as a magnet for powerful lobbyists. (The *Post* reported that Tom Daschle convinced Barack Obama to launch his run for the presidency over dinner at the exclusive chef’s table inside Tosca’s kitchen.)

“Washington is blessed with many, many restaurants,” says Trout Unlimited spokeswoman Elizabeth Dubovsky, adding it would be nearly impossible to include everything.

The nonprofit has also hosted Anchorage-area food events tied to its anti-Pebble campaign—TU calls it the “Bristol Bay Campaign.” Last summer they gave away salmon samples at South Anchorage Farmer’s market.

Paula Dobbyn, TU’s Alaska spokeswoman, says the fact that some Alaskans support Pebble Mine won’t stop Trout Unlimited from reaching out to Alaska chefs and restaurants.

“Everybody likes food,” Dobbyn says, adding dinner is a natural place for people to connect.

“Trout Unlimited is of the opinion that this mine poses unacceptable risks to the salmon fishery.”

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## Energy& Environment

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MINING: Enviro groups hit Hill to kill Alaska copper mine plans (Friday, October 23, 2009)

Patrick Reis, E&E reporter

Environmental groups converged on Capitol Hill this week in the hopes of killing plans for an Alaska copper mine, but the coalition included more than the usual suspects.

"I've never opposed a major mining project, and I still believe in using natural resources, but this mine is beyond the pale," said Rick Halford, a 20-year-plus Republican veteran of the Alaska state senate who once co-sponsored a bill calling for the federal government to open drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. "If it goes forward, the ecosystem of Alaska -- in terms of what we have today -- will be lost forever."

Halford joined Trout Unlimited, commercial fishers, sportfishers, tourism officials and Alaskan natives this week to protest Pebble Partnership's plan to mine for copper and other minerals along the shores of Bristol Bay in southwest Alaska. The groups say the mine would devastate the local ecosystem and one of the country's largest and most profitable salmon runs, crippling the commercial and sportfishing industries and destroying a way of life for Alaska natives.

The partnership of Anglo American PLC and Northern Dynasty Minerals Ltd. has not yet made a specific proposal for the Pebble Mine, but the company hopes to introduce one next year, said Pebble spokesman Mike Heatwole. The permitting process is expected to take up to three years, he said.

The coalition wants Congress to stop it from ever getting that far.

The Pebble site is on land owned by the state of Alaska, limiting federal input, but environmental groups see many avenues for intervention.

Among other federal hurdles, any mine would require a Clean Water Act permit from U.S. EPA; a Clean Water Act permit from the Army Corps of Engineers with EPA approval; a National Environmental Policy Act review from the Interior Department; endangered species consultations with the Fish and Wildlife Service; and consultations with the National Marine Fisheries Service on potential harm to endangered species, marine mammals and fish habitat.

Support facilities for the mine could also require approval, as they would run across federal land or affect the nearby Lake Clark National Park, according to the Alaska Wilderness League.

"Multinational corporations have years and years and millions of dollars to buy the body politic," Halford said. "We have to use every avenue we can think of to stop it."

Representatives from the groups met with dozens of lawmakers this week, asking them to author legislation and press the executive branch for strong environmental protection, but what they will get for their efforts is uncertain.

Alaska delegation undecided

The Alaska delegation is taking a "wait and see" approach, holding judgment until the permitting process moves forward.

"We should not jeopardize those renewable resources for a nonrenewable resource," said Sen. Mark Begich (D). "Saying that, I am a firm supporter of the public process and of the mining industry in Alaska. I think Pebble Mine should be able to go through the permitting process with the burden on the developer to prove the nonrenewable resource can be developed without harming the renewable one, the fish of Bristol Bay."

Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R) also believes that the permitting process should be allowed to go forward.

"Her feeling has always been that this is a local issue," said Murkowski spokesman Robert Dillon. "It should be dealt with as a local issue and with local stakeholders before it gets to the federal level."

The groups also met with Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.), who expressed concern about the potentially devastating environmental impact of such a mine site. Cantwell will consult closely with the Interior Secretary about the issue, said a representative from her office.

Mine opponents have a champion in Rep. Jay Inslee (D-Wash.), who spoke in support of Bristol Bay conservation at a Trout Unlimited event Wednesday night and introduced a bill last session to block offshore drilling in the bay. The bill never made it out of committee.

"The greatest achievement in human evolution would be to get back to a place where we hunt and fish all day," Inslee told the crowd, saying that Bristol Bay provided such a place and that it should not be sullied.

Foul play in the villages?

The Pebble Partnership and mining industry representatives insist that the area can be mined without destroying the fishery, the ecosystem that supports it, or the ways of life that depend on it.

"As Alaskans we recognize the value of salmon across the cultural spectrum,"

Pebble spokesman Heatwole said. "Our leaders have said that if we cannot protect the fishery, the mine won't be built. All we have sought is to allow us to work through the process prescribed by law."

The alarm over the mine is the product of the groups' scare tactics inflicted on local villagers, said Steve Borell, executive director of the Alaska Miners Association, an industry group.

"To go door to door telling people the mine is going to destroy the salmon without any proof is ludicrous. It's not quite criminal, but it's criminal"

Borell said. "It is going to be the most-scrutinized mine ever built in this country if they decide they ever want to propose a mine."

The opponents are trying to subjugate a legal process that would ensure environmental protection while creating more than 1,000 local jobs, Borell said.

"This company has spent \$300 million looking for copper that this nation badly needs, that the world badly needs," he said. "Are you going to try to pull the rug out ... before the project has even been proposed?"



Both sides claim to have widespread local support.

"The controversy is unfortunate in that we believe most support the notion of us bringing forward a plan so we can have a discussion about the full opportunity balanced with the environmental impacts and how we propose to mitigate them," Heatwole said.

But Katherine Carscallen, a commercial fisher who does outreach for Trout Unlimited, said local opposition is nearly unanimous. "There's no division on this. Opposing this mine is the number one issue for fishermen," she said. "Any fishermen who tells you otherwise is getting paid" to do so.