

Traditional Knowledge Study

Appendix E





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October 11, 2018

Dear Todd:

**Traditional Knowledge Study
Oscar Creek**

Attached you will find a TK Study of the Oscar Creek completed by the Norman Wells Renewable Resources Council consultant Margaret McDonald.

We interviewed only 3 Elders – Leon Andrew, John McDonald and Edward Oudzi. These were the ones that were available.

We look forward to participating in the activities at Oscar Creek by providing monitors.

Sincerely,

Ruby L. McDonald
Director

Cc Nathalie Oldfield
Environmental Analyst

Enclosures (1)

Oscar Creek Bridge Relocation Project

Background and Project Description

The previous Oscar Creek bridge installation project was constructed in 2005. It was a 66-meter single-span steel bridge. It crossed Oscar Creek approximately 30 km northwest of Norman Wells @ km 1054.5 on the MVWR. Approaches to the bridge were not completed due to alignment issues. This bridge has been out of service since that time. The key issues for this project is that the current road alignment does not allow for construction of bridge approaches that meet TAC standards. Oscar Creek is also encroaching on section of South approach to bridge and lastly, changes in seasonality and creek flow posing erosion concerns.

Project Overview

AECOM did a study (2012) to evaluate options. The final report recommended relocating the bridge 6 kms upstream to a site selected initially by the Federal Government in 1970.

DOT has installed a permanent stream crossing at Oscar Creek that is not currently in use on the existing winter road. An option for realignment of this stream crossing further upstream was considered in the preliminary design. In considering the terrain, topography, length of bridge required, and overall cost, it was confirmed that the permanent stream crossing at Oscar Creek is preferred and included in the preliminary design for the Highway. At the time of detailed

design and construction, stream training to minimize erosion potential on the south abutment will be required

A 2-year construction phase will include, dismantling and reconstruction, site clean-up and new winter road alignment to the new bridge.

The Oscar Creek bridge is important as it is part of the continuation of the Mackenzie Valley winter road and it will extend the winter road season and reduce risks. This proposed bridge project will also develop the local economy and enhance capacity building.

(Retrieved from CONSTRUCTION OF THE MACKENZIE VALLEY HIGHWAY, TULITA DISTRICT OCTOBER 2011

6.4 Comparison of Alignment Options and the Preferred Alignment 6.4.1 Comparison of Alignment Options Section 6 - Development Summary.doc Page 6-13

(https://www.inf.gov.nt.ca/sites/inf/files/resources/project_description_report_for_construction_of_the_mvh_tulita_district.pdf)

Traditional Knowledge Study – Norman Wells

The traditional knowledge study will:

- provide information for construction
- incorporate traditional land use information and contribute to developing environmental protection and monitoring plans
- teach about traditional land use including plants and animals, identify sensitive and significant areas, study soil and permafrost and assess historical resources.

Purpose of TK research project

- To conduct interviews of Dene and Metis elders and other community members in the Sahtu Settlement Area to document traditional current camps, cabins and travel routes within the area of Oscar Creek.
- To complete TK study on behalf of Norman Wells Renewable Resource Council.
- To document TK so it is available for future generations.

Objectives:

- To identify sites of cultural significance.
- To document cultural and heritage resources within the study area through interviews, maps and photos.

People interviewed for the TK study in Norman Wells.

- Johnny McDonald
- Leon Andrew
- Edward Oudzi

Traditional Land Use in the Proposed Area of Study

In the 1930-1940's Oscar Graneth and spouse Elule (member of the Hodgson/Tourangeau clan) lived and raised a family of 4 children @ Oscar Creek. He hunted and trapped that whole area to support his family.

Wilfred McDonald was a well-respected Metis elder who was born in the Tulita area in 1935 and who has been the registered trapper for the area between Norman Wells and Gibson Gap since 1988. Mr. McDonald noted that he was the 2nd generation of his family to harvest this particular area. He lived permanently @ Oscar Creek year-round for many years until his demise on Oct 13, 2013. He hunted and trapped that whole area for years. His cabins are situated on bank of Mackenzie River, on left side of Oscar Creek.

Although the use of this land has decreased in recent years, those interviewed agreed that the land must be protected for future generations, for whatever purpose they may choose.

Hunting & Trapping

Hunting and Trapping has been carried out extensively in the proposed study area as means of providing food, clothing, shelter and transportation. Animals found within this area is moose, woodland caribou, grizzly and black bears, wolverine, wolves, lynx, foxes, rabbits, beaver/muskrats, weasel, mink, squirrels, porcupine, geese, ducks, ptarmigans, grayling, whitefish and jackfish.

Burial Sites

Burial sites in the Oscar Creek area - Very few people interviewed know of any burial sites in around Oscar Creek, although elder Edward Oudzi said that back in

the day, people were buried all over. Family members who died were buried on site. So, he said there probably a lot of burial sites that we are not aware of.

Plants and berries

Aside from berries (blueberries, high bush cranberries, low bush cranberries, cloud berries, raspberries, gooseberries, blackberries and juniper berries), the Dene and Metis have harvested many plants and roots, often for medicinal purposes. Although the use of these traditional medicines declined for some time. Several types of trees also provide a source of medicine. Spruce gum is not only used as medicine, it was also used as glue.

Creeks and Lakes

Water quality is of the utmost importance to the Dene and Metis. They rely on water for drinking and the fish and animals that they eat must have clean water in order to stay healthy. This means that monitoring water quality in even the smallest of streams is essential to the integrity of the water quality over the entire area. All the interviewees agreed that the water @ Oscar Creek is drinkable and also used for cooking. It is sustaining a healthy fish and wildlife population.

Oscar Lake Conservation Zone (Zone #47) as per SLUPB 2010

There is a 2.5 km buffer around Oscar Lake, located within the Norman Range Special Management Zone. The buffer encompasses the wetland area and smaller

waterbodies adjacent to the lake. This zoning designation prohibits bulk water removal, mining, oil and gas, power development, forestry, and quarrying, and has general and special management conditions.

History - Wilfred McDonald, Interview Quotes, August 11, 2003

“I think the one big point I want to make is about Oscar Creek. DOT has really picked a bad spot to put the bridge. The amount of water that goes through there during the spring thaw is going to take out your road. It comes up about 15 feet there sometimes, so I want to make sure you’ve thought about that. I know you plan to build the bridge high so maybe it won’t get pushed off, but that’s not the only trouble spot there.

Every three or four years in the spring, the ice on the Mackenzie will block the mouth of the Oscar and water levels will go up 15 feet or more. The water can come up so high that even some of the trees right around my place are surrounded by water. I can go paddling through timber, sometimes. Don’t forget that there’s ice to deal with through there too and this ice is sometimes 4 feet thick. If the water’s high and flowing fast and then there is ice on top of all that, you’ll find the ice will come right up on that cleared area by where you’re going to build the bridge. This is a very strong warning to you guys. That ice will take out anything you build there, I think. I want you to be sure you are prepared for the kind of water velocities and ice that can happen at Oscar. You can see from how the banks are all eroded and lots of the bank faces are completely without grass and that the water and ice really move through there.

My advice for this particular bridge would be to consider relocating it further away from the Mackenzie, maybe above the pipeline survey area. It'd be worth it to realign the road to lead to that location."

Interviews attached

Interview with Leon Andrew

Q1: What in your estimation comprises the terrain at and around Oscar Creek?

A: The area is rugged because it is within the vicinity of the Franklin Mountain range. The land around the creeks is all forest and a lot of muskeg. The land along both sides of the creeks is hard ground comprised mostly of sandy gravel and mud.

Q2: What types of soil is found at these creeks?

A: There is esker so there is a potential for gravel. There is also a lot of loose sandy gravel mixed with mud @ these creek crossings. Good gravel sources are over on the other side of the ridge. This side of the ridge may have gravel, but it is too wet and too low lying.

Q3: When we are working @ Oscar Creek can we expect to find similar weather conditions @ Billy, Elliot and Hanna Creek?

A: Yes, the weather conditions along all these creeks (Oscar, Billy, Hanna and Elliot creek) are fairly similar.

Q4: What sort of plants or vegetation can be found between Oscar and Hanna Creek? Are berries and such plants harvested up there?

A: There is a lot of moss, lichen, birch fungus, wild mushrooms and various berries (blue, rasp, hi/low bush cran, goose, black, cloud and juniper berries). In the past people have harvested berries and medicinal plants all the time.

Q5: Does anyone use the water from these creeks? Is the creek water drinkable?

A: Unless you live by these creeks i.e., trapping or hunting, it is not being used. Yes, the water is drinkable.

Q6: Do you think that installing this bridge on Oscar Creek will have an impact on stream flow and fish and fish nurseries?

A: I believe it will have minimal impact on stream flow and fish & fish nurseries. They will develop alternate routes of migration.

Q7: Is Oscar Creek situated along any migratory routes of waterfowl (i.e. geese, ducks etc.?)

A: There is a chain of lakes beginning at Bosworth Creek and going northward which is right in the pathway of a migratory route for geese, ducks. The waterfowl stop to eat and rest along these lakes. The woodland caribou in this area don't migrate.

Q8: Are there any old Indian trails beside or through Oscar Creek and area that people accessed & used at one time?

A: There is an old Indian trail from Oscar Creek which crosses the winter road and extends to Oscar Lake and onto Lennie & Kelly Lake. People from the past used this trail extensively.

Q9: Are there any important spiritual, archaeological sites that you would like to see protected at Oscar Creek crossing and area?

A: All that area needs to be protected for future generations. It is so important to ensure that we have environmental monitors at this site pre, during and post installation of this bridge and even after the installation is complete.

Q10: Do you think this bridge project will have an effect on traditional activities practiced within the surrounding Oscar Creek area?

A: No, I don't believe so because installing bridge will not pose a complete barrier. Oscar Creek will still flow, and fish will find alternate routes of migration.

Q11: Are there any comments you would like to make about this bridge installation will stand the test of time?

A; I would like to see environmental monitors on site pre, during and post project.

Interview with Edward Oudzi

Q1: What in your estimation comprises the terrain at and around Oscar Creek?

A: There is a lot of sandy gravel and hard ground at and within the vicinity of Oscar Creek. Our elder, Edward Oudzi stated there is an island situated on Oscar Creek close to the proposed bridge installation site that could be used when installing the bridge.

Q2: What type of soil is found at Oscar Creek?

A: Soft rich black soil. In the past, the Graneth family had large garden plots where they would grow their own vegetables. Along sides of the creek the soil is a mixture of packed sandy gravel and mud.

Q3: When we're working at Oscar Creek can we expect to find pretty much the same weather conditions at Billy, Hanna and Elliot creek?

A: Yes, the weather conditions along all these creeks (Billy, Elliot and Hanna Creek) are all similar.

Q4: What sort of plants and vegetation can be found between Oscar and Hanna Cree? Are berries and such plants harvested up there?

A: There is plenty of moss, lichen, Labrador tea, rose hip bushes. There are also blueberries, low and hi-bush cranberries, goose berries, black berries, cloud berries and juniper berries. Today there is not much berry picking happening there as it is quite a distance from the communities.

Q5: Does anyone use the water from these creeks? Is the creek water drinkable?

A: In the past, Wilfred McDonald used the water for drinking and cooking the whole time he lived there.

Q6: Do you think that installing this bridge at Oscar Creek will have an impact on stream flow and fish and fish nurseries?

A: If it does it would be very minimal. There is a spring fish run of grayling, whitefish and jackfish from Oscar Lake. It's not likely the whole creek will be blocked off. The fish will find alternate routes.

Q7: Is Oscar Creek situated along any migratory routes of waterfowl or caribou?

A: There is a chain of lakes northward from Bosworth Creek and geese and ducks migrate along these lakes as there is a lot of feed. Woodland caribou don't migrate in this area. They live along the foothills of the mountains and surrounding area.

Q8: Are there any old Indian trails through Oscar Creek and surrounding area that people use to travel on at one time?

A: There is an old Indian trail from Oscar Creek, crossing the winter road on left side of the creek, all the way to Oscar Lake and onto Lennie and Kelly Lake.

Q9: Are there any sites near Oscar Creek crossing and area that are important for spiritual or archaeological reasons or just sites you'd like to see protected?

A: The practice in the past when someone died was that they just buried them where they passed on. There are burial sites around Oscar Lake but am not aware of any around Oscar Creek. I would like all area within the vicinity of Oscar Creek and Lake be protected for future generations.

Q10: Do you think this bridge project will have an effect on traditional activities carried out in the surrounding area of Oscar Creek?

A: No, I don't believe so. I believe it would assist people in having easier access to practice these traditional activities.

Q11: Are there any further comments that you'd like to make about this bridge installation project or plans you've heard regarding the Oscar Creek crossing?

A: Environmental monitors need to be on site before, during and after the installation of the bridge.

Interview with Johnny McDonald

Q1: What in your estimation comprises the terrain at and around Oscar Creek?

A: The land around all the creeks (incl Oscar, Hanna, Billy & Elliot) is all forest and muskeg. There is a lot of muskeg. There is permafrost all across this area. Forest fires will disturb the permafrost as it destroys the protective moss. Takes quite a while for the moss to grow back.

Q2: What type of soil is found @ Oscar Creek?

A: Good gardening soil and along the creek and creek crossings there is sandy gravel and mud. On the sides of the creek there is hard packed ground.

Q3: When we're working at Oscar Creek can we expect to find pretty much the same weather conditions at Billy, Hanna and Elliot creek?

A: Very similar weather conditions at all these creeks as they are close in proximity.

Q4: What sort of plants or vegetation can be found at Oscar and Hanna Creek? Are berries and such plants harvested up there?

A: Labrador tea, birch fungus, lichen and a lot of moss. Back in the day the Graneth family who resided at Oscar Creek probably harvested a lot of blue and cranberries. The old-timers knew medicinal plants very well.

Q5: Does anyone use the water from these creeks? Is the creek water drinkable?

A: Water from the creek is used to cook and clean and it is also drinkable.

Q6: Do you think that putting the bridge at Oscar Creek will have an impact on stream flow and fish and fish nurseries?

A: If the bridge is put in right, there shouldn't be a problem. The impact will be minimal, and the fish will find alternate routes to migrate.

Q7: Is Oscar Creek situated along any migratory routes of birds (geese, ducks) or caribou, for instance?

A: There is a chain of lakes and the waterfowl stop at those lakes to feed on their way north and south.

Q8: Are there any old Indian trails through Oscar Creek and area that people use to travel on at one time?

A: Yes, Oscar Graneth and Johnny Lennie Sr used these trails to travel back and forth when trapping or hunting. Because these trails haven't been used for a long time, they are probably very grown in.

Q9: Are there any sites near Oscar Creek crossing and area that are important for spiritual or archaeological reasons or just sites you would like to see protected?

A: Not that I know of but that whole area needs to be protected.

Q10: Do you think this bridge project will have an effect on traditional activities carried out in the surrounding area of Oscar Creek?

A: Except for campers and the odd hunter there is no activity at Oscar Creek/Lake.

Q11: Are there any comments you'd like to make about this bridge installation project or plans you've heard regarding the Oscar Creek crossing?

A: Environmental monitors need to be on site pre, during and post phase of this project. We need to monitor bear dens etc.