



# RIVERS WITHOUT BORDERS

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**CONTACT**

Chris Zimmer, [Zimmer@riverswithoutborders.org](mailto:Zimmer@riverswithoutborders.org),  
907/586-2166

## **Alaska Governor and Congressional Delegation Ask U.S. Federal Government for Help in Addressing Transboundary Mining Concerns Letter Highlights B.C.'s "Inadequate Response" to 60 Years of Acid Mine Pollution from Tulsequah Chief Mine**

(JUNEAU) A joint letter sent today to U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson from Alaska Governor Bill Walker and Lt. Governor Byron Mallott, Senators Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan and Representative Don Young emphasized the “potential catastrophic effects on Alaska’s communities” from upstream mining activities in British Columbia (B.C.) and urged the U.S. federal government to “help protect overall U.S. interests in this situation.” The letter also called the Tulsequah Chief “an example of an inadequate response by the B.C. government.”

“Alaskans are out of patience with B.C.’s failure to stop the pollution from the abandoned Tulsequah Chief. B.C.’s failure to clean up the mine is a clear example of why Alaska and the U.S. federal government need to work together to ensure upstream mining in B.C. doesn’t harm our interests downstream,” said Chris Zimmer of Rivers Without Borders. “We are glad to see the State of Alaska now working with members of Congress, and hopefully the State Department, to increase pressure on B.C. to honor its responsibilities and promises to remediate the abandoned mine. Today’s letter is an important step in increasing pressure on B.C. However experience has shown us that continued cooperative pressure will be needed to ensure B.C. honors its responsibilities at Tulsequah Chief.”

The Tulsequah Chief mine, located in the Taku River watershed in northwest B.C. close to the Alaska border, was abandoned in 1957 without any remediation. B.C. has wanted a new company to re-open the mine and then clean it up, but two companies have already gone bankrupt trying to re-open the mine and B.C. has done little to stop the illegal pollution. An [Aquatic Ecological Risk Assessment](#) released by the B.C. government on July 18 documents “unacceptable risks” from the acid mine drainage.

“After two bankruptcies, it’s clear the Tulsequah Chief is not a viable mine,” said Zimmer. “The only way to stop the illegal and clearly harmful acid mine drainage from the abandoned mine into the salmon-rich Taku watershed is for B.C. to take responsibility for mine cleanup. The new B.C. government needs to take a much more responsible approach with Tulsequah Chief than the previous Clark administration. We’re glad to see Alaska leaders stepping up the pressure on B.C. and Canada.”

Today’s broad concerns about B.C. mining across the transboundary Taku, Stikine and Unuk watersheds began with the Tulsequah Chief in the late 1990’s.

“The experience with Tulsequah Chief shows us that Alaska needs specific and enforceable protections to ensure that upstream mining in B.C. does not harm our water quality, fisheries and livelihoods,” said Zimmer. “We don’t want to see similar problems crop up at mines that will be much larger than Tulsequah Chief, such as KSM. It is vital the U.S. government heed the call in today’s letter to join with Alaska leaders to develop measures to protect our fish, water and jobs from upstream mining in B.C.”

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