

Study finds three rivers generate millions in economic activity

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The McDowell Group released an economic study commissioned by Salmon Beyond Borders on Nov. 17 which found the present value of three transboundary watersheds threatened by British Columbia (B.C.) mining are valued at just under \$1 billion when considering a 30-year horizon. McDowell Group also stated with appropriate management, Southeast Alaska's transboundary watersheds can generate economic benefits in perpetuity.

The economic analysis completed by the McDowell Group, an Alaska-based research and consulting firm, measured the economic impacts in Southeast Alaska of the Taku, Stikine and Unuk River watersheds. The study also briefly considered economic contributions to Southeast Alaska from the Nass and Skeena Rivers, two rivers systems that also have cross-border economic impacts. To assess these impacts, McDowell Group focused on two key industries in the region: commercial fishing and the visitor and recreation industry.

McDowell Group found that, combined, the Taku, Stikine and Unuk River watersheds account for \$48 million in economic activity annually, including multiplier effects. This includes \$34 million in direct spending, 400 jobs for the Southeast region, and almost \$20 million in labor income. The firm also estimated the ex-vessel value and first wholesale value of Nass and Skeena River sockeye that are commercially caught in Alaska waters is approximately \$620,000, and over \$1.3 million, respectively.

McDowell Group noted that measuring transboundary watershed-related economic activity specifically is complex because data is scant, and it can be difficult to separate the threatened watersheds from the larger ecosystem and economy that includes all of Southeast Alaska and Canada.

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