

Province says remediation of Mount Washington copper mine will support fish stock recovery

The \$4.5-million remediation of an abandoned Mount Washington open pit copper mine will support the recovery of Vancouver Island fish stocks, announced Environment Minister Barry Penner and Minister of State for Mining Kevin Krueger.

"This is the best long-term solution to clean-up toxic copper leachate that has been contaminating the headwaters of the Tsolum River for decades," said Penner. "Thanks to incredible dedication by all our partners, we have developed a historic project to improve water quality, return salmon, steelhead and cutthroat trout to these waters, and support our goal of sustainable B.C. fisheries."

The mine remediation will take place in three phases, between 2008 and 2010. The project will include the installation of a thick, pliable

roofing-like material (bituminous geomembrane) that will cover the entire site. This will be covered by a one meter thick glacial till layer, which will be planted with vegetation to stabilize and protect the material from the elements. The Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources will lead the remediation.

"The restoration of the Tsolum River will have positive environmental, economic and social impacts for generations to come," said Comox Valley MLA Stan Hagen. "It is a great example of shared stewardship between government and the local community that will benefit all involved."

In March 2006, the B.C. government provided the initial \$50,000 contribution to the Tsolum River Partnership for an engineering study

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*- Kevin Krueger
Minister of State
for Mining*

to develop the optimal remediation plan for the mine site. SRK Consulting, a leading international expert firm in the field of mine remediation was hired to complete

the study, and submitted the plan to the ministries of Environment and Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources and the Tsolum River Partnership for review in December 2007.

"Through partnerships like this one with the Tsolum River Restoration Society, we are achieving our vision for an environmentally responsible mining industry," said Krueger. "We are ready to begin the final work to restore this land, river and wildlife."

"This is a significant and exciting turning point in the history of the Tsolum River," said Jack Minard, technical co-ordinator with the Tsolum River Restoration Society. "Once water quality issues are solved once and for all we can turn our energies and resources to rebuilding lost and degraded stocks

and habitats. The Courtenay River and Estuary and low summer flows are our next priorities."

The Tsolum River Partnership includes the ministries of Environment and Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources, Timber West, Tsolum River Restoration Society, Pacific Salmon Foundation, Environment Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the Mining Association of BC, and Natural Resources Canada.

The group began working together in 2001 to identify steps to restore the health and productivity of the Tsolum River to historic levels.

The detailed SRK report can be found at www.tsolumriver.org/.

For more information on the protection of rivers and fisheries, see www.gov.bc.ca/env/index.html.