

Alaska takes Canada mining concerns to Secretary Tillerson

By **BECKY BOHRER**
Associated Press

NOVEMBER 17, 2017, 4:00 PM | JUNEAU, ALASKA

Officials in Alaska want the [U.S. State Department](#) to raise with the Canadian government concerns about the impacts of British Columbia mining on waters that flow across the border.

Gov. [Bill Walker](#), Lt. Gov. Byron Mallott and Alaska's congressional delegation also asked Secretary of State Rex Tillerson to determine if the concerns should be brought to a special international commission.

The commission gets involved when asked to do so by the national governments.

The congressional delegation made similar requests under the Obama administration and found the response to be lacking.

The State Department in October 2016 said it was working with other federal agencies to determine what Canada's national government was doing to address U.S. concerns and committed to identifying the best way forward. Sen. [Lisa Murkowski](#) called the department's response a positive step but said more needed to be done.

In their letter to Tillerson this week, the Alaska officials said they are encouraged by how engaged the provincial government in British Columbia has been with the state. But they said they also see a complementary federal role.

They recommend a formal consultation process during environmental reviews that would involve state and federal agencies and tribes. They also urge the creation of a task force to develop recommendations and direct funding for river protection.

Chris Zimmer, Alaska campaign director with Rivers Without Borders, said it's good that Walker and Mallott are working with the congressional delegation to increase pressure on British Columbia.

Concerns persist with pollution from an abandoned mine in the province, underscoring a need for the state and U.S. government to work together to ensure that upstream mining does not harm downstream interests in Alaska, Zimmer said in a statement.

Copyright 2017 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Copyright © 2018, Los Angeles Times

This article is related to: [Canada](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [Bill Walker](#), [Lisa Murkowski](#)

Support Quality Journalism
Subscribe for only 99¢

START NOW ›