



Salt Chuck Mine

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Summary

The Salt Chuck Mine operated as copper-palladium-gold-silver mine from around 1916 to 1941. Located on Prince of Wales Island in southeast Alaska, the site has a significant problem with **acid mine drainage** and is on the EPA National Superfund priority site list. Pure Nickel Inc, a Canadian-based exploration company, currently holds rights to mining leases in the area and in Summer 2012 **began active exploration** .

Background

The Salt Chuck Mine began life as a copper-silver-gold mine and expanded after later discoveries of platinum and palladium. Under the control of the Alaska Gold and Metals Company from 1916-1941, the mine produced around 300,000 tons of ore.

Acid mine drainage from the mine has been a problem for the ecology of the area and downstream communities for many years. Contaminants currently found at the mine range from PCBs to toxic levels of heavy metals. As a result, the site **has been** on the EPA National superfund site for many years. In March 2010, the EPA **moved this site up** to the "priority" list, which makes federal cleanup funds more accessible. This was, in part, a response to **requests by the village of Kasaan** to clean up the mine since the downstream area is used for commercial fishing and **subsistence harvesting** of a variety of species.



Mine and mill site
source: Public Domain

Salt Chuck Tailings



Contaminated tailings on the beach
source: Public Domain

In particular EPA studies of shellfish in the area **have found** arsenic and vanadium at levels of concern for human health. However, the contaminated tidal areas are under State of Alaska control and there are currently **no remediation plans** for these areas, although cleanup of the upstream areas would presumably help. In 2007 the EPA **estimated** 6.4 MB the cost to cleanup the mine at around \$5 million, with **perpetual annual maintenance** costs of \$53,000.

In 2010, the USFS **solicited** cleanup bids under the American Recovery and Investment Act of 2009 and the contract was won by **North Wind** , which is a CIRC corporation. According to the **DEC** and North Wind, **cleanup was underway** as of summer 2011. The EPA has continued to collect samples and monitor the site through 2013.

Current Status

Pure Nickel Inc. conducted exploratory drilling on the site as recently **as 2007** . In Fall 2011 they announced that permits **had been received** for continued exploration starting later in the year. In

<http://www.groundtruthtrekking.org/Issues/MetalsMining/SaltChuck.html>

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addition, there have been **rumors** of the presence of **rare earth elements** at the site. A drilling exploration program **began** in August 2012.

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