

CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

RESOLUTION NO. 2014-16

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA URGING THE US GOVERNMENT TO WORK WITH THE INTERNATIONAL JOINT COMMISSION (IJC) AND THE ALASKA/BRITISH COLUMBIA (BC) TRANSBOUNDARY REGION AND TO UTILIZE ANY AND ALL POWERS UNDER THE BOUNDARY WATERS TREATY TO ENSURE THAT ALASKA RESOURCES ARE NOT HARMED BY UPSTREAM DEVELOPMENT IN BC

WHEREAS, The transboundary rivers of the Northwest British Columbia/Southeast Alaska region, including the Taku, Stikine and Unuk rivers, are of tremendous and unique economic, ecological, cultural and recreational value. The clean water and intact habitat of these river systems make them some of the most productive wild salmon rivers on the entire west coast of North America; and

WHEREAS, With the BC Northwest Power Line bringing in power, these rivers and their tributaries are facing a significant increase in new, large-scale development and industrialization that will transform the area and impact these rivers. Several open-pit mine projects, in known acid-generating ore bodies, along with associated waste rock piles, tailings dams, energy projects, and roads, all threaten the productivity of the rivers and health of the region. Major threats to water quality, salmon and wildlife include accidents and spills, tailings dam breaches, long-term acid mine drainage, and habitat fragmentation; and

WHEREAS, the proposed mines include Tulsequah Chief in the Taku watershed; Galore Creek, Red Chris and Schaft Creek in the Stikine watershed; and the Kerr-Sulphurets-Mitchell (KSM) project in the headwaters of the Unuk River; and

WHEREAS, Some of these mines would require an unprecedented level of water treatment and could pose the threat of acid mine drainage for centuries, if not in perpetuity; and

WHEREAS, There has been little transparent dialogue between the Canadian and U.S. governments regarding the proposed projects and specific ways to ensure our interests are protected; and

WHEREAS environmental laws and permitting processes in BC and Canada have been weakened over the past decade. The ongoing acid mine drainage from the Tulsequah Chief mine and the tailings dam failure at the Mt. Polley mine demonstrate weaknesses in monitoring and enforcement; and

WHEREAS Commercial fishermen, subsistence and recreational users, local communities, elected leaders and native tribes on both sides of the Canadian/U.S. border have all raised concerns about the pace and scope of the proposed industrial development in British Columbia and the potential for harm to water quality, fish and wildlife, and local economies; and

WHEREAS A major part of Sitka's economic base is commercial and sport charter ocean fishing with 570 resident commercial permit and 536 crew license holders, that deliver salmon, halibut, and black cod to three major processing plants employing 769 processing jobs, with a first wholesale value of \$167 million in 2012, and

WHEREAS maintaining and protecting healthy wild salmon populations throughout these river systems must be a priority. The concerns of local communities, individuals and user groups downstream from these projects must be integral to any transboundary watershed development decisions making; and


WHEREAS The Canadian and BC permitting processes have not been adequate to address our concerns; and

WHEREAS the Boundary Waters Treaty states "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 river concerns known as the International Joint Commission.

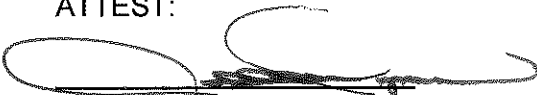
THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Assembly of the City and Borough of Sitka strongly urge the government of the United States to work with the government of Canada to refer the issue of transboundary development in the BC and Alaska region to the International Joint Commission and to utilize any and all powers under the Boundary Waters Treaty to ensure that Alaska resources are not harmed by upstream development in BC; and

BE IT FURTHER REOLVED, that affected communities and governments be consulted with and represented in any policy discussion related to impacts to these watersheds.

PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED by the assembly of the City and Borough of Sitka, Alaska on this 14th day of October 2014.


Mim McConnell, Mayor

ATTEST:


Colleen Ingman, MMC
Municipal Clerk