



Post Office Box 1229 / Sitka, Alaska 99835 / 907.747.3400 / alfastaff@gmail.com

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Dear Reviewer,

I am writing to express the opposition of our organization, the Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association (ALFA), to the proposed redevelopment of a historic mine site on the Taku River that would dramatically expand industrial activity in Southeast Alaska's most productive wild salmon ecosystems. Our over 200 members own and operate fishing vessels that depend on healthy fisheries and sustain local economies. The proposed Polaris Mine is a huge threat to our health and economy.

The Polaris project would rely heavily on transporting equipment and materials up the Taku River, a waterway known for shallow channels, shifting gravel bars, twenty-foot tidal swings, and unpredictable conditions. Current estimates call for approximately **225** barge/landing craft round-trips during the three-year construction phase, all of which to happen June – September. Plans include underground mining, ore processing facilities, fuel and waste rock storage, and construction of a mile-long airstrip in Flannigan Slough, one of the Taku's most fragile, culturally significant, and important salmon habitats. The Taku River is the largest intact watershed on the Pacific Coast of North America and Southeast Alaska's most productive salmon systems. It supports all five species of Pacific salmon, thriving wildlife populations, commercial and subsistence fisheries, and communities whose cultures and livelihoods depend on a healthy watershed. ALFA asserts that the Taku River is the wrong place for any mine.

Salmon sustains Southeast Alaska's cultures, ways of life, and economy. Salmon fisheries contribute \$254 million to the region's economy year after year, and will continue to do so as long as the rivers, forests, and oceans they depend on are safeguarded. The abandoned Tulsequah Chief mine, which is in this same watershed, is still leaching poison into salmon streams and waterways. No new mine should even be considered until that clean-up is complete.

In closing, ALFA maintains that no gold mine is worth the risk to sustainable salmon runs and the health of the Southeast ecosystems. With 70 percent of the gold ever mined worldwide currently sitting in vaults, there is no defensible rationale for further gold mining even without risks to a world class salmon river. On behalf of ALFA's membership, we urge you to STOP this mine.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely

Linda Behnken
Executive Director, ALFA