



September 18, 2010

Prime Minister of Canada: pm@pm.gc.ca,
Minister of Indian Affairs John Duncan: Duncan.J@parl.gc.ca,
Minister of the Environment Jim Prentice: Minister@ec.gc.ca,
Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Gail Shea: Shea.G@parl.gc.ca

Re: PROPOSED PROSPERITY MINE IN CHILCOTIN

Dear Prime Minister Harper and Honourable Ministers:

On behalf of our Society's 3,500 members and supporters, we strongly oppose the proposed open pit mine at Fish Lake (Teztan Biny) and fully support the Tsilhqot'in Nation in its opposition to this mega-development in their aboriginal protected area and rights area.

We would first like to bring to your attention that the proposed mine zone is within the boundaries of an internationally significant aboriginal protected area, Xeni Gwet'in (Nemiah) Aboriginal and Wild Horse Preserve, a fact we also pointed out in our recent submission to your Canadian Environmental Assessment Authority (CEAA) Review Panel. This preserve, nearly the size (and stature in our opinion) of Yellowstone National Park, was created as the Nenduwh Jid GuZit'in Declaration in 1989 with no industrial forestry, mining (or exploration) or large-scale hydro-electric development. A Wild Horse Preserve declaration was created by the same First Nations over the same area in 2006 – western Canada's first wild horse protection area. Given that First Nations rights are enshrined in our Canadian constitution, why is your government even considering possible approval of an industrial mine complex in this aboriginal protection area? It's ecological stature and beauty are on par with national park treasures created by our Federal government such as Banff and Jasper National Parks, and you quite rightly don't allow mines there so why does your government not show the same respect for this outstanding aboriginal preserve and the rights of the First Nations caretakers who have lived there since time immemorial and protected the land accordingly?

The proposed mine is also adjacent to three provincial protected parks, Big Creek, Spruce Lake Wilderness and Tsy'los. In our submission to your panel, we noted that these aboriginal and provincial protected areas represent a huge investment by society in preserving lasting legacies for future generations, the ecological integrity of which is now seriously threatened by the proposed Prosperity Mine development.

Even the CEAA Panel report recognized that the mine area is "*a pristine, untouched, and unique ecosystem with exceptional vistas, clear glacial fed lakes and streams, relative remoteness and abundant wildlife*". A postcard featuring Fish Lake was issued by GoBC as one in a series

promoting tourism in the province. This vast wilderness supports a strong, growing wilderness tourism industry that is one of the foundations for the Nemiah First Nations economic development program. Much of the tourism is based on non-motorized access, through the Nemiah First Nation tourism and access management plans. Although the CEAA Panel acknowledged the proposed Prosperity Mine would jeopardize the operations of a major wilderness lodge at Taseko Lake, we submit that the impacts of the proposed mine on wilderness tourism will be far more reaching than that, such as the effects of *uncontrolled motorized hunting and recreational access by the large influx of mine workers anticipated*.

The Valhalla Wilderness Society (VWS) was one of the sponsors of a recent grizzly bear conservation study in the Chilcotin headed by Dr. Lance Craighead of the respected Craighead Research Institute. This study formed the basis for a biological submission to the CEAA Panel sponsored by a number of groups (including VWS). The grizzly bear population in the West Chilcotin region and South Chilcotin Ranges (site of Taseko's mine proposal) is the largest residual dryland population left in the Coast Ranges foothills of western North America. Their diet includes salmon, white bark pine nuts and wild potatoes. The Chilcotin still has a nearly intact dryland grizzly bear area the size of the protected Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. However, grizzly bears in the Chilcotin are now provincially listed as “threatened” and in BC are federally listed as a species of concern. The CEAA Panel agreed that the proposed mine will push the already threatened Chilcotin grizzly population over the threshold of extinction. How can you approve a mine that will do this to a federally listed species (to only mention one of a number in the mine area) and where the negative effects clearly cannot be mitigated?

We also feel it is unconscionable that the Federal government would even consider approving a mine project that requires the complete destruction of Teztan Biny (Fish Lake), a traditional fishery and ceremonial site that has sustained the Tsilhqot'in people for generations. We also believe that mine drainage and contamination issues will have a negative effect on Fraser-run salmon and other fisheries in the adjacent Taseko River, just has been recently proven by an independent study of fisheries in the Athabasca River downstream from the Alberta Tar Sands.

Besides citing significant impacts on grizzly bears, tourism and other values, the CEAA Panel's concluded that the proposed Prosperity mine ***“would result in significant adverse environmental effects on fish and fish habitat, on navigation, on the current use of lands and resources for traditional purposes by First Nations, on cultural heritage, on certain potential or established Aboriginal rights or title”***.

Accordingly, please do not approve this project. We highly recommended that government and First Nations now work together to protect all of the Upper Taseko Watershed including the mine area.

Sincerely, (signed)

Wayne P. McCrory, Director.