

Petersburg Borough, Alaska
RESOLUTION #2019-20

A RESOLUTION URGING THE STATE OF ALASKA TO ENSURE THE BRITISH COLUMBIA (B.C.) GOVERNMENT IMPLEMENT AN OPEN AND TRANSPARENT PROCESS TO CLEAN UP AND CLOSE THE TULSEQUAH CHIEF MINE

WHEREAS, 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 two 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; and

WHEREAS, 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 mine; and

WHEREAS, 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, the pollution was allowed to continue unabated by previous B.C. governments; and

WHEREAS, this situation is changing and it appears the current B.C. government now realizes the Tulsequah Chief is not a viable mine and the previous strategy of hoping a company will reopen and eventually clean up the mine isn't realistic; and

WHEREAS, although B.C. is developing a remediation plan for the mine and says that on site work will start in 2020, there is still much to do to ensure this happens; and

WHEREAS, cleaning up and closing down the Tulsequah Chief mine is currently the best, relatively easiest and timeliest opportunity to protect a valuable transboundary salmon watershed; and

WHEREAS, Alaska legislators, governors, members of congress, community leaders, fishing and tourism groups, businesses and other Alaskans have made cleanup of the Tulsequah Chief a main goal in discussions with B.C. Provincial and Canadian federal officials for many years.

WHEREAS, Remediation of the Tulsequah Chief Mine remains the state of Alaska's highest transboundary water priority.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Petersburg Borough Assembly urges the State of Alaska to:

1. Ensure that the B.C. government conducts a comprehensive cleanup and closure of the Tulsequah Chief mine site; and
2. Engage with B.C. and ensure that the process to develop and implement a cleanup and closure plan is as open and transparent as possible and gives downstream interests a voice; and

3. Ensure that the cleanup plan be released to the public so that interested parties are given meaningful opportunity to review the plan in order that downstream stakeholder interests are considered toward achieving the best possible remediation outcome.

PASSED and APPROVED by the Assembly of the Petersburg Borough, Alaska this 16th day of December, 2019.

Mark Jensen, Mayor

ATTEST:

Debra K. Thompson, Borough Clerk