

Feds fund watershed rehab

By **QUENTIN DODD**
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There's new hope for tackling the acid mine drainage from the abandoned Mount Washington Copper Mine on the slopes of Mount Washington.

Father Charles Brandt said last week the federal government has announced it will contribute \$267,000 to the Tsolum River Task Force's work to try to end the drainage, which is blamed for wiping out salmonid stocks in the river downstream.

Brandt said he's particularly encouraged by the formation of the task force by numerous organizations in the Comox Valley.

Representatives of the task force are due to meet

with Environment Minister Cathy McGregor shortly, and it's thought deputy premier and Minister of Employment and Investment Dan Miller will also be there.

Brandt said the federal money is through an agreement between the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the task force, and will be funnelled through the Comox Valley's Project Watershed.

"All the money will be used to enhance salmonids in the lower part of the watershed," said Brandt. "None of it will be going to clean up the mine-site. We're hoping the provincial government will put in matching money for that."

Brandt said the task force has already hired a contractor to act as lead person on the enhancement program. That will include cleaning gravel, monitoring water flows, inventorying coho sites and studying water extractions for such things as farming.

The 30-person group also plans to hire an administrator to keep track of the paperwork.

Brandt said the provincial government has installed four strategically placed monitoring units on the watershed, one on Headquarters Creek, two on the Tsolum, and the fourth at the mine-site just immediately downstream.

"They hired a specialist to do a report and they have another \$15,000 they're going to be spending on some work on Pyrrhotite Lake," Brandt said.

"The report suggested that they should put a pipeline down from the mine-site to the Duncan Bay Main and have a treatment plant down there, which would cost quite a bit of money to do."