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COMINCO'S BLUEBELL MINE IS HISTORY
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More than 150 years ago, native Indians and fur traders visited the rusty outcroppings on the east shore of Kootenay Lake to extract lead from the mineral galena to make bullets for their muzzle-loading rifles. In 1882, American prospector Robert Sproule acquired the mineral rights to this large rusty exposure by staking the Blue Bell claim. Most of the near surface mining of this area by the Kootenay Mining and Smelting Company and The Canadian Metal Company before 1930 resulted in a large open pit called the Bluebell "glory hole". This excavation has served as an important visual reminder of the historical past of this area but soon it will just be a memory.

During September, Cominco Limited., who last mined the Bluebell lead-zinc-silver ores between 1952 and 1972, commenced a Remedial Action Plan (RAP) "to substantially improve the environmental quality and public safety aspects" of the site. The company hosted an Open House at the Riodel Community Center on August 2 to discuss this plan with interested residents who examined maps, photographs and reports. Technical details were provided by Bruce Donald, Cominco's Reclamation Superintendent from Kimberly and Neil Sandstrom from Morrow Environmental Consultants Inc. Also in attendance to participate in the discussions and answer questions was Ed Stockerl, Environmental Safety Officer with the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks in Nelson.

In 1997, Cominco authorized Morrow Environmental Consultants Inc. (MECI) to carry out a preliminary environmental site assessment of both the peninsula (about 75 hectares) and offshore areas in the vicinity of Bluebell and Galena Bays, where previous mining was concentrated. Initial work consisted of mapping areas of stressed vegetation, the collection and analysis of mine waste, lake waters and sediments, surface and ground waters and geophysical (offshore/onshore) surveys. The geochemical surveys continued through 1999 and were supplemented by excavating pits to delineate contaminated areas and borehole drilling to provide hydrological information. A comprehensive report of the results of this Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) was completed in mid-June, 2000 and distributed to the BC Ministry of Energy and Mines and the BC Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks. More recently, Morrow Consultants prepared the Remedial Action Plan (RAP) report which identifies several land based contaminated areas which are targeted for treatment and restoration this year. The contaminated areas consist mainly of process fines and waste rock which have high concentrations of arsenic, cadmium, copper and/or zinc. The process fines were derived from both tailings (defined as that portion of the ore which is regarded as too poor to be treated further) and concentrate (that portion of the ore which is sent to the smelter). These fines are being transported (about 100 truck loads during the period September to December) and disposed at Cominco's Old Iron tailings pond near Kimberley. The waste rock will be placed in the Bluebell "glory hole" and Comfort open pit along with the concrete foundations from the previous mine buildings. A total of 27 mine openings to surface have been permanently sealed. Hydrocarbon impacted soils (soils with diesel and motor oil) will be transported to the landfill area northwest of the glory hole and treated on-site. It is noteworthy that during Cominco's 20 year mining operation, 5.3 million tonnes of lead/zinc concentrate were shipped to Trail and 3.9 million tonnes of tailings were generated. About half of the tailings were discharged into Kootenay Lake near the south end of the peninsula.

Once the proposed work is completed, a vast improvement of the environmental quality on the Bluebell peninsula is expected. The only remaining historical mining structure will be the sealed 1952 concrete portal at Galena Bay. Cominco will continue to evaluate the site condition and prepare a Remedial Action Plan for the foreshore/offshore for implementation in 2001. The total cost of the program is estimated at \$3 million.

TOO MANY PEOPLE PRAY FOR RAIN, AND THEN COMPLAIN ABOUT THE MUD