

Dear Representative Stutes,

Thank you for considering Alaskans' concerns regarding mines in the headwaters of transboundary rivers, their current impacts on downstream marine life, and the threats they present to subsistence for Alaska residents and to the health of our economy.

Only a few major rivers that originate across the border in British Columbia flow through the Coast Range into Southeast Alaska. They are the largest, most important freshwater systems in our region. Each carries all five species of salmon and provides habitat for the region's greatest diversity of flora and fauna.

Open-pit and underground mines already operate in the headwaters of the largest of these rivers, the Taku and the Stikine, and additional mines are envisioned or under development in others. Recent toxic waste escapements that resulted in catastrophic impacts to similar watersheds in southern British Columbia, and nearly 60 years of toxins still leaching from a closed mine in the Taku headwaters—a mine that developers are seeking to reopen—call particular attention to the dire need to create binding international law that ensures the short- and long-term health of Alaska's waters and riparian and marine habitats.

There are many examples of cooperative, binding international agreements that prevent the degradation of watersheds worldwide. One glaring exception is North America, and it's time for that to change. It must change or Southeast Alaska faces a significant threat not only to residential quality of life, but to the region's most important industries, fishing and tourism. The United States and Canadian federal governments, the State of Alaska and the Province of British Columbia must secure enforceable environmental and financial protections for our transboundary rivers.

Thank you for representing us, your constituents, in this matter!

Sincerely,

Larry West

Juneau, AK 99801