



Washington State Legislature

March 23, 2021

The Honourable John Horgan, M.L.A.
Premier of British Columbia
PO Box 9041
Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E1

Dear Premier Horgan-

Today we write about the transboundary rivers shared between us. Rivers like the Skagit, Similkameen, Okanogan, Kettle, and Columbia all start in British Columbia and flow to Washington state, offering tremendous unique economic, social, ecological, cultural, and recreational value to both Canada and United States. In the headwaters these rivers in British Columbia, there are at least a dozen operating or mining exploration projects within 60 miles of the north of Washington border.

Large-scale mining and energy development in the headwaters of these rivers could have significant adverse effects on the environment and fisheries within the transboundary region. A tailings pond dam breach at one of these upstream operations, like the one that occurred at the Mount Polley Mine in 2014, could create major negative impacts on Washington resources environmentally and economically. Ongoing pollution from the Trail Smelter in British Columbia has negatively impacted farmers, tribes and Washington communities for over the past 96 years and counting. More recently, we have been alarmed by a proposed project on the Skagit River proposed by the very company responsible for the Mount Polley Dam breach, which now poses a threat to the City of Seattle.

Both of our countries are responsible for adhering to the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909, which prohibits pollution on one side of the boundary that would cause injury to life or property on the other side. Without strict regulations, consistent inspections, and financial assurances including full bonding, existing and proposed mining in the headwaters of our shared river basins can pose threats to the water and communities in both British Columbia and Washington.

It is our understanding that the Government of British Columbia has undertaken a review of their reclamation policy. We strongly urge your government to take full advantage of this current opportunity to undertake needed reforms to improve British Columbia's financial assurances system and particularly to require full security on mines as is already required in Washington. In addition, a robust financial assurances system that would be protective of this transboundary region would ensure accurate and independent reclamation estimates including water treatment and opportunities for a public review of those estimates.

More broadly, we believe there would be significant value in an industry funded pool for reclamation costs to cover reclamation not covered by mine operators or costs related to unintended environmental accidents. A fair and fulsome claims settlement process would be established for both stakeholders in British Columbia as well as downstream states.

Washington and British Columbia have a strong and prosperous relationship and a shared commitment to the protection of the environment. Your leadership on this critical issue can help level the playing field so that all residents in the transboundary region, regardless of which country they live in, can benefit.



Washington State Legislature

Sincerely,

Senator Jesse Salomon
32nd Legislative District

Representative Dave Paul
10th Legislative District

Representative Laurie Dolan
22nd Legislative District

Senator Kevin Van De Wege
24th Legislative District

Senator Karen Keiser
33rd Legislative District

Senator Reuven Carlyle
36th Legislative District

Representative Alex Ramel
40th Legislative District

Senator Jamie Petersen
43rd Legislative District

Senator Derek Stanford
1st Legislative District

Senator Brad Hawkins
12th Legislative District

Senator Christine Rolfes
23rd Legislative District

Senator Claire Wilson
30th Legislative District

Representative Eileen Cody
34th Legislative District

Representative Sharon Tomiko Santos
37th Legislative District

Representative Debra Lekanoff
40th Legislative District

Representative Nicole Macri
43rd Legislative District

Representative Gerry Pollet
47th Legislative District

Representative Davina Duerr
1st Legislative District

Senator Sam Hunt
22nd Legislative District

Representative Drew Hansen
23rd Legislative District

Representative Cindy Ryu
32nd Legislative District

Representative Joe Fitzgibbon
34th Legislative District

Representative Emily Wicks
38th Legislative District

Senator Lisa Wellman
41st Legislative District

Senator David Frockt
46th Legislative District

cc: Honourable Murray Ranking
Honourable Bruce Ralston
Fin Donnelly