

Bulldozers balance on bank of mining waste to be mixed with limestone, covered with glacial till

# Mine clean-up starts

The clean-up of an abandoned copper mine on Mt. Washington, the source of acid pollution blamed for killing the Tsolum River, is under way but ministry officials say the whole project won't be done this summer.

Faced with higher than expected costs, the Mines Ministry has decided to concentrate its efforts on the most hazardous part of the dump site and leave other areas until next year, said Murray Galbraith, ministry reclamation engineer.

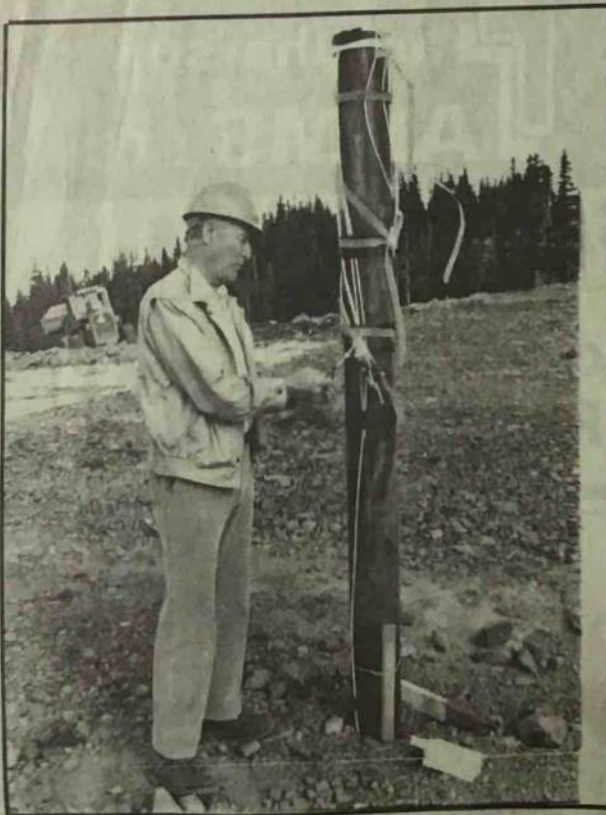
The government has committed \$600,000 to the project to contain contamination with a mixture of glacial till and limestone, and a further \$1.2 million for a plastic membrane if the till method fails.

Contaminants that drain from the east side of the dump into the Tsolum River watershed may be stopped by the project.

But waste rock on the west side, where contaminants could drain into the Oyster River watershed, will be left uncovered.

No contamination from the mine has been reported in the Oyster River system.

Galbraith said it's the government's "intention" to con-



Engineer Galbraith checks monitoring pipe

tinue the work on the west side.

Father Charles Brandt, a Steelhead Society member, is pleased the work has finally started, but is "personally concerned" about drainage from the west side of the dump.

Copper levels of 20,000 micrograms per litre were measured at the mine site, and 80 micrograms per litre in the Tsolum.

Just 20 micrograms per litre can kill a fish fry, Father Brandt said.

Despite that concern, he was excited by his first glimpse of the project this week.

"This is great to see. I never believed fully that it would happen."

Timing is critical to the project because of the enormous amount of glacial till — "enough to cover a football field four metres deep." Galbraith says — that's needed to form a "raincoat" to cover waste rock at the site.

The till, mixed with limestone hauled in from Texada Island, is expected to keep water and air from reaching the acres of waste rock containing copper ore.