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with



**TATSHENSHINI WILD**



TATSHENSHINI  
*Wild*

FREE DISTRIBUTION

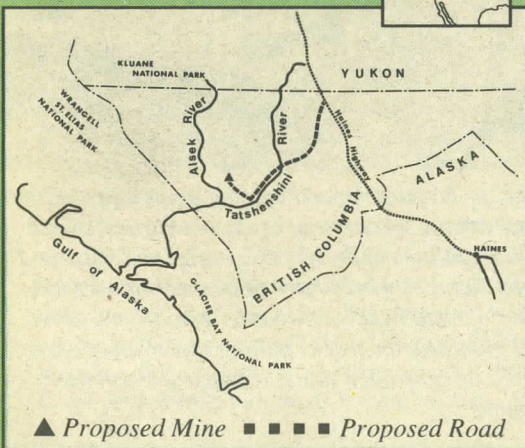
# TATSHENSHINI

# North America's Wildest River Threatened

## Tatshenshini.

There are few places left on this planet where the untouched beauty and boundless nobility of the wilderness are as obvious or awe-inspiring.

A remarkable remnant from ancient times when the mountains were re-emerging from the Ice Age, and fragile ecosystems were beginning to take hold and flourish, the Tatshenshini/Alsek (TAT-SHEN-SHEE-NEE/ALL-SECK) has continued to run its mighty mile-wide course. Today, from the sub-Arctic tundra of the Yukon, past the towering peaks of the Fairweather and St. Elias Ranges, and down to the salmon-rich banks of the Gulf of Alaska, North America's wildest river threads 160 miles through 2.8 million acres of the continent's last and most spectacular unprotected frontiers.



## A Legacy To the World

A major tributary of the Alsek River, the 'Tat' is located primarily in British Columbia. Yet it is an American river too. It is a place of species and spaces unique to North America and the world.

These include:

- The world's largest non-polar icefields where massive glaciers shear off into icebergs at river's edge.
- A distinct ecological forest community found nowhere else in North America.
- One of the highest densities of grizzlies (Alaskan brown bears) in the world.
- British Columbia's only winter range of Dall sheep.
- Canada's only population of rare silver-blue glacier bear.
- Thriving populations of mountain goats, wolf, moose, gyrfalcons, eagles, and salmon.
- The exceptional biodiversity of six geoclimatic zones including Canada's only hedysarum meadows.



## Preservation Needed

Preservation of the Tatshenshini/Alsek would secure this priceless legacy and link together and complete the largest protected international wilderness in the world. Yet the Tatshenshini/Alsek is in grave danger.

After thousands of years in delicate balance, it finds itself vulnerable to an ill-conceived mega-scale copper mine that would devastate its wilderness integrity forever.

**Only your urgent participation  
as part of a strong international  
conservation effort can save the Tat.**



Major big game wildlife populations such as Dall sheep (above), grizzlies, and the rare glacial bear (left above) roam across national boundaries and thus require a contiguous network of protected wilderness. Found nowhere else in Canada, the blue bear (named for its colour phase distinct from other black bears) is little understood at present and no studies have considered the environmental impact of the proposed road or mine on its habitat.

## Public pressure has worked before

Successful preservation of South Moresby/Gwaii Haanas on the Queen Charlotte Islands as a national park reserve took years of public pressure in Canada, just as Americans rallied in the 60's to save the famous Grand Canyon of the Colorado River. Today the fight to preserve the Tatshenshini is no less momentous.

### Now we must make it work again.

The Company is proposing the *immediate* construction of a 70-mile access road through a sensitive ecosystem to service a mega (30,000 tonnes/day) open pit copper mine scheduled for opening in 1994. This threat in terms of long-term impacts must be weighed against the proposed mine's short-term life (just 20 years of mine operation, and thousands of years of lost wilderness legacy). Geddes' scheme would:

- *Violate critical valley-bottom wildlife habitat with 90 foot wide cleared road access involving wide-scale river dredging for road construction purposes.*
- *Endanger wildlife populations with potential spills and vehicle-animals collisions, and with heavy metal contamination and acid waste generation from the mine, which could wipe out important salmon rearing habitats.*
- *Imperil the world's largest eagle sanctuary in Alaska, multi-million dollar fishing operations centered around Upper Lynn Canal and Dry Bay, as well as sports and native fisheries.*
- *Create major social impacts on the town of Haines, Alaska including noise, safety, and pollution factors. (e.g. 250,000 tons/yr. of hazardous chemicals, oils and explosives in addition to the ore and fuel would be transported down Haines' main street).*



*Despite a poll conducted by the Borough of Haines (Summer 1990) indicating that 60% of the 1200 residents opposed the Geddes project because of unacceptable impacts on economic mainstays including tourism and fishing, and the impact on the 3500 bald eagles of neighbouring Chilkat Eagle Preserve, Geddes President Gerald Harper stated at a November 29, 1990 community meeting:*

*"A popular vote of the people of Haines, Alaska, or their local government against the mine will not stop us."*



## An International Reputation

First navigated by river-based wilderness

hazardous chemicals, oils and explosives in addition to the ore and fuel would be transported down Haines' main street).

- Jeopardize Canada's premier wilderness tourism river.
- Threaten the long-term ecologic integrity and sensitive back-country of Glacier Bay National Park downstream.
- Desecrate the solitude and visual integrity of the Tat with a two-lane industrial haulage road and bridge carrying 150 giant ore truck movements daily — one truck every 10 minutes!



The Tat/Alsek contains one of the world's most densely populated grizzly habitats. The proposed Geddes road would slice through the very core of the riverside denning sites, resulting in unavoidable collision deaths of grizzlies (brown bears).



*"The mine would initiate effects in Canada, but the culmination of certain impacts would be hardest felt in Glacier Bay National Park ... A bridge and visible access road would have very serious deleterious effects on what is now one of the premier wilderness float trips in the world."*

*Marvin Jenson, Superintendent*

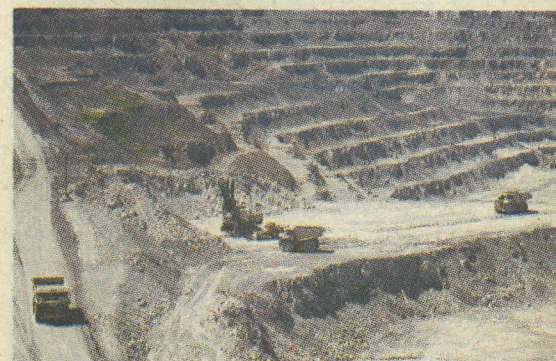
*Glacier Bay National Park, National Parks Service, U.S. Dept. of Interior*

## Reputation

First navigated by river-based wilderness explorers only as recently as 1972, the reputation of the remote Tatshenshini/Alsek spread quickly. It is now rated as one of the top ten wild rivers in the world. Judiciously, a number of governments have formally acknowledged its significance:

- In 1980, the river's lower reaches were protected by the U.S. as an extension of Glacier Bay National Park.
- Headwaters in the Yukon were protected as part of Canada's Kluane National Park.
- Adjoining Alaskan territory has been preserved as Wrangell-St. Elias National Park.

Only in British Columbia is the Tatshenshini unprotected. This is despite strong recommendations to the British Columbia government by the U.S. Congress, the United Nation's nature protection agency (International Union for the Conservation of Nature - IUCN), and by B.C.'s own Ministries of Parks and of the Environment.



*With the Geddes deposit located in the heart of the Tatshenshini wilderness, ore concentrates, over 20 million gallons of diesel fuel yearly, and mine and camp supplies would have to be trucked over 160 miles of road in severe weather conditions. Over 150 giant tractor trucks pulling two trailers each would be scheduled daily — one truck every ten minutes!*

**“I’ve never experienced such a vast expanse of unprotected wilderness.**

**The Tatshenshini-Alsek has to be preserved; it’s part of North America’s heritage. That’s why the Tat is a leader on American Rivers’ list of the ten most endangered rivers. ”**

Tom Cassidy  
American Rivers (Washington, D.C.)

## The Geddes Project: Feasible mine or Promoter's Dream?

Originally envisaged as a modest fly-in gold operation, drill results proved this uneconomic. Geddes Resources, a junior exploration company formed to exploit this deposit, tried to come up with plan after plan for an economic use for the remote and unaccessed property. Today, this company *without* a track record is trying to sell to the British Columbia government *and* the public a scheme for a mega-scale copper mine of 30,000 tonnes of ore per day in another attempt to make the deposit appear profitable.

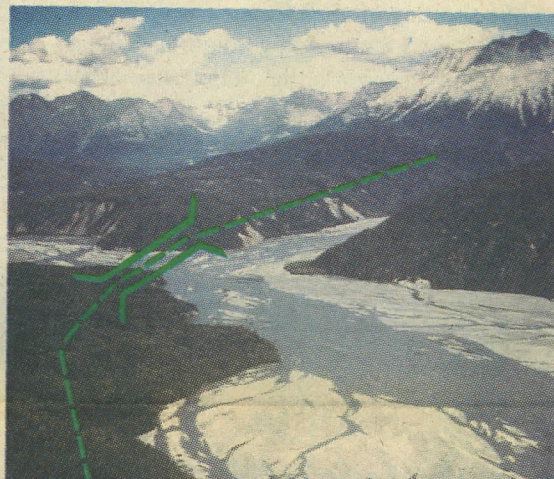
The evidence suggests that this is a company over its head, now scrambling to respond to issues. Their first “Stage I” mine plan verifies this – the report was rejected by the Government because of its major deficiencies including unproven technologies, lack of environmental consideration, and inadequate attention to the massive long-term threat of acid



*The area’s global significance is indisputable: The portion of the drainage in Kluane National Park has World Heritage Site status; an application for such recognition is formally underway for the Alaskan section; and discussions with the United Nations’ IUCN indicate that the B.C. portion of the Tat would also qualify.*

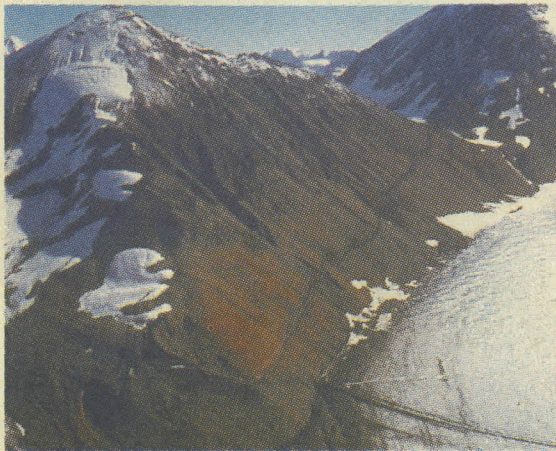
in the U.S. As well, in the summer of 1989, the Company was caught by the B.C. Ministry of the Environment slashing survey lines into the Tatshenshini Valley without permits.

Given such a track record, should the public assume that this junior exploration company is responsible and competent? Geddes is under-capitalized; it doesn’t have its financing in place; it hasn’t completed its feasibility studies; nor does it have any copper contracts in place — in a market which Forbes Magazine predicts will see copper prices declining radically in 1991.



Government because of its major deficiencies including unproven technologies, lack of environmental consideration, and inadequate attention to the massive long-term threat of acid rock drainage.

The Company also has been inconsistent, telling the B.C. Government that truck passages would be reduced by using oversize ore trucks, while *at the same time* telling the Alaskan government that legal load trucks 2/3 that size would be travelling the sub-standard Haines Highway. Today, it appears that Geddes consistently works to avoid comprehensive Environmental Impact Statements of its project



The 6000' Windy Craggy peak (above) would be transformed into 200,000,000 tons of waste rock and tailings. Geddes proposes to store the acid-generating rock underwater between two giant dams. According to the Geologic Survey of Canada, the Tat is in the country's highest risk earthquake zone – just 75 miles from the epicentre of the greatest quake ever recorded on the continent (Richter 8.6). The risk of storing this waste has been compared to placing a nuclear waste dump atop the San Andreas fault! The potential threat to groundwater, river, and ultimately to wildlife from the hazardous sulphuric waste is so great that the Government rejected the first mine plan in 1990.

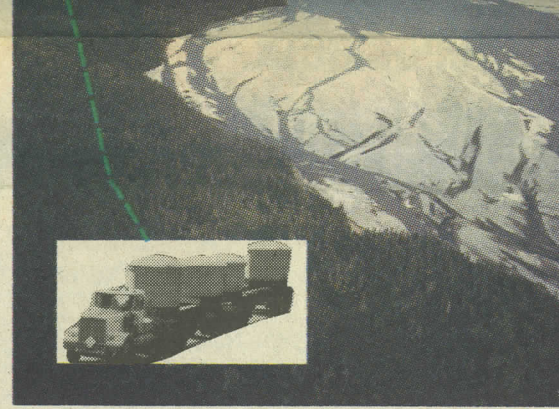
copper prices declining radically in 1991.

### Acid Rock Drainage (ARD)

ARD is the production of sulphuric acid as a result of sulphur-bearing rock being exposed to air and water through mining practices. Recognized as the British Columbia mining industry's #1 environmental problem, ARD from several B.C. mines currently requires treatment costing millions of dollars. Copper ore extracted from these mines contains roughly 5% sulphur. However, the Windy Craggy deposit has 35% sulphur content. If its ARD leaks into the groundwater, streams and river, it would impair water quality and destroy salmon rearing habitat. The massive risk would endure for centuries.

### Geddes' Revised Plan Now 50% Bigger

Geddes has now revised its plan by increasing its production volume by 50% and promising the "latest and best technology." However, according to government agencies reviewing the plan, the "latest" is still unproven; and the "best" is unacceptable given the common understanding of experts who are learning how to deal with acid rock drainage (ARD) but need many more years of study. A world-class wilderness like Tatshenshini is not a place for the British Columbia Government to experiment with untried technologies. The potential for catastrophe is simply too great.



*Proposed access road and bridge. Of all impacts, the most tragic would be that the only valley corridor penetrating the heart of this international wilderness would be cut in half. Not only is the Tat the sole passage for grizzly and other wildlife through North America's highest coastal range of mountains, but the Champaigne-Aishihik Band has filed a claim protecting the valley's traditional status as a native Indian route from the coast to the interior.*

**“ It does not appear that the environmental and engineering problems associated with this project can be resolved with existing technology ... We believe the long-term environmental degradation likely to result from the proposed Windy Craggy mine outweighs any economic gains that may accrue. ”**

Steven Pennoyer  
Director of the Alaska Region  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
U.S. Dept. of Commerce

## Help Protect The Tatshenshini!

In Fall 1990, Geddes Resources revised its mine plan and is pressing the government for quick eight week approval — a process that would take six months in the United States.

**It is Geddes' intention that road construction would begin in Spring 1991, with the mine on-line for 1994.**

That such an ill-conceived high risk proposal could even have advanced this far with such minimal environmental review reflects British Columbia's mining legislation which often allows industrial development even when high social and environmental costs outweigh any benefits.

Public concern and strong pressure on government set back the Geddes project in 1990. The first mine plan was rejected; however, the Government of British Columbia still has not got the message — the public does not want this mine. Not only has it failed to adequately address wilderness value issues, but the B.C. Mine Development Steering Committee has disallowed public scrutiny of all B.C. agencies' comments on the Stage I report which might provide a clearer appreciation of the importance of these environmental impact issues.

**Only if massive public pressure is applied internationally NOW will Geddes mega-scheme be stopped and North America's wildest river formally protected.**

## Governments Must Listen To



**“ This isn't pristine wilderness; it's barren land ”**

Gerald Harper, President, Geddes Resources

## Write to Government and Contribute to Tat Wild Today!

Your dollars and letters will make a difference. Every dollar and letter will help Tat Wild and its co-sponsoring organizations:

- *Keep the issue frontline in Canada so that the B.C. Government doesn't swiftly approve the project before wilderness values and potential impacts are fully identified.*
- *Encourage U.S. Federal and State Governments to complete comprehensive Environmental Impact Statements of the proposal.*

## Tatshenshini Wild

Tatshenshini Wild is spearheading an international campaign to preserve the wilderness values of the Tatshenshini/Alsek River. Situated on the frontline in British Columbia,



‘Tat Wild’ has joined in partnership with 26 other major environmental groups representing over two million members across the continent including: Friends of the River, National Audubon Society, Sierra Club, Western Canada Wilderness Committee, Wilderness Society, American Rivers Inc., Canadian Nature Federation, American Wildlands, Southeast Alaska Conservation

# Governments Must Listen To Your Feedback!

Let your government officials know how you feel about the preservation of the Tatshenshini Wilderness.

In Canada, ask why the road access impact and wilderness issues are not being fully discussed. Also, request that all reports be made public as they are in the United States under "access to information" legislation.

**Premier of British Columbia  
Legislative Buildings  
Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4**

**Minister of Environment  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ont. K1A 0A6  
(No postage required)**

In the United States, outline your concerns on how the Geddes' scheme will impact the American salmon fisheries, bald eagles, brown bears, and Glacier Bay National Park, Alaska.

Request that a complete and comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement be done on the whole project as required by the National Environment Protection Act.

**Governor of State of Alaska  
P.O. Box "A", Juneau, AK 99811**

**Also write your state Congressperson.**

Please send us a copy of your letter; it helps us keep track of the pressure being put on the leaders of both countries.

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Vol. 10 No. 2.

- Project objectives, risks and potential impacts are fully identified.
- Encourage U.S. Federal and State Governments to complete comprehensive Environmental Impact Statements of the proposal.
- Continue the coordinated lobby to initiate full impact assessments by the Canada/U.S. International Joint Commission.
- Ultimately, achieve preservation of the Tat in order to complete the largest protected wilderness area in the world.

## Working Together, We Can Forever Keep The Tatshenshini Wild!



Tatshenshini T-shirts (thick, 100% cotton with logo on breast and back) and posters are available from Mountain Equipment Co-op with proceeds to Tat Wild. The generous financial support of MEC has made this publication possible. Mail Order: #200-1655 W. 3rd Ave., Vancouver, B.C. V6J 1K1, Toll free 1-800-663-2667.



Tat Wild gratefully recognizes the following for their contributions of donated services and time: LOGO, MAP AND POSTER - Red Sable Signs; LAYOUT AND DESIGN - David Milligan & Assoc.; PHOTOGRAPHY - Eclipse, James Katz, Pat Morrow, Pat O'Hara, Allen E. Smith, Phil Timpany, Art Wolfe; COPYWRITING - Catherine Winckler; EDITED & PRODUCED BY - Tatshenshini Wild and WCWC/WILD.

Western Canada Wilderness Committee, Wilderness Society, American Rivers Inc., Canadian Nature Federation, American Wildlands, Southeast Alaska Conservation Council and International Rivers Network.

If you would like membership information on any of these or other groups, please see below.

## Give a Legacy to the World. Be part of the generation that can say "I saved the Tatshenshini!"

- I want to protect North America's wildest river with this donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_. I am making my tax-deductible contribution payable to:

**CANADIANS:**  
WCWC/WILD  
"Tatshenshini Fund"



**AMERICANS:**  
Friends of the River Foundation  
"Tatshenshini Fund"

- I'd like to know more.  
Please send me the Tat info. pack.
- I'd like membership info. on:



**MAIL ALL  
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