



July 28, 2017

Ms. Janet Pfleeger
Acting Executive Director
Federal Permitting Improvement Steering Council
Office of the Executive Director
1800 F Street NW, Suite 3017
Washington, DC 20405

Dear Ms. Pfleeger,

The Pebble Limited Partnership is proponent of the Pebble Project, an initiative to develop one of the world's most significant undeveloped resources of copper and gold in southwest Alaska. I write to request that the Federal Permitting Improvement Steering Council add mining to the list of industry sectors eligible to have covered projects under the FAST Act.

The importance of the mining industry to the United States cannot be overstated. From the economy to national security, mining makes extraordinary and necessary contributions to the welfare of our country. For example, the National Mining Association (NMA) has reported that the direct and indirect effects of mining to our GDP are some *\$220 billion*; the value of mining production is nearly *\$110 billion*; mining exports are valued at some *\$16 billion*; and that mining employment supports some *1.7 million domestic jobs*. Further, the U.S. Department of Defense uses 750,000 tons of minerals each year in technologies and equipment that protect our troops. The U.S. Geological Survey has reported that, of 88 important minerals they track, the United States is more than 25 percent import-dependent for 62 of them. For 20 of them, the U.S. relies 100 percent on imports. Many of those 20 key minerals are absolutely critical to the economy and national defense.

Ensuring a reasonable permitting process for mining projects is vital to the successful functioning of our economy. Despite the importance of the mining industry to America's security and economy, the NMA has found that securing the necessary mine permits now takes close to 10 years – one of the longest permitting processes in the world for mining projects. By comparison, permitting processes in Australia and Canada, which have similar environmental standards and practices as the U.S., take between two and three years. Such permit delays and regulatory uncertainty hamper investment in our domestic resources, which increases reliance on foreign imports. Ensuring that the mining industry has access to the processes set out in the FAST Act will be a small but important contribution to keeping our domestic mining industry competitive.

We seek this action now because we expect that the Pebble Partnership will soon be prepared to submit a permit application for a "dredge and fill" permit required under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. This project in particular is deserving of being a "covered project" under the FAST Act. In defining "covered projects", Congress specifically noted that such projects could occur in the following industrial sectors: "renewable or conventional energy production, electricity transmission, surface transportation,



aviation, ports and waterways, water resource projects . . . or any other sector as determined by a majority vote of the Council . . .”

The Pebble project will be a significant undertaking in a part of America that lacks basic infrastructure. Thus, the Pebble project will involve building or procuring numerous infrastructure components, including energy production and electricity transmission, pipelines, surface transportation, and construction of a port. While Pebble’s planned infrastructure projects might well be sufficient to fall within the existing FAST Act categories, adding mining to the list would remove any doubt as to whether the Pebble project as a whole could be defined as a “covered project.”

Congress also indicated that “covered projects” should (1) be subject to NEPA, (2) require a total investment of more than \$200 million, and (3) not qualify for abbreviated authorization or environmental review processes under other law. Pebble would meet each of these requirements. Alternatively, a project could fit the definition of a “covered project” if the project is subject to NEPA and has a size and complexity which make the project likely to benefit from “enhanced oversight and coordination,” including a project likely to require authorization or environmental review involving more than two Federal agencies, or the preparation of an environmental impact statement under NEPA. The Pebble project will meet this alternative definition as well, as it will require multiple federal and state permits, as well as an environmental impact statement under NEPA.

The Pebble Partnership is not seeking to avoid rigorous environmental review. Indeed, we welcome the opportunity to undergo a robust review under NEPA and the Clean Water Act. The Pebble project will be a complex, multi-faceted project, and we seek only to avoid the unnecessary delays that have frequently occurred on such projects in the past.

We look forward to discussing our request with you, and working with the Council to address any questions or concerns.

Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,

Tom Collier
Chief Executive Officer