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July 20, 2012

Our File No.: 4336 001 009  
Your File No.: EIRB 02/10-05

Eli Nasogaluak  
EIRB Environmental Assessment Coordinator  
Environmental Impact Review Board  
Joint Secretariat – Inuvialuit Renewable Resources Committee  
107 Mackenzie Road, Suite 204  
P.O. Box 2120, Inuvik, NT  
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Via Email at [eirb@jointsec.nt.ca](mailto:eirb@jointsec.nt.ca)

**RE: EIRB 02/10-05 – Hamlet of Tuktoyaktuk, Town of Inuvik, and the Government of the Northwest Territories – Note to File – Construction of the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway, Northwest Territories**

Dear Mr. Nasogaluak,

Environment Canada (EC) is pleased to submit the following Note to File to the Environmental Impact Review Board (the Board) as part of the environmental assessment review process being conducted for the Hamlet of Tuktoyaktuk, Town of Inuvik, and the Government of the Northwest Territories' (the Developer) Construction of the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway (the Project) (EIRB 02/10-05). This Note to File is a Meeting Report of the meeting held between EC and the Developer regarding outstanding wildlife issues and upcoming field season surveys for the Project on June 13, 2012. The Meeting Report is signed off by both EC and the Developer.

Should you have any questions or wish to discuss the Meeting Report further please do not hesitate to contact Stacey LeBlanc at (780) 951-8953 or [Stacey.LeBlanc@ec.gc.ca](mailto:Stacey.LeBlanc@ec.gc.ca).

Yours truly,

Cheryl Baraniecki  
Regional Director, EPO

cc: Carey Ogilvie (Head, Environmental Assessment North, EPO)  
Vanessa Charwood (Head, Western Arctic Unit, EC-CWS)  
James Hodson (Environmental Assessment Coordinator, CWS)  
Stacey LeBlanc (A/Sr Environmental Assessment Coordinator, EPO)  
Mike Fournier (Sr Environmental Assessment Coordinator, EPO)  
Jim Stevens (Director, Mackenzie Valley Highway, GNWT-DOT)

## **MEETING REPORT**

**Main Issue:** Outstanding wildlife issues and upcoming field surveys for the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway Project

**Meeting Date:** June 13, 2012, 1:30 p.m. (MT)

**Location:** Arctic Boardroom, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Nova Plaza, 5019 52<sup>nd</sup> Street, Yellowknife, NT

### **Attendees:**

- Vanessa Charlwood, CWS
- James Hodson, CWS
- Kate Witherly, CanNor
- Stacey LeBlanc, EC
- Gavin More, ENR-GNWT
- Jim Stevens, DOT-GNWT
- KAVIK-Stantec (on-phone – Erica Bonhomme, Derek Ebner, Marcel Gahbauer, Kent Russell)

### **Summary of Discussion:**

1. Discussion of Environment Canada's (EC) outstanding concerns with the cumulative effects assessment for federally listed species at risk and COSEWIC-assessed species at risk (hereafter species at risk).
  - EC stated it was preparing a response to the request from the EIRB in its May 25, 2012 letter but the draft was not available for the meeting.
  - DOT stated it had, in response to EC IR, provided a series of tables with a variety of buffers as there are differences in zones of influence based on specific species. These were based on EOSD classifications that are currently used by ENR and the University of Alberta researchers for grizzly bear analyses. This allowed flexibility for any party to combine appropriate development information. The tables were not intended only for species at risk analysis.
  - EC stated the tables met the IR request but it could not estimate the combined effect of existing and reasonably foreseeable developments included in the cumulative effects assessment. In addition to the individual footprints, EC would need to see a single disturbance map to assess the combined effect; it would be useful to include the combined buffered disturbances accounting for overlap.
  - The focus for the field studies should be on species at risk to confirm availability of suitable habitat or species presence/absence
  - EC recommended that the summer field work data be used to complete the cumulative effects assessment once more information was obtained on species at risk distribution and by recalculating buffers based on the



plant community typing in the LSA vegetation mapping report to extend the habitat suitability models for species at risk to the entire cumulative effects study area. DOT indicated it would attempt to do this, however, DOT indicated the Tuktoyatuk Peninsula vegetation in the IOL 2004 regional vegetation database coverage was not available.

## 2. Review of Habitat Suitability Modeling for species at risk and Waterfowl

- EC had no suggestions to improve the criteria used in the draft wildlife habitat report. EC recommends that DOT verify that the habitat suitability models work using the field data collected this summer. The Proponent can refine these models should the field studies demonstrate the need to. EC will provide advice as stated in their IR response.

## 3. Review of Field Study Program

- KAVIK-Stantec plans to conduct the fieldwork between the end of June and second week of July. The final report would not be available until later in August.
- Field work will likely consist of 1 day of aerial surveys and a few days of ground surveys. The exact number of survey points and methodology was not yet determined.
- Location of surveys would be informed by the habitat suitability mapping and will try to cover good, medium and poor suitability habitat for each species.
- The accuracy of preliminary vegetation mapping will be verified during upcoming vegetation surveys.
- DOT is conducting the fieldwork to validate the conclusions that are currently made in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). EC is satisfied with this approach, as currently there are no on the ground details to validate DOT's conclusion that a cumulative effects assessment for some species at risk is unnecessary. EC is also looking for the field study to validate the current EIS which states that some species at risk are not expected to occur in the project area.

## 4. Development of further mitigation for species at risk

- EC highlighted that the Rusty Blackbird and Short-eared Owl may occur in the project area, based on data available from EC's NWT/NU bird checklist database.
- DOT indicated Rusty Blackbird sightings were limited to an incidental aerial observation at a 15 km distance from the LSA during waterfowl surveys. As such no additional information was available to more fully evaluate the observation. More importantly, no sightings of this species were made during 3 years of wildlife observations by IOL based on records it provided to ENR. No more recently published EC work

reviewing the original 1970s pipeline reports were provided to ENR. Some other species records were very old.

- DOT plans to mitigate impacts should the field work identify suitable habitat for species at risk. This work will include grizzly bears and other appropriate species.
- EC agreed that winter construction avoided the primary issue of potential disturbance of birds or nests.
- Mitigation may be required for species at risk, and will be developed in discussion with EC.

5. Follow-up monitoring for species at risk and other wildlife

- The field studies being conducted this summer may inform EC's position on the need for future follow-up and monitoring.

**Developer Commitments**

- DOT is committed to refining the habitat suitability modeling for species at risk and waterfowl should the field studies demonstrate a need.
- DOT is committed to meeting with the Canadian Wildlife Service (EC) again in late August to discuss the survey results and to determine if further mitigation would be needed.
- DOT is committed to developing its wildlife mitigation and monitoring plan for construction in consultation with EC.
- ENR will provide criteria for grizzly den habitat predictive mapping.
- DOT is committed to then filing a final wildlife studies report by August 31.

**Signature of Party Representative:**

  
Jim Stevens (Director, Mackenzie Valley Highway, GNWT-DOT)

**Signature of Developer Representative:**

  
Vanessa Charlwood (Section Head, Western Arctic Unit, CWS)

Date: July 19, 2012