

Tsolum R. pollution is probed

By FRANCES BULA

A team of eight senior experts from several federal and provincial ministries visited Mt. Washington Wednesday to investigate the abandoned copper mine which may be polluting the Tsolum River.

The eight are meeting Thursday and today to discuss possible solutions to the copper pollution. Fisheries staff in the Comox Valley have suspected for several months that copper dribbling into the system from the abandoned mine is a major cause for the decreased pink runs to the river and the total failure of the hatchery enhancement efforts.

The high-powered interest in Tsolum River pollution is largely the result of work by the local Steelhead Society. Rev. Charles Brandt, chairman of the committee to rehabilitate the Tsolum River, has bombarded federal and provincial ministries with letters for the past four months.

As a result, Comox MLA Karen Sanford questioned Environment Minister Austin Pelton about Tsolum River contamination May 10, pressuring him to act on the problem.

At that time, Pelton said he was not informed about the problem but three representatives from the provincial environment ministry were among the visitors to Mt. Washington Wednesday.

Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources Minister Stephen Rogers wrote Brandt last week to say that "I share your concerns that effluent may be affecting fish stocks" and that his staff will work with the environment ministry to "develop an appropriate strategy for controlling the problem."

Brandt has also been contacted by the director of the federal en-

vironmental-protection branch, M. Ito, who wrote that "while I have no illusions about the difficulties we must overcome in addressing the problems at Mt. Washington, I can assure you we are prepared to pursue all possible avenues."

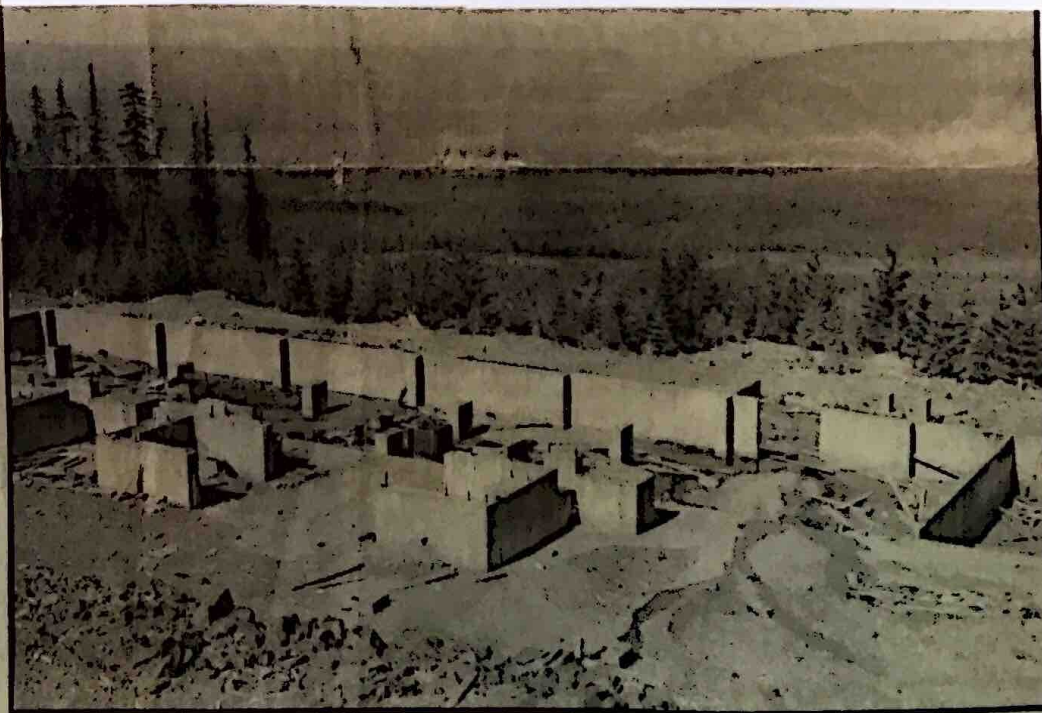
Premier Bill Bennett and opposition leader Bob Skelly are also being kept informed of investigations and action at the Mt. Washington mine site.

The visitors to Mt. Washington on Wednesday included:

(Continued on page 2)



Tom Oxland and Rev. Charles Brandt check stream



Structures at mill site of Mt. Washington Copper still stand with overburden