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ORGANIZED VILLAGE OF KASAAN

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December 18, 2008

Dan Opalski
Director of Environmental Cleanup
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Sixth Avenue
Seattle, WA 98101

USDA FS Tongass NF: Salt Chuck Mine
Thorne Bay, Prince of Wales-Outer Ketchikan County, Alaska
EPA ID No. AK0001897602
Reference No.: 26

Dear Mr. Opalski,

The Organized Village of Kasaan (OVK) is a federally recognized Tribe, located on Prince of Wales Island, in Southeast Alaska. Kasaan is located on the western side of Kasaan Peninsula and our traditional territory encompasses the entirety of Kasaan Bay. In 2003, under an EPA Indian General Assistance Program grant, the OVK formed the Kasaan Bay Watershed Council, which guides the priorities to be addressed by the OVK Natural Resources Department. Two documents have been produced by the Tribe that have prioritized the Salt Chuck mine site as a priority for clean-up. In the Kasaan Bay Watershed Management Plan (2005), the Watershed Council identified the Salt Chuck mine as one of the top priorities of issues to address, due to its contamination from the former Salt Chuck Mine site and its direct impact on subsistence resources. And in 2006, the Tribe conducted a Unified Watershed Assessment using EPA protocols, which identified the Salt Chuck area as a Category I Watershed in need of restoration.

The OVK has been in government-to-government consultation with the U.S. Forest Service regarding the Salt Chuck Mine site since 2006. At the request of the OVK, the U.S. Forest Service had shellfish associated with the tidelands at the Salt Chuck site tested for contaminants as part of the U.S. Forest Service Environmental Engineering Cost Analysis. Kasaan residents and Tribal members of the Organized Village of Kasaan have harvested fish, clams, cockles, crab and shrimp from the waters in and around Salt Chuck for decades, including areas currently impacted by saturated tailings from the former Salt Chuck Mine site. The preliminary analysis show there are contaminants from the former Salt Chuck Mine site affecting these subsistence resources. Harvest of resources from and near the Salt Chuck have not ceased, because there have not been any public closures of beaches or public outreach to discourage users of the area.

The Organized Village of Kasaan is in full support of having the Salt Chuck mine listed on the National Priorities List. Under a Tribal Environmental Agreement between the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the OVK, signed in February 2004, the OVK would like to request that our two entities begin working in a government to government relationship on Salt Chuck to make sure the needs of the Tribe are being incorporated and addressed. If you have any question, please do not hesitate to contact me our Tribal Administrator, Paula Peterson, at any time. We can be reached at (907-542-2230 or by email at richard@kasaan.org and paula@kasaan.org.

Sincerely,

Richard J. Peterson, President

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