

Tsolum River gets 'adopted'

The Tsolum River is dead, but not forever.

At least that is what the Comox Valley's Steelhead Society hopes.

It has adopted the Tsolum and is going into battle to get government attention for the problem of copper leaching into the river from an abandoned copper mine on Mt. Washington.

Father Charles Brandt, chairman of the Tsolum River Enhancement Committee, is writing to the premier, the minister of the environment, the minister of energy, mines and petroleum resources, and MP Ray Skelly to alert them to the situation - and ask what can be done about it.

He is especially questioning the gap in responsibility that allowed Mt. Washington Copper to abandon the open-pit mine in the late '60s.

The copper from the overburden removed from the mine is now leaching into tributary creeks of the Tsolum.

"Have you or will you discuss this matter with Mt. Washington Copper outlining their responsibility in this matter as well as your own government?" writes Brandt.

The waste management branch of the environment ministry and a fisheries biologist have both been testing the water of the Tsolum River for copper levels, which appear to fluctuate with the seasons.

Although Brandt mentions that clear-cut logging, and gravel and water being taken from the river have had their effect, he, and the committee, are the most concerned about the copper in the river.

The Tsolum, which had runs of 200,000 or more pink salmon in the 1930s, now has few salmon of any kind returning to it.