

City Light SEEC Payment Ordinance

Economic Development, Technology & City Light Committee

June 22, 2022

Overview

- Background
 - High Ross Treaty and Agreement
 - Skagit Environmental Endowment Commission (SEEC)
 - Upper Skagit Watershed “Donut Hole”
- History of Threats & Actions to Protect the “Donut Hole”
- Current Actions & Status
- Purpose of Council Ordinance

High Ross Treaty

- US Treaty between US & Canada established in 1984
- Settled the High Ross dam controversy between the US and Canada
- BC Province & City of Seattle administer the agreement
- Established the SEEC to protect the environmental integrity of the transboundary watershed.

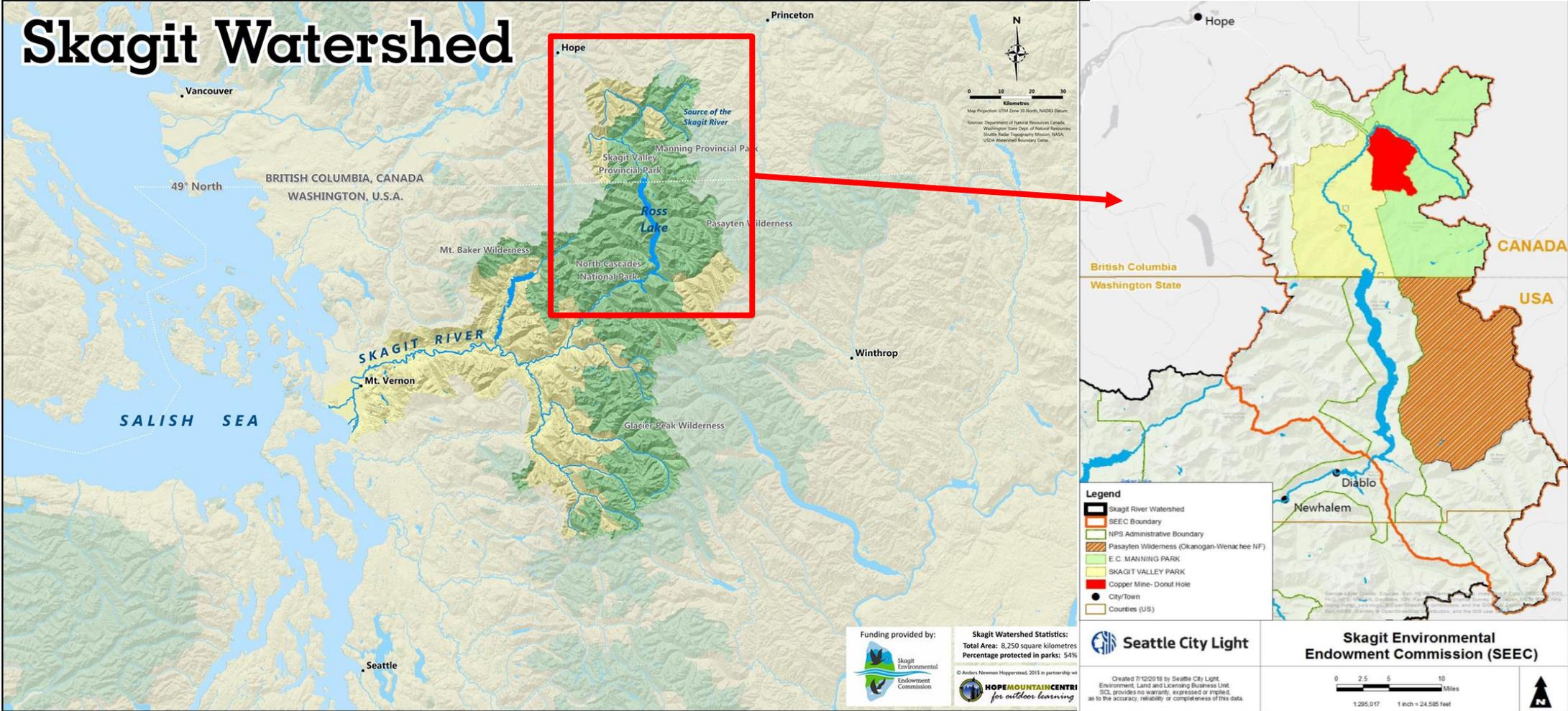


Skagit Environmental Endowment Commission

- Purposes:
 - Conserve and protect wilderness and wildlife habitat.
 - Enhance recreational opportunities in the Skagit Valley.
 - **Acquire mineral or timber rights consistent with conservation and recreational purposes**
 - Conduct studies of need and feasibility of projects.
 - To plan for and construct hiking trails, footbridges, interpretive displays and the like.



Donut Hole Location



Upper Skagit Watershed's Importance

- Skagit River provides over 30% of fresh water flowing into Puget Sound.
- Largest and healthiest populations of threatened steelhead and Chinook salmon in Puget Sound and largest run of chum salmon in conterminous US.
- Chinook salmon make up 80% of the food source for the endangered Puget Sound resident Orca population.
- Largest and most diverse population of bull trout (a threatened species); 90% spawn in the Upper Skagit.
- Critical for reintroduction of grizzly bears, habitat for spotted owls and stands of old growth forest.
- Otherwise protected by B.C. provincial parks, the North Cascades National Park and Ross Lake National Recreation Area.



History of Actions to Secure the Donut Hole

- SEEC had been working to surrender the mineral tenures since 1984 (close hole in Manning & Skagit Provincial Parks)
- Urgency increased to secure permanent protection
 - Mount Polley Mine Disaster – Imperial Metals (2014)
 - SEEC began outreach efforts to Imperial Metals (2016)
 - Logging permit was granted, and logging roads established (2018)
 - Establishment of a coalition led by Washington Wild & engagement from the Mayor's Office, WA tribes, BC First Nations and local, state & federal officials (2018)
 - Imperial Metals submitted exploratory mining permit (2019)
 - Public outcry & pandemic delayed any action on the exploratory permit & BC Premier Horgan reached out to Governor Inslee (2020)
- SEEC & BC negotiated a deal with Imperial Metals for surrender of the mineral tenures for US\$19.1M (announced in 2022)

British Columbia

140 organizations and officials oppose exploratory drilling in area between 2 protected B.C. parks



Imperial Metals seeking permit in the Skagit headwaters just north of the U.S. border



Rafferty Baker · CBC News · Posted: Aug 14, 2019 5:37 PM PT | Last Updated: August 14, 2019



The Smitheram Valley is one of the three main valleys in the area known as the Donut Hole, where Imperial Metals wants to explore for gold. (Wilderness Committee)

Environment | Local News | Local Politics | Nation & World

Mining proposal for Skagit River headwaters in B.C. sparks outcry from congressional Dems, Gov. Inslee

May 22, 2019 at 8:34 am | Updated May 22, 2019 at 12:19 pm



1 of 4 | Logging is shown in the "donut hole," a Manhattan-sized patch of public land left unprotected because of historic mineral... (Mike Siegel / The Seattle Times, 2018) More

Status of SEEC & City Actions

- City Light/SEEC Letter of Intent (2021)
 - City Light will contribute \$1.25M
 - State will contribute \$4.5M via City Light
 - City Light will transfer \$5.75M to SEEC
- WA State Legislature included \$4.5M in 2022 supplemental budget (2022)
 - Grant from WA State Department of Commerce for City Light to transfer to SEEC
- Letter from BC Minister Heyman to Mayor Harrell (confirms protection)
- Ordinance authorizes City Light to:
 - Execute a grant agreement with the State of WA that authorizes City Light's acceptance of the State's payment and conveyance of it to SEEC.
 - Execute an agreement with SEEC to provide City Light and State funding.

THANK YOU



Seattle City Light