



Alaska/B.C. Transboundary Rivers News: new B.C. mines, tailings disposal and B.C. party leadership

June 13 – July 24, 2017

Greetings everyone,

Developments in the issue of Canadian large-scale mining activity in Alaska/British Columbia (B.C.) watersheds continue to be numerous and fast-paced.

New Mine in Operation Upstream of Ketchikan, AK

On June 20th, the [first gold was poured at Pretivm's Brucejack](#) gold mine approximately 28 miles from the U.S./Canada border in the Unuk River watershed. This and Imperial Metals' Red Chris mine in the Stikine watershed are now the two operating mines of at least ten total proposed and developing mines directly upstream from Southeast Alaska.

B.C. OKs KSM to Dump Tailings into Fish-Bearing Headwaters, Alaskans Not Consulted

One week after Pretivm's first gold pour, Seabridge Gold, owner of the KSM mining project, also in the Unuk River watershed about 20 miles from the U.S./Canada border, [received authorization](#) from the Canadian federal government to dump tailings into the fish-bearing headwaters of the adjacent salmon-rich Nass River watershed. The same regulatory amendment under Canada's federal Fisheries Act was granted to Imperial Metals to dump tailings into fish-bearing streams at the Red Chris tailings facility. [Judith Lavoie of DeSmog Canada writes](#) of the Seabridge Gold authorization: "While the company has pledged to compensate for the loss...and will relocate about 30,000 fish from the affected creeks, Alaskans say they were not consulted, despite a recently-signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between B.C. and Alaska." Commercial fishermen and other Alaskans resent the fact they are going to great pains to protect the salmon on the U.S. side of the border through fishery closures and restrictions, only to have Canada put these same fish at risk on the other side of the border.

Thousands of Alaskans Request Enforceable Protections in Comment Period

June 30th marked the end of a comment period during which the State of Alaska invited feedback on the Alaska/B.C. MOU and Statement of Cooperation (SoC), as well as on the transboundary rivers situation in general. In [letters submitted to Governor Walker](#) and Lieutenant Governor Mallott, a number of organizations that collectively represent thousands of Alaskans, as well as several Alaska State legislators, including [Speaker of the House Bryce Edgmon](#) and House Fisheries Committee Chair Louise Stutes, reiterated their call on the State of Alaska to formally request the U.S. federal government pursue [international, enforceable protections](#) to

ensure Alaskans are not irreparably harmed by upstream Canadian mining.

Statement of Cooperation Fails to Notify Alaskans of Pertinent B.C. Mining News

A number of letters submitted to the State of Alaska also highlight how, despite the SoC, the State of Alaska was not notified by the B.C. government of the potential new buyer for the Tulsequah Chief mine. [The Province](#), [Vancouver Sun](#), [CoastAlaska News](#) and others reported how Alaska Tribal leaders, B.C. First Nations citizens, and Alaska commercial fishermen are dismayed the B.C. government is not cleaning up and closing the beleaguered mine, as indicated by former [B.C. Energy and Mines Minister Bill Bennett](#) (now an executive at junior mining company, Eagle Plains Resources).

“GreenDP” Party Control in B.C. Could Lead to Promising Changes in Mining Sector

B.C. Green party leader, Andrew Weaver, referred to Tulsequah Chief as [“an environmental black eye to B.C.”](#) on the floor of the Legislative Assembly earlier this spring. Under the leadership of NDP Premier John Horgan and a cabinet of new ministers, the [“GreenDP” party officially assumed control of the B.C. provincial government](#) this week, [after sixteen years of Liberal party rule](#). Expectations are high for big changes with this new coalition government, including in the mining sector.

Mount Polley Disaster Third Anniversary Approaching

Finally, August 4th quickly approaches, which will mark the third anniversary of the Mount Polley mine tailings disaster in the Fraser River watershed, as well as the [statute of limitations for certain violations](#) to be filed against the B.C. government and Imperial Metals for this breach. Eyes on both sides of the border will be watching for Premier Horgan’s first moves on this situation.

Best regards,
Heather Hardcastle
Salmon Beyond Borders Campaign Director

*The publications referenced above and other archived AK-B.C. transboundary-related media are [here](#).