



Gwich'in Social & Cultural Institute

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November 16, 2015

AlecSandra Macdonald
Gwich'in Land and Water Board
Box 2018
Inuvik NT X0E 0T0
Via email: amacdonald@glwb.com

Dear AlecSandra,

Re: Water License Application: G99L8-001 and 002 – Peel and Mackenzie rivers ferry crossings, Department of Transportation

We have reviewed the above-noted application and associated materials. The ferry landings are all located within important traditional fishing and camping areas. Numerous traditional Gwich'in place names attest to the long history of use and cultural importance of these areas. Additionally, the ferry landings themselves have created sandbars and eddies as noted by Gwich'in harvesters. We have the following concerns with the application:

- The Spill Management Plans do not include immediate notification of nearby traditional land users. We feel this should be codified in the plan. This could include a camp-by-camp in-person notification and a public radio notification, as appropriate to the type and size of spill. The harvesters consuming fish from the river have a right to know immediately and to be able to make informed choices with full information.
- The LAMP included counts of fish harvested but did not compare these counts to previous harvests. This information is available within the Gwich'in Harvest Study database, from GRRB. A comparison between the years of the harvest study and the current LAMP should be undertaken to identify issues and trends that can be targeted for mitigation.
- The length of the license as 25 years is inappropriate considering the changing environment and the effects of the changing environment on Gwich'in harvesters. A five year license term should be retained.
- The GSCI feels that monitoring of water health, fish health, and fisheries should continue as a perpetual program, funded and hosted by DoT. As noted in the next

point, the scope of the harvest portion of the monitoring should be slightly expanded. The GSCI does not support the issuance of the water license without a provision to continue annual or bi-annual monitoring. Harvest monitoring and TK monitoring are not solely tools of engagement. TK monitoring in particular provides a depth and breadth of information generally unavailable from scientific methods (see the *NWT Traditional Knowledge Policy 53.03*, which outlines the GNWT's commitment to TK, including "[t]raditional knowledge should be considered in the design and delivery of government programs and services.") Monitoring programs, which should be ongoing, cannot rely on short-term projects such as those led by academics or funded through a proposalling process.

- The LAMP included counts of fish harvested but apparently did not include open-ended questions about changes to fish health, river health, *etc.* Future monitoring efforts should include this type of qualitative information-gathering, which can also identify issues for mitigation.
- The original Aquatic Effects Study by GeoNorth (2002-2003) indicated that fish at the ferry landing in Tsiigehtchic are soft and mushy, and have deformities, parasites and changes in the colour of fish organs. Around the Peel River ferry, the quality of the fish was poorer than in the past, and loche liver was of a particular concern. Specific questions about fish colour, flesh, liver health, and similar should be included in the LAMP monitoring program.
- DoT does not address Cumulative Effects, especially in regards to thaw slumps in the Peel watershed. The ferry landings may not be contributing a large percentage of the materials or impacting fish populations, but they are working within a larger context of changing conditions which should be recognized and addressed. The GSCI recommends that researcher Steve Kokelj, permafrost scientist with Industry, Tourism, and Investment GNWT, be contacted for further information.
- Cumulative Effects may also include effects from climate change and upriver development, including but not limited to changes to break-up and freeze-up, and erosion due to permafrost changes. The GSCI feels that planning for these changes should be proactive.

As with any application, if archaeological or heritage materials are encountered during the development within the Gwich'in Settlement Area, all work must cease immediately as required by law, and the GSCI and the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre in Yellowknife must then be contacted.

Sincerely,



Sharon Snowshoe
Executive Director, GSCI

c.c. Tom Andrews, PWNHC