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**BC AND REDFERN FAIL TO STOP "ACUTELY LETHAL" POLLUTION FROM
TULSEQUAH CHIEF AND BIG BULL MINES
Alaska Can't Trust Mining Corporation or BC to Protect Taku Water Quality and Salmon**

(Juneau) New documents from Canadian federal fisheries and environment ministries demonstrate a history of failure by Redfern Resources Ltd. and British Columbia (BC) to address "acutely lethal" acid mine drainage at the Tulsequah Chief and Big Bull mine sites. These documents also provide evidence that BC has been deceitful about its plans for other industrial development in the Taku watershed. Redfern wants to reopen the Tulsequah Chief mine and construct a 100 mile access road from Atlin, BC to the mine site. The mine site is on the Tulsequah River, main tributary of the Taku, and above several critical salmon spawning and rearing areas.

"This new information is the latest in a pattern of misleading or outright false statements by BC and the Redfern corporation combined with a 50-year failure to conduct any meaningful cleanup. The long history of ignoring Alaska's interests in the Taku clearly demonstrates why we can't trust BC and Redfern to protect water quality and fisheries," said Chris Zimmer of the Transboundary Watershed Alliance. "Here is yet another reason for Governor Murkowski to rethink his stated trust in Redfern and BC and to ensure that the concerns of Alaskan fishermen, businesses, property owners and citizens are addressed."

In February 2004, federal Environment Minister David Anderson and Fisheries and Oceans Minister Geoff Regan provided written responses to a petition by citizens of Atlin, BC. Anderson's response shows federal investigators visited Redfern's Tulsequah and Big Bull mine sites in October of 2003, and found that "none of the measures undertaken by Redfern had significantly reduced the acutely lethal toxicity of the ARD [Acid Rock Drainage] discharges from the two mine sites." The acid mine drainage problem at the Tulsequah Chief mine site has been an ongoing problem since the mine last operated in the 1950s. British Columbia first tested the site in 1990, and found "considerable acid generation" at the site, adding that the water samples taken were "acutely toxic" to fish. Officials retested the site 5 times between 1998 and 2003. In spite of those findings BC has taken no meaningful action to enforce clean-up.

The documents are equally critical of the BC government. BC promised in December 2002 that it would "require that Redfern close the access road as a means of ensuring that any impacts to wildlife that result from the use of the access road stop, when the mine closes." Yet, federal fisheries Minister Geoff Regan wrote in his 2004 letter that "the province of British Columbia has been clear that other users could assume road responsibilities to perpetuate its use." BC has been less than honest about its intentions in the Taku, since BC has been promoting the long-term use of the road to other mining companies at the same time that BC was promising to close the road.

Redfern has also been less than open in its public statements including denying that its ongoing court case versus the Taku River Tlingit has any bearing on the mine, claiming that legal issues are resolved when a final decision on the court case is six months away, misrepresenting the position of the US government and stating that the mine has been approved when it lacks necessary federal permits.

“Redfern has a long history of misrepresenting the facts about the Tulsequah Chief project in its shameless pitches to potential investors,” said Zimmer. “This mining corporation has not been shy about disclosing results of its test drilling to potential investors, but why hasn’t it disclosed the liability implications of the October 2003 inspection and ongoing “acutely lethal” pollution?”

Juneau sport and commercial fishermen, fishing businesses, Taku property owners, conservationists and citizens are all on record that the serious threats to water quality and fisheries posed by the Tulsequah Chief mine demand independent review by the International Joint Commission (IJC). The IJC was created by the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909, which states “waters flowing across the boundary shall not be polluted on either side to the injury of health or property on the other,” as a way to settle transboundary disputes about water quality. The IJC was used in 1985 when Montana requested formal negotiations with Canada regarding plans for Canadian coal exploration just north of Glacier National Park. The IJC recommended against a mining operation at the sites because of potential effects on downstream water quality and aquatic habitat. A similar body, the Georgia Basin/Puget Sound International Airshed Strategy, was created in 2003 by the US and Canada to allow joint environmental reviews of projects that create transboundary air pollution.

“BC and Redfern have adopted a ‘develop the mine at all costs’ attitude and have clearly failed to live up to their international responsibilities in the Taku. Independent review by the IJC is needed to ensure that fisheries and water quality are protected,” said Zimmer.

Recent revelations of massive downstream pollution to the US side of the Columbia River by a Canadian smelter owned by Teck Cominco Ltd. (ironically the former owner of the Tulsequah Chief) and BC’s failure to enforce monitoring and clean-up regulations should be a lesson for Alaska. The Canadian smelter routinely dumped heavy metals, slag and more toxic chemicals than allowed into the Columbia River, but has rarely been fined by BC agencies. Teck Cominco is fighting clean-up requests from the US EPA and Washington state.

“The State of Alaska needs to stand up right now for the Alaskan families and businesses that depend on the Taku’s clean water and rich fisheries or we could be facing the same situation as Washington state in 10 or 20 years. BC and its mining industry have a history of lax monitoring and enforcement and simply cannot be trusted to maintain the clean water and healthy salmon runs that Alaskans depend on,” said Roger Featherstone of Alaskans for Responsible Mining.