

CS FOR HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 9(FSH)
IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA
THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY THE HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

Offered: 4/7/17

Referred:

Sponsor(s): REPRESENTATIVES ORTIZ, Kreiss-Tomkins, Tuck, Tarr, Parish

A RESOLUTION

1 **Urging the United States government to continue to work with the government of**
2 **Canada to investigate the long-term, region-wide downstream effects of proposed and**
3 **existing industrial development and to develop measures to ensure that state resources**
4 **are not harmed by upstream development in British Columbia.**

5 **BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

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

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

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

14 **WHEREAS** proposed and operating mines in the transboundary area include
15 Tulsequah Chief, New Polaris, and Big Bull in the Taku watershed; Galore Creek, Red Chris,

1 and Schaft Creek in the Stikine watershed; and Brucejack and Kerr-Sulphurets-Mitchell in the
2 Unuk watershed; and

3 **WHEREAS** large-scale mining and energy development could have significant
4 adverse effects on the environment and fisheries within the transboundary region; and

5 **WHEREAS** the proposed mines would generate billions of tons of acid-generating
6 tailings, which would be held behind huge dams and could pose the threat of acid rock
7 drainage for centuries, if not in perpetuity; and

8 **WHEREAS** the tailings would need monitoring, maintenance, water treatment, and
9 possible remediation for centuries, if not in perpetuity; and

10 **WHEREAS** ongoing acid rock drainage at the Tulsequah Chief mine, the tailings dam
11 failure at the Mount Polley mine, and the 2016 Audit of Compliance and Enforcement of the
12 Mining Sector published by the Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia
13 demonstrate weaknesses in current monitoring and enforcement efforts in British Columbia;
14 and

15 **WHEREAS** the federal-provincial environmental assessment process does not
16 address the long-term, cumulative effects of industrial development in the transboundary
17 region; and

18 **WHEREAS** the Statement of Cooperation on Protection of Transboundary Waters,
19 signed by Alaska Lieutenant Governor Byron Mallott, Bill Bennett, British Columbia
20 Minister of Energy and Mines, and Mary Polak, British Columbia Minister of Environment,
21 on October 6, 2016, is an important step, but cannot provide binding, enforceable protections
22 for the residents and rivers and watersheds of the state; and

23 **WHEREAS** the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 between Canada and the United
24 States is an effective and historically tested means of proactively dealing with similar
25 international transboundary issues; and

26 **WHEREAS** commercial fishermen, subsistence and recreational users, elected
27 leaders, local communities, and Alaska Native and First Nation tribes on both sides of the
28 Alaska-Canada border have raised concerns about the pace and scope of the proposed
29 industrial development in the headwaters of the transboundary river systems and the potential
30 for harm to water quality, fish and wildlife, and the socio-economic sustainability of local
31 communities in the region;

1 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature strongly urges the United States
2 government to continue to work with the government of Canada to investigate the long-term,
3 region-wide downstream effects of proposed and existing industrial development and to
4 develop measures to ensure that state resources are not harmed by upstream development in
5 British Columbia.

6 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Rex W. Tillerson, United
7 States Secretary of State; and the Honorable Lisa Murkowski and the Honorable Dan
8 Sullivan, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the
9 Alaska delegation in Congress.