



# Municipality of Skagway

GATEWAY TO THE KLONDIKE

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## DECLARATION OF EMERGENCY

**WHEREAS**, since July of 2017, the Municipality of Skagway has experienced multiple life-threatening landslides every year over Congress Way and the Railroad Dock; and

**WHEREAS**, on June 23rd and August 3rd of 2022, two large rockslides impacted the Railroad Dock and Congress Way during daytime port operations, significantly impacting port operations and the safety of cruise passengers and dock workers; and

**WHEREAS**, the ongoing threat of continued life-threatening landslides motivated the closure of the forward berth on the Railroad Dock and the closure of multiple municipal facilities on Congress Way including the local tour brokerage tour booth, restrooms, and SMART bus stops, impacting countless tour operators including White Pass & Yukon Route; and

**WHEREAS**, a report from Shannon & Wilson Geotechnical and Environmental Consultants dated July 13, 2022, states that there is a “significant risk” of “catastrophic failure” of the mountainside above the Railroad Dock and Congress Way poses “significant risks to life and property;” and

**WHEREAS**, geotechnical reports state that the rockslide face is moving away from the mountainside at a rate of 2.5 inches over the last year and is accelerating from previous rates of 1.5 inches per year,

**WHEREAS**, at least 30 ships are diverting to other ports due to the Railroad Dock berth closure, resulting in substantial financial hardship for the MOS and local business owners that are solely reliant on cruise tourism dollars to survive; and

**WHEREAS**, an “atmospheric weather” event is expected to impact Skagway with heavy rainfall on August 5-7, 2022, increasing the already significant danger of a catastrophic rockslide event; and

**WHEREAS**, rockslide mitigation is expected to cost in the tens of millions of dollars; and

**WHEREAS**, cruise vessels are forced to tender passengers into Skagway from the aft Railroad Dock berth, causing a significant impact to Small Boar Harbor infrastructure; and

**WHEREAS**, the MOS has engaged several private contractors and engineers to study the rockslide area and develop a comprehensive mitigation plan; and

**WHEREAS**, the MOS had incurred significant expense related to Police, Fire Department, and Public Works response; and

**WHEREAS**, a declaration of emergency will alert the public to the seriousness of the risk, and provide direction to sources of information and other available resources, all while the Skagway Borough works in cooperation with other local and state agencies through the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to implement actions and responses to address the ongoing rockslide risk;

**WHEREAS**, the current threat is already negatively impacting the general economy of our community due to the cancelations and re-scheduling of greater than 100,000 cruise tour visitors since June 23, 2022 and unless the risks are mitigated before the 2023 tourism season, the outlook for 2023 will further suppress our economy and threaten the viability of the hundreds of small businesses centered on the tourism trade; and

**WHEREAS**, Skagway is a destination for many cruise passengers to Alaska, the inability of vessels to berth in Skagway due to the slope failure risks will have impacts to the entire Southeast Alaska tour economy; and

**WHEREAS**, Skagway is actively seeking collaboration with state and federal agencies to address and mitigate the risks but cannot bear the entirety of the undertaking alone;

**NOW, THEREFORE, I**, Andrew Cremata, Mayor of the Skagway Borough, do hereby proclaim on August 4, 2022, a declaration of emergency in the Skagway Borough and in accordance with the recommendations of the Skagway Borough Emergency Incident Command. This proclamation is in effect for seven (7) days until the Skagway Borough Assembly adopts this declaration by resolution at a special assembly meeting. As provided by AS 26.23.140, the intent of this declaration is to activate the response and recovery aspects of any and all applicable local or interjurisdictional disaster or emergency plans, and to authorize the furnishing of aid and assistance under those plans. Further, I hereby request that the Skagway Assembly continue this declaration until it determines that the emergency does not pose a threat to our community.

**IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED**, the Municipality of Skagway requests that the governor of the State of Alaska declare a disaster emergency to exist as described in AS26.23 and provide all possible disaster assistance to the Municipality of Skagway in its response to this event.

Dated this 4th day of August, 2022, at Skagway, Alaska.

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Andrew Cremata, Mayor

Attest:

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Steve Burnham, Borough Clerk  
(SEAL)