



Salt Chuck Mine

by Bretwood Higman, David Coil, Elizabeth Lester

LAST MODIFIED: 12TH AUGUST 2019

CREATED: JAN. 19, 2018

Copyright: Creative Commons Attribution



Table of Contents

1. Summary
2. Background
3. Current Status

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 ([/Issues/MetalsMining/AcidMineDrainage.html](#)) 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 (<http://www.purenickel.com/s/NewsReleases.asp?ReportID=542800>).

Salt Chuck Mine



SALT CHUCK MILL — Mine and mill site — Get Photo (</photos/salt-chuck-mill/>)

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 \(/Issues/MetalsMining/AcidMineDrainage.html\)](/Issues/MetalsMining/AcidMineDrainage.html) 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

Salt Chuck Mine



PCBs to toxic levels of heavy metals. As a result, the site has been (<http://yosemite.epa.gov/r10/cleanup.nsf/7d19cd587dff1eee8825685f007d56b7/f31e3262dcb665d488257a52007aa9e6!OpenDocument>) on the EPA National superfund site for many years. In March 2010, the EPA moved this site up (<http://yosemite.epa.gov/opa/admpress.nsf/0/3C3C5EEC5545889F852576DB005D7F89>) to the “priority” list, which makes federal cleanup funds more accessible. This was, in part, a response to requests by the village of Kasaan (http://www.epa.gov/region10/pdf/sites/salt_chuck_mine/letter_regarding_organized_village_of_kasaan.pdf) to clean up the mine since the downstream area is used for commercial fishing and subsistence harvesting (</Issues/OtherIssues/Subsistence.html>) of a variety of species.

Salt Chuck Mine



SALT CHUCK TAILINGS — Contaminated tailings on the beach — Get Photo (/photos/salt-chuck-tailings/)

In particular EPA studies of shellfish in the area have found (<http://www.dec.state.ak.us/spar/csp/docs/southeast/salt-chuck-mine.pdf>) 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 (<http://seacc.org/issues/mining/salt-chuck-mine-contaminated-site>) for these areas, although cleanup of the upstream areas would presumably help. In 2007 the EPA estimated (http://www.epa.gov/region10/pdf/sites/salt_chuck_mine/engineering_evaluation_cost_analysis_draft_report.pdf) 6.4 MB

Salt Chuck Mine



the cost to cleanup the mine at around \$5 million, with perpetual annual maintenance (</Issues/OtherIssues/InPerpetuity.html>) costs of \$53,000.

In 2010, the USFS solicited (<https://www.fbo.gov/index?s=opportunity&mode=form&id=a126b7c505f6d079ae42ec1ecc64d1d9&tab>) cleanup bids under the American Recovery and Investment Act of 2009 and the contract was won by North Wind (<http://www.northwind-inc.com/>), which is a CIRI corporation. According to the DEC (<http://www.dec.state.ak.us/spar/csp/sites/salt-chuck.htm>) and North Wind, cleanup was underway (<http://commerce.idaho.gov/news/2011/05/north-wind-of-idaho-falls-is-going-strong.aspx>) as of summer 2011. The EPA has continued to collect samples and monitor the site through 2013.

Current Status

Pure Nickel Inc. (http://www.purenickel.com/s/Salt_Chuck_Project.asp) conducted exploratory drilling on the site as recently as 2007 (<http://www.purenickel.com/s/NewsReleases.asp?ReportID=267258>). In Fall 2011 they announced that permits had been received (<http://www.purenickel.com/s/NewsReleases.asp?ReportID=484981>) for continued exploration starting later in the year. In addition, there have been rumors (<http://www.petroleumnews.com/pntruncate/190854164.shtml>) of the presence of rare earth elements (</Issues/MetalsMining/RareEarths.html>) at the site. A drilling exploration program began (<http://www.purenickel.com/s/NewsReleases.asp?ReportID=542800>) in August 2012.

Further Reading

- > [EPA page on Salt Chuck Mine and Superfund status \(http://yosemite.epa.gov/r10/cleanup.nsf/7d19cd587dff1eee8825685f007d56b7/f31e3262dcb665d488257a52007aa9e6!OpenDocument\)](http://yosemite.epa.gov/r10/cleanup.nsf/7d19cd587dff1eee8825685f007d56b7/f31e3262dcb665d488257a52007aa9e6!OpenDocument)
- > [Alaska Department of Conservation \(DEC\) "Contaminated Site" page on Salt Chuck Mine \(http://www.dec.state.ak.us/spar/csp/sites/salt-chuck.htm\)](http://www.dec.state.ak.us/spar/csp/sites/salt-chuck.htm)
- > [Pure Nickel Inc. page on Salt Chuck Mine \(http://www.purenickel.com/s/Salt_Chuck_Project.asp\)](http://www.purenickel.com/s/Salt_Chuck_Project.asp)