

# *Environment ministry ready to sign to reclaim abandoned copper mine*

The ministry of environment is on the verge of signing a contract with a company to reclaim an abandoned copper mine on Mount Washington blamed for killing fish in Tsolum River.

Reports on how to carry out the project should be finished in time to allow work on Mount Washington to begin after snow melts this spring, said Ted Oldham, the ministry's regional waste manager in Nanaimo.

The latest development was praised by Father Charles Brandt, whose Comox Valley chapter of the Steelhead Society of B.C. has made enhancement of the Tsolum its main objective since March 1985.

"I'm really quite pleased about everything, especially the cooperation they (the ministry of environment) have given us. They have all been really open about it, which is really great."

Oldham said a committee has recommended to the deputy

minister that a contract be signed, likely this week.

"I don't expect any problems."

Oldham declined to give the name of the company until the contract is actually signed, but Brandt said he has learned the firm is well known for work it has done all over the world.

Several companies were asked to submit proposals for an engineering study, including a ranking of options with a cost analysis of each.

The company has been asked to submit an interim report in two weeks, Oldham said.

After discussion of the report by various government agencies, the company will be asked to submit a final report, which will be reviewed by deputy ministers.

The ministry has listed 10 options for reclamation of the mine or treatment of the area surrounding it, Oldham said, but the final report may suggest a combination of the options or outline new ones.

The company was recommended on the basis of its expertise, experience and proposed costs, he said.

With all necessary reports expected to be finished by spring, Oldham said, the only possible hang-up is funding.

A ministry of environment report confirmed earlier this year that acid drainage from the mine led to copper concentrations known to be toxic to salmonids.