

Southeast silver mine boosts economy, jobs

A new Alaskan silver mine opened last week which is expected to become North America's largest producer of the precious metal — with an expected recovery of 6.4 million ounces per year.

Greens Creek mine, located on Admiralty Island, is also expected to produce 36,000 ounces of gold, 28,000 tons of zinc and 9,000 tons of lead each year.

Between 1987 and 1988, mining accounted for an increase of more than 1,500 jobs statewide.

Sen. Frank Murkowski, present at the Sept. 23 opening of the mine, said it could become as valuable to Southeast Alaska's economy as timber, fishing and tourism.

"The Greens Creek operation illustrates that mining in Southeast can create jobs and benefit the local

economy while at the same time preserving the other environmental values," Murkowski said.

The mine, which is expected to produce for at least 10 to 15 years, has been hailed as a model of cooperation between environmentalists, miners and government agencies, he said.

The mine sits adjacent to the Admiralty Island National Monument Wilderness area.

Development in the area has been carefully laid out to keep the best balance between resource and environmental priorities, Murkowski said.

After the ore is completely mined, the land is scheduled to be allowed to fall back into a wilderness state.

Between 1987 and 1988, mining accounted for an increase of more than 1,500 jobs statewide, and new mining claims were up 43 percent in the same year.

Deposits were first discovered at Greens Creek in the early 1970s. Special provisions were made for further defining the deposit in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act in 1980.

The mine has proven reserves of 3.5 million tons of ore and will handle about 1,000 tons of ore a day.

According to Murkowski, the mine will provide 230 jobs in Juneau with an annual payroll of \$13 million.