

Dear Mayor and Borough Assembly,

Thank you for choosing to serve our community. I know that listening to all the residents of Haines is a huge commitment of time, but I hope you will find a few minutes to read my comments on the Lutak dock project.

I am writing to urge you to stop and reconsider the current Lutak dock project. This project has been moving ahead at an unnecessarily rapid pace, and I think the Borough needs to take some time to examine the course we are on. We need to look no further than the mismanagement of the recent Porcupine Road project to conclude that it would be wise to closely examine the decision process that is driving the Lutak dock project.

Do we want to establish the reputation among federal funding agencies that the Haines Borough cannot be trusted to submit funding requests that are factually based? Do we want the agencies to know that the Haines Borough will disregard the rules related to the awarding of federal funds? Do we want our own borough taxpayers to be saddled with huge debts for projects that were designed to primarily benefit commercial interests rather than the residents of Haines?

As a concerned citizen of Haines I say NO! It is time to put a halt to the exploitation of federal dollars to benefit industries that can fund their own way. It is time to stop putting the residents of Haines into long-term debt to fund projects that are unnecessary in scope and lacking in public support. It is time to conduct an independent audit of Lutak Dock expenditures to date so we can all know what is happening. We deserve that.

I am a retired Manager of the commercial and subsistence fisheries in Haines. Lutak Inlet is perhaps the most critical component of the Lynn Canal ecosystem. Lutak Inlet is the final salt-water destination for one of the largest sockeye salmon runs in Southeast Alaska, and all five species of salmon migrate through the Inlet on their way to spawn in the Chilkoot River watershed.

One often overlooked, and certainly understudied aspect of Lutak Inlet is the role it plays as a critical and productive estuary. Each spring and early summer millions of juvenile salmon and eulachon rear and migrate along the shorelines of the Inlet. The eulachon, which spawn in Chilkoot River in the spring, produce tens of millions of young by early summer, and all of these fish wash into the rich waters of Lutak Inlet.

At every moment of their time in Lutak Inlet the in-migrating fish and marine mammals, the resident diverse population of fish, mammals, and shellfish, and the dense schools of out-migrating juvenile fish are dependent on the biological productivity of Lutak Inlet.

A project such as this dock reconstruction requires an environmental assessment or impact statement in order to proceed. Unfortunately, there have not been enough

studies to fully assess the biological importance of Lutak Inlet. We do not know the residence time or the migration patterns of the juvenile sockeye. We do not know the drift patterns on the newly hatched eulachon. We don't know how susceptible either of these fish are to the pollutants that may be resident in the existing dock, or to the materials that may be transported across the dock.

This dock needs to be designed to produce minimal impact to the Lutak Inlet estuary. The current design fictitiously claims to "encapsulate" whatever pollutants may be present in the existing dock, but it truth does nothing to stop the migration of these pollutants into Lutak Inlet. There is not even a plan to test the existing material for pollutants even though the design requires extensive drilling of these materials in order to install the tie-backs. With the Lutak dock we have the chance to build a project that removes fill that may be laced with toxins leaching into Lutak Inlet.

I do not understand how it can be considered responsible to put the extremely valuable salmon and eulachon runs at jeopardy just to push through a dock that is far in excess of the needs of the community of Haines. What will this town be if we lose the Chilkoot River sockeye run due to the development of Lutak Inlet, and then damage the Chilkat River salmon runs due to the development of short term resource extraction? Why aren't we using these federal dollars to implement projects that are designed to improve the natural environment rather than add to its cumulative degradation?

Please think long and hard about the path we are on with this Lutak dock project. The ecological integrity of marine and freshwater ecosystems surrounding Haines are far more important than seeking and expending funds to create projects designed to assist in the development of industries that will damage what is the heart of the place we all love.

Mark Sogge