December 2, 2020

Senator Lisa Murkowski
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Dan Sullivan
302 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Representative Don Young
2314 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Governor Mike Dunleavy
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 110001
Juneau, AK 99811-0001

Dear Senators Murkowski and Sullivan, Representative Young and Governor Dunleavy:

United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA) is the statewide commercial fishing trade association, representing 39 commercial fishing organizations participating in fisheries throughout the state of Alaska, and the U.S. federal fisheries off Alaska’s coast.

We are happy to report that all the attention and pressure from Alaskan leaders, fishermen, businesses, Tribes, NGO’s and others have given to cleaning up and closing down the abandoned and polluting Tulsequah Chief Mine in the Taku watershed near Juneau is paying off.

The government of British Columbia (B.C.) is finally taking steps to take responsibility for cleaning up and closing the Tulsequah Chief. In August, the provincial government released a draft Closure and Reclamation Plan for the Tulsequah Chief Mine Site and appropriated $1.6 million for its activities; crews were on-site this past August and September. In October, Ontario’s Superior Court of Justice ruled to halt the long receivership process for Chieftain Metals, owner of the Tulsequah Chief Mine. The court decision is significant because as long as the receivership process was ongoing, B.C. was legally prevented from taking specific measures to assume responsibility for the mine. That legal prohibition is now lifted.
These are significant moves but there is still much to be done. Continued pressure and attention from Alaska will be critical to ensuring B.C. seizes the opportunity presented by the recent Ontario court decision and quickly and thoroughly follows through on its cleanup plan.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. To ensure we get the results we all want in a timely manner, we respectfully ask for your continued help by:

- Directly communicating to the governments of B.C. and Canada the urgency and high priority of cleaning up and closing the Tulsequah Chief site;
- Urging the U.S. State Department and EPA to prioritize mine cleanup and closure;
- Urging the B.C. government to provide greater transparency of the process with clear timelines as the mine remediation process moves forward; and
- Urging B.C. to provide its plans to obtain necessary funding to complete the project.

For more than 60 years the abandoned B.C. Tulsequah Chief Mine has been pouring toxic, heavy metal-laden acid mine drainage into the Taku watershed, Northern Southeast Alaska’s most productive salmon river. The ongoing pollution is in violation of the Canadian Fisheries Act, B.C. mine permits and water quality standards, and an agreement with the Taku River Tlingit First Nation. The Tulsequah Chief has created a two decades-long controversy between Canada and the United States, which has sparked concerns across the entire transboundary region.

Thank you for helping make these recent milestones happen for the Tulsequah Chief Mine and Taku River. Let’s keep this momentum going and ensure the Tulsequah Chief Mine is cleaned up and closed once and for all.

Sincerely,

Matt Alward
UFA President

Frances H. Leach
Executive Director

Cc:
Pierce Wiegard (Senator Sullivan), Ann Robertson (Senator Murkowski), Michael DeFilippis (Representative Young)
Patty McGrath EPA, Daniel Kachur State Department
AK DNR Commissioner Corri A. Feige, Kyle Moselle OPMP
ADF&G Commissioner Doug Vincent-Lang
Senator Bert Stedman
Senator Jesse Kiehl
Representative Sara Hannan
Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins
Representative Dan Ortiz
Representative Andi Story
Representative Louise Stutes