

Article #4 ~ Main Issues at Mount Nansen Mine

What are the Main Issues of Concern at Mount Nansen?

a) Tailings: The tailings are the biggest concern at Mount Nansen. Tailings are like fine sand, containing metals and some chemicals that were added in the milling process. The tailings are stored in ponds, held behind a dam. The valley floor and sides are made of sand. When the valley floor is frozen due to permafrost, water is prevented from passing into the ground beneath. When these areas thaw it is possible for water from the tailings pond to seep through and under the dam.



b) Tailings Dam: The long term stability of the dam is a concern. The dam was built on permafrost that is beginning to thaw. If there is a very large flood or earthquake, it could break and tailings would flow down the valley. The fine sand could possibly kill fish and destroy fish habitat.



c) The Pit: the main pit collects water and must be pumped out to prevent water from flowing through an old underground tunnel and into Pony Creek. The water is pumped out and treated as it contains small amounts of zinc. This treated water is released into Dome Creek. The water coming into the pit is partially evaporated during the summer. Although the water level does rise in the summer it gets lower over the winter.



d) Buildings: the mill and other buildings could be a safety hazard to people visiting the site. The buildings need to be demolished and the site returned to a more natural state. It is possible that there is contaminated soil around the buildings from gas/oil spills. Any contaminated soil that is found will be cleaned up.

Should I be worried?

While there are issues with the mine site, you should not be worried, as they are being managed to ensure no harm to the environment. It has been seven years since the mine closed. Since that time, rainfall, sunlight and water treatment, have broken the mill chemicals into harmless components. Metals are not getting into the water at this time either. The water was good enough quality in 2005 that it did not have to be treated and could be released directly into the streams.

The dam is stable right now but with climate warming, we want to make sure it will be stable over the long term. Most likely, the dam will need to be fixed or removed in the near future.

For more information, please contact:

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