

Presented by: The Manager
Introduced:
Drafted by: Mayor

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY AND BOROUGH OF JUNEAU, ALASKA

Serial No. 2807

A Resolution of the City and Borough of Juneau in Support of the Enforcement of the Boundary Waters Treaty in the Southeast Alaska/Northwest British Columbia Transboundary Region.

WHEREAS, the transboundary rivers of Northwest British Columbia and Southeast Alaska have tremendous unique economic, ecological, cultural, and recreational value; and

WHEREAS, protecting productive pristine waters and intact habitats throughout these transboundary river systems is necessary to ensure healthy wild salmon populations and abundant fisheries; and

WHEREAS, large-scale mining in British Columbia is experiencing unprecedented and rapid expansion within the Taku, Stikine, and Unuk watersheds; and

WHEREAS, projects of concern include Tulsequah Chief, New Polaris, and Big Bull in the Taku watershed; Galore Creek, Red Chris mine, and Schaft Creek in the Stikine watershed; and the Kerr-Sulphurets-Mitchell project and Brucejack mine in the headwaters of the Unuk River; and

WHEREAS, large-scale mining development could have significant adverse effects on the environment and fisheries within the transboundary region, including areas important to residents of the businesses in Juneau; and

WHEREAS, the projects of concern would generate billions of tons of acid generating tailings, which would be held behind huge dams and which could pose the threat of acid rock drainage for centuries, if not in perpetuity; and

WHEREAS, ongoing acid rock drainage at the Tulsequah Chief mine, and the Mount Polley tailings dam failure, demonstrate weaknesses in current monitoring and enforcement efforts in British Columbia; and

WHEREAS, the Auditor General of British Columbia issued a report on May 3, 2016, on her audit of compliance and enforcement in the mining sector and 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 of Alaska; and

WHEREAS, commercial fishermen, subsistence and recreational users, elected leaders, local communities, and Native Tribes and First Nations on both sides of the Alaska / Canadian border have raised concerns about the pace and scope of the proposed large-scale mining development in the watersheds of transboundary river systems and the potential for harm to water quality, fish and wildlife, and the socio-economic sustainability of local communities such as Juneau within the region; 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.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE ASSEMBLY OF THE CITY AND BOROUGH OF JUNEAU, ALASKA:

Section 1. The City and Borough of Juneau strongly urges the United States government to utilize any and all powers under the Boundary Waters Treaty to develop binding and enforceable protections to ensure that Alaska resources and ways of life are not harmed by upstream Canadian development in British Columbia.

Section 2. The concerns of affected local communities, individuals, and user groups downstream from these projects must be integral to transboundary watershed development decision-making. The City and Borough urges our Canadian neighbors and the United States government to establish greater opportunity for these voices to be heard.

Section 3. Effective Date. This resolution shall be effective immediately after its adoption.

Adopted this _____ day of _____, 2017.

Kendell D. Koelsch, Mayor

Attest:

Laurie J. Sica, Municipal Clerk