

January 20, 2016

Governor Bill Walker  
Lieutenant Governor Byron Mallott  
P.O. Box 110001  
Juneau, AK 99811

Dear Governor Walker and Lieutenant Governor Mallott,

Thank you for your efforts to address potential threats to salmon, water quality, and livelihoods posed by British Columbia's ambitious mining program proposed and operating in the headwaters of shared rivers in the BC - Alaska transboundary region. As you are well aware, there is very strong support in Alaska for increasing environmental protections in this region by invoking the Boundary Waters Treaty and convening the associated International Joint Commission (IJC). We are writing to inform you that there is also growing Canadian support for such protections and for utilizing the Treaty. This support, combined with opportunities inherent in a new Canadian federal government, makes consideration of specific international protections for transboundary watersheds timely.

We are aware that a Memorandum Of Understanding between Alaska and BC was signed on November 25 with the intent of developing a Statement Of Cooperation (SOC) specific to transboundary mining concerns. While we do not oppose such an arrangement, we agree with the thousands of Alaskans who believe the development of an SOC should be done only after the U.S. has formally asked Canada for an IJC reference for the transboundary region. As Canadians, we respectfully urge this approach, not to be meddling in your governmental affairs, but rather because we view the IJC as the most time tested and best resourced tool for meaningful international engagement in international watershed issues.

Formalizing a SOC prior to Alaska invoking the Boundary Waters Treaty through U.S. State Department channels will likely lessen chances of both federal governments working together when clearly federal engagement at this level would be beneficial. We have heard some officials in BC suggest that the province and state have sufficient resources to effectively engage independent of their respective federal governments. Indeed BC and Alaska must be fully committed to transboundary watershed stewardship, and we are, again, supportive of their ongoing discussion, but not if it precludes federal involvement via the IJC under the Boundary Waters Treaty.

BC mine safety and compliance issues have been significant in recent years, to say the least. It would be surprising to us if Alaska didn't want a thorough review of the potential cumulative effects of multiple mining projects in the transboundary region, as offered by IJC engagement, to ensure our shared waters remain thriving and bountiful.

We have been communicating with concerned Alaska groups and individuals about our mutual transboundary watershed interests, and expect collaboration to increase. We stand ready to join downstream Alaskans working together with the best and most powerful tool available through the IJC to protect the outstanding resources of the BC – Alaska transboundary watersheds.

Thank you Governor Walker and Lieutenant Governor Mallott for considering our view on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Bob Peart, Executive Director  
Sierra Club BC  
Victoria, BC

Bruce Passmore, Executive Director  
Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society  
Vancouver, BC

Jay Ritchler, Director General, Western Canada  
David Suzuki Foundation  
Vancouver, BC

Eduardo Sousa, Senior Forests Campaigner  
Greenpeace Canada  
Vancouver, BC

Ugo Lapointe, Canadian Coordinator  
Mining Watch Canada  
Ottawa, ON

Jessica Clogg, Executive Director  
West Coast Environmental Law Association  
Vancouver, BC

Stan Tomandl, Executive Director  
Friends of the Stikine Society  
Victoria, BC

Joe Foy, Executive Director  
Wilderness Committee  
Vancouver, BC

Nikki Skuce, Director  
Northern Confluence  
Smithers, BC

Ian McAllister, Executive Director  
Pacific Wild  
Denny Island, BC

Will Patric, Executive Director  
Rivers Without Borders Canada  
Vancouver, BC

Dan Lewis, Executive Director  
Clayoquot Action  
Tofino, BC

Shannon MacPhail, Executive Director  
Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition  
Hazelton, BC

Greg Knox, Executive Director  
Skeena Wild Conservation Trust  
Terrace, BC

Jesse Zeman, Executive Director  
BC Wildlife Federation  
Victoria, BC

Aaron Hill, Executive Director  
Watershed Watch Salmon Society  
Victoria, BC

Monty Bassett, Director  
Out Yonder Productions  
Smithers, BC

Wayne P. McCrory, Chair  
Valhalla Wilderness Society  
New Denver, BC

Dr. Jill Calder  
Kamloops Physicians for a Healthy Environment Society  
Kamloops, BC

Cc:

Sam Cotten, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish & Game  
David Rogers, Habitat Division Director, Alaska Department of Fish & Game  
Mark Myers, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Natural Resources  
Ed Fogels, Deputy Commissioner, Alaska Department of Natural Resources  
Larry Hartig, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation

U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski  
U.S. Senator Dan Sullivan  
U.S. Congressman Don Young  
Catherine Novelli, Under Secretary, U.S. Department of State  
Jane Nishida, Assistant Administrator, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

British Columbia Premier Christy Clark  
Bill Bennett, Minister, B.C. Ministry of Energy and Mines  
Mary Polak, Minister, B.C. Ministry of Environment  
Hunter Tootoo, Minister, Canadian Ministry of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard  
Carolyn McKenna, Minister, Canadian Ministry of Environment and Climate Change  
Stephane Dion, Minister, Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs