

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 13, 2019

The Honorable John Horgan
Premier
PO Box 9041 STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC V8W 9E1

Dear Premier Horgan,

It is our understanding that the International Joint Commission (IJC) did not convene in April for its usual meeting as the IJC lacked a quorum among U.S. and Canadian Commissioners. As you know, the bilateral discussions on transboundary water issues that typically occur in conjunction with the biannual convening of the International Joint Commission (IJC) have strengthened bilateral cooperation between the two governments, including discussion of the future of the Lake Koochanusa Working Group in Montana, efforts to establish baseline monitoring in the Alaska-British Columbia transboundary area, and sharing best practices on transboundary notification procedures. In the absence of this engagement opportunity between our two governments, we feel it is possible and appropriate to continue our effort and are writing to provide you with a summary of our own work in Congress to dedicate attention and resources to concerns regarding U.S. – B.C. transboundary watersheds.

We write together to highlight efforts of the United States (U.S.) and continued plans of Congress to protect American interests in the face of potential environmental and economic impacts resulting from large-scale hardrock and coal mines in British Columbia, Canada (B.C.). While we appreciate Canada's engagement to date, we remain concerned about the lack of oversight of Canadian mining projects near multiple transboundary rivers that originate in B.C. and flow into our four U.S. states. To address these concerns, we have taken steps in partnership with our federal and State governments to improve water quality monitoring and push for constructive engagement with Canada. In sharing an update on our efforts, we hope to encourage you, in your role as Premier, to allocate similar attention, engagement, and resources to collaborative management of our shared transboundary watersheds.

The Department of State, Department of the Interior, and the Environmental Protection Agency established an interagency working group in 2017 to address concerns regarding B.C.'s mining activity in transboundary watersheds and to determine the specific mechanisms necessary to safeguard U.S. economic interests and resources. Furthermore, the U.S. Congress has recently appropriated funding (\$1.8 million USD) to the Department of the Interior for stream gauges in transboundary rivers which will provide better monitoring and water quality data, including detection of any impacts from upstream mining, at the international boundary. Congress has also directed the U.S. Geological Survey to enter into a formal partnership with local Tribes and other agencies to develop a long-term water quality strategy to address contamination risks in transboundary rivers shared by British Columbia and Alaska, Washington, Idaho, and Montana.

As you know, Alaska, Washington, Idaho, and Montana have tremendous natural resources that need to be protected against impacts from B.C. hard rock and coal mining activities near the headwaters of shared rivers, many of which support environmentally and economically significant salmon populations. Additionally, indigenous peoples whose lands are affected by past, present and proposed mines near transboundary rivers have voiced concern and requested that the U.S. and Canadian governments undertake cumulative assessments of impacts to communities, cultural and natural resources, as well as the enforcement of the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909. These transboundary watersheds support critical water supply, recreation opportunities, and wildlife habitat that support many livelihoods in local communities. We appreciate the diverse array of benefits that responsible management of our shared watersheds can bring, and view this as an opportunity to engage and collaborate toward a mutually beneficial future.

Members of Congress, including some of the undersigned below, as well as state governments have called for oversight and accountability measures in shared transboundary watersheds equivalent to those on the U.S. side of the border. Furthermore, in April of 2018, U.S. Department of State presented to Global Affairs Canada concerns and opportunities for collaboration regarding: 1) strengthening the decision-making process regarding mining impacts in shared transboundary watersheds, in coordination with local stakeholders; 2) insufficient scoping and evaluation of past, present and future mining impacts with respect to geographic extent and cumulative impacts; and 3) use of objective, transparent data collection and gaps in baseline and long-term monitoring. Congress has directed the U.S. government to increase its work with federal, state, tribal and local partners, including local elected officials, to monitor and reduce contaminants in transboundary watersheds.

We have both an opportunity and a responsibility to better manage our critical shared resources in a cooperative, constructive manner. As we prepare to request continued funding from the U.S. Congress to support our ongoing efforts, we seek your direct engagement on these matters and ask for you to undertake, alongside your federal counterparts, dedicated efforts to monitor transboundary water quality. We look forward to working with you to address the challenges posed to the economies, cultures, and resources of our great region.

Sincerely,



Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator



Dan Sullivan
United States Senator



Mike Crapo
United States Senator



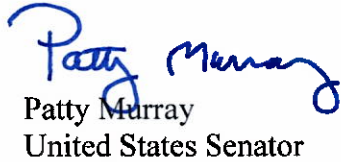
James Risch
United States Senator



Jon Tester
United States Senator



Steve Daines
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator

CC via email:

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau

The Honorable Chrystia Freeland, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Honorable Jonathan Wilkinson, Department of Fisheries and Oceans

The Honorable Catherine McKenna, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change

The Honorable Carolyn Bennett, Ministry of Crown-Indigenous Relations

Hon. Nathan Cullen

Hon. Fin Donnelly

Hon. Wayne Stetski

Hon. Doug Donaldson

Hon. Michelle Mungall

Hon. George Heyman

Hon. Scott Fraser

The Honorable Mike Pompeo, Secretary of State

The Honorable David Bernhardt, Secretary of the Interior

Chad McIntosh, Office of International and Tribal Affairs, EPA

Alaska Governor Michael J. Dunleavy

Idaho Governor Brad Little

Montana Governor Steve Bullock

Washington Governor Jay Inslee