

March 14, 2017

State of Alaska
House of Representatives Fisheries Committee

Support for House Joint Resolution 9

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for HJR9 which seeks cooperation between the United States and Canada to perform appropriate assessments of the risks to fisheries, water, wildlife, and people of ongoing mining development on transboundary rivers.

The transboundary rivers that drain to Southeast Alaska produce some of the most prolific salmon runs in the world. Commercial fisheries in Southeast Alaska, alone, currently generate well over 1 billion \$US of economic activity annually, requiring only minor investments in management, supplementation, and habitat protection. Much of this sustainable economic activity is garnered from harvest of species that rely critically on the healthy estuaries and rivers of this region. Intact salmon watersheds such as the transboundary rivers have become globally rare and only paralleled in scale, novelty, and productivity by systems such as Bristol Bay in southwest Alaska.

Erosion of environmental regulation in Canada during the last decade is enabling development within the transboundary watersheds of what would be the world's largest new mining district. This development is proceeding without credible scientific assessment of risks to ecosystems and economies of the region. There is no legitimate excuse for this oversight. The environmental and economic risks are potentially enormous and restoration from future impacts may not be possible within several human lifetimes. Proper assessment needs to be done before further development occurs.

There is a long history of sound assessment and even-handed mediation between Canada and the US over trans-boundary environmental conflicts. For example, the actions of the International Joint Commission have always emphasized science based decision-making that encourages perspectives from Canada and the US to respond to emerging threats. It has been remarkably successful at guiding efforts such as the restoration of water quality in the Great Lakes.

I commend you for considering HJR9 as a first step towards seriously protecting the fisheries and waters of Southeast Alaska. Supporting this resolution would fall in line with Alaska's stellar history and global reputation for protecting and properly managing its fishery resources.

Sincerely,



Daniel E. Schindler
Professor, Aquatic and Fishery Sciences