



January 18, 2012

Gavin More
Manager, Environmental Assessment
Environment and Natural Resources
Government of the Northwest Territories
Yellowknife, NT X1A 2L9

Dear Mr. More,

RE: Gahcho Kué Project - Information Requests

Please find attached information requests on the Gahcho Kué Project submitted to the Government of the Northwest Territories by the Gahcho Kué Panel.

If Government of the Northwest Territories cannot respond to a specific information request, or believes it is outside the scope of the Environmental Impact Review, it should notify the Panel within one month of receiving the attached document and provide written rationale.

The Panel looks forward to your responses to these information requests.

If you have questions please call me at 766-7052 or by email at chubert@reviewboard.ca or alternatively you can contact Nicole Spencer at 766-7062, or email at nspencer@reviewboard.ca.

Sincerely,

(original signed by)
Chuck Hubert
Gahcho Kué Panel Manager

IR Number: GKP 18

Source: Gahcho Kué Panel

To: Government of the Northwest Territories

Reference: Section 7

Subject: Uncertainty over the assessment of residual effects for caribou populations based on the Developer's energetics model.

Preamble: The Developer has taken a similar approach as GNWT's approach to estimating cumulative effects in the Bathurst caribou herd (NWT Cumulative Impact Monitoring Program: Capacity Building & Monitoring Projects 2008-2009). However, there are differences especially for the energetics model. The Developer's model is based on Boertje (1985).

Request:

1. Is the developer's energetics model consistent with techniques used by GNWT?
2. Can ENR-GNWT describe how appropriate the developer's energetic model is to assess residual effects and whether they are under-estimated.

IR Number: GKP 19

Source: Gahcho Kué Panel

To: Government of the Northwest Territories

Reference: Section 7

Subject: Uncertainty for the assessment of increased access for harvesting.

Preamble: The assessment of the effect of the Tibbett-Contwoyto winter road and spur winter road on harvesting lacks information including the proportion of caribou harvests along the winter roads relative to the total harvest and the caribou annual winter distribution. In Section 7, the effects pathway “increased access for traditional and non-traditional harvesting may alter caribou movement and behaviour, which can affect survival and reproduction” is rated as a secondary pathway. This pathway refers to the behavioural responses to hunting. But there is no information on the effect of hunting on caribou behaviour. Instead, Page 7.77 describes previous total harvests and current restrictions. The description of the pathway (rated secondary) states that the increase in access to the region [for hunting] associated with the winter roads is limited to eight to twelve weeks each year, and should result in minor changes to the annual harvest rate of caribou relative to baseline conditions.

The Environmental Impact Statement does not address the likelihood that the current restrictions will likely be changed if herd abundance increases. Additionally, when herds are in the phase of low numbers, even any increased harvest during the early stages of a herd recovery can be significant and even irreversible. The Environmental Impact Statement does not include any mitigation and mitigation for access to hunting on the Tibbett-Contwoyto winter road and spur winter road. In addition, the Environmental Impact Statement does not describe information on access and hunting elsewhere.

Request:

1. Can ENR-GNWT provide information for the total harvest, the proportion of the harvest from the winter roads (based on harvest locations or monitoring such as check stations) relative to annual winter distribution of caribou?
2. Does ENR-GNWT agree with the developer’s assessment of the Tibbett-Contwoyto road and the Gahcho Kue spur winter road as a secondary pathway given the herds are in the early stages of recovery and at low numbers?
3. What is the ENR-GNWT approach on monitoring and mitigation for access to hunting along the Tibbet-Contwoyto winter road and Gahcho Kue spur road if and when hunting restrictions are changed.

IR Number: GKP 20

Source: Gahcho Kué Panel

To: Government of Northwest Territories

Reference: EIS Analysis Session, Day 3, pg. 74, 173, 191, 234

Subject: Carnivore Mortality

Preamble:

At the EIS Analysis Session, De Beers indicated that they had not considered the effect of mineral exploration sites on carnivore mortality because that information is generally not made available by the Government of the Northwest Territories (EIS Analysis Session Day 3 Transcript, page 234).

Information provided by De Beers (EIS Analysis Session Day 3 Transcript, pg. 74, 173, and 191) and EIS (Table 7.5-1) show that mineral exploration sites are the most abundant features on the landscape, so these sites could represent a substantial source of carnivore mortality.

Request:

1. Provide information on the annual number of wolf, grizzly bear, and wolverine incidents and mortalities at mineral exploration sites and the measures considered to be most successful to reduce these incidents/mortalities.