



NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL

February 16, 2005

Hon. Geoff Regan
Minister
Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Minister's Office, Centennial Tower
200 Kent Street
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada K1A 0E6

Re: Tulsequah Chief mine and road proposal comments

Dear Minister Regan,

I am writing to voice my concerns regarding the Tulsequah Chief mine and road proposal. I have been following the situation in the Taku watershed with considerable interest over the years, and remain deeply concerned that the rights of the Taku River Tlingit First Nation and the integrity of that incredibly valuable watershed have not been adequately protected. The screening document recently submitted by Canadian officials is a political rather than technical document. It ignores extensive evidence presented by the Tlingits and others that this project would have numerous profoundly negative impacts. That a conclusion was ever reached that the construction of a 160 kilometer road into the heart of a pristine wild salmon watershed will not result in any significant environmental effects is evidence enough that assessment to date is flawed and far off course.

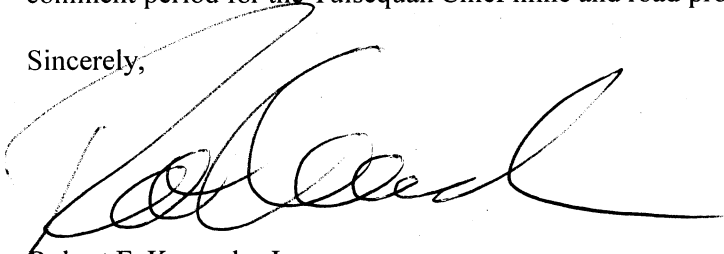
In the northern regions of our two countries it is still possible to find remnant landscapes with fully functioning natural systems, including rare plant and animal species. Still places like the Taku watershed are exceptional in our world. While they may be as rich in industrial resources as they are in diversity, we need to approach resource extraction in such areas carefully, and with a view to the long-term sustainability of all the communities that depend on these regions. If development is to take place in the watershed, it should be done in accordance with the highest standards of development and on the basis of a land use planning process that includes and listens to the concerns of the Tlingits and other local residents. That has absolutely not been the case in the Taku watershed to date, despite the amazing and ongoing land planning work being brought to the table by the Tlingits.

Despoiled landscapes that were once verdant and productive are too numerous to count in Canada and the United States. We have the experience and knowledge to avoid such blunders, and I urge you to apply that understanding in the Taku watershed. It is far too valuable to be sacrificed to the repetition of past mistakes. It presents an amazing opportunity for two countries and a First Nation to draw on the lessons of history and embark on a visionary journey towards sustainability. All of the pieces are in place except for willingness by the federal and provincial governments. US federal and state governments have asked for binational planning and those calls have been echoed by thousands of people in the United States and Canada.

The Taku watershed is intact and healthy and could provide livelihoods for northern residents without sacrificing its ecological values. If the recommendation stemming from the federal screening process is allowed to stand, the Taku will be compromised in its ecological integrity now and the promise it holds for sustainable livelihoods in the future will also be sabotaged. The damage to the Taku River Tlingit First Nation from such a reckless development decision has *Re:* been documented and would be immense. I urge the Canadian government to revisit this proposal, and either reject it outright, or subject it to the kind of scrutiny that is warranted and allowed for under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*. I entreat you to assume the full weight of this decision and its ramifications and do what is right for the Tlingits, for Canadians, and for a world where places like the Taku are incredibly rare and precious.

Thank you for considering my comments and for including them as my input to the public comment period for the Tulsequah Chief mine and road project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.

CC:

Sue Farlinger, Tulsequah Chief Public Comment Submissions, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Oceans, Habitat and Enhancement Branch, Major Projects Review Unit, Suite 200 – 401, Burrard Street, Vancouver, B.C., Canada V6C 3S4

Hon. Stephane Dion, Minister, Environment Canada, Minister's Office (Parliament Hill), 121 East Block, House of Commons, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1A 0A6

Hon. Jean C. Lapierre, Minister, Transport Canada, Minister's Office, Place de Ville, 330 Sparks St., Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1A 0N5

Hon. Paul Martin, Prime Minister of Canada, Prime Minister, Prime Minister's Office, 111 Wellington St, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1A 0A6