

Beatson Copper Mine

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Ground Truth Trekking

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BEATSON MINE — This creek exits the remains of the Beatson Mine (/Issues/MetalsMining/BeatsonMine.html) which is source of the acid mine drainage (/Issues/MetalsMining/AcidMineDrainage.html) that still affects the area. — Get Photo (/photos/beatson-mine_1/)

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Summary

The Beatson copper mine in Prince William Sound produced over 182 million pounds of copper from 1904-1930. The mine site has an ongoing problem with acid mine drainage (/Issues/MetalsMining/AcidMineDrainage.html) and is responsible for elevated levels of heavy metals in shellfish in the area.

Background

Commercial grade copper sulfide ore was discovered at the north end of Latouche Island, at a site originally called the Beatson-Bonanza claims (http://www.dggs.alaska.gov/webpubs/usgs/b/text/b0963b.PDF) 6.1 Mb, in 1897. Full production at the mine began in 1904. The “Alaska Syndicate” (primarily J.P. Morgan and the Guggenheim family) purchased the mine in 1907, and the company that would become the Kennecott Copper Corporation took control in 1910 (/Issues/MetalsMining/Kennecott-Copper-Mine.html). The mine operated until 1930, closing due to a combination of low copper prices and little remaining ore of high quality. Now uninhabited, Latouche Island is found near the entrance to Prince William Sound.

Like many abandoned and current copper mines, the site has ongoing problems with acid mine drainage (/Issues/MetalsMining/AcidMineDrainage.html). As a result, even 80 years after the closure of the mine there are elevated levels of

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zinc, copper, and lead (http://pubs.usgs.gov/of/2007/1359/of2007-1359.pdf) in the rivers, ocean sediments, and shellfish nearby.

Further Reading

> Chemical Data for Rock, Sediment, Biological, Precipitate, and Water Samples from Abandoned Copper Mines in Prince William Sound, Alaska (2007) USGS (http://pubs.usgs.gov/of/2007/1359/of2007-1359.pdf)

> Copper Deposits of the Prince William Sound District Alaska (1950) USGS. (http://www.dggs.alaska.gov/webpubs/usgs/b/text/b0963b.PDF)

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