



# Alaska Trollers Association

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August 6, 2012

Senator Dennis Egan  
Representative Beth Kerttula  
Representative Cathy Munoz  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Senator Egan and Representatives Kerttula and Munoz:

On behalf of Alaska Trollers Association (ATA), I want to thank you again for forming the Taku River Task Force. Your commitment to this issue and the good work done by your staff members to assist the Task Force in completing their work was very much appreciated. During the course of its hearings and meetings, the Task Force clearly identified water quality as an ongoing issue. This is the subject of my request today.

The Taku Task Force process was interesting, timely, and useful in educating the public on a variety of issues and laws relevant to permitting, monitoring, and enforcement of potential development projects in the Taku River watershed. Briefings by the agencies and US Coast Guard helped clarify some long-standing issues and highlighted the remarkable diversity and bounty of natural resources that the Taku River provides residents of both the US and Canada. As you well know, the fisheries resources of the Taku watershed are of significant importance not only to local residents, but also commercial, sport, and subsistence users throughout the region.

Chieftain Metals' recent shut down of the water treatment plant at the Tulsequah Chief Mine is of great concern to fishermen, due to the increased potential for harm to salmon, critical habitat, and water quality. This could ultimately affect the public's perception of Alaskan and Canadian seafood products. Alaska's salmon marketing program is based on the story of healthy, sustainable fish reared and harvested in Alaska's pristine waters. The adverse effect of pollution – real or perceived - could taint our reputation for delivering wholesome fish to market.

In 2010, Governor Sarah Palin, Natural Resources Commissioner Tom Irwin, the Alaska Congressional Delegation, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Fisheries David Balton, and the US Interior Department staff all sent inquiries regarding Canada's ability to protect habitat in the face of the Tulsequah Chief Mine development. It seems reasonable to surmise that such attention helped influence construction of the water treatment plant. Unfortunately, it now appears that Chieftain does not intend to make good its previous commitment to treat effluent from the mine site.

To date, Canadian and British Columbia regulatory agencies have been silent on the closure of the water treatment plant. Chieftain Metals has yet to announce a specific plan or timeline for re-starting the plant. And while Chieftain's June 6 letter to Environment Canada references a number of options, it is unclear whether any of those options are feasible, or if Chieftain intends to re-start of the treatment plant at all.

Chieftain and the BC and Canadian agencies have indicated that a proper cleanup requires development of the Tulsequah Chief mine. However, given a variety of financial challenges and an apparent absence of investors, Taku River Tlingit First Nation resistance to an access road, and numerous permitting issues, it seems unlikely that Chieftain will

reinitiate mine operations any time soon. Thus, it seems prudent to develop options to prevent mine drainage pollution, and to do so in a way that does not rely on the presence of a working mine.

I would encourage you to work with Governor Parnell, the Alaska Delegation, the US State Department, and all appropriate state and federal agencies, to find ways to persuade both BC and Canada to develop appropriate cleanup strategies at the Tulsequah mine site.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if I can be of assistance or answer questions regarding ATA's position on this matter, or any other issue of importance to the fishing industry.

Sincerely,

Dale Kelley  
Executive Director

Cc:

Cora Campbell, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
David Bedford, Deputy Commissioner, ADFG / Alaska Commissioner Pacific Salmon Commission  
Gordy Williams, Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
Tom Irwin, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Natural Resources  
Sharmon Stambaugh, Alaska Department of Natural Resources  
Senator Mark Begich  
Senator Lisa Murkowski  
Representative Don Young  
Deputy Assistant Secretary of State David A. Balton  
Steven Wiener & Cindi Godsey, US Environmental Protection Agency  
Kim Elton & Pamela Bergman, US Department of the Interior