

Unuk | Junak River

To Dream

OVERVIEW

The mighty Unuk River, Junak in Tlingit or 'To Dream', located near the communities of Ketchikan, Saxman, and Metlakatla, is home to all five species of wild Pacific salmon and a rich Eulachon run. It was once known for having the largest Chinook (King) salmon run in Southeast Alaska. It is a significant producer for local communities and Tribes that rely on the river for traditional and cultural practices and food sovereignty. As stressors in the ocean ecosystem increase, such as plastic pollution and acidification, river habitats like the Unuk | Junak become even more critical to the survival of salmon.

Headwaters in British Columbia

CANADA
US

VITAL STATS

River Length

80
miles

Average Flow

1,207
cubic feet
per second

Watershed Area

745
square miles

The Unuk | Junak flows from British Columbia, Canada to Alaska, United States. The upper watershed sits within the traditional territories of the Tahltan First Nation, Gitksan Nation, Gitksan wilp Skii km Lax Ha, Gitanyow First Nation, Gitanyow wilp Wii'litsxw, and the Métis Nation of British Columbia. The lower watershed is in Tlingit, Haida, and Tshimshian territories.

Countries

2

Alaska
Native
Peoples

3

First
Nations

6

WATERSHED COMMUNITIES

KEY SPECIES

11+ Fish Species

7+ Mammal Species

2+ Bird Species

The Unuk | Junak provides spawning grounds for all five species of Pacific salmon and steelhead trout, as well as habitat for cutthroat and rainbow trout, char, whitefish, and eulachon. The watershed encompasses important mountain goat, moose, brown and black bear, wolf, lynx, kingfisher, and black-tail deer habitat. Rare peregrine falcons are also thought to nest in the remote areas of the Unuk | Junak Watershed.

Enters the Pacific Ocean near Ketchikan, Alaska



INDUSTRIES



Fishing



Tourism



Photography



Recreation

The Unuk | Junak is a fishing river and significantly contributes to the overall income for Southeast Alaska. It provides an important source of food sovereignty and livelihood to subsistence, commercial, sport fishing groups. The Unuk | Junak also flows through Misty Fjords National Monument in Alaska, making it a magnificent tourist destination.

THREATS

**KSM
Mine**

Proposed and
Permitted

**Bruce
Jack
Mine**

Operational

**Eskay
Creek
Mine**

Legacy

The Eskay Creek Mine has historically leaked acid mine drainage upstream of the Unuk | Junak and the proposed KSM Mine poses a potential threat to salmon and rivers in Southeast Alaska. It would be among the largest open-pit mines in the world and would send 119,000 gallons per minute of wastewater into the Unuk | Junak. It could also negatively impact Mountain goat and grizzly habitat with increased truck and marine traffic.



Photo from USGS

GROWING CONCERN

Several groups have spoken out in resistance to the KSM Mine. Subsistence and commercial fisheries are very concerned, as the eulachon and King salmon runs have been critically declining in recent years. Resistance is building, but greater mobilization is needed to protect the Unuk | Junak River.

TAKE ACTION

Learn More

- [Southeast Alaska Indigenous Transboundary Commission](http://www.seitc.org): www.seitc.org
- [Southeast Alaska Conservation Council](http://www.seacc.org/unuk): www.seacc.org/unuk
- [Rivers Without Borders](http://www.riverswithoutborders.org/about-the-region/unuk): www.riverswithoutborders.org/about-the-region/unuk
- [Wild Border Watersheds](http://www.wildborderwatersheds.org/watersheds/unuk): www.wildborderwatersheds.org/watersheds/unuk

Get Involved

- Write to your leaders to request action on transboundary mines
- Participate in your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee
- Sign our petition at www.seacc.org/protect_the_unuk
- Host an event to raise awareness

Spread the Word!

www.seacc.org



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Conservation Council](#)

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