



HERE'S AN AERIAL VIEW of the old mine site which the Tso lum River Restoration Society is only \$4 million away from stopping leakage.

CV Reco

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PHOTO SUMKTTCD

Capping project plan complete for mine

Colleen Dane
Record Staff

After 40 years, the Tso lum River Restoration Society is only \$4 million away from stopping leakage of an old mine site at the water way's head.

The detailed design plan for a capping project at the abandoned site has been complete — and with a little more support from the public, spokesperson Jack Minard said they could begin work in six months.

"It's a very comprehensive, well-thought-out, well-laid-out plan; we are extremely pleased and if we got the funding we could be full out in July," said Minard.

The proposed reclamation design, done by SRK Consulting (Canada), proposes that a bituminous liner be put on the contaminated areas, to protect water from the copper leachate.

"Get a seal on the cover between the dirty water and the clean water and try to keep them separate," said Minard, to explain the proposal simply.

Other parts of the plan include re-vegetation of the land as well as a potential water treatment— with the total costs coming in at \$4,145 million.

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Wetland work in 2003 cut copper levels in water by 65 per cent

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It's the final step in what has been a nearly 25-year effort to restore the river that's been severely damaged by the leachate.

In the late-1940s, up to 200,000 pinks were reported in large salmon runs in the river, which also included coho, chum and steelhead.

However, the mine abandoned in the 1960's began to leak toxic copper into the waters.

In 1982, the degrading conditions were proven when not one of 2.5 million pink fry released into the river, returned.

Various formations of groups and partnerships have come forward to work for the river — including a cover and wetland project done in 1988, which was deemed a failure.

It wasn't as bad as they thought initially, and the cover started to take some effect years later.

Wetland work in 2003 was very successful — further cutting the copper levels in the water by 65 per cent.

Those projects have a limited life, said Minard — and that's encouraged

the Tsolum River Partnership to move forward with longer-term plans.

While they plan to get most of the money required from government and industry, Minard is asking for people in the community to show their approval for the project spending by sending a note of support.

"All we're asking for is letters of support — we are

going to government for a part of this funding and government does respond to the electorate," he said.

"We know we have the community's support — we've had it all along what we're asking now is for folks

just to take that extra step — write a letter, make a phone call, send an e-mail," said Minard.

The mailing address for Comox Valley MLA Stan Hagen is 437 5th St. Courtenay BC V9N 1J7, for the Minister of Mines, Energy and Petroleum Resources Richard Neufeld, PO Box 9060, STN. PROV GOVT, Victoria, BC, V8W 9E2, and the Minister of Environment Barry Penner, PO Box 9047, STN. PROV GOVT, Victoria, BC. V8W9E2.

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