ALASKA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

RESOLUTION #2015-06

A RESOLUTION OF THE ALASKA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE SUPPORTING INTERNATIONAL JOINT COMMISSION (IJC) INVOLVEMENT IN THE ALASKA AND BRITISH COLUMBIA TRANSBOUNDARY REGION

WHEREAS, the transboundary rivers of Northwest British Columbia and Southeast Alaska have tremendous unique economic, ecological, cultural and recreational value; and

WHEREAS, pristine waters and intact habitats make protecting productive and healthy wild salmon populations throughout these transboundary river systems a priority; and

WHEREAS, commercial mining in British Columbia (BC) is experiencing unprecedented expansion within the headwaters of the Taku, Stikine and Unuk rivers; and

WHEREAS, proposed mines include Tulsequah Chief in the Taku watershed; Galore Creek, Red Christ and Schaft Creek in the Stikine watershed; and the KerrSulphuretsMitchell (KSM) project in the headwaters of the Unuk River; and

WHEREAS, large-scale mining and energy development could have significant adverse effects on the environment and fisheries within the transboundary region; and

WHEREAS, an unprecedented level of water treatment and inadequate tailings containments could pose the threat of acid mine drainage for centuries, if not in perpetuity; and

WHEREAS, federal, provincial, environmental assessment processes should address the cumulative impacts of industrial development; and

WHEREAS, commercial fishermen, subsistence and recreational users, elected leaders, local communities and Native tribes on both sides of the Alaska/Canadian border have raised concerns about the pace and scope of the proposed industrial development in the headwaters of transboundary river systems and the potential for harm to water quality, fish and wildlife, and the socioeconomic sustainability of local communities within the region; and

WHEREAS, the Boundary Waters Treaty states, “waters flowing across the boundary shall not be polluted on either side to the injury of health or property on the other” and
provides a mechanism to address transboundary river concerns known as the International Joint Commission.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska Municipal League strongly urges the United States government to work with the government of Canada to refer the issue of transboundary development in the Alaska and British Columbia region to the International Joint Commission and to utilize any and all powers under the Boundary Waters Treaty to ensure that Alaska resources are not harmed by upstream development in BC; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the concerns of affected local communities, individuals and user groups downstream from these projects must be integral to transboundary watershed development decision making and further urge greater opportunity for these voices to be heard; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that affected communities and governments be consulted with and represented in policy discussions related to impacts to these watersheds.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the Alaska Municipal League on this 21st day of November, 2014.

Signed:
Linda Murphy, President, Alaska Municipal League

Attest:
Kathie Wasserman, Executive Director, Alaska Municipal League