

Background and Heavy Metals Data:

Pollution from the Tulsequah Chief has been a problem since the mine was closed in 1957. Harry Carlick of the Taku River Tlingit First Nation was a federal government employee working downriver blasting snags and debris piles out of the river in the 1950s and said the following about Cominco, the owners and operators of the Tulsequah Chief at that time: "They were polluting the river. There were no fish on the Tulsequah and the side creeks when the mine was operating. There was nothing there. The trees were even dead, right down to the airport." Alaska Department of Fish and Game sampling in recent years found significant numbers of juvenile salmon in the Tulsequah, but not in the downstream plume of pollution coming from the mine.

Despite consistently finding "considerable acid generation" and "acutely toxic" contamination draining from Tulsequah site since 1992, the Canadian government has not enforced a clean-up order at the Tulsequah Chief or the Big Bull site, both now owned by Redfern. Federal inspections confirm that "none of the measures undertaken by the company had significantly reduced the acutely lethal toxicity" of the discharges. Instead of finally ordering Redcorp to clean up the both sites, Environment Canada on May 21, 2004 granted Redfern's request to extend the cleanup deadline at the Tulsequah Chief from September 2003 until June 2005. Sources indicate that Redcorp has done little to date to address this pollution and will likely miss the June 30 deadline for a full clean-up.

TULSEQUAH CHIEF MINE POLLUTION INTO THE TULSEQUAH RIVER		
Heavy Metal	Annual pollution (pounds)	Since 1990 (pounds)
Zinc	23,861 (12 tons)	357, 915 (179 tons)
Copper	5,099 (2 tons)	76, 485 (38 tons)
Lead	122	1830
Cadmium	97	1455
Arsenic	49	735
Totals	29,228 (15 tons)	438, 420 (219 tons)

The amounts above were calculated by Dave Chambers of the Center for Science and Public Participation based on data in Tulsequah and Taku Rivers Mass Balance Water Quality Report, J. Lough and I. Sharpe, British Columbia Ministry of Water, Land, and Air Protection, Environmental Protection Division, Data Report # 2003-1, November, 2003, Appendix C. The loading estimates/calculations are based on sampling done in two months - July 2002 and August 2003. There was also data available from 3 monthly readings in 2001, but this data was not used because (1) all metal loadings for those months were identical, and (2) because the flow rates for the mine discharge for the 2001 data was "estimated" rather than "measured," as was the case for the 2002-2003 data. If the 2001 data were to be included, the loading figures would all be at least twice those above, so the figures quoted are conservative.

The Canadian federal government has denied requests for copies of monthly monitoring and status reports, the cleanup order itself and other information related to the ongoing pollution and failed cleanup.