

December xx, 2018

Governor Mike Dunleavy
Lieutenant Governor Kevin Meyer
P.O. Box 110001
Juneau, Alaska 99811

Dear Governor Dunleavy and Lieutenant Governor Meyer,

As you begin your new administration the undersigned would like to ensure you and your staff recognize the value of the transboundary Taku River to Southeast Alaska, the long-standing controversy of the abandoned and polluting Tulsequah Chief mine, and what is now the best opportunity in 20 years to obtain real action from British Columbia (B.C.) to clean up and close down the mine.

We are asking for your help to continue the engagement with B.C. and Canada, Alaska legislators, our Congressional delegation, the U.S. federal government and the undersigned that has over the last several years made significant progress in addressing the Tulsequah Chief issue. We need your help to finish the job. We must emphasize that this is an issue with broad support on both sides of the border, throughout Southeast Alaska and across the political spectrum.

The Taku River is usually Southeast Alaska's largest overall salmon producer, with Southeast's largest run of coho and king salmon, and is a vital regional economic, cultural and recreational resource. Annual salmon runs can top 2 million wild fish. The Taku produces up to 100,000 chinook, 300,000 coho, 400,000 sockeye, 50,000 chum and 1,000,000 pink salmon, as well as significant populations of steelhead trout, cutthroat trout, Dolly Varden char and eulachon.

- Taku salmon support commercial fisheries with an average \$4.2 million in first wholesale value and a total annual output of at least \$6 million.
- Approximately 400 people earn income from the commercial harvest of Taku salmon, including permit holders and their crew, processing employees and others.
- The Taku River produces about 90% of the wild spring king salmon sport catch and about 75% of the annual wild king sport catch in the Juneau area.
- Taku coho account for about 30-50% of the sport catch in Juneau area waters.

The Taku is the traditional territory of Tlingit people on both sides of the border. The Douglas Indian Association is the federally-recognized tribe in Alaska and the Taku River Tlingit First Nation is based in Atlin, B.C. Both have recently called for the cleanup and closure of the Tulsequah Chief.

The Tulsequah Chief mine has been discharging toxic acidic wastewater into the Taku watershed since it was abandoned in 1957. Despite numerous calls for cleanup for nearly two decades the pollution has been allowed to continue unabated by previous B.C. governments. But this situation is now changing.

Cleaning up and closing down the Tulsequah Chief mine is currently the best, relatively easiest and timeliest opportunity to protect a valuable Southeast Alaska transboundary salmon watershed from the effects of mining in B.C.

The timely opportunity stems from an apparent change in the now NDP-led B.C. government attitude toward Tulsequah Chief. For 20 years, instead of enforcing the law and halting the illegal pollution, previous B.C. governments hoped a new mining company would re-open the mine and eventually clean it up. A "mine it to clean it up" strategy worried many on both sides of the border and has not worked. Two companies have gone bankrupt trying to develop the mine. It appears B.C. now realizes the Tulsequah

Chief is not a viable mine and its strategy of hoping a company will reopen and eventually clean up the mine isn't realistic.

B.C. is now saying some encouraging things about ending Tulsequah Chief's pollution and has taken the significant step of issuing a call for proposals for Tulsequah Chief cleanup and closure. But there could be much latitude as to what constitutes proper remediation, and Alaska's continued input will be crucial.

Alaska legislators, community leaders, fishing groups, businesses and other Alaskans have made cleanup of the Tulsequah Chief a main goal in discussions with B.C. and Canadian federal officials for many years. Most recently Senator Dan Sullivan on November 19 released a statement in response to news that B.C. will begin taking steps to clean up and permanently close the Tulsequah Chief Mine:

"I am encouraged to see the B.C. government taking a more active role in the long overdue clean-up of the Tulsequah Chief mine... As voices on both sides of the border have been asking for years, it's time for the B.C. government, the state of Alaska, Alaska Native and First Nations communities [to] work together to remove this and other looming threats over our rivers, fisheries, and communities' health and wellbeing."

We urge you to work with those leaders, businesses, organizations and individuals whose involvement in the Tulsequah Chief issue over the last many years is now achieving significant progress with the B.C. provincial and Canadian federal governments. We need your help to ensure that progress on Tulsequah Chief continues and that we can soon see a full and permanent solution to this abandoned and polluting mine.

Thank you for your attention to this important and timely issue. We would be happy to meet with you and/or your staff at your convenience. Please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Sincerely,

Cc:

DEC Commissioner, DNR Commissioner, ADF&G Commissioner, ADF&G Habitat Division Director,
Kyle Moselle DNR
Southeast Alaska Legislators
Senators Murkowski and Sullivan, Representative Young
State Department, EPA, Interior Department

Attachments:

--OVK and DIA resolutions; DIA and TRTFN letters
--Alaska delegation letters
--Recent media clips