

30 May 1990
The Honourable Rita M. Johnston
Minister of Transportation & Highways
Rm. 301, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4

Dear Ms Johnston:

I am writing to you about the proposed new Island Highway and specifically that section that lies between Courtenay and the Oyster River.

We were told by the representatives of your government at a meeting at Washington Inn in Courtenay in April of this year that among the 5 possibilities for the routing of this section of the proposed highway - that CORRIDOR 3 is the preferred route. Corridor 3 follows closely a section of Headquarters Creek upon which is located a Federal salmon hatchery, and follows very closely for a number of miles the Tsolum River.

Environmentally, CORRIDOR 3 is the worst possible route for the highway: it is the route that will result in the greatest ecological damage to this area.

Why is it when governments propose new highways they almost invariably select a route that is most damaging to our life support systems, our rivers?

The Tsolum River has already been exploited excessively, first by Mt. Washington Copper which has polluted the Tsolum River system with copper leachate. This pollution has resulted in the virtual killing of this river. Fortunately your government has taken responsible steps in reclaiming this mine site, by a cost so far of close to a million dollars. The work is ongoing.

It is not only the copper pollution: the river has been exploited in the past by clear cut logging with drastic impacts on the river in the way of slope stability, erosion, peak flows, etc. And in addition some of the best spawning gravel was removed from the lower regions of the river to construct the Comox airbase. Human sewage continues to flow into this stream, and many householders continue to use the river as source of water. Is it any wonder that this once great salmonid producing river has been reduced to a sterile waterway.

And now we are told that the preferred route for the proposed new highway will parallel the Tsolum river with all of the dire consequences that might result to the environment and to the river from auto pollution in the form of fuel and rubber residues etc., making their way into this important stream.

My request to you is that you consult with your colleagues and experts both provincially and federally before such a route is sanctioned. I list several such experts below.

Sincerely yours,

Father Charles A.E. Brandt (yde)
Chairman, Tsolum River Enhancement Committee
Comox Valley Chapter of the Steelhead Society of B.C.
R.R.1, Site 22, Black Creek, B.C.
VOR 1CO

cc:

The Hon. Jack Davis, Minister of Energy, Mines and Petroleum
Resources
The Hon. Stan Hagen, Minister of Regional and Economic Development
Dr. D.W. Narver, Director of Recreational Fisheries Branch,
Ministry of Environment.
Mr. Doug Morrison, Head, Habitat Protection Section, MOE.
Mr. Gordon McEachen, Fisheries Officer, DFO, Comox, B.C.