

Alaska, more than any other state in the US, has a history of natural resource dependency that is unequalled in any other state. This dependency on raw natural resources as the main driver for the economy has persisted to current times. In addition to the economic importance of natural resources, usage of the ecosystem and the benefits it provides are an important part of the survival, culture and economic well-being of the rural population. Bristol Bay has a special role in Alaska based on its abundance of salmon, which bring tourists and industry to the region and provide its main source of income. Recently, the mining industry has taken an interest in the region and its numerous natural resources. Concern has been expressed by both the existing fishing and tourism industries as well as the general population of the region as to the effects that mining activities would have on the region's ecosystem and fish and wildlife populations on which they are dependant. The current permitting system has been criticized for being too lenient and biased in favor of the mining companies. This has been attributed to changes in the competences assigned to different agencies from 2002-2005. The large mine permit team has the job of analyzing the data funded by the Pebble Partnership associated with the various state permits needed for the mine, and making a judgment based on the analysis of sound-science. This approach has subsequently been labeled risk-management or risk assessment. It has been emphasized that this approach fails to fulfill ideas of democracy and transparency.