

Mine meeting fails to bring cash back

by Margo Piffer

A recent meeting with Minister of Mines Anne Edwards in Vancouver failed to nail down a solid financial commitment to the reclamation of the Mount Washington Mine.

The recently formed Mount Washington Mine Reclamation Project Committee met with Edwards and Larry Hubbard, representing Environment Minister Moe Sihota.

The MWMRP committee had hoped to get a staged financial commitment toward solving the copper pollution problem in the Tsolum River.

The Tsolum watershed is high on the list of priorities of the Comox Valley Watershed Assembly, and has been one of the main objectives of the Comox Valley Chapter of the B.C. Steelhead Society since 1986.

Representing the Comox Valley chapter of the BCSS at the meeting was Father Charles Brandt, who said the delegation was told "there would not be any cash available," for the mine reclamation process proposed — the sealing off of the mine pit with concrete to prevent water leaching into the pit and oxidizing the copper.

Brandt was told, however, that a technical team from the Department of Forestry were up on Mt. Washington recently to look at the possibility of a treatment facility.

"While this is not a perfect solution, it is at least a step in the right direction," said Brandt. "That would allow us to solve the problem in the pit over time.

"We had no problem convincing the Ministry of Mines that the job needs doing. It's just that the ministry has no unallocated budget and is standing in line at the Treasury Board with all the other ministries," added Les Carter, who facilitated the meeting.

"What is really needed now is for all sectors of the population to lobby — that includes business people and those promoting tourism — so that we can convince the government that restoring the Tsolum is an investment in the economy of the Comox Valley," said Carter.