

**Lake Pend Oreille, Pend Oreille River,  
Priest Lake and Priest River Commission  
“The Lakes Commission”**



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**MEMORANDUM**

**From:** Kate Wilson, Program Coordinator for the Lakes Commission

**Date:** January 30, 2006

**Re:** Lakes Commission-Press Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

The Lakes Commission met Wednesday, January 25, 2006, at the Sandpoint Community Hall. Three items were discussed: the Lakes Commission’s position on the proposed Rock Creek Mine, the predation situation in Lake Pend Oreille, and updates regarding Eurasian milfoil in the Pend Oreille Basin.

As an advisory Commission created by the State of Idaho, the Lakes Commission will be writing letters to Governor Kempthorne, the Idaho Legislature, Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, and various other government and political entities recommending actions on the issues that were reviewed at the meeting.

“Until developers [of the Rock Creek Mine] are willing to commit more time and effort doing what needs to be done to provide us downstream with assurances that make us reasonably comfortable that we won’t be another Coeur d’Alene Valley sometime down the road,” Ford

Elsaesser, Chair of the Commission said, “the Lakes Commission cannot recommend or endorse the development of Rock Creek Mine at this time.”

After comments from each of the Commission’s board members stating their positions, and a brief commentary period from the public, the Lakes Commission voted unanimously against the proposed Rock Creek Mine.

“There are just too many questions and not enough answers,” Lakes Commission board member, Linda Mitchell stated. “It is not in our best interest as currently proposed.”

All of the Lakes Commissioners expressed concerns regarding threats to water quality and the proximity of the nearby Montanore Mine project, owned by a different company.

“It makes a lot of sense to encourage these mining companies to get together and do a joint impact statement, a joint venture, to access the mine from the other [Montanore] side,” commented Lakes Commissioner board member, Brent Baker.

The Lakes Commission will also be recommending support be garnered for the Idaho Department of Fish & Game (“IDFG”) in its efforts to recover the kokanee population in Lake Pend Oreille. IDFG will be conducting population estimates on lake trout and whitefish in February 2006, using a method that uses gill nets. This will “validate” their trap netting estimates, and as explained by Chip Corsi, the IDFG Panhandle Regional Supervisor, will help restore the species that holds a “very important ecological niche” in the Pend Oreille Basin.

Finally, the Commission will be addressing the growing problem of Eurasian milfoil in local water bodies by joining Rep. Eric Anderson’s efforts to secure consistent and adequate funding to combat this invasive weed.

The meeting lasted three hours and was attended by approximately 60 people. The next meeting will be held in mid-March and deal with a more in-depth look at Eurasian milfoil and the spring lake levels.