

MILWAUKEE LAKE & STREAM
The Hatch
FISHING

Milwaukee Lake & Stream Fly Fishers, Inc
www.speakeasy.org/~MLSFF October 2008

Fishing in Alaska

By Nelson Erdman

Fishing Anchorage

Anchorage is the most traveled to city in Alaska, probably has the cheapest flights and overall has just about every major chain hotel and restaurant to be had along with some really nice “Alaskan” places to stay and eat. Anchorage has a population of 200,000+, but is plunked down in the middle of wilderness. One can walk a few blocks from the convention center to Ship Creek where fishermen pull salmon right from the downtown waterway. I thought there was dental hygienist convention going on seeing how people many were flossing” for fish.



With up to a 30 foot tide coming in and out twice a day, many people time their fishing to a couple hours prior and up to the tide and others on the backside of the tide. If you’re going to fish in Ship Creek, be ready for some tight quarters of fishermen, everything from spinning rods to bobber’s w/roe to fly fishermen all casting to some really spooked fish. With that much of a tide, the current is very strong so the weights used would make you think they were deep sea fishing. Wisconsin fly-fishing split-shot will be laughed at by the locals — and was — as I talked to a few locals on how to fish these waters.

Salmon derbies will pay out tens of thousands of dollars and will land you on the front page of the Anchorage newspaper the next day – or worse for those who don’t buy a derby ticket. The laughter of those talking how they should have bought a ticket before catching a prized salmon can be brutal. On the train, I heard of some people who landed an 18-pound silver salmon, good enough for a prize in the derby, but who had neglected to buy a ticket before they fished. If you want to find a derby, you can’t swing a dead Dog-salmon without hitting one someplace in Alaska.

Most of this type of fishing is either done of charter boats in the ocean or by combat fishing which is just about shoulder-to-shoulder fishing in the rivers and streams, while interesting to see and do for awhile, this is not why you go to Alaska for fishing. For real Alaskan fishing you’ll need to get out of Anchorage and get a guide.

First real fishing trip

We journeyed south on the Seward Highway with our rental SUV. The road runs along the train tracks along Cook Inlet before going over Turnagain Pass. Amazing scenery south of Anchorage! We exited west to the amazing Kenai River area.

We met our guide and traveled 30 minutes to the west; we parked our rental and drove with the guide to Skilak Lake where he put his drift boat in. We motored across Skilak Lake to the Kenai River where we set up for some fishing. The current was very strong and the amount of weight put on the line was like we were working for Walleyes. Right away we saw schools of Red's, King's and Pink's along with the target fish for August, the silver salmon. The action started right away with Dolly Varden and trout all 20" plus. My wife was the first to get a silver, while I brought a 24" trout to the net. Pictured to the right is a Dolly Varden.



As we moved down river the action heated up to a point where the guide was netting fish with some three fish on sets between my wife, daughter and I. We easily caught 20 fish in 30 minutes with the biggest being a silver around 30". We continued to drift the "Wildlife Refuge" and spent the rest of the day coming on schools of salmon that would make your head spin, all the while hooking up on the Dolly Varden and trout — which were all over the 18" and below keeper range.



The day ended at "Torpedo Alley" hooking into 3 fish that ended up snapping our lines. After a long day of fishing with the family the guide took to us shore to cut up our fish. We then continued downstream to our rental SUV.

We stopped in Cooper Landing for food on Kenai Peninsula that refers to itself as "a quaint little drinking town with a fishing problem." The number of hats and T-shirts you could purchase with this on it was endless in many of the small towns we stopped in on the Kenai.

Meanwhile back in Anchorage

The dental hygienist convention continued flossing for silvers, people on the bridge would spot them and fishermen would cast and cast and cast. As I spent hours watching, casting, and talking, you'd maybe see 2-3 silvers caught during that time. It seemed the

first run of silvers had come and gone the week prior to me getting to Anchorage and the next run would start after we left near the end of August.

It was time to find another place to go fishing, consulting the local paper for fishing reports I concluded that the fishing wasn't in Anchorage for salmon and most of the streams and rivers mentioned were either combat fishing hot-spots or too far to travel while on a "family" vacation.

The one option was to go Stillwater; the newspaper talked about the lakes in and around the Anchorage area and it seemed that within 30 minutes of Anchorage one could find plenty of fishing for Grayling, Arctic Char, landlocked salmon and trout.

And this fishing I wouldn't be using weights, instead I'd be able to use Wisconsin sized flies. Jewel Lake on the southeast side of town has a nice area for fishing. Rainbows are the deal there and there are plenty of them. Sand Lake probably has the best fishing, but the access point leaves you with a hike through a slough about 1/2 mile long until you hit some deeper water. It however would be a great lake with a small boat or tube and the fishing is pretty good. Campbell Lake is a small lake inside Kincaid Park and has tons of small trout. Oblong Lake is where I had the most success fishing one night with a fellow fly-fisherman from Alaska; we caught a bunch of rainbows as the sun dipped down at 10:30 pm or 11:00 pm. He explained that the fish in the lakes tend to eat when it is dark; I guess they are a little frightened by the Bald Eagles that live near the lakes!



North of Anchorage about 15 minutes is Eagle River and Mirror Lake which has a beach, picnic areas, a grill (a rare find in parks in Alaska, Bears I guess is the reason) and is home to many rainbow trout. North of there is a great State park called Chugach State Park, 25 miles north of Anchorage and a 10 mile scenic drive from the highway, located inside the park is Eklutna Lake, good access and a wonderful view of the twin peaks of the Yuditnu and Bold and eight-mile creek flowing into the lake. Dolly Varden and Grayling are the fish most plentiful, bright patterns and flashes of silver/ foil are your best bets in the glacial runoff lake.

If you go:

Getting there: Most major airlines fly out of Chicago to Anchorage, most make a stop someplace prior to heading to Anchorage. Alaskan and Northwest fly the most direct flights to Anchorage.

Guides: Get a guide and make sure you interview them over email and phone, there are lots of guides up there and you want to make sure you fish with someone who actually will fish for what you want with the gear you want. You'd hate to be going after Rainbows with the fly to get hooked up with bait fishermen wanting to limit on salmon. Do your homework! Most guides will make up a full boat; see how much it is to rent the whole boat for the 1/2 or full day. It might be worth it in the end to fish with people who know what they're doing!

Where to stay and eat: In Anchorage, just about every major chain is represented. Go online to order an Anchorage and Kenai Peninsula guide and you'll get information on where to stay and what to do. Per night rates will be anywhere from \$50-\$100 for roadside cabins to \$150-\$300 for hotels in Anchorage. Most restaurant prices are a few dollars more per item than around here and groceries seem to

be increased at least 35-60%. If you get a long way from Anchorage, expect prices to soar, like a 2-liter soda was \$3.79. Try to find the Wal-Mart for best prices in Anchorage, Eagle River and Wasilla-Super Wal-Mart. Going out to eat, expect lots of salmon and fresh seafood, burgers are \$9-12, steaks are \$24-32 and a large salad is \$12-15. Forget the veggies with your meal; you'll get rice, potatoes or something grown in Alaska



What else: If you plan to visit many state parks, an Annual Pass \$40 might be worth it and there's plenty of camping if that is your thing, try the State and National parks for good campgrounds and always remember there's bear — and lot's of them. Moose are more plentiful, just as dangerous as bears, and can really mess up your rental if you hit one! I almost did.

Another interesting note about the amount of daylight, my wife and I tended to go to bed around midnight Alaskan time, 3 am Wisconsin time and never really felt like going to bed as the sun seemed to stay light forever. We adjusted to the time change from day one.

Alaska's Pebble Gold Mine

The greatest North American wilderness spawning grounds for wild Pacific salmon are threatened by a proposed development to create the largest North American open-pit gold mine that could destroy them. The mine licensing will shortly be in the hands of Alaska politicians, and the governor favors it. Destruction of the fabulous Bristol Bay salmon/rainbow commercial and sport fishery is at stake. The Pebble Mine has been described by proponents as "Alaska's second Gold Rush." If approved, it could create a 1,000-square-mile industrialized mining zone within the Bristol Bay watershed and be mined for the next 40 to 50 years, and will produce some of hard-rock mining's most toxic wastes.

Reprinted from Fly Fisherman Online Magazine



The streams and river draining into Bristol Bay host the worlds largest population of sockeye salmon (above) but

The vast open-pit mine, if licensed, would sit on state land in the cradle of the Bristol Bay fisheries' spawning grounds, in the headwaters of the Kaktuli River and Upper Talarik Creek (the famous late-season lake-run rainbow fly-fishing pot of gold) part of the Nushagak and Kvichak (pronounced Kwee-jack) drainages 20 miles northwest of Lake Iliamna, between the Newhalen and Mulchatna rivers

How big is the Pebble Mine? According to the mining-development company Northern Dynasty Minerals, Inc., a subsidiary of the Canadian company Hunter Dickinson, Inc., there are about 33 million ounces of gold beneath 20 square miles of tundra at \$400 to \$500 an ounce, 18.8 to 24 billion pounds of copper at \$1.60 to \$1.70 per pound, and a billion pounds of molybdenum at \$35 per pound, or an

estimated \$83 billion in minerals to be harvested from a pit 1,700 feet deep, with huge dams to contain the waste rock and tailing pond (to be located in a severe earthquake zone) to hold the 3 billion tons of waste from the low-grade ore. A 100-mile road, electric lines, and an 85-mile slurry pipeline would be built from Cook Inlet to the Pebble Mine. The total cost for the mining operation is estimated by mine planners at \$1.8 billion. The company says it has already invested \$60 million. Its plans have sparked a gold-mining claims rush with at least eight other mining companies recently staking claims in the area.

Who Is Northern Dynasty?

Northern Dynasty is a "junior" in the mining industry, according to Mara Bacsujlaky in her article entitled "Mining the Stock Market." She describes juniors as ". . . companies which more properly are exploration companies, are those with no operating mines or ore reserves, whose principle activity is speculation, conducting exploration programs in new areas, funded by massive stock placements. Although infrequently a junior will find something worth mining, most times a 'hot prospect' turns out to be a bust, with neither a mineable deposit nor a mining company standing in line to take over the property." She says mining juniors have a long history of losses and no earnings. If they do find something worth mining, the mining industry "majors" buy the mining rights and do the mining. What juniors leave behind in their "explorations" includes "unreclaimed drill holes, trenches, drilling muds, fuel spills, abandoned fuel drums and other camp items or trash, unreclaimed or poorly constructed and sited exploration roads, resulting in longterm damage to [wildlife] habitat from erosion or increased access."

In its prospectus Northern Dynasty claims it cannot be held liable for environmental damages to the Pebble area because it is not a U.S. company.

Heap-Leach Cyanide Processing

The economics of low-grade gold-ore processing would probably require cyanide heap-leach processing to be profitable. (Northern Dynasty says it will use the vat cyanide process and not the heap-leach process-its mining plan had not been written at the time of this writing. Anyway, Northern Dynasty will probably sell its mining rights to a major mining company, which will decide on ore processing techniques. In any event the mining processing methods will be subject to federal and state licensing regulations).

Heap-leach processing is the most environmentally damaging form of ore processing (For more detailed information on cyanide heap-leach processing, read the New York Times serial article "The Cost of Gold." In heap-leach open-pit mining, huge shovels gouge up as much as .5 million tons of rock per day from the earth (in this case tundra) and miners drizzle diluted cyanide over it for years to separate the gold. The piles of rock are exposed to rain and air and become environmental time bombs, with sulfides mixing over time with rain to create sulfuric acid. The acid pollutes streams and frees heavy metals such as cadmium, lead, and mercury (and arsenic) that are dangerous to humans, wildlife, and especially fish. Mining officials say they can cap mine waste and use lime to neutralize the acid. But scientists have found that cyanide can change to other toxic forms, particularly in cold climates and can migrate from capped waste piles in wet climates. Bristol Bay is cold in winter and wet during spring run-off. [The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has labeled the hard-rock mining industry as the largest source of pollution in the United States. In 2004 the agency estimated that clean-up of U.S. metal mines could cost \$54 billion. Some scientists point out that mining holding ponds usually fail over time, and mining company attempts at environmental mitigation (usually minimal and inadequate) have had a sad track record. They cite Montana's Zortman-Landusky gold mine and industrial-size gold mines in Guyana, Indonesia, Romania, New Guinea, and Peru as environmental disasters.

What species are threatened? The Bristol Bay watersheds produce the world's greatest wild commer-

cial salmon fishery--worth between \$20 million and \$100 million annually, depending on spawning-run returns and market prices, and not counting the sport-fishing lodge and ancillary services revenue (50 lodges in the southwest Alaska region), estimated at over \$100 million annually. The following runs of fish would be threatened: Chinook, sockeye, chum, silver, and pink salmon. Sockeye alone includes 150 related discrete populations, and, at peak years, numbers up to 50 million returning fish. In recent years, however, the sockeye number has been down, with commercial take about 25 million fish. Other species affected include Artic char, grayling, Dolly Varden, northern pike, rainbow trout, and lake trout. Also at risk, if the mine is approved and the 100-mile road built, are caribou (the 85,000- to 120,000-animal Mulchatna herd), moose, sea otters, brown bear, wolverine, Beluga and orca whales, bald eagles, wolves . . . and lodges that cater to fly fishers. Bristol Bay is the world's greatest fly-fishing wilderness, and its wild salmon-fed rainbows are the crown jewels of the watershed.

Major Rivers Threatened

Major rivers and lakes and their fisheries in the Bristol Bay watershed that will be threatened by the Pebble Mine include the following: Kaktuli, Kvichak, Nushagak, Newhalen, Stuyahok, and upper and lower Talarik Creek and lakes Iliamna and Clark.

To make matters worse, according to Scott R. Brennan, campaign director for Alaskans for Responsible Mining, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, owners of 3.5 million acres in southwest Alaska, is looking at opening its lands to hard-rock mining.

Brennan is the author (with Jay H. Wothgott) of *Essential Environment, the Science Behind the Stories* (2004), a textbook for university environmental science courses around the U.S. Here are his observations on the Pebble Mine and what it represents to Americans.

"The Pebble is the tip of the iceberg here. New mining claims in the Pebble region in the past 12 months total some 1,000 square miles of state land. The 3.5 million acres of BLM lands, if opened to hard-rock mining, would be in addition to that. If this Pandora's box is opened, we could be looking at a major industrial mining complex with many heap-leach and other operations, a complex of roads and all the industrial/environmental threats that accompany such developments.

"This is the single most important environmental challenge facing fisheries today if you are a sport fisherman. The Teddy Roosevelt tradition is on the line: We are being presented a choice--wild fisheries and wildlife or gold. We cannot have both.

"Ironically, (Alaska) Gov. Murkowski worked with the mining companies to change a state law that forbids dumping mine wastes in salmon and trout spawning streams. The new regulations would allow dumping of mine wastes into those streams to create "mixing zones." If that happens, all the Bristol Bay waters would potentially be open to mine wastes.

"The mining developers are, as usual, promoting jobs created by the mining operations--1,000 to 2,000, according to them. But there are only 1,000 people (mostly native Americans) living in the Bristol Bay area. Most of the permanent high-paying jobs will go to nonresidents.

"In addition, for taxation under Alaska law only mine net profits are taxed and that has returned less than 1.6 percent of mineral values to the state in taxes---\$18.4 million to the state between 2001 and 2003 and \$30 million to local governments based on \$2.9 billion in mineral value from mining claims on state lands. Is this return worth the loss of Alaska's crown salmon jewel?"

"This is the only mine in Alaska that we are opposing because it would be the ultimate disaster--location, location, location: wrong mine, wrong place environmentally, and wrong time."

Brian Kraft, owner/operator of Alaska Sportsman Lodge at the head of the braids on the Kvichak and Trout Unlimited's (TU) outreach coordinator for Bristol Bay, says there is a strong chance of beating the Pebble Mine in the licensing phase because the people of Alaska get no benefits from the mine and the native Alaskans and commercial fishermen have the most to lose and are, with a few exceptions, against it.

Kraft warns that hard-rock mining poisons develop slowly, as they did at Montana's Zortman-Landusky Mine, but they are deadly, especially to fish, and they last long. "The tailings that Pebble would produce must be treated forever, and the mine would be located in the most sensitive headwaters of the spawning area. Alaska needs a moratorium on mining within any salmon or trout spawning areas. In terms of salmon and trout spawning, this is the worst place in Alaska to locate a hard-rock mine. The best way to stop this is for sportsmen to get involved by supporting TU. TU has taken the lead in this fight."

For and Against the Mine

Although the Pebble Mine will be in its licensing approval stage in 2006-2008, Gov. Frank Murkowski and Lt. Gov. Loren Leman are pushing for accelerated regulatory approval. Groups opposed to the mine include the village tribes and native corporations of Ekwok, New Stuyahok, Koliganek, and Non-dalton; village councils of Dillingham and Kakhonak; Trout Unlimited; Bristol Bay Alliance; citizens of Port Alsworth; and the Alaska Wilderness Recreation & Tourism Association.

Groups in favor of the mine include the Lake and Peninsula Borough, Levelok village tribe, and Lake and Pen Borough council. Native Americans affected by the mine include Yupiks, Athabascans, and Aleuts.

To Help Fight the Mine

Trout Unlimited (<http://www.tu.org>)

TU has re-opened its Anchorage office to help in the fight against the Pebble Mine and according to Brian Kraft has put tremendous efforts and resources into the fight. Contributions to TU are critical to stopping the mine in its licensing phase.

Alaskans For Responsible Mining (<http://www.reformakmines.org/>)

Alaskans for Responsible Mining (ARM) is a voluntary association of non-governmental organizations working together to raise public awareness of the impacts of the mining industry to Alaska's watersheds, wildlife, fisheries, communities and public health and to reform Alaska's inadequate mining laws.

Renewable Resources Coalition (<http://www.renewableresourcescoalition.org/>)

The mission of the Renewable Resources Coalition is to preserve and protect the ongoing viability of Alaska's abundant fishing and hunting resources and the lands and waters they need to survive; and to promote public awareness of public policy issues that affect the well being of businesses and individuals that are dependant upon the fish and game resources that we are duty bound to protect.

Bristol Bay Alliance (<http://www.bristolbayalliance.com/>)

This site contains links to a complete review of the science on industrial-scale gold mining and the documented environmental and human health dangers it represents for the world.

In addition to the above groups, you can also contact the Alaskan legislators and/or our own legislators. For the complete story and links to legislators go to <http://www.flyfisherman.com/alaska/jrpebble/>

October Meeting:

Tips, Techniques, and Tying!

At our October 14th meeting at Yester Years Pub & Grill there will be some demonstrations of the making of furred leaders and of fly tying by some of our members.

A number of our members have used furred leaders in the fishing in recent outings and trips and have had good experiences with them. If you want to see how they're made and get some tips on their use, this is for you. The leaders can be made from everything from thread to monofilament, and can be "tuned" to the desired final usage.

In addition, we'll have some fly tyers doing their favorite patterns — including the pattern that turned out to be a Yellowstone area "magic fly" on a recent trip by some ML&SFF members. Why, it might even replace the Pink Squirrel as your favorite "go-to" fly!!

The meeting starts at 7:00 pm on Tuesday the 14th. Come early and join us for a burger and a beer at 6:00 pm!

October Outing:

Salmon on the Sheboygan!

We'll be going to Kohler for the salmon run again on Saturday, Oct. 18th . We'll be looking for chinooks and brown trout to be in the river, Bring your favorite salmon flies and big rods and come play!

We'll be meeting at the Pettit Center at 7:00 am and will leave at 7:15 am. With the price of gas being what it is, we're thinking many of us will want to carpool. If you want a ride be on time. Don't forget to bring a lunch!

If you plan on driving up on your own you can consult the maps section on the club website for the directions and location of where the outing will take place!

Tippet Tips — *By Jody Baker*

All too often flyfishers start digging around in their fly box for a different fly when they aren't catching fish. They do so under the assumption that the fish isn't interested in the fly they are using. Instead, the real reason they are fishless is often the size of the tippet they're using. Most fish (with the exception of salmon) are quite leader shy and will refuse any offering that is attached to a leader they can see. And they can see tippet that we can't, either because it casts a shadow on the water, or it sets up micro drag.

So, the next time you go to select a different fly, tie on a smaller tippet instead and present the same fly again. You'll be surprised at how often the fish will take the very fly they've been refusing. What may have happened if you're using a commercial tapered leader, is that you've cut off most of the tippet from constantly changing flies and you're now tying your fly to a leader that is much too thick. Just tie on a one to two foot section of the next smaller diameter or pound-test and you're back in business. If you're constructing your own leaders, just continue tapering down another diameter or pound-test before attaching your fly.

This tip won't always work, of course, but just put the suggestion in your memory bank and give it a try the next time you're going fishless.





"The tag says **CLICK TO ENLARGE.**"

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MILWAUKEE LAKE & STREAM FLY FISHERS

2008 CALENDAR

	October	November	December
Meeting	14th @ Yester Years Pub & Grill	11th @ Yester Years Pub & Grill	9th @ Yester Years Pub & Grill
Outing	18th Salmon on the Sheboygan	-None-	Holiday Brunch Date TBA
Fly Tying	15th and 29th	12th & 26th	10th (Only)
Notes			

Meeting:	September through April: 7 pm Yesteryears Pub & Grill 9427 W. Greenfield
Outing:	Meet at 6:30 am at Park & Rides lots. See Hatch for details.
Fly Tying:	Sportsmen's Warehouse (I-43 & Mooreland Rd.) from 6:00 - 8:30 pm.

The Hatch is the monthly newsletter of the Milwaukee Lake & Stream Fly Fishers, an incorporated nonprofit organization affiliated with the Federation of Fly Fishers.

Milwaukee Lake & Stream Fly Fishers meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. at Yester-Years Pub & Grill, 9427 W. Greenfield Ave., West Allis, WI

Meetings May through August are on the water. Read **The Hatch** for locations or go to our website at: <http://www.mlsff.org>

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Submit contributions for **The Hatch** by the 20th of the month to:
Greg Schick, Editor
at: gaschick@wi.rr.com

"Today she met me at the door, said I would have to choose, if I picked that fishing pole today, she'd be packing all her things and she'd be gone by noon....well I'm gonna miss her when I get home tonight. Right now I'm on this lake shore, and I'm sitting in the sun! I'm sure it'll hit me when I walk thru that door tonight. Yeah, I'm gonna miss her. Oh lookie there, I got a bite!"

- Brad Paisley