



Fisheries  
and Oceans

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November 5, 2007

Alistair MacDonald  
Environmental Assessment Officer  
Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board  
P.O. Box 938, 5105 50th Avenue  
Yellowknife, NT X1A 2N7

**RE: DFO comments on the conduct of environmental assessments in the Upper Thelon River Basin**

Dear Mr. MacDonald:

Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the options that the MVEIRB is currently considering for the conduct of environmental assessments for uranium exploration in the Upper Thelon River Basin (EA0708-02, EA0708-03, EA0708-04, EA0708-05). In response to your letter dated October 3, 2007, DFO is providing the following input for your consideration.

**1. Evidence Transfer from the Public Record from UR Energy**

DFO supports the inclusion of all relevant evidence from the UR Energy public registry (EA0607-003) that was not specific to the UR Energy project components and to the Screech Lake location. It stands to reason that much of the evidence presented throughout the UR Energy EA will be relevant to the proposed developments and therefore, to avoid the resubmission of this same evidence, DFO supports the first option proposed by the Review Board. It is understood that the MVEIRB will not automatically assume that the evidence provided in the UR Energy EA will be relevant for these EAs without input from the parties.

**2. Scoping**

DFO recommends that the Review Board issue a series of scoping questions to all interested parties for feedback, and then take these issues into consideration when focusing each EA on certain key issues. DFO supports the second option presented by the Review Board so that each EA can focus on any new considerations and/or considerations specific to the individual EA. DFO is concerned that any specific information pertinent to only one of the developments may be omitted if of a generic scope of assessment is adopted for all four projects.

**3. Gathering New Evidence**

DFO supports the first option presented by the Review Board where Terms of Reference and a formal Developer's Assessment Report are prepared and submitted for each EA. The developers can choose to cooperate and submit very

similar DARs, or, depending on the unique ToR (see below), submit the same ToR covering each development.

ToR: Option b) Develop a generic Terms of Reference while leaving room for some development-specific requirements for each EA (essentially this would use a generic ToR as the base, but each EA would have its own slightly different ToR which addresses development-specific requirements).

IRs: A formal ToR and a DAR is recommended (eliminating option (a)). Therefore IRs should only be issued after the receipt of the DAR based on a formal ToR for each development.

#### **4. Public Hearings**

DFO supports either the second option presented by the Review Board where separate hearings would be held by each developer, or a combination of the second and third options. Although it is recognized that much of the information discussed by both proponents will be very similar, the second option is preferred as it will likely be less confusing to the communities and the most fair to the developers. It is recognized that a joint hearing would address consultation fatigue, however it would have to be very clear to all participants that there are four proposed developments, being led by two different developers.

Another possible solution which DFO would support would be to hold a joint hearing, with multiple stages. The hearing could commence with an introductory presentation where general information pertaining to uranium exploration in the Upper Thelon is presented. A general discussion of uranium development in the Upper Thelon would follow. Following this, each developer could discuss their specific projects in detail and allow for public comment on each proposal.

If you have any questions or comments with regards to any of the aforementioned comments, please do not hesitate to contact me at (867) 669-4919 or by email at [PechterE@dfo-mpo.gc.ca](mailto:PechterE@dfo-mpo.gc.ca).

Sincerely,

Beth Pechter  
Environmental Assessment Analyst for Major Projects  
Fisheries and Oceans Canada  
Western Arctic Area

cc: