



# UNITED FISHERMEN OF ALASKA

**Mailing Address:** PO Box 20229, Juneau AK 99802-0229

**Physical Address:** 410 Calhoun Ave Ste 101, Juneau AK 99801

**Phone:** (907)586-2820 **Fax:** (907) 463-2545

**Email:** [ufa@ufa-fish.org](mailto:ufa@ufa-fish.org) **Website:** [www.ufa-fish.org](http://www.ufa-fish.org)

March 12, 2014

Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
U.S. Senate  
709 Hart Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Mark Begich  
U.S. Senate  
144 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Don Young  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2111 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515-0201

Via email

**RE: Canadian Mine Development in Transboundary Watersheds**

Dear Senator Murkowski, Senator Begich, and Representative Young:

United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA) is the statewide commercial fishing trade association, representing 36 commercial fishing organizations participating in fisheries throughout the state and its offshore federal waters. UFA has a strong interest in maintaining environmental values that provide for the sustainable harvest of Alaska's fishery resources. Development projects that have the potential to do irreparable harm to water quality and aquatic resources are widely opposed by our members. We write to make you aware of the risks posed by numerous existing and proposed mining projects in watersheds shared by British Columbia (B.C.) and Alaska.

Due to be completed in 2014, B.C.'s Northwest Transmission Line will facilitate large-scale mining in northwest B.C. At least a dozen industrial projects are planned in the headwaters of several transboundary rivers. Two primary concerns related to the massive B.C. mining boom are water quality impacts in Alaska and damage to salmon spawning habitat in B.C. The transboundary Taku, Stikine, and Unuk Rivers support significant fish and wildlife populations; all five species of salmon contribute heavily to sport, subsistence, personal use, and commercial fisheries.

The Unuk River is one of the top four king salmon producers in Southeast Alaska. The Taku River is Southeast Alaska's single largest producer of all species of salmon, and the largest producer of king and coho salmon. On average, 40% of the region's king salmon originate in

the Taku River. The Stikine River is also a heavy salmon producer and ranks second only to the Taku. The Taku and Stikine Rivers are the primary focus of the Transboundary Rivers annex of the Pacific Salmon Treaty, and provide for important fisheries in both Alaska and British Columbia.

There appears to be limited dialogue between Canada and the U.S. regarding mining development in B.C. No agreements are in place to ensure that Alaska's fishing and environmental interests will be protected in the face of B.C.'s fast expanding mining program. Canadian agencies have established joint working groups with Alaskan and U.S. agencies to review various mine proposals, but they are under no legal obligation to address U.S. or Alaskan concerns. Moreover, Alaskan and U.S. agencies lack the resources necessary to participate in these working groups in a meaningful way.

Given the enormous environmental and economic value of transboundary watersheds, the existence of bilateral conservation and harvest sharing agreements through the Pacific Salmon Treaty, and the absence of a functional plan to safeguard Alaska's downstream interests, we respectfully request you engage the U.S. State Department on this matter.

We urge you to ask the State Department to identify and employ mechanisms to ensure that Alaska water quality and fish and wildlife values will not be adversely affected by upstream industrial development in B.C.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments and requests, please feel free to contact us with any questions.

Sincerely,



Julianne Curry  
Executive Director

CC: Sean Parnell, Governor  
Cora Campbell, Commissioner, ADFG  
Joe Balash, Commissioner, DNR  
Larry Hartig, Commissioner, DEC

### **Enclosure: Alaska Commercial Fishing and Seafood Processing Fact Sheets**

#### MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers • Alaska Independent Fishermen's Marketing Association  
Alaska Independent Tendermen's Association • Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association • Alaska Scallop Association • Alaska Trollers Association  
Alaska Whitefish Trawlers Association • Aleutian Pribilof Islands Community Development Association • Armstrong Keta • At-sea Processors Association  
Bristol Bay Reserve • Cape Barnabas Inc. • Concerned Area "M" Fishermen • Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association • Cordova District Fishermen United  
Douglas Island Pink and Chum • Freezer Longline Coalition • Golden King Crab Coalition • Groundfish Forum • Kenai Peninsula Fishermen's Association  
Kodiak Regional Aquaculture Association • North Pacific Fisheries Association • Northern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association  
Petersburg Vessel Owners Association • Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation • Purse Seine Vessel Owner Association  
Seafood Producers Cooperative • Southeast Alaska Herring Conservation Alliance • Southeast Alaska Fisherman's Alliance  
Southeast Alaska Regional Dive Fisheries Association • Southeast Alaska Seiners • Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association  
United Catcher Boats • United Cook Inlet Drift Association • United Southeast Alaska Gillnetters • Valdez Fisheries Development Association