

Mining Matters

KEMESS MINE

There are more than 30 industrial minerals mines and hundreds of sand and gravel quarries providing employment to B.C. workers. B.C. has nine coal mines and eight metal mines in operation.

The Kemess Mine, 280 kilometers north of Smithers, is one of them. This week let's talk about the impact that one mine can have on just one community.

Kemess South has been in operation under Northgate Minerals since 2000, producing over 2.7 million ounces of gold and 700 million pounds of copper. The mine itself is open-pit and the site also boasts a large mill, maintenance shop, and camp facilities for full-time employees.

Kemess employs 330 full-time people, 80 year-round contractors, 30 seasonal employees, and about 75 short-term folks who work for contractors brought in for special projects.

Seventy full-time workers and twenty contractors live in the Smithers area, most with their families. About 100 employees fly in and out of the Smithers airport. Northgate estimates \$6.5 million are spent in the Smithers area on supplies, subcontracting, etc.

Forty-five First Nations employees work at Kemess, with 38 in trained positions (including ticket trades, engineering, heavy machinery operators, blasters, etc) and seven in general labour jobs. Several people have been hired through NWCC's School of Exploration and Mining.

Unfortunately, the mine expects to shut down in the first quarter of 2011 when the deposit is depleted. The initial environmental/feasibility studies put forth for the Kemess North project were denied thus the company is looking at alternative, more environmentally friendly ways to access this new, large deposit. This year, Northgate expects to spend \$3 million drilling and exploring underground mining possibilities for the future development of Kemess North.

Each British Columbian has an annual consumption of over 9 kg (20 lbs) of copper for wiring, plumbing, brass, and heat exchangers. Thus, in one year, Canadians alone consume this one mine's LIFETIME's worth of copper.

"Mining Matters" is a bi-monthly column written by Anastasia Ledwon, P.Geo., and welcomes your feedback and questions at general@smithers.ca.

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