



## Position Statement on Mining March 2018

The American Sportfishing Association (ASA) has chosen to be publicly opposed to a few select mines over the years where a clear and substantial risk is posed to highly important recreational fisheries. The three regions where ASA, along with many other local and national fishing (and in some cases hunting) organizations, has actively opposed proposed mines have many attributes in common; namely they are iconic fishing locations with thriving local economies centered around the natural wonders the regions provide. Because of ASA's growing involvement in mining-related fisheries issues across the U.S., ASA has developed this Policy Position on Mining that describes the circumstances that would determine ASA getting involved in individual mining issues.

ASA believes that some areas have special cultural and economic importance and, therefore, warrant special consideration when something as potentially harmful as a large-scale mining operation has been proposed. For example, to date ASA has engaged in advocacy efforts to prevent mining operations in the following areas:

- **Bristol Bay** has the world's largest sockeye salmon fishery and one of the largest king salmon runs, primarily because the Bay's freshwater salmon habitat is largely untouched by development. As such, Bristol Bay is one of the most valuable wild salmon fisheries on Earth. Bristol Bay's wild salmon fishery is an economic powerhouse worth \$1.5 billion annually for both the recreational and commercial fishing industries.
- **Yellowstone National Park** is our nation's iconic first national park and the pristine waters of the Yellowstone River provide for idyllic recreational fishing. There is a large and growing outdoor recreation and tourism industry in surrounding/overlapping counties, like Park County, Wyoming, for which direct spending from the fishing industry alone generates \$70 million a year.
- The **Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness** (BWCAW) is known as the "Yellowstone of the Midwest" and is America's most visited Wilderness area. BWCAW contains more than 1 million acres of pristine water and woodlands, and, along with the Superior National Forest, features interconnected lakes, streams and wetlands that contain 20 percent of all the fresh water in the entire National Forest System. That prized water supports the walleye, trout, bass and pike that draw thousands of fishermen to the area each year.

ASA, along with others in the recreational fishing community, have worked hard to inspire and engage a new generation of anglers. Because of our collaborative efforts, sportfishing has seen a 20 percent increase in participation over the last decade; participation that accompanies an increase in associated spending and taxes that significantly contribute to many rural economies as well as national GDP. And for our members to continue to thrive, the sportfishing industry has and will continue to depend upon clean and healthy waters and abundant fish.

ASA has expressed concerns that the various proposed mining operations in the watersheds within which we have been active may pose a real and considerable threat to fishery

resources, water quality and sportfishing opportunities. Acid mine drainage, heavy metal leaching and significant water withdrawals have been some of the historic negative impacts for numerous mining operations across the U.S. and ASA wants to ensure that any regulating agencies use the best available science to thoroughly evaluate any proposed mining activity in an area important to the sportfishing industry. ASA also stresses the need to consider the cultural and economic importance of sportfishing in proposed mining areas in deciding the best use of public lands and waters for the public interest.

ASA would like to emphasize that it in no way opposes the mining industry writ large. ASA recognizes that mining is an important and necessary sector of America's economy. As a trade association, ASA understands the importance of business operations like that of the mining industry as, like the recreational fishing industry, the mining industry provides important jobs and pays taxes that help stimulate the nation's economy and provides funds for conservation. ASA also understands the important cultural significance that mining has in America; especially to rural American families. ASA strives, however, to ensure that any future mining endeavors do not jeopardize the health or growth of the sportfishing industry in cases where ASA members' interests in natural resources overlap.

### **Principles upon which ASA bases its involvement in individual mining issues**

The American Sportfishing Association opposes any legislation or policy that will facilitate the construction of a mine that would be detrimentally harmful to a U.S. fishery that is economically and culturally important to the sportfishing industry and angling community. When determining the level of involvement as mining issues are presented to ASA Government Affairs Staff, ASA will consider the following principles:

1. Strong local sportfishing and other outdoor business positions, and a well-formed coalition and campaign: ASA's decision to take a position on a specific mining proposal will be made with consideration to local sportfishing and other local business positions. Accordingly, ASA's level of involvement in a mining-related policy debate in which ASA has taken a position will depend, in part, upon the organization of said local coalition and strength of voice of their campaign. ASA will continue to maintain its own voice during a coalition-led campaign, but will participate in the local campaign where we see fit to collaborate.
2. The likelihood of negative environmental impacts: ASA's decision on whether or not to take a position on a specific mining proposal will stem from the mining activity's level of potential negative impacts on a fishery, with special significance to the sportfishing industry and angler community.
3. The cultural and economic importance of the fishery: ASA will carefully consider a natural area's cultural and economic importance to the sportfishing industry and angling community as a whole before considering opposition to mining activity.
4. The potential precedents set: ASA will give consideration to the possible precedents set of progressing forward with a mining project, especially in pristine areas where no mining currently exists. Also for consideration are the new types of and methods of mining, the size of the proposed mine, and other possible precedent-setting aspects of a proposed project.