

hearings



By *Jacob Resneck, CoastAlaska* | *September 27, 2018* | Energy & Mining , Southeast



Muddy water from the breached Mount Polley Mine tailings pond dam floods a downstream creek and road days after the August 2014 dam breach. (Cariboo Regional District Emergency Operations Center photo)

Three engineers who worked on the troubled [Mount Polley Mine](#) face formal allegations of negligence and unprofessional conduct. The trio face disciplinary hearings by their professional peers over their work leading up to the 2014 dam breach.



About four years ago, a tailings dam failed late one summer night. It sent [millions of](#) ^

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If found guilty, they could have their licenses suspended and/or be fined thousands of dollars. The engineers were named in filings as [Stephen Rice](#), [Laura Fidel](#) and [Todd Martin](#). An attorney for one of the three engineers declined comment.

Critics of the open pit copper-gold mine note it's the first time anyone is being held responsible for the pollution.

The provincial government [declined to sanction the mining company over the spill](#).

"I don't think it's right that they're going to throw three people under the bus and continue to proceed with their mining project," said Loretta Williams, who chairs [First Nations Women Advocating Responsible Mining](#).

The group [released a report](#) warning that without proper oversight, future mining spills are likely.

"Government needs to really step up to the plate and really hold these companies accountable so that nothing like this happens again in the future," Williams said.

The Mount Polley Mine resumed operating in 2016.

B.C.'s environment ministry released a statement Wednesday calling the allegations against the engineers "unproven" but noted there's an ongoing joint investigation by provincial and federal authorities.

"All of the information gathered during the course of this investigation will be considered by the Public Prosecution Service of Canada for consideration of charges under the federal

Fisheries Act which carries higher penalties than provincial legislation,” the statement ^

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Correction: An earlier version of this article incorrectly stated that the Mount Polley Mine in Canada had discharged mine waste into a transboundary watershed. The dam break actually discharged tailings into the Fraser River watershed, which though not a cross-border system, supports salmon populations that are valuable to commercial fishermen in Southeast Alaska.



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