

Report outlines Tsolum work

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Special to the C-I

This is an amazing story by any account. The story of the Tsolum River could never be told without including an account of the effects on this once-magnificent, salmonid-bearing stream by the abandoned, unreclaimed, open-pit copper mine developed by the Mount Washington Milling company, 1964-67, high on the slopes of Mt. Washington, 14 miles northwest of the city of Courtenay.

It is the story that recounts the discovery of the deadly copper pollution that has literally wiped out the salmon runs in the Tsolum River. The story that recounts how a group of ordinary people working in conjunction with government on all levels, with informed biologists and scientists and with industry; with politicians at the local level - all working at grass roots level - undertook a study and hands-on working relationship with this river, which has resulted in the *State of the Tsolum River*.

This is a document and study that should be in every classroom that has any relation or concern with the environment, a document that should be in every fisheries, mining, forestry, and government archives.

The Tsolum River Task Force (TRTF), whose mandate is restoring the Tsolum River to "historic levels of health and productivity," was formed in 1997 following the "healing the Tsolum" workshop attended by over 200 people.

With full realization that the Tsolum will never be healed without the reclamation of the abandoned mine site, and aware of the previous attempts to reclaim the mine by the provincial government (1988-95), the Task Force wished to prepare for this eventual mine reclamation by having the Tsolum

River in a state of preparedness. To this end TRTF received funding from various agencies, but principally from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) for the Tsolum River Restoration Project whose objectives were to assess salmon habitat and to identify factors which were limiting salmon production in the Tsolum River; to complete a hydrological assessment; conduct a water-monitoring program which would address seasonal high water temperatures, elevated copper concentrations and high silt loads; to undertake demonstration projects in fish habitat restoration and water storage; and finally to prepare action plans to achieve progress toward these deliverables.

State of the Tsolum River is an account of how these promised deliverables were actually delivered. There is not the space in a review such as this to describe in detail how these deliverables were actualized. It is our wish to turn the readers attention to the document itself, and to realize first hand how this took place.

The document consists of eleven sections: Executive Summary; Project and Watershed Description; Volunteers and Community Involvement; Media and Public Events; Acid Mine Drainage; Water Monitoring; Fish Habitat Mapping Programs; Refuge Pond Studies; Restoration Projects; Flows and Storage Report; and finally

Enhancement.

The Section: Volunteers and Community Involvement commands special attention. Community support is of the essence of TRTF's efforts to restore the health and productivity of the watershed.

In their volunteer roles as custodians of the river, streamkeepers have provided continuous informal monitoring of changes occurring in the Tsolum River and its principal tributaries, changes resulting from highway construction, timber harvesting previous mining activities in the upper watershed, and the loss of riparian vegetation due to development on private land.

This local knowledge, recorded in this report, has proved invaluable as we move towards restoring the Tsolum River to historic levels of health and productivity.

Aldo Leopold, the Father of North American Ecology said that a thing is right when "...it tends to preserve the beauty, integrity and stability of the whole biotic community..."

The Tsolum River Task Force is doing the right work in the whole Tsolum River biotic community.

State of the Tsolum River is available through the Tsolum River Restoration

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