

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
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Jessica Clogg, Executive Director
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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
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Dan Lewis, Executive Director
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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