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JUNEAU -- The spectacular collapse of Canada's Mount Polley mine waste dam exactly a year ago Tuesday raised fears that new mines much closer to Southeast Alaska could threaten rivers and salmon stocks crucial to the area.

But Lt. Gov. Byron Mallott, just back from Washington, D.C., said Southeast residents' hopes for help from the U.S. State Department in dealing with Canada are unlikely to be realized.

That's left Alaskans watching Canada's mining boom "extremely disappointed," said Rob Sanderson, a Native leader from Ketchikan.

"These projects offer no benefits to Alaskans; only the threat of pollution," he said.

Some of those monitoring the growth of new Canadian mines say they had little confidence in British Columbia's mine regulations even before the Mount Polley disaster.

To give Alaska a say in what happens with those mines, they're pushing for use of the Boundary Waters Treaty between the countries, which has a process called the International Joint Commission to resolve cross-border disputes when an activity in one country threatens the waters in another.

Local governments and fishing, environmental and tribal groups all lined up behind the IJC process, hoping that it would give Alaska an ability to protect its interests.

The city and borough of Juneau urged the IJC be activated, saying that both Mount Polley and the ongoing acid drainage pollution from the nearby Tulsequah Chief mine show the weakness of Canadian environmental regulation.

Juneau and many other communities throughout Southeast urged the U.S. and Canadian governments to refer the issue to the IJC.

But Mallott, who met with Canada's minister for public policy and officials at the U.S. State Department during his trip, said Alaska shouldn't count on help there.

Both groups, he said, "made it pretty clear" that they won't support an IJC referral.

"They felt those were issues that should be dealt with by the state of Alaska and British Columbia, and both were fairly strongly articulated in that regard," Mallott said. "So that was the response I got," he said.

Chris Zimmer of the environmental group Rivers Without Borders has long been urging the IJC process and was surprised to see the dispute being treated as a local issue that doesn't need treaty involvement.

"It baffled me," he said.

"This situation and the IJC are just tailor-made for each other. To say this is a local issue makes no sense," Zimmer said.

Alaska is holding a trans-boundary waters "dialogue" in Juneau this week, hosted by Mallott.

Mallott chairs a Walker administration trans-boundary working group that includes the commissioners of the departments of Natural Resources, Fish and Game and Environmental Conservation. All will be represented at the meeting.

Participation at the dialogue, which includes a meeting with tribal representatives Wednesday and a broader 45-member group Thursday, is by invitation only, though the public can observe the meetings.

Sanderson and Zimmer are among the participants, along with local governments and other representatives.

A white paper produced for meeting participants says it will address the risk of mining pollution from British Columbia affecting Alaska waters and especially its salmon-producing waters, but says little about what it hopes to accomplish. It is scheduled to conclude with a discussion of "next steps."

While the dialogue was billed as including industry representatives, the list of attendees shows no representatives of the Canadian mining industry. Among its topics will be the adequacy of Canadian mining regulation.

The white paper also says that Alaska doesn't currently have funding available to conduct its own environmental reviews of British Columbia's projects that may affect Alaska, but does participate in the Canadian review process as resources allow.

But while Alaskans such as Sanderson and Zimmer say they'd like to see the state do more to participate and monitor the Canadian regulatory process, they say the state needs more tools to do so and shouldn't give up on the IJC process.

"The Department of State is a tough wall to get through, but we shouldn't take a 'no' from an overworked, low-level employee there," Zimmer said.

Mallott said that despite the rejection so far, he's not giving up on the IJC process, but he's also working to develop a relationship with British Columbia officials.

He said he doubts the U.S. State Department's consideration had risen to the level of Secretary of State John Kerry; he met with an assistant secretary.

Representatives of Sens. Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan will be at the meeting, he said, in case additional federal help is needed.

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