

Release report on Tsolum

Sir,

The Comox Valley Chapter of the Steelhead Society is growing impatient with the B.C. government's delay in releasing the Agra Report on the Tsolum River and the abandoned Mt. Washington Copper Mine.

This \$10,000 report — carried out by Agra Earth and Environmental Ltd., a Calgary/Victoria based firm, with the approval of the Ministry of Environment and paid for by the taxpayers of B.C. — has failed to see the light of day.

Completed in May of this year, the report sits on some bureaucrats desk in Victoria. In the meanwhile, the people of the Comox Valley and the province lose another year of benefits and enjoyment from the Tsolum watershed.

For all intents and purposes

Guest Column

the Tsolum remains a dead river, poisoned by a copper mine at its headwaters. And even though taxpayers have spent \$1.5 million to date on the mine's reclamation, deadly copper levels remain the same as before cleanup work commenced in 1987.

Our hopes were that the Agra Report would give us new direction. And possibly it will, if it is released to the public.

The Agra Report — under the direction of Dr. John Wiens — is reportedly a benefit study, meaning that all who would benefit from the mine

cleanup were interviewed prior to the report's completion: e.g., Valley residents along the river, recreational and commercial fishermen, forestry and mining personnel, farmers, community leaders, etc.

The report could possibly solicit funding from such groups for mine cleanup and watershed enhancement.

Included in the report, as well, are suggested remedies for mine reclamation, costing (allegedly) between \$5 and \$10 million.

Other factors have caused the river's demise — such as

past logging, gravel and water removal, pesticides, etc. — and the report addresses the responsibility for such a task. It appears that it could best be handled by a local group.

Because of the delay in the report's release, the Steelhead Society working with the Watershed Assembly has requested its release through the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

We have been informed that the Ministry does not disclose information that will be released to the public within 60 days after a request is received. A copy of the report should therefore be in our hands by December 16.

Charles Brandt
Chair: Tsolum River
Enhancement Committee
Comox Valley Chapter
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