



March 28, 2024

To:

Environment and Climate Change Canada
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Yellowknife, Northwest Territories
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Fisheries and Oceans Canada
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Via email:

eanorthnwt@ec.gc.ca
fisheriesprotection@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

RE: Mackenzie Valley Highway Project

Notification pursuant to ss. 79(1) of the Species at Risk Act

The Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board (Review Board) is undertaking an environmental assessment (EA) of the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) Mackenzie Valley Highway Project (the project). The project is a two-lane gravel highway from Wrigley to the existing highway near Norman Wells (approximately 320 km). The project follows the same general route as the existing winter road.

Under ss.79 (1)¹ of the Species at Risk Act, the Review Board must notify the competent minister or ministers in writing of the project if it is likely to affect a listed wildlife species or its critical habitat. The Review Board sent a Species at Risk Act notification letter² to Environment and Climate Change Canada (then Environment Canada) for the project over ten years ago. Since that time, the scope of the project has changed, and species listed under the Species at Risk Act within the revised study area of the project have changed.

The Review Board has prepared this updated notification to Environment and Climate Change Canada and Fisheries and Oceans Canada pursuant to ss. 79 (1) of the Species at Risk Act for the following reasons:

¹ [Species at Risk Act - Canada](#)

² [Letter Review Board to Environment Canada re Notification pursuant to s. 79 of the Species at Risk Act](#)



- the project scope has changed to a highway starting in Wrigley and ending near Norman Wells,
- the status of species listed under the Species at Risk Act and species of conservation concern has changed, and
- recovery strategies for some species at risk have been prepared.

The Government of the Northwest Territories submitted its Developer's Assessment Report for the project in the fall of 2023. Based on the location and the developer's submissions to date, the Review Board has identified the following preliminary species listed under the Species at Risk Act or of conservation concern. Please verify and, if required, update this list during the environmental assessment.

This list of bird species at risk or of conservation concern in the regional study area of the project is from the Developer's Assessment Report, Volume 3, Appendix 20A, Table 3.1.³

Bird species at risk or of conservation concern

- Peregrine falcon
- Yellow rail
- Lesser yellowlegs (species of conservation concern)
- Red-neck phalarope
- Short-eared owl
- Common nighthawk
- Olive-sided flycatcher
- Bank swallow
- Barn swallow (species of conservation concern)
- Rusty blackbird
- Horned grebe

This list of mammal and invertebrate species at risk or of conservation concern in the regional study area of the project is from the Developer's Assessment Report, Volume 3, Appendix 19A, Table 3.1.⁴

Mammal species at risk or of conservation concern

- Little brown myotis
- Grizzly bear
- Wolverine
- Boreal caribou
- Barren-ground caribou (threatened status under COSEWIC)

³ [Developer's Assessment Report Volume 3 Appendix 20A](#)

⁴ [Developer's Assessment Report, Volume 3, Appendix 19A](#)



Invertebrate species at risk or of conservation concern

- Gypsy cuckoo bumble bee
- Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee (species of conservation concern)
- Yellow-banded bumble bee
- Transverse lady beetle

This list of fish species at risk or of conservation concern in the regional study area of the project is from the Developer's Assessment Report, Volume 3, Appendix 17A, Table 4.1.⁵

Fish species at risk or of conservation concern

- Bull trout
- Dolly varden

Please indicate if any other species merit special consideration during this environmental assessment.

The Review Board requires your departments' help in determining the likelihood of adverse effects from the project on these species or their critical habitats. For this environmental assessment (EA), the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) is adopting a "whole of government" approach. The GNWT's Wildlife Management Division is contributing to the EA process on behalf of the developer, instead of acting as an independent expert body or party as it typically would in other EAs. The Review Board may therefore seek a greater level of input and involvement from Environment and Climate Change Canada regarding matters related to wildlife and species at risk (including Boreal caribou, a Key Line of Inquiry), to ensure a thorough independent expert analysis of these topics in this EA.

All relevant information for this environmental assessment is on the Review Board's public registry.⁶ The lead contact for the EA is Catherine Fairbairn, Senior Environmental Assessment Advisor at 867-766-7054, or cfairbairn@reviewboard.ca.

Sincerely,

Catherine Fairbairn
Senior Environmental Assessment Officer

⁵ [Developer's Assessment Report, Volume 3, Appendix 17A](#)

⁶ [EA1213-02 Public Registry Mackenzie Valley Highway](#)