

June 29, 2017

The Honorable Bill Walker and The Honorable Byron Mallott
Governor and Lieutenant Governor of the State of Alaska
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 110001
Juneau, AK 99811-0001

CC (*via email*):

Alaska Congressional Delegation, Alaska Legislators, Alaska Agencies, Southeast Alaska Mayors, Transboundary Citizens Advisory Group, Central Council Tlingit Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, Douglas Indian Association, Ketchikan Indian Community, Organized Village of Kasaan, United Tribal Transboundary Mining Work Group

Dear Governor Walker and Lieutenant Governor Mallott:

On May 17, 2017, multiple Alaskans received from you, Lt. Governor Mallott, draft implementation documents for the Statement of Cooperation on Protection of Transboundary Waters between the State of Alaska Departments of Environmental Conservation, Fish and Game and Natural Resources and the Province of British Columbia Ministries of Environment, and Energy and Mines (“SoC”). You invited Alaskans to submit by June 30th comments on these drafts and/or general comments on how the State of Alaska can best protect Alaska-British Columbia (B.C.) transboundary waters. Salmon Beyond Borders, which is driven by commercial and sport fishermen and business owners, appreciate the opportunity to provide our comments to you.

As you know, Salmon Beyond Borders has commented many times on the Alaska-B.C. SoC (and MoU) process, and we thank you for your efforts through this process thus far to try to protect Alaskans downstream of Canadian mining activity in the transboundary Taku, Stikine, and Unuk watersheds. We stated in our comment letter dated September 23, 2016: *“The MoU/SoC process, focused on information sharing, notice, monitoring, and public access to information, is one step within a series of steps that can collectively lead to enforceable measures to protect the clean water, fisheries, jobs, cultures and ways of life in the transboundary watersheds.”*

Salmon Beyond Borders also wrote in that letter (and in a January 2016 comment letter to you), *“Critical additional steps must, of course, involve the action of the U.S. federal government...[and] the State of Alaska should explicitly tell the U.S. federal government there is a necessary, critical role for the federal government to play in this international matter.”* The non-binding and unfunded MoU/SoC can never lead to *binding* protections for Alaskans.

Although you, Lt. Governor Mallott, have said you have *verbally* requested the U.S. federal government to engage in this transboundary situation, the State of Alaska still has not made this *written* request, like the Alaska congressional delegation has, and as more than 6,000 Alaskans have called on you to do within the last year.

Our ask of the State of Alaska is that both of you, Governor Walker and Lieutenant Governor Mallott, explicitly and in writing request the U.S. federal government to develop and secure binding, enforceable measures to defend threatened Alaska interests, and Alaskans’ way of life, in Alaska-B.C. transboundary watersheds. We request you send this simple written statement to U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson by August 4, 2017. This is a fitting date as it is the 3rd anniversary

of the Mount Polley mine tailings disaster, and is almost one week in advance of Alaska Wild Salmon Day on August 10, 2017.

In the last three years, through letters and resolutions, tens of thousands of Alaskans have called on the U.S. federal government to take action under the Boundary Waters Treaty to protect U.S. interests in this situation. The U.S. federal government will likely continue to not take meaningful action, however, unless specifically requested to do so by both the Alaska congressional delegation and the State of Alaska.

In the attached memorandum to the two of you from Montana citizens, Montanans also strongly recommend that the State of Alaska immediately and specifically request federal help. They write, in part: *“The difference in outcomes in the two Montana-B.C. transboundary rivers, the Elk-Kootenai and Flathead, is clear: when transboundary rivers are managed solely through a state/province MoU, British Columbia’s interests take clear precedent; when transboundary rivers are managed not only through state/province agreements but hand-in-hand with federal/international protocols, the interests of downstream stakeholders are balanced well against the interests of upstream industry.”*

Please know that Alaskan families are counting on you to formally request by August 4th that the U.S. federal government work with the Canadian federal government to safeguard Alaska’s interests. And, please remember, in the case of Canada’s large-scale mining in transboundary watersheds, Alaska has everything to lose and nothing to gain.

Sincerely,

Heather Hardcastle, Campaign Director
Salmon Beyond Borders

Enclosure (Memorandum: “Montana’s experience – A guide to protecting Alaska’s transboundary future”)