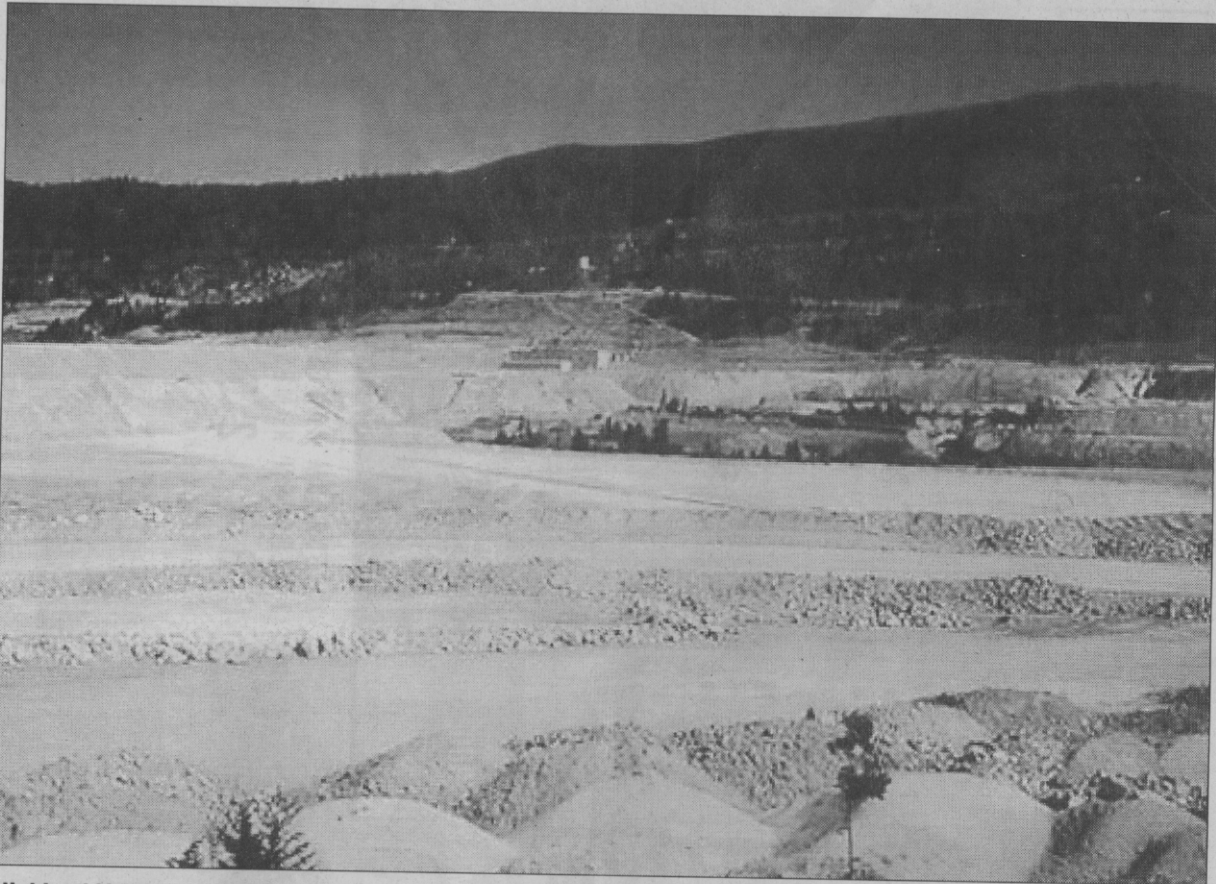


## ISSUES &amp; IDEAS

Highland Valley  
883955

# Hey, we'll take Vancouver's garbage



Highland Valley site: A long-term solid waste management plan for the citizens of southwest B.C.

## An Interior mine site provides an economic, efficient and environmentally safe landfill solution

**L**ower Mainland residents have been warned of a looming "trash disaster." The Greater Vancouver Regional District's Cache Creek landfill is approaching its capacity and is set to close in 2008.

While people had been told its successor would be a new landfill located at the Ashcroft Ranch on the Agricultural Land Reserve in British Columbia's southern Interior, that option now appears in question.

The environmental assessment of the Ashcroft Ranch project has been suspended, and the provincial government has directed the GVRD to evaluate other landfill options.

Now some claim we face an imminent "garbage crisis" because, without the Ashcroft Ranch project, there is no place to dispose of more than 500,000 tonnes of garbage annually from the GVRD and other municipalities.

Fortunately, there is a better, less costly and more environmentally responsible alternative to digging a new landfill on the undisturbed, working ranchlands of the historic Ashcroft Ranch beside the Thompson River.

The solution is the proposed Highland Valley Centre for Sustainable Solid Waste Management, a cost-effective, smart and sustainable alternative that will re-use a portion of the existing Highland Valley Copper mine site in the southern Interior.

The Highland Valley alternative was originally conceived in 2002 when the mine's management began to look for innovative ways to offset the economic impact of the mine's closure, expected between 2008 and 2013, on surrounding communities.

In examining our options, it became apparent that locating a landfill on top of a plateau of benign rock at the mine site could

**Wolf Nickel**



provide more than 100 jobs and economic diversification opportunities for the local communities and first nations.

It also became apparent that locating a landfill on the former mine site is an environmentally superior approach that precludes the need to develop an undisturbed agricultural area, such as the Ashcroft ranchlands.

The concept behind the Highland Valley alternative is based on the award-winning project at Gibraltar Mines where a new landfill for Williams Lake was developed within the mine property.

The Highland Valley project will deliver a long-term solid waste management solution that addresses the requirements of the citizens of southwest B.C. As proposed, it will set a new standard as a world class waste management and recycling facility.

Unlike other proposals, the Highland Valley landfill project will not disturb any sensitive provincial habitat. Nor would it displace any endangered plant or animal species.

Moreover, the project is designed with a triple liner system that will provide a level of groundwater protection unprecedented in Canada.

The site geometry will also permit the development of a high-capacity landfill that will occupy only half of the footprint required at the proposed Ashcroft Ranch site. The reduced footprint will significantly lower costs, saving taxpayers approximately \$80 million

over the life of the landfill.

A key feature of the Highland Valley project is an aggressive program to reduce solid waste through the recycling of substances such as cardboard, scrap metal and clean wood waste. The mine's industrial buildings could serve as the landfill's central processing and recycling facility once the mine closes.

Another key feature of the Highland Valley alternative involves harnessing the energy of landfill gas (methane) to generate electricity. Most conventional landfills flare methane into the atmosphere, where it contributes to smog and global warming.

Highland Valley proposes instead to use the methane to produce up to eight megawatts of renewable, green electricity—enough power to supply up to 8,000 homes.

The GVRD's plan for the Ashcroft Ranch is opposed by first nations with traditional lands adjacent to the proposed landfill. Opposition is based on concerns regarding irrigation and drinking water safety, as well as the disturbance of culturally significant sites and more than 200 hectares of productive habitat used for harvesting traditional foods.

In contrast, Highland Valley Copper is committed to work through concerns of local first nations and communities. We recognize that successful projects—projects that are a win for everyone involved—come through sincere and committed consultations with local first nations, residents and other stakeholders.

Creating a new and sustainable use for a soon-to-be-closed mine will provide residents of the Lower Mainland and southwestern B.C. with a secure and cost-effective landfill that will deliver environmental benefits and serve the public interest for generations to come.

*Wolf Nickel is president and general manager of Highland Valley Copper.*