

CITY AND BOROUGH OF WRANGELL

RESOLUTION No. 09-17-1378

A RESOLUTION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF THE CITY AND BOROUGH OF WRANGELL, ALASKA, SUPPORTING ENFORCEMENT OF THE BOUNDARY WATERS TREATY IN THE SOUTHEAST ALASKA/NORTHWEST BRITISH COLUMBIA TRANSBOUNDARY REGION

**WHEREAS**, the Wrangell Borough Assembly represents the residents of the City and Borough of Wrangell; and

**WHEREAS**, the Stikine River is exceptionally vital to Wrangell's cultural and economic health and well-being, all of the transboundary watersheds of the Northwest British Columbia and Southeast Alaska region are of tremendous and unique ecological, economic subsistence, cultural and recreational value, and the clean water and intact habitat of these river systems are some of the most productive wild salmon rivers on the entire west coast of North America; and

**WHEREAS**, transboundary rivers and their tributaries are facing a significant increase in new large-scale mining development that will impact wild salmon watersheds that cross the U.S. and Canada border, including the Red Chris open-pit mine that began operations in the headwaters of the Stikine River in February 2015; and

**WHEREAS**, this large-scale open pit mining development is occurring in known acid-generating ore bodies, along with associated waste rock storage facilities and tailings dams, roads and other infrastructure, will threaten the productivity and health of watersheds and fish and wildlife habitat through cumulative impacts and contamination or possible catastrophic failures; and

**WHEREAS**, Alaska Native Tribes, B.C. First Nations, commercial fishermen, traditional and customary and recreational users local communities, and conservation groups on both sides of the U.S./Canadian border have raised concerns about the mining development in British Columbia presenting significant potential for harm to water quality, fish and wildlife, cultural practices, and local economy; and

**WHEREAS**, the members of the Wrangell Borough Assembly agree to share information and seek all opportunities for collaboration to address these issues, promote methods to protect these vital rivers from harm, and seek to facilitate and promote meaningful dialogue and engagement at the local, state, federal, provincial, and Tribal levels to assure protection of resources on both sides of the border; and

**WHEREAS**, maintaining and protecting healthy wild salmon populations throughout these river systems is the priority of local communities and all user groups

and individuals downstream from these projects must be addressed in all transboundary watershed development decision-making; and

**WHEREAS**, the Auditor General of British Columbia, in her report issued May 3, 2016, found that the British Columbia Ministry of Energy and Mines and Ministry of the Environment's "compliance and enforcement activities of the mining sector are inadequate to protect the province from significant environmental risks"; and


**WHEREAS**, the Statement of Cooperation on Protection of Transboundary Waters, signed by Lieutenant Governor Byron Mallott, Bill Bennett, British Columbia Minister of Energy and Mines, and Mary Polak, British Columbia Minister of the Environment, on October 6, 2016, is important, but cannot provide binding, enforceable protections for the residents, rivers, and watersheds of the state; and

**WHEREAS**, the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 between the United States and Canada states in Article IV, "It is further agreed that the waters herein defined as boundary waters and waters flowing across the boundary shall not be polluted on either side to the injury of health or property on the other," and provides a mechanism to address transboundary water concerns through the International Joint Commission; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE ASSEMBLY OF THE CITY AND BOROUGH OF WRANGELL, ALASKA**, hereby calls for the United States federal government to utilize any and all powers under the Boundary Waters Treaty to develop binding and enforceable protections and financial assurances to ensure Alaska and British Columbia interests and ways of life are not negatively impacted by Canadian development in the shared transboundary watersheds of Southeast Alaska and Northwest British Columbia.

ADOPTED: September 26, 2017

  
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David L. Jack, Mayor

ATTEST:   
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Kim Lane, MMC, Borough Clerk

