

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

June 8, 2016

CONTACT:

Chris Zimmer, Rivers Without Borders, 907/586-2166,
Zimmer@riverswithoutborders.org

**TULSEQUAH CHIEF MINE WATER QUALITY STUDY FLAWED AND NO EXCUSE FOR FURTHER INACTION ON MINE POLLUTION, INDEPENDENT ANALYSIS FINDS
With Mine Owner Chieftain Metals Unable To Stop Acid Mine Drainage, B.C. Needs To Step In**

(JUNEAU) An [independent analysis](#) released today shows significant flaws in Chieftain Metals' [Tulsequah Chief water quality study](#) that was done in response to the unauthorized closure of the water treatment plant at the mine. The analysis also found no justification for Chieftain's claim that the closure of the plant and ongoing acid mine drainage from the abandoned mine is not affecting the Taku watershed. The transboundary Taku is southeast Alaska's number one salmon producing river system.

"The Chieftain Metals study is fundamentally flawed and cannot be used to delay cleanup of this polluting mine any longer. In fact, if you look at some of the data in this study it is clear that the ongoing mine pollution does pose risks to the Taku," said Chris Zimmer of Rivers Without Borders. "Chieftain and B.C. have both a legal and moral responsibility to clean this up. It is indefensible to use Chieftain's flawed study as a reason for not prioritizing the Tulsequah Chief for cleanup."

The analysis was done by fisheries biologist Sarah O'Neal for Rivers Without Borders and concluded that Chieftain's study "relied on an unclear and insufficient sample design, used inappropriate receptor (bioindicator) species, incorporated previously collected data of unknown quality, failed to address some study objectives altogether, and reported information haphazardly. Consequently, the conclusion of low risk to aquatic life from Tulsequah Chief Mine acid mine drainage is unreliable." This contradicts [B.C. Minister of Energy and Mines Bill Bennett citing](#) the Chieftain study as evidence the pollution is minor and thus a low priority for remedial action.

Alaskans were initially encouraged by [Minister Bennett's reaction](#) to his visit to the Tulsequah Chief mine site in August 2015, after which he pledged to rectify the problem sooner rather than later. However, [he quickly began backtracking](#), claiming that since the discharge isn't harmful the Tulsequah Chief was a low priority for cleanup. He said he was hoping eventual mine development would result in a halt to the acid mine drainage.

"We can't depend on Chieftain to do the right thing, so it's now up to B.C. and the Canadian feds to assume the responsibility," said Zimmer. "[Chieftain Metals can't pay its bills](#) and is unable to attract any investors; this combined with a risk-averse investor climate and the downward trend in metals prices means this mine will likely never reopen, certainly not in the foreseeable future. So a cleanup solution that is not dependent on Chieftain and an operating mine must be developed as soon as possible."

Since it was abandoned in 1957 without any reclamation, the Tulsequah Chief mine has been pouring toxic acid mine drainage into the Tulsequah River, largest tributary to the transboundary Taku River. Despite [numerous inspections and cleanup orders](#) from B.C. agencies and frequent calls for action from Alaska and the U.S., B.C. and Canadian authorities have done little to enforce the orders and halt the pollution. The only significant attempt to address the pollution was the installation of a temporary water treatment plant by Chieftain Metals. But the plant only operated for several months and was closed in

[June 2012 due to costs and technical issues](#). As a result, acid mine drainage is once again pouring directly into the Tulsequah River, in violation of mine permits, Canadian federal law and a Memorandum of Understanding with the Taku River Tlingit First Nation.

“It’s time to seal up this festering sore. If Chieftain can’t do it then B.C. needs to step up. Alaskans concerned about B.C. mining across the transboundary region see the Tulsequah Chief as the test case of how B.C. will deal with other mines,” said Zimmer. “So far B.C. is failing the test and Alaskans have real reason for worry. If B.C. can’t deal with this relatively small mine, how will it deal with massive mines like KSM?”

#####