

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



May 7, 2021

Honorable John Horgan  
P.O. Box 9041 Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria, BC V8W 9E1  
*Delivered electronically*

Dear Premier Horgan,

As Alaska lawmakers, we write to convey the deep concerns of our constituents regarding the potential impacts to our transboundary rivers from abandoned, operating, and future large-scale mining projects in British Columbia. We write with a sense of urgency as the Alaska Department of Fish & Game is poised to list the once-mighty Chinook salmon runs of the Taku, Stikine, and Unuk Rivers as "Stocks of Concern" this year. Similarly, Stikine River sockeye salmon runs are forecasted to not meet subsistence needs and B.C salmon stocks are historically low. Meanwhile, B.C. mine developers continue building massive tailings dams at the headwaters of these shared rivers. We must work together to develop a binding international framework that will protect the health of these rivers for generations to come.

The non-binding, unfunded B.C.-Alaska Memorandum of Understanding and Statement of Cooperation on Protection of Transboundary Waters are important communication tools. But without binding international agreements and the funding for long-term water quality testing, downstream Alaskans and British Columbians remain unprotected from the real threat of significant water pollution and associated impacts from upstream mining activity.

We know your government recently delayed the process of amending its mine reclamation policy. In 2018, former Alaska Governor Bill Walker asked your Province to require companies with mining projects in B.C.-Alaska transboundary rivers to post a full reclamation bond at the time they are permitted, as the State of Alaska requires. Washington state lawmakers also made a similar request in a letter on March 23, 2021. We echo Governor Walker's request as a minimum step toward shared stewardship of our salmon rivers.

The United States Congress has appropriated increasing amounts each year since 2016 to fund water quality monitoring gauges on the U.S. side of our transboundary rivers. Congress has also appropriated funds for the U.S. Department of State's engagement with Global Affairs Canada on the issue of governance related to the potential impacts of B.C. mining in shared watersheds. There is a clear need and opportunity for Canada to join with the U.S. in supporting First Nations and Canadian agencies in conducting ecological monitoring on the Canadian side of the border.

