

Meeting Report: GNWT - Th̄chò All Season Road – EA-1617-01-2016

Th̄chò All Season Road GNWT Working Group Meeting with Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC)

Main Issue: ECCC IR #9 - Avian Species at Risk – Suitable Habitat Adequacy Statement Response

Meeting Date: June 9, 2017 – 3:00pm, Gallery Building Dolomite Boardroom

Attendees:

- 1) Georgina Williston – Head, Environmental Assessment North
- 2) Emily Nichol – Environmental Assessment Coordinator
- 3) Myra Robertson – Head, Western Arctic Unit, Canadian Wildlife Service
- 4) JF Dufour – Environmental Assessment Officer, Canadian Wildlife Service
- 5) Katie Rozestraten – Environmental Analyst, GNWT Infrastructure
- 6) James Hodson – Wildlife Biologist, GNWT Environment and Natural Resources
- 7) Darren Campbell – Project Assessment Analyst, GNWT Lands
- 8) Tamika Mulders – Project Assessment Analyst, GNWT Lands
- 9) Damian Panayi – Project Manager/Biologist, Golder Associates Ltd.

Summary of Discussion:

This meeting was arranged by the GNWT and CANNOR/ECCC for the purposes of clarifying Environment and Climate Change Canada's IR to the GNWT on the Th̄chò All Season Road (ECCC-IR-#9). The IR requested: that the Proponent clarify why available migratory bird monitoring data relating to avian species at risk valued components was not incorporated in the effects assessment, or consider re-doing the effects assessment with available monitoring data.

The Party (ECCC):

ECCC stated that they collected migratory bird data with Autonomous Recording Units (ARU) from a section of highway between Behchokò and Fort Providence which would be useful in the TASR impact assessment. The data was collected in the same ecoregion as a large portion of the proposed TASR. The available dataset consists of a three minute bird community assessment from 554 sample stations, including replicates. The study included control and treatment sites, consisting of burned and unburnt areas. The ARU recordings have not been completely analyzed for avian species at risk occurrences, (i.e. the dataset is only a three minute subsample of all the recordings). ECCC stated that there is a legal requirement to consider species at risk, and would like the best available information to be considered. The incorporation of this data would be useful for the Review Board's consideration, regardless of the significance determination. It is ECCC's position that considering this data will add confidence to the impact assessment by using measured relative abundances and densities of birds per habitat type from a nearby field site. The data could be easily overlaid on the Proponent's remote sensing data. ECCC's dataset includes the following fields: sampling station, date, time, species, abundance, latitude and longitude. ECCC's dataset should be available for the Proponent in a matter of weeks, granted there is a data sharing agreement in place. ECCC also noted that the migratory bird baseline dataset from the Nico-Fortune project wasn't incorporated in the developers Adequacy Statement Response. ECCC-IR-#9 asked for clarification as to whether the Proponent would consider using the available Nico-Fortune and the ECCC data. ECCC recognizes the tight timelines for this EA. The information request response from the Proponent could indicate continued cooperation with ECCC on this issue and commit to a revised assessment in time to inform ECCC's final technical comments. Alternatively, ECCC requests that the Proponent provide an

explanation for not including the Nico-Fortune and ECCC datasets in the initial effects assessment and rationale for not re-doing the effects assessment with the available datasets.

The Proponent (GNWT)

Golder (acting as GNWT consultant) mentioned they are well aware of the legal requirement to consider species at risk and aim to incorporate that requirement into their assessments. There was some communication previously about the existence of this dataset earlier this year with Melissa Pink (GNWT Lands); however, the additional data wasn't available for use at that time and not provided to the GNWT during the ASR phase of the TASR EA. The GNWT and Golder would need to determine if this data would be valuable to the effects assessment, and its inclusion into any new assessment will also depend on when this data becomes available (recognizing no control over MVEIRB set timelines). Golder also stated that the NICO data focused on habitat on the Taiga Shield, whereas the TASR will be entirely within the Taiga Plains. Once Golder reviews the data, they will be able to determine whether it will be useful in their assessment. To determine whether a significant adverse impact may occur in the context of the EA, the TASR considers the relative change in habitat availability. As long as the footprint size is the same, it is unlikely for the suitable habitat to change with the addition of this data. Golder indicated that their existing assessment already took a conservative approach and the results are based on an overestimate. Further information will be included in the response to the information request ECCC-IR-#9.

General

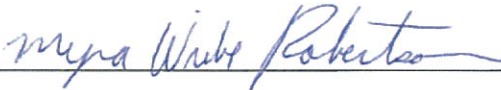
While the technical session dates are still unknown, GNWT-INF estimates either August 13-14, 2017 or July 29-August 4, 2017. INF is currently discussing with the Tłı̨chǫ Government to confirm dates.

A data-sharing agreement can be set up with ECCC in advance so GNWT will be able to have access to this songbird data as soon as it becomes available. The agreement will give Golder access through the GNWT as its consultant.

Action Items

- ECCC will provide the GNWT with their bird community assessment dataset as soon as it is ready for distribution.
- ECCC will provide the GNWT and Golder with a list of species detected in this survey.
- The GNWT will work with ECCC to set up a data sharing agreement in anticipation of this data.
- GNWT/Golder will assess this data when it is received and update their effects assessment with the data incorporated, or provide an explanation as to why the data will not be included.
- GNWT will post the decision to use additional data or not to the public registry

Signature of the Party (ECCC):



Date: July 4, 2017

Signature of the Proponent (GNWT):



Date: July 4, 2017