

Alaska State Legislature

Senator Dennis Egan
Senator Gary Stevens
Representative Harriet Drummond
Representative Bryce Edgmon
Representative Andy Josephson



Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins
Representative Dan Ortiz
Representative Justin Parish
Representative Louise Stutes
Representative Geran Tarr

April 20, 2018

The Honorable Bill Walker and The Honorable Byron Mallott
Governor and Lieutenant Governor of Alaska
P.O. Box 110001
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Governor Walker,

Thank you for your letter to Secretary Tillerson, dated November 13, 2017, on the issue of large-scale hard rock mine proposals and operations in British Columbia (B.C.) upstream of Southeast Alaska's transboundary salmon rivers. We commend the work you and Lieutenant Governor Byron Mallott have so far completed on this issue, including negotiating the Statement of Cooperation (SoC) with B.C. and the numerous meetings the Lt. Governor has held on this issue with local constituents and B.C., U.S., and Canadian officials, particularly most recently, on a trip to Ottawa with Senator Dan Sullivan.

Alaska is a state with an economy and culture deeply tied to our natural resources. During the October 25, 2017 constituent meeting held by Lt. Governor Mallott, Representative Louise Stutes (Kodiak) stated, "This issue is the greatest threat facing Alaska's commercial fishing industry." The Taku, Stikine, and Unuk rivers are responsible for 80% of the king salmon produced in Southeast Alaska. The king salmon returns in the region are currently at record lows, and the closure of this fishery for a second year is having a dramatic impact on the livelihoods and ways of life throughout communities in Southeast Alaska.

As noted in the joint letter to Secretary Tillerson, "The Tulsequah Chief Mine in B.C., now closed, is currently discharging acid mine drainage into a tributary of the Taku River...and it serves as an example of inadequate response by the B.C. government." Alaskans face great uncertainties regarding what will happen when a much larger mine, such as the Red Chris Mine in the headwaters of the Stikine River, ceases operations – and, indeed, current mine operations – which could result in potential irreparable pollution to the shared watershed.

Alaska and the United States must demand binding international agreements that include enforceable financial assurances; joint funding of the independent collection of baseline water quality, and fish and wildlife assessment data in transboundary watersheds; long-term monitoring paid for by B.C. mine proponents; and a transparent environmental review process for mining projects in transboundary watersheds that is developed to the satisfaction of U.S., Canadian, and Tribal governments.


In a continued effort to amplify this issue, we also encourage you to partner, as appropriate and to mutual advantage, with the state administrations of the other U.S. states that share a border with British Columbia in a unified call to the U.S. Department of State to defend U.S. interests and resources. Washington, Idaho, and Montana all currently face similar issues with upstream B.C. mining activity in transboundary watersheds. State leaders must take every opportunity to impress upon the U.S. federal government the urgent need for action in these transboundary watersheds.

Thank you for your work to protect Alaskan interests and for ensuring that our state is represented on the front lines moving forward.

Respectfully,



Senator Dennis Egan



Senator Gary Stevens



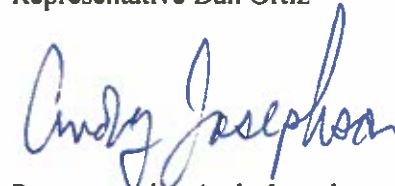
Speaker of the House Bryce Edgmon



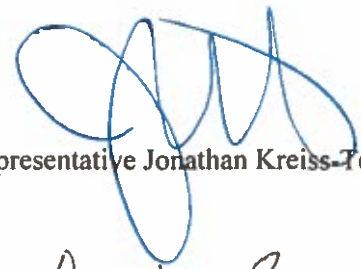
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