

Drilling

starts on test wells for methane and coal

*ESPO
JWH
2001*

By Jim Amos
Echo Staff

Priority Ventures has sunk the first test hole in its search for coal and coalbed methane in the Comox Valley.

Drilling began last Tuesday on the first of three test holes the company plans to sink in the next month or so.

"It's going well", company president Neil Swift said Friday.

A water well crew began drilling a week ago on a private property site off Piercy Road near the B.C. Hydro line. The crew on the water well was to drill the first 100 to 200 feet and cement a casing in place. When it reaches its target, a diamond-tipped drill will take over and extract core samples to a depth of about 1,200 feet.

The drilling was going quicker than anticipated, Swift said, and no surprises had come up.

As Priority expected, the water flow has been low - about one gallon a minute - and it is being collected in a holding pond. The water will be disposed of at the Pigeon Lake landfill.

The water well rig was expected to finish its work last Friday and then be moved to a second location at the intersection of Piercy and Condensory roads.

The third test site is on Wildwood Road.

(Cont. on page 3)

News

*ESPO
JWH
2001*

Test drilling starts for coal and methane gas

(Cont. from page 1)

Because of the second site's closeness to some homes, extra sound suppression - including a second muffler - is being added to the rig's motor.

Swift said tests have shown the rig creates 70 decibels of sound at a distance up to about 100 metres. The nearest home to the Piercy-Condensory site is 150 to 200 metres away. Trees between the test site and the home should help to dampen the sound, he said.

Meanwhile, the company has ordered independent tests of nearby water wells to determine the water supply and quality. Knowing those figures will show whether the drilling activity has any affect, he said.

Barring any problems, Priority expects the three core holes to take about 36 days to drill. The core samples will be tested for coal and gas content and quality, which could take 30 to 60 days. If results are as anticipated, Priority will then apply to drill two gas production wells to test for productivity.

Depending on how quick its applications are processed, Swift figures those two wells could be under way late in the year.

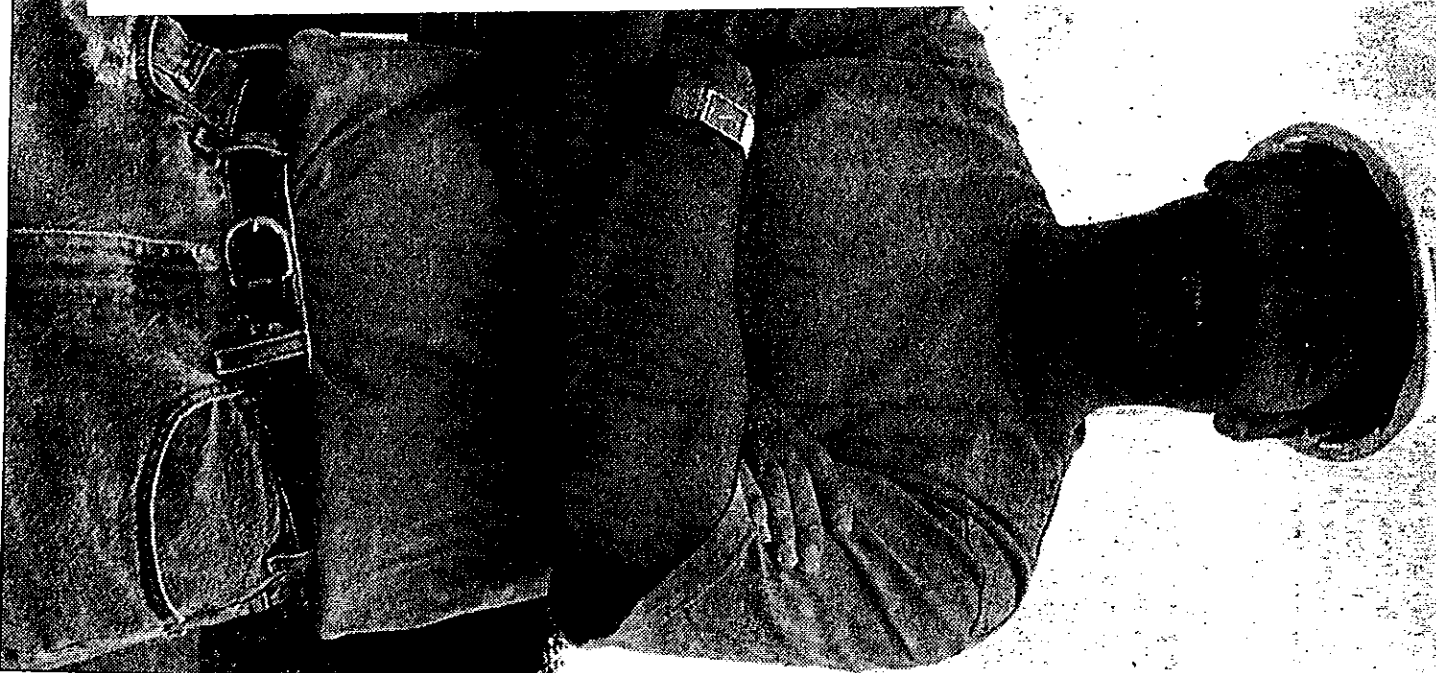
Meanwhile, the public will get a chance tomorrow to see exactly what the coalbed methane industry is all about.

The Ministry of Energy and Mines is holding an open house, 4-8 p.m. at the Coast Westerly Hotel.

Red tide closes most of coastal area to shellfish

Much of coastal B.C. has been closed to shellfish harvesting due to high levels of red tide, which causes paralytic shellfish poisoning.

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans has ordered closure of the West Coast of Vancouver Island, the North Coast and parts of the inside waters of Vancouver Island for bivalve shellfish har-



Priority Ventures president Neil Swift had a drill rig and crew at the corner of Piercy and Condensory Roads Monday morning sinking the company's second test hole in search of coal and coalbed methane. Drilling began last Tuesday on the first test hole on Piercy Road near the B.C. Hydro power line and a third is set to go on Wildwood Road.

at **Labour Market Information Canada**

THE