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## Province begins Tsolum cleanup

by ROSS McLAREN

A Tsolum River cleanup project will likely begin at month's end and be completed in September, according to a provincial official.

Provincial mining engineer Murray Galbraith says the government is calling tenders on a project that will stop acid mine drainage from the aban-

doned Mt. Washington Copper Mine.

If a bid is accepted, a contractor will begin dumping gravel on acid-generating waste rocks at the mine site this month. Galbraith would not say how much the project is expected to cost for fear of influencing the bidding process.

The province announced the project in March after it was

learned that acid drainage is killing the Tsolum River ecosystem.

Waste rock produces acid drainage when it is exposed to air and rainwater. To stop the process, a contractor chosen by the province would put glacial till on top of the rocks. The till, consisting of gravel, sand and soil, would be taken from the

mine site.

Galbraith says covering the rocks with till will solve the acid leaching problem.

"I'm fully confident it is the best long term solution to acid mine drainage," he said.

Once the rocks are covered with till, federal and provincial environmental officials will install instruments at the dump

and in the nearby river to measure temperature, oxygen, gas levels and downstream water quality, Galbraith says.

Father Charles Brandt, head of the Tsolum River enhancement committee, is happy with the news.

He says the program is a first in acid mine reclamation that represents "important research for all B.C."

The next step, he says, is trying to restock the Tsolum River. The fisheries department will test the river to determine what fish live in the water and test again later to see if the acid problem has abated.

"There is no way restocking will happen until the copper levels go way down," said Brandt. "It could be a year and a half down the road."