

Letter proves gov' t aware of mine damage - Brandt

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The chairman of the Comox Valley Steelhead Society's Tsolum River enhancement committee has received a letter he says explains that the provincial government realizes the impact acid mine drainage from the Mt. Washington Copper Mine has had on the Tsolum River.

In a letter to Father Charles Brandt, Environment Minister Bruce Strachan stated: "I am also very concerned about the devastating impact that the Mt. Washington mine has had on the fishery of the Tsolum."

Strachan's letter to Brandt followed a March announcement which described that a restoration program totalling from \$600,000 to \$1.3 million was scheduled for early spring.

Strachan's recent letter ex-

plains that the program will be jointly funded by the environment ministry and the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources. Treasury board has approved the funding, Strachan said in his letter.

Strachan's letter explained that the first stage of the project will include entail the control of surface draining from the dormant mine with the installation of an impermeable clay seal on the waste dumps and the establishment of an "intensive monitoring program."

"If the clay seal does not significantly reduce acid generation, then the second stage of this project, involving the installation of a synthetic membrane, will be carried out," Strachan said.

He added that while the syn-

thetic membrane will be successful in short-term applications, natural clay is being used because of questions that have arisen about the long-term durability of artificial membranes and to avoid the high costs of the membranes.

"We would like to use the opportunity provided by the Mt. Washington minesite to carry out practical research on acid mine drainage control to other problem mines in the province, and second, the eventual rehabilitation of the once-productive fishery in the Tsolum," Strachan wrote.

Father Brandt, pleased by the letter, said the Comox Valley Steelhead Society has passed a resolution and offered to assist in the rehabilitation of the Tsolum River, including the rebuilding of fish and brood stocks.