

October 5, 2015

Alaskans Strongly Support Reforming British Columbian Mining In Order to Help Protect Local Alaskan Watersheds Key Survey Findings

To: Interested Parties

From: Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research

A new survey¹ conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research on Alaskan voters' views toward the British Columbian mining industry highlights three central findings:

- 1. Alaskans have a substantial level of concern about the potential impacts of British Columbian mining on their state.**
- 2. As a result, Alaskans overwhelming support a set of commonsense proposals to reform British Columbia's mining laws and regulations.**
- 3. Even though this issue crosses an international boundary, Alaskan voters want their elected officials to fight for an Alaskan seat at the table when it comes to decisions about the way mining in British Columbia operates.**

Concerns About B.C. Mining's Impact on Alaska

Nearly three-quarters of Alaskan voters express concern about a mining waste spill in British Columbia affecting shared watersheds that drain into Alaska, and they feel that way strongly—42 percent say they are very concerned about such an event. This apprehension is greatest in Southeast Alaska (86 percent very or somewhat concerned), but is not limited to that transboundary region—70 percent of the rest of the state also voice concern.

Overwhelming Support for Proposals to Reform Mining Regulations

¹ Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research conducted a survey of 500 registered Alaskan voters. The survey was conducted by live professional interviewers between August 19th and 30th, 2015. The sample is subject to a margin of error of +/-4.4 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence interval; margin of error is higher among subgroups. The sample was weighted using data from the U.S Census Bureau and several distinct voter files.

This concern leads to widespread, robust support for proposals designed to change the way mining is regulated in British Columbia. The table below highlights that more than seven in ten Alaska voters support each of these proposals.

Support is generally somewhat higher in Southeast Alaska than statewide, but every proposal is supported by at least a 34-point margin across every region of the state. Indeed, support for each of these proposals transcends geography, politics, and every other demographic divide. Democrats, Republicans, and Independents all support every proposal below by at least 23 percentage points (see Appendix A).

	Favor-Oppose (Total Statewide)	Favor-Oppose (SE Alaska)
Ensure that mines have full plans for cleanup, closure and long-term tailings maintenance and water treatment prior to getting operating approval. These plans should include the requirement that mining companies adequately funds the costs of closing the mine safely and on-going maintenance of its tailings.	90-6	95-2
Establish a mandatory fund paid into by the industry before a mining project in watersheds shared by Alaska and British Columbia is granted operating approval that can be used for cleanup and compensation in the case of mining waste failures.	79-16	87-10
Increase the authority and usage of independent review boards to inspect and regulate mining waste facilities.	77-16	81-13
Make sure that the U.S. has an equal seat at the table with British Columbia to decide if and how mining development in Canada should go forward if it has the potential to pollute shared waters.	76-22	79-18
Establish "no-go" zones where mining is prohibited in certain areas, such as at salmon watersheds, areas of cultural or ecological importance, unsettled First Nations' land claims, and farm land.	72-22	74-14
<i>Now I am going to read you some proposals that have been made to help reform British Columbia's mining laws and regulations. For each, please tell me whether you favor or oppose that proposal.</i>		

Alaskan Voters Should Have a Seat at the Table

The table on the preceding page shows more than three-quarters support for the proposal to require U.S. involvement in Canadian mining development decisions—a finding reflected throughout this survey. Seventy-three percent agree (42 percent strongly agree) with the statement that “What happens with mines in British Columbia near watersheds that drain into Southeast Alaska impact us. Even though it’s another country, we should have a say in how the Canadian mines are governed and regulated.”

This dynamic extends to politics—Alaskan elected officials who stand up for Alaska on this issue have the potential to reap electoral rewards. The plurality—45 percent—say that they would be more likely to support their member of Congress if they worked with the State of Alaska, Congress, and the U.S. Department of State to demand any Canadian mining project include a financial guarantee that Alaskans would be compensated if a shared watershed was damaged by a mine. This is a strong response on this measure—in general, people tend to be unwilling to say one issue will have an impact on the way they, regardless of partisanship. Indeed, 54 percent of Democrats, 42 percent of Republicans, and 44 percent of Independents say this issue would make them more likely to support their member of Congress.

Finally, a parallel study conducted in among British Columbians² on the same issue reveals a striking finding that suggests even Canadians agree that Alaska should have a say in B.C. mining policy. Nearly two-thirds (65 percent) of British Columbians say that the fact that “some Alaskans living in the U.S. along the border of northwestern British Columbia have expressed concern about mining upstream from our shared salmon rivers” makes them less likely to support mining and industrial development in northwest British Columbia.

Conclusion

Alaskan voters exhibit real concern about the potential deleterious impacts on their state from mines in British Columbia. Even though it is a different country, this concern leads to overwhelming support for commonsense, balanced proposals to reform the mining industry—support that crosses political and demographic lines.

It is abundantly clear that Alaskans understand the dynamic that leads to them assuming all the risks that come with British Columbian mining, without having any say in the process or benefiting from any of the rewards. This is a dynamic that the Alaskan electorate feels strongly about changing, and they are poised to reward elected officials who take on this fight on their behalf.

² Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research conducted a survey of 805 British Columbian adults eligible to vote, including an oversample of 200 residents of Northern British Columbia. The survey was conducted by live professional interviewers between August 19th and 30th, 2015. The sample is subject to a margin of error of +/-3.5 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence interval; margin of error is higher among subgroups. The sample was weighted using data from the Census of Canada.

Appendix A: Support for Proposals by Partisanship

	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
Ensure that mines have full plans for cleanup, closure and long-term tailings maintenance and water treatment prior to getting operating approval. These plans should include the requirement that mining companies adequately funds the costs of closing the mine safely and on-going maintenance of its tailings.	97-2	89-6	88-10
Establish a mandatory fund paid into by the industry before a mining project in watersheds shared by Alaska and British Columbia is granted operating approval that can be used for cleanup and compensation in the case of mining waste failures.	93-6	78-18	73-21
Increase the authority and usage of independent review boards to inspect and regulate mining waste facilities.	92-5	75-17	73-23
Make sure that the U.S. has an equal seat at the table with British Columbia to decide if and how mining development in Canada should go forward if it has the potential to pollute shared waters.	87-11	74-23	72-26
Establish "no-go" zones where mining is prohibited in certain areas, such as at salmon watersheds, areas of cultural or ecological importance, unsettled First Nations' land claims, and farm land.	89-7	73-21	57-34
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