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Contact: Gwen Dobbs
202-266-0418 or gwen@alaskawild.org,

Jeremiah Millen
907-222-4046 or jeremiah@alaskawild.org

**Statement by Jeremiah Millen, Field Representative for Alaska Wilderness League,
on the Bristol Bay Decision**

“We applaud the Obama Administration for the decision to protect Bristol Bay as a national treasure in Alaska and its decision to withdraw Bristol Bay from consideration for oil and gas development through 2017. Bristol Bay is a vital watershed, world-class fishery, and an economic engine to the local community.

Even though we are hopeful for the future of Bristol Bay given the recent decision to include offshore protection—we are not ready to celebrate yet. We strongly encourage the Administration to enact protections for Bristol Bay onshore, as well as offshore. It just does not make sense to protect the offshore without protecting the onshore.

Millions of salmon return to Bristol Bay each year to push up river to spawn in Bureau of Land Management (BLM) waters. BLM lands not only contribute to the world’s largest wild salmon runs, but also contribute vital lands and healthy waters to the largest commercial sockeye salmon fishery on earth. Five species of Pacific salmon are found in the Bay Region (chinook, coho, sockeye, chum, and pink). BLM onshore lands are as vital to wild salmon as the offshore lands.

Our wild Alaskan salmon stocks are literally connected to the ocean, river, and the surrounding BLM lands—the whole ecosystem must be protected to preserve wild salmon. BLM lands should not be a blind spot in determining priorities for protections. The Administration should take the next logical step in protecting Bristol Bay’s world-class fishery by encouraging the Bureau of Land Management to include on-shore protections for wild salmon’s spawning and rearing waters and lands. The right time to protect Alaskan wild salmon is now.”

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www.AlaskaWild.org

122 C St NW, Ste 240, Washington, DC 20001 * Tel: 202-544-5205 * Fax: 202-544-5197