

November 15, 2011

The Honourable Christy Clark
Premier of British Columbia
PO Box 9041
Station Provincial Government
Victoria, BC
V8W 9E1

Dear Premier Christy Clark,

RE: Environmental consequences of multiple development projects in the British Columbia – Alaska transboundary region

We are writing to ask for your leadership to balance the rush to develop mineral and energy resources on the Canadian side of the British Columbia – Alaska transboundary region with safeguarding the unique and irreplaceable ecological values of this largely pristine area. The impending construction of an industrial transmission line into west central British Columbia is the catalyst behind a spate of new proposals for mining and power generation, yet no process is currently in place to meaningfully assess cumulative impacts. Of particular concern are the international salmon runs of the Stikine, Iskut and Unuk Rivers. If allowed to proceed haphazardly, without careful consideration and thoughtful planning, the rush to develop this extraordinary region will almost certainly result in unnecessary destruction of fish and wildlife habitat and a diminishment of water quality and overall ecosystem health.

Vast, interconnected, and largely pristine, the transboundary watersheds of northwestern British Columbia and southeast Alaska comprise spectacularly diverse and wild natural environments. The Stikine, Iskut, and Unuk river watersheds are of profound importance to First Nations on both sides of the border. The watersheds support robust populations of all five North American species of Pacific salmon, and sustain international fisheries. The coastal estuaries are essential stopover sites for migratory birds, and the varied landscapes are ideal habitat for wildlife species of concern such as wolverine and grizzly bear, along with iconic species such as mountain goat, Stone's sheep, and caribou. Owing to their location, biophysical complexity, and largely intact state, the transboundary watersheds are climate change sanctuaries of global importance.

In British Columbia, a multitude of industrial projects is planned or proposed for these watersheds. The Northwest Transmission Line (NTL) – a 287 kV industrial transmission line extending 344 km (215 miles) into the region – has received environmental approvals. Characterized by proponents as a “gateway to a completely transformed region over time,” the NTL is a government subsidized venture that's being constructed to power massive mining (11 proposed sites), energy (coal bed methane), and hydroelectric (at least 18 sites) developments. Collectively, these mean that roads, pipelines, pollution and haphazard human infrastructure will undoubtedly follow.

As this burst of development activity proceeds, no organization (government or non-government) has comprehensively addressed the huge scope of ecological and social issues that are likely to arise across the entire region. The scale and intensity of proposed development certainly will fragment the watersheds with roads, transmission lines, river diversion projects, and open pit mines. Habitat for salmon and other wildlife will be destroyed at the development sites. Cumulative impacts likely will cascade throughout the watersheds in the form of altered flow and temperature patterns, disturbance to wildlife interacting with roads, and reduced water quality

associated with sedimentation and acid mine drainage. There is much at stake, and the existing baseline inventories are entirely inadequate to assess, project, monitor, and prevent cumulative impacts anticipated from burgeoning resource development.

The Stikine, Iskut and Unuk River watersheds contain pristine salmon habitat and form some of the largest contiguous wildlife habitat in North America. A resilient future for these watersheds depends on sustainable management policies and stewardship practices that reflect a commitment to sound science, healthy environments and community wellbeing. However, as the B.C. Auditor General reported in July 2011, with regard to certified development projects in the province, “the Environmental Assessment Office cannot assure British Columbians that mitigation efforts are having the intended effects because adequate monitoring is not occurring and follow-up evaluations are not being conducted.” Furthermore, “information currently being provided to the public is not sufficient to ensure accountability.” Given that proposed development would be occurring in transboundary river headwaters, the downstream impacts to Alaskan interests will also likely not receive adequate consideration.

We respectfully ask for your support for a renewed focus on creating a well-structured and transparent ecosystem-based approach for assessing new development proposals in the British Columbia-Alaska transboundary watersheds. Before further development is approved, British Columbia must initiate a comprehensive assessment of potential cumulative impacts arising from the multiple development proposals in the watersheds. The cumulative impacts assessment must be rooted in a more complete baseline understanding of ecological values in the region. In addition, a formal mechanism must be established to incorporate downstream U.S. concerns about potential Canadian development projects into review processes.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jim Pojar, Ph.D.

Registered Professional Biologist (Association of Professional Biology of B.C.)
Certified Senior Ecologist (Ecological Society of America)
Smithers, British Columbia

Dr. Jack A. Stanford, Ph.D.

Jessie M. Bierman Professor of Ecology and Director, Flathead Lake Biological Station,
University of Montana-Missoula

Dr. David W. Schindler OC, AOE, DPhil, FRSC, FRS

Killam Memorial Chair and Professor of Ecology
University of Alberta, Edmonton

Dr. John D. Reynolds, Ph.D.

Tom Buell BC Leadership Chair in Salmon Conservation
Department of Biological Sciences
Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC, V5A 1S6

Dr. T. E. Reimchen, Ph.D.

Adjunct Professor, Department of Biology
University of Victoria
PO Box 3020, Victoria, B.C., V8W 3N5

Dr. Daniel E. Schindler, Ph.D.

H. Mason Keeler Professor, School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences
University of Washington
Box 355020 Seattle, WA 98195-5020

Dr. Michael Fay, Ph.D.

National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence
Biologist, Wildlife Conservation Society
Ketchikan, Alaska

Dr. Anne Salomon, Ph.D.

Hakai Professor and Acting Director
Hakai Network for Coastal People, Ecosystems and Management
Coastal Marine Ecology and Conservation Lab
School of Resource and Environmental Management
Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC Canada V5A 1S6

Dr. David Suzuki, Ph.D.

Scientist, broadcaster and author
Co-founder David Suzuki Foundation
Vancouver, BC V6K 4S2

Jay Ritchlin

Director, Marine and Freshwater Conservation
David Suzuki Foundation
2211 W. 4th Ave., Suite 219
Vancouver, BC V6K 4S2

Dr. Wade Davis, Ph.D.

Ethnobotanist
National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence
3411 Woodley Road, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20016

Dr. John Smol, Ph.D., FRSC

Canada Research Chair in Environmental Change
3M Teaching Fellow
Editor, Environmental Reviews
Paleoecological Environmental Assessment and Research Lab (PEARL)
Department of Biology, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario K7L 3N6

Dr. Jonathon W. Moore, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor
Liber Ero Chair
Simon Fraser University
Department of Biological Sciences
Burnaby, British Columbia, V51 1S6

Dr. Thomas P. Quinn, Ph.D.

Professor, Aquatic & Fishery Sciences
University of Washington, Seattle, Washington

Dr. John S. Richardson, Ph.D.

Professor, Department of Forest Sciences
University of British Columbia
Vancouver, BC, V6T 1Z4

Dr. John W. Schoen, Ph.D.

Wildlife Biologist, Retired
Anchorage, Alaska

Dr. Donald G. Reid, Ph.D.

Conservation Zoologist
Wildlife Conservation Society Canada
39 Harbottle Road
Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 5T2

Dr. Megan V. McPhee, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor
University of Alaska Fairbanks
Fisheries Division
17101 Point Lena Loop Road
Juneau, AK 99801 USA

Dr. Craig Orr, Ph.D.

Executive Director
Watershed Watch Salmon Society
1037 Madore Avenue
Coquitlam, British Columbia, V3K 3B7

Dr. Thomas D. Sisk, Ph.D.

Professor of Ecology
Northern Arizona University
Flagstaff, Arizona, USA

Dr. Lance Craighead, Ph.D.

Executive Director
Craighead Institute
201 South Wallace Ave., suite B2D
Bozeman, Montana 59715

Dr. Jeffrey V. Baumgartner, Ph.D.

Executive Vice President
Wild Salmon Center
Jean Vollum Natural Capital Center
721 NW Ninth Ave, Suite 300
Portland, Oregon, 97209

Dr. Jeffrey W. Short, Ph.D.

JWS Consulting LLC
Juneau, Alaska

Dr. Gordon F. Hartman, Ph.D.

Retired, Department of Fisheries and Oceans
Nanaimo, British Columbia

Dr. Mason D. Bryant, Ph.D.

Certified Fisheries Scientist, American Fisheries Society
Douglas Island Aquatic Ecology
Douglas, Alaska

Dr. Michel Lapointe, Ph.D.

Professor, Department of Geography
McGill University
Montreal, Canada H3A 2K6

Dr. Gershon Cohen, Ph.D.

Project Director, Campaign to Safeguard America's Waters
Earth Island Institute
Haines, Alaska

Matthew Kirchhoff, M.Sc.

Director of Bird Conservation
Audubon Alaska
441 West Fifth Avenue, Suite 300
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

Dr. Clayton Apps, Ph.D.

Ecologist, Aspen Wildlife Research
Cochrane, Alberta

Dr. Robert M. Hughes, Ph.D.

Senior Research Scientist
Amnis Opes Institute
Corvallis, Oregon 97333

Dr. Robert H. Armstrong, Ph.D.

Research Supervisor, Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game (retired)
Associate Professor of Fisheries, University of Alaska, Fairbanks (retired)
5870 Thane Road, Juneau, AK 99801

Greg Knox, MEM

Executive Director
Skeena Wild Conservation Trust
Terrace, British Columbia

Dr. Mary F. Willson, Ph.D.

Retired Professor of Ecology
Juneau, Alaska

Dr. K V. Koski, Ph.D.

Habitat Restoration Specialist
Juneau, AK 99801

Dr. Mark S. Boyce, Ph.D.

Professor of Ecology, and Alberta Conservation Association Chair in Fisheries & Wildlife
Department of Biological Sciences
CCIS 1-271, University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta, T6G 2E9

Dr. Joseph Cook, Ph.D.

Director & Curator of Mammals and Genomic Resources, Museum of Southwestern Biology
Professor of Biology
University of New Mexico

CC:

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Honourable Peter Kent, Canada's Minister of the Environment
Honourable Rich Coleman, BC Minister of Energy and Mines
Honourable Terry Lake, BC Minister of the Environment
Honourable Steve Thomson, BC Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations
Steve Carr, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Energy and Mines
Cairine MacDonald, Deputy Minister, Ministry of the Environment
Doug Konkin, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Forests, Lands, and Natural Resource Operations
Kevin Kriese, Assistant Deputy Minister Northern Region, Ministry of Forests, Lands and
Natural Resource Operations
Mark Zacharias, Assistant Deputy Minister, Environmental Sustainability and Strategic Policy,
Ministry of Environment
Jane Lloyd Smith, Director of Resource Management, Skeena Region, Ministry of Forests,
Lands, and Natural Resources Operations
John Mazure, Acting Executive Director, Environmental Assessment Office
Susan Farlinger, Regional Director General, Pacific Region, Department of Fisheries and Oceans
Doug Donaldson, MLA, Stikine
Adrian Dix, Leader of the BC New Democratic Party, MLA, Vancouver-Kingsway
John Horgan, House Leader Official Opposition, Critic for Energy, Mines and Petroleum, MLA,
Juan de Fuca
Nathan Cullen, MP, Skeena-Bulkley Valley

ALASKA

Governor Sean Parnell
Senator Lisa Murkowski
Senator Mark Begich
Congressman Don Young
Dr. Kerri-Ann Jones, Assistant Secretary, U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Oceans and
International Environmental and Scientific Affairs
David A. Balton, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Fisheries U.S. Department of State,
Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs
Steven Wiener, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of International and Tribal Affairs
Patty McGrath, Regional Mining Coordinator, US EPA Region 10
Kim Elton, Director of Alaska Affairs, Office of the Secretary, US Department of the Interior
Pamela Bergmann, Regional Environmental Officer – Alaska, U.S. Department of the Interior
Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance
Cora Campbell, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Gordy Williams, Special Assistant to the Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Randy Bates, Director, Division of Habitat, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Charlie Swanton, Director, Sportfish Division Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Jeff Regnart, Commercial Fisheries Division Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Sharmon M. Stambaugh, Large Project Coordinator, Office of Project Management and
Permitting, Alaska Department of Natural Resources