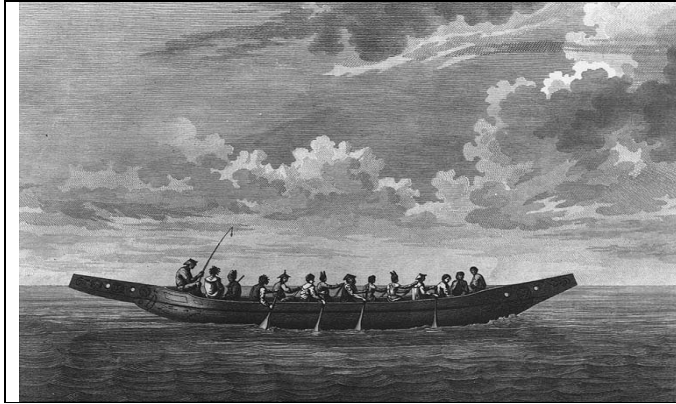




***Southeast Alaska
Subsistence Regional
Advisory Council***

**Don Hernandez, Chairman
1011 E. Tudor Road, MS121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199**

OSM.R26042

APRIL 17 2026

Anthony Christianson, Chair
Federal Subsistence Board
c/o Office of Subsistence Management
1011 East Tudor Road, Mail Stop 121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Dear Chairman Christianson:

On behalf of the Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council), I am writing to request that the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) elevate the protection of subsistence fishery resources in the international Transboundary River watersheds of the Taku, Stikine, and Unuk rivers that originate in British Columbia to the current Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior, members of the Alaska Congressional Delegation, the Department of State, and the Alaska Lieutenant Governor. This is an on-going issue. The Council has shared these concerns with the Board since 2017.

Additionally, I would like to highlight our most recent advocacy on this issue and request that the Board provide a status update on its elevated communications as requested by the Council:

- 1) Pursuant to this Board's reply to the Council's FY2021 Annual Report, the Council re-submitted a letter to the Board making specific requests:
 - a. Write a letter to the Lieutenant Governor regarding large scale mining development in British Columbia, Canada, requesting support from the State to advocate for the protection of the international watersheds and fishery resources for subsistence uses.

- b. In this letter, include a request for the Lieutenant Governor to engage with the Department of State and our Congressional Delegation to effectively address this issue.
- 2) The Council requested elevation of this issue to the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior during the last administration. We are aware that the Board sent a letter to Secretaries Vilsack and Haaland dated July 29, 2024, informing them of our support of the efforts made by Salmon Beyond Borders to bring attention to the Transboundary Rivers mining issue and the potential negative impacts to subsistence resources. The Council received the Secretaries joint response dated January 17, 2025.

The Council has received information in recent years concerning the impacts and threats to vital resources, and we feel it is incumbent upon us to bring these issues to the attention of newly elected or appointed leaders in our government who are in a position to take meaningful action to protect the rivers that Southeast coastal communities rely on for sustainable subsistence resources.

Please accept the Council's request for additional action by this Board on this important issue:

- 1) Write a letter to the Alaska Lieutenant Governor regarding large-scale mining development in British Columbia, Canada. The Council requests that the current Alaska Lieutenant Governor be asked to advocate for the protection of these international watersheds and fishery resources for subsistence use. Additionally, please ask that she engage with the U.S. Department of State, expressing her willingness to work in conjunction with our Congressional Delegation to advance this issue at the Federal and international levels.
- 2) Re-elevate this issue to the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior by sending a follow-up letter to the Board's July 29, 2024, letter to the newly appointed Secretaries. Please include this Council's May 12, 2023, letter and attachments, the Board's July 29th letter, and the previous Secretaries' January 17, 2025, response letter, to convey the cumulative concerns expressed in those documents. This information should be included in the elevation correspondence to provide critical perspective and details to the new Secretaries.
- 3) Provide copies of letters generated from requests 1 and 2 to the current Alaska Congressional Delegation.
- 4) Advise the Council of the status of any letter that the Board sent to the Lieutenant Governor on behalf of the Council, pursuant to its FY2021 Annual Report Reply to the Council and any letters from the Lieutenant Governor received in response.

The Council looks forward to receiving a response to this letter from the Board by our next meeting in October 2026 and hopes that copies of the letters requested above may accompany it. The Council appreciates the Board's diligence in addressing these requests as the Council feels

the urgency and importance of protecting subsistence resources that are essential to our coastal communities here in Southeast Alaska.

If you have any questions regarding this letter, they can be addressed through our Council Coordinator, DeAnna Perry, at 907-209-7817, deanna.perry@usda.gov.

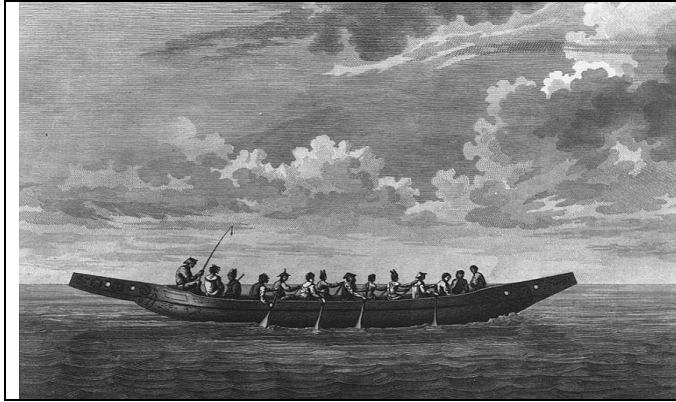
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donald Hernandez", written over a light gray rectangular background.

Donald Hernandez,
Chair

Enclosures: Council letter to Board requesting ltr. to Lt. Governor, dated May 12, 2023
Board Letter to Secretaries elevating transboundary rivers concerns, dated July 29, 20224
Secretaries' Response Letter to Board, dated January 17, 2025

cc: Federal Subsistence Board
Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Members
Office of Subsistence Management
Benjamin Mulligan, Deputy Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Aaron Poetter, Federal Subsistence Liaison, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Interagency Staff Committee
Administrative Record



***Southeast Alaska
Subsistence Regional
Advisory Council***

**Don Hernandez, Chairman
1011 E. Tudor Road, MS121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199**

In Reply Refer To:
RAC.SE.DP.23001

MAY 12 2023

Anthony Christianson, Chair
Federal Subsistence Board
c/o Office of Subsistence Management
1011 East Tudor Road, Mail Stop 121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Dear Chairman Christianson:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council), to express our continuing concerns for the protection of subsistence fishery resources in international Transboundary River watersheds of the Taku, Stikine, and Unuk Rivers that originate in British Columbia and flow into Southeast Alaska. In a previous letter, dated January 24, 2017, the Council informed the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) that it was encouraged by reports that there had been communications between former Lt. Governor Byron Mallott and Canadian officials regarding interest in and cooperation towards protecting transboundary river watersheds. The Council asked the Board to forward a letter to Lt. Governor Mallott, sharing the Council's concerns about transboundary mining issues, with a request that the Lt. Governor's office send a letter to the Department of State, expressing his desire to work in conjunction with the Alaska Congressional Delegation to advance this issue at the federal and international levels. The Board forwarded the Council's letter of concern and request to the Lt. Governor in 2017, however we did not receive a response. Since that time there has been a change in administration to Governor Dunleavy and Lt. Governor Dahlstrom.

In its FY2021 Annual Report Reply, the Board requested that the Council resubmit their transboundary mining concerns in the form of a new letter to the Board and committed to elevate Council concerns to Lt. Governor Dahlstrom. The Council wishes to start with State support in its endeavor to protect watersheds and fishery resources that are vital to southeast Alaskans. The Council hopes that the Lt. Governor entertains the request for her to engage with the Department of State and Alaska's current Congressional Delegation to seek preemptive solutions.

Therefore, the Council specifically requests that the Board:

- 1) Write a letter to the Lt. Governor regarding large scale mining development in British Columbia, Canada, requesting support from the State to advocate for the protection of the international watersheds and fishery resources for subsistence uses.
- 2) In this letter, include a request for the Lt. Governor to engage with the Department of State and our Congressional Delegation to effectively address this issue.

The Council hopes that, as a result of engagements at these levels of government, the Department of State will take the lead in collaborating with Canada to openly address the transboundary mining issue and proactively resolve the concerns of subsistence users that depend on the health of transboundary rivers.

For your convenience, the Council has prepared and attached a draft letter from the Board to the Lt. Governor. We have also included two resolutions from the Alaska Congressional Delegation to the Secretary of State that enumerate detailed concerns from constituents and their governmental representatives. Please consider including these documents as enclosures to the letter if the Board deems it appropriate.

The Council continues to receive new information on the impacts that mining is having on resources utilized by subsistence users through testimony (also, see attached resolutions: Sitka Resolution 21-21 and Craig Resolution 21-18), and the Council members believe it is important to again alert those who can take action to protect the rivers that Southeast coastal communities rely on for sustainable resources and subsistence uses.

Thank you for supporting the Council's concern for an issue of vital importance to the subsistence needs of Southeast Alaska.

If you have any questions regarding this letter, they can be addressed through our Council Coordinator DeAnna Perry at 907-209-7817 or deanna.perry@usda.gov.

Sincerely,



Donald Hernandez,
Chair

Enclosures

cc: Federal Subsistence Board
Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Members
Office of Subsistence Management
Interagency Staff Committee
Benjamin Mulligan, Deputy Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Mark Burch, Special Projects Coordinator, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Administrative Record



Federal Subsistence Board

Office of Subsistence Management
1011 East Tudor Road, MS 121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503 - 6199



In Reply Refer To:
OSM.A24072

JULY 29 2024

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of Interior
1849 C Street, Northwest
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretaries Vilsack and Haaland:

The Federal Subsistence Board (Board) has received a letter from the Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council). This letter is in support of the efforts made by Salmon Beyond Borders (SBB) to bring attention to transboundary mining and its possible negative impacts to subsistence resources. SBB presented information to the Council in October 2022 and requested the Council's support in elevating the concerns to both Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior and asked that specific actions be taken. The Council voted to send the attached letter in a further effort to highlight this issue and encourage action to protect the health of fisheries in these rivers.

This Council has been following the Canadian mining industry within the transboundary watersheds, which include the Taku, Stikine, and Unuk rivers in Southeast Alaska for several years. The Council has previously written letters to the Alaska Lieutenant Governor and requested that steps be taken to protect waters throughout the transboundary river watersheds that originate in British Columbia and flow into Southeast Alaska. The Council specifically asked the Lt. Governor to send a letter to the Secretary of State requesting Federal engagement in this issue regarding the large-scale mining operations that are currently running or are planned for transboundary river watersheds in Southeast Alaska. In addition, the Council requested an International Joint Commission referral to further safeguard water quality and fishery production in these rivers. To date, the Council has received no response.

The Council is continuing their advocacy by supporting similar efforts by SBB to draw attention to the risk posed by these mines, as outlined in the attached letter. The Council would like to see the requested actions in this letter be taken so that threats by Canadian upriver mining operations on Southeast Alaska subsistence resources can be eliminated, or at least mitigated. Upon review and consideration, the Council would appreciate the courtesy of your reply, which, it hopes, will outline the specific actions you will take in response to these requests.

We appreciate your time and attention to this matter. The Federal Subsistence Management Program looks forward to working with you on this issue. You may reach me through my point of contact, Robbin La Vine, Subsistence Policy Coordinator, 907-206-0900 or, robbin_lavine@ios.doi.gov.

Sincerely,



Anthony Christianson
Chair

Enclosure: SERAC Letter to the Board supporting SBB efforts to address transboundary mining threats to subsistence resources (May 12, 2023) with 3 attachments

cc: Federal Subsistence Board

Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Members

Office of Subsistence Management

Benjamin Mulligan, Deputy Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Mark Burch, Assistant Director, Division of Wildlife Conservation, Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Interagency Staff Committee

Administrative Record



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

January 17, 2025

Anthony Christianson, Chair
Federal Subsistence Board
c/o Office of Subsistence Management
1011 East Tudor Road, Mail Stop 121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Dear Chairman Christianson:

Thank you for your letter dated July 29, 2024, documenting information and concerns regarding permitting and development activities affecting transboundary river watersheds that span both Alaska and British Columbia. Secretary Haaland has asked me to respond on behalf of her and Secretary Vilsack. We appreciate your ongoing attention to these important topics and your patience for the time it has taken us to respond to your letter.

We are proud of the Biden-Harris Administration's work to conduct water quality monitoring, to engage in partnerships with local Tribes and to lead interagency collaboration to develop a water quality strategy for transboundary rivers impacted by mining activities. Most recently, our staff engaged with Tribal Nations and diverse stakeholder groups at an Interagency meeting hosted by the Council on Environmental Quality to discuss an approach to addressing the impacts and potential downstream impacts of transboundary pollution from mining development in the province of British Columbia and Yukon territory of Canada.

We recognize the critical importance of finding collaborative solutions that address pollution caused by mining operations in British Columbia and safeguard the safety, health, culture, overall well-being, and subsistence way of life of downstream Indigenous and rural communities in Alaska, as well as to the native fish and wildlife resources and overall abiotic environment.

For future Federal Subsistence Board engagement related to this critical issue, please reach out directly to Ciisquq Crystal Leonetti, Director, Office of Subsistence Management, at crystal_leonetti@ios.doi.gov. We sincerely appreciate your time and expertise in bringing these important matters to our attention.

Sincerely,

Joan M. Mooney
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary
Exercising the Delegated Authority of Assistant
Secretary – Policy, Management and Budget

cc: Secretary of Agriculture
Federal Subsistence Board
Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Benjamin Mulligan, Deputy Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Mark Burch, Assistant Director, Division of Wildlife Conservation, Alaska Department of
Fish and Game
Interagency Staff Committee
Office of Subsistence Management