

October 3, 2023

Public Services and Procurement Canada
300 – 269 Main Street
Winnipeg, MB R3C 1B3

SLR Project No.: 234.30025.00000

**RE: DRAFT Species at Risk Assessment
Lot 169 and Lot 502, Fort Simpson, NWT**

Introduction

SLR Consulting (Canada) Ltd. (SLR) was contracted by Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) to complete a Species at Risk (SAR) Assessment at Lot 169 (terrestrial lot) and Lot 502 (water lot) in Fort Simpson, Northwest Territories (NWT) (the Site). Other works to be completed separately by SLR on the Site include Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs) and a risk classification under the National Classification System for Contaminated Sites (NCSCS) and the Aquatic Sites Classification System (ASCS).

The objectives of this SAR Assessment were to:

- Identify historical occurrences of SAR from publicly available data;
- Identify SAR species that have the potential to occur based on overlapping range and habitat; and
- Evaluate the risk to individuals, residences, and critical habitat for identified species.

Methods

Identification of SAR that have historical occurrences and those that may occur at the Site was based on a desktop review of existing sources. The following sources were reviewed:

- Federal and Provincial SAR listings, including *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) public registry;
- *Species at Risk (NWT) Act*;
- Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC);
- ESRI and online air photos for habitat and vegetation review;
- Northwest Territories (NWT) Species Infobase;
- Mapped data layers compiled from the Federal Government other public sector agencies;
- Other sources of information available publicly online, including applicable federal and territorial publications.

The following resources regarding migratory birds were reviewed:

- iNaturalist (2023) – citizen science database; and
- eBird (2021) – citizen science database.

The following resources have been contacted and data requests submitted; however, SLR is still awaiting responses. This report will be updated before being finalized, or an amendment will follow later to include this data. Due to the residential location of the Site, it is not expected that additional data will alter the outcome of this report.

- NatureCounts – most comprehensive database of migratory birds in North America; and,
- NWT Wildlife Management Information System (WMIS);

Databases were searched for historical occurrences within three kilometres of the Site. In addition, a list of SAR that have potential to occur based on overlapping ranges was created. The likelihood of occurrence was then evaluated based on habitat requirements and an assessment of aerial imagery and Site photographs.

Results

The following summarises the desktop review including a description of the Site and surrounding sensitivities, historical occurrences, and potential occurrence of SAR.

Site Description

Lot 169 and Lot 502 (the Site) are adjacent and comprise the Fort Simpson public wharf. The Site was historically used by the Northern Transport Company Ltd. (NTCL) to barge in supplies to Fort Simpson, prior to highway access. The existing land use is local recreation, boat storage with some refuelling.

The site is bound to the south by the Northwest Territories Power Corporation (NTPC) diesel electrical generation station; to the north by a commercial float plane mooring and fueling commercial operation, to the west by the Mackenzie River and to the east by a municipal road and various residential/commercial properties.

Historical Occurrences

A search using citizen science records showed historical observations of fifteen SAR within 3 kms of Site (Table 1). Most observations were associated with the Mackenzie River, the nearby snye, or flying overhead. Some records appear to be vagrants given their presence is outside of normal range.

Potential Species at Risk

There are fifteen additional SAR that have ranges overlapping the Site (Table 2), which includes three invertebrates, two birds, three fish, and seven mammals. Including the species with historical occurrences (Table 1), 30 species were assessed for likelihood of occurrence at the Site. Fifteen were determined to not have suitable habitat on the Site and an additional 8 were considered to be unlikely to occur (**Error! Reference source not found.**). These species were not assessed further.

The occurrence of the remaining 7 species were determined to be possible within 30 m of the Site (Table 2): Bank Swallow (*Riparia riparia*), Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*), Bull Trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*), Fourhorn Sculpin (*Myoxocephalus quadricornis*) Little Brown Myotis (*Myotis lucifugus*), Northern Myotis (*Myotis septentrionalis*), and Shortjaw Cisco (*Coregonus zenithicus*).



Important Wildlife Areas

The NWT Species and Habitat Viewer shows the Site falls within Important Wildlife Area's (IWA's) for beaver and moose and is within a unique area with a mineral lick density ranking of 1. Several wetlands were also detected within 3 km of the Site, which may provide high quality habitat for a variety of SAR. No Important Bird Areas (IBA) occur nearby (IBA 1995).



Table 1. Species at Risk with historical occurrences within 3km of the Site.

Species	Scientific Name	COSEWIC Status ¹	SARA Status ¹	NWT Rank ²
Bank Swallow	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	Threatened	Threatened	At Risk
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Special Concern	Threatened	Sensitive
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	<i>Tryngites subruficollis</i>	Special Concern	Special Concern	Sensitive
Common Nighthawk	<i>Chordeiles minor</i>	Special Concern	Special Concern	Sensitive
Evening Grosbeak	<i>Coccothraustes vespertinus</i>	Special Concern	Special Concern	Secure
Harris's Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia querula</i>	Special Concern	Schedule 1	Sensitive
Horned Grebe	<i>Podiceps auritus</i>	Special Concern	Schedule 1	Sensitive
Hudsonian Godwit	<i>Limosa haemastica</i>	Threatened	No schedule	At Risk
Lesser Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa flavipes</i>	Threatened	No schedule	Sensitive
Olive-sided Flycatcher	<i>Contopus cooperi</i>	Special Concern	Schedule 1	Sensitive
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Not at Risk	Delisted	Sensitive
Red Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>	Endangered	Schedule 1	At Risk
Rusty Blackbird	<i>Euphagus carolinus</i>	Special Concern	Schedule 1	Sensitive
Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>	Threatened	Schedule 1	Sensitive
Yellow-banded Bumble Bee	<i>Bombus terricola</i>	Special Concern	Special Concern	Sensitive

Notes:

- 1 Sources for status: Government of Canada 2023. *Species at Risk Act* 2002.
- 2 NWT Species Infobase



Table 2. Species at Risk with Ranges that Overlap the Site or have Historical Observations and the Likelihood of Occurrence.

Species	Scientific Name	COSEWIC Status ¹	SARA Status ¹	NWT Rank ²	Likelihood of Occurrence ³	Species Summary
Bank Swallow	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	Threatened	Schedule 1	At Risk	Possible	Several occurrences in area and known nesting cavities on banks of the Mackenzie River nearby. Potential for nesting cavities within 30 m of site works.
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Special Concern	Schedule 1	Sensitive	Possible	Nest in manmade structures and forages in open areas, has been observed in area.
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	<i>Tryngites subruficollis</i>	Special Concern	Schedule 1	Sensitive	Unlikely	Use grassland and human-altered areas as stopovers, but the Site is likely too developed and urban. Historical observation was likely migrating. Species breeds in high arctic.
Bull Trout	<i>Salvelinus confluentus</i>	Special Concern	Schedule 1	Sensitive	Possible	Potential for presence in the Mackenzie River directly adjacent to Site. Works may occur within 30m of river.
Canada Warbler	<i>Cardellina canadensis</i>	Special Concern	Schedule 1	Sensitive	Nil	Lives in forested areas; no suitable habitat.
Woodland Caribou – Boreal Population	<i>Rangifer tarandus</i>	Threatened	Schedule 1	At Risk	Nil	No suitable habitat. Avoids anthropogenic disturbances.



Species	Scientific Name	COSEWIC Status ¹	SARA Status ¹	NWT Rank ²	Likelihood of Occurrence ³	Species Summary
Common Nighthawk	<i>Chordeiles minor</i>	Special Concern	Schedule 1	Sensitive	Unlikely	May nest in open areas, but the Site is likely too developed.
Eastern Red Bat	<i>Lasiurus borealis</i>	Endangered	No Status	Presence Expected	Unlikely	If large trees are available on Site, they may provide possible roosting habitat.
Evening Grosbeak	<i>Coccothraustes vespertinus</i>	Special Concern	Schedule 1	Secure	Nil	Area is outside of normal range. Historical observation was likely vagrant.
Fourhorn Sculpin	<i>Myoxocephalus quadricornis</i>	Data Deficient	Schedule 1	Secure	Nil	The freshwater fourhorn sculpin found deep, cold lakes the Northwest and Nunavut Territories, Out of range, no suitable habitat.
Gypsy Cuckoo Bumble Bee	<i>Bombus bohemicus</i>	Endangered	Schedule 1	At Risk	Possible	Occurs in old fields and urban parks and gardens; nests in abandoned rodent burrows/rotten logs, typically forages on flowers in wooded areas; overwinters in mulch/vegetation.
Harris's Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia querula</i>	Special Concern	Schedule 1	Sensitive	Nil	No suitable habitat.
Hoary Bat	<i>Lasiurus cinereus</i>	Endangered	No Status	Undetermined	Unlikely	If large trees are available on the Site, they may provide possible roosting habitat.
Horned Grebe	<i>Podiceps auritus</i>	Special Concern	Schedule 1	Sensitive	Nil	No suitable habitat.



Species	Scientific Name	COSEWIC Status ¹	SARA Status ¹	NWT Rank ²	Likelihood of Occurrence ³	Species Summary
Hudsonian Godwit	<i>Limosa haemastica</i>	Threatened	No Status	At Risk	Nil	No suitable habitat.
Lesser Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa flavipes</i>	Threatened	No Status	Sensitive	Nil	No suitable habitat.
Little Brown Myotis	<i>Myotis lucifugus</i>	Endangered	Schedule 1	At Risk	Possible	Structures or large trees may provide suitable habitat.
Northern Myotis	<i>Myotis septentrionalis</i>	Endangered	Schedule 1	At Risk	Possible	Structures or large trees may provide suitable habitat.
Olive-sided Flycatcher	<i>Contopus cooperi</i>	Special Concern	Schedule 1	Sensitive	Unlikely	Often found in forested areas on the edge of rivers. Site is likely not forested enough.
Peregrine Falcon anatum/tundrius	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Not at Risk	Delisted	Sensitive	Nil	No suitable habitat.
Red Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>	Endangered	Schedule 1	At Risk	Nil	Historical occurrence was likely migratory as this species breeds in the arctic.
Red-necked Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>	Special Concern	Schedule 1	Sensitive	Nil	No suitable habitat.
Rusty Blackbird	<i>Euphagus carolinus</i>	Special Concern	Schedule 1	Sensitive	Nil	No suitable habitat.



Species	Scientific Name	COSEWIC Status ¹	SARA Status ¹	NWT Rank ²	Likelihood of Occurrence ³	Species Summary
Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>	Threatened	Schedule 1	Sensitive	Unlikely	Need dense vegetative cover (tall grass) for nesting, likely not tall/dense enough, not enough area, and too close to developed area.
Shortjaw Cisco	<i>Coregonus zenithicus</i>	Threatened	Schedule 1	Undetermined	Possible	Potential for presence in the Mackenzie River directly adjacent to Site. Works may occur on the shoreline.
Silver-haired Bat	<i>Lasionycteris noctivagans</i>	Endangered	No Status	Undetermined	Unlikely	If large trees are available on Site, they may provide possible roosting habitat.
Suckley's Cuckoo Bumble Bee	<i>Bombus suckleyi</i>	Threatened	No Status	Undetermined	Possible	Occurs in open meadows and prairies, farms, croplands, boreal forest, and montane meadows, and urban parks and gardens. Requires abandoned rodent burrows and rotten logs, these may exist on the recreation site
Transverse Lady Beetle	<i>Coccinella transversoguttata</i>	Special Concern	Special Concern	Special Concern	Possible	Habitat generalist - occurs in suburban gardens; overwinters in rocks, crevices, grass tussocks, tree bark and mulch.
Wolverine	<i>Gulo gulo</i>	Special Concern	Special Concern	Sensitive	Nil	No suitable habitat. Avoids anthropogenic disturbances.
Yellow-banded Bumble Bee	<i>Bombus terricola</i>	Special Concern	Special Concern	Sensitive	Possible	Occurs in mixed woodlands, farmlands, meadows grasslands,



Species	Scientific Name	COSEWIC Status ¹	SARA Status ¹	NWT Rank ²	Likelihood of Occurrence ³	Species Summary
						boreal and urban parks and gardens. Requires abandoned rodent burrows and rotten logs.
<p>Notes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Sources for status: Government of Canada 2023. <i>Species at Risk Act</i> 2002. 2 NWT Species Infobase 3 Likelihood of occurrence within Project Study Areas was based upon a qualitative assessment of results of potential habitat. Similarly, other factors such as breeding range, location of known colonies, etc. were incorporated. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Likely: The Site is located within the mapped range and the majority of the area is available habitat; b) Possible: The Site is located within the mapped range or has historical occurrences and some of the available habitats (within 30m) may provide suitable breeding or other life-stage requirements; c) Unlikely: The Site is located within the mapped range or has historical occurrences, but available habitat is marginal or doesn't provide breeding or other life-stage requirements; d) Nil: The Site is located outside of the mapped range or is located within mapped range but suitable habitat is not present. 						



Discussion

Ten SAR were determined to have potential to occur at the Site including two bird (bank swallow and barn swallow), two fish (Bull Trout and Shortjaw Cisco), two mammals (little brown myotis and northern myotis) and four invertebrates (gypsy cuckoo bumble bee, Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee, transverse lady beetle, and yellow-banded bumble bee). Although the Site was considered within an IWA, given the residential nature, there is no suitable habitat for beaver or moose, and mineral licks are unlikely to occur.

Terrestrial Species

Birds

Bank Swallows are a migratory bird that nests in riparian areas, quarries, or road cuts where vertical banks with alluvial, friable soils allow the construction of burrows (Garrison and Turner 2020). An observation on iNaturalist reports this habitat is present and there are existing bank swallow burrows along the Mackenzie River. Exact burrow locations are not confirmed but there is potential of these occurring within the Site. Bank swallows typically use their nesting sites from mid-April to late August (ECCC, 2021) therefore the timing of construction is unlikely to overlap with sensitive timing for bank swallows. If work should occur during mid-April to late August a Qualified Environmental Professional should be consulted to completed a site survey for bank swallows and if necessary determine an appropriate site specific mitigation plan.

Barn Swallows are a migratory bird that nests on buildings during May through August. By late-August and early-September they migrate south (Brown and Brown 2020). This migration occurs typically earlier than other species (Brown and Brown 2020), so it is likely they will be in the area by the time work is underway. A thorough walk around of any manmade structures should be completed prior to work, and any located nests should be given a 30 m buffer until the nest is vacated.

Mammals

Little Brown Myotis roost in buildings and trees during summer and northern myotis similarly have been known to roost in buildings but more typically under the bark or within crevices of trees (EC 2015). However, by late-summer or early-fall, both species move to swarming sites to mate before hibernating underground in caves, abandoned mines, and tunnels (EC 2015). Hibernacula are considered critical habitat for these species, but this does not occur at the Site. Similarly, Silver-haired bats are solitary roosters in trees and cavities (and sometimes buildings) in the summer. However, they are long-distance migrants that hibernate in the south in late summer. Silver-haired bats were recently (May 2023) listed as Endangered but are not yet protected under the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA 2023). If present, bats are likely only to occur sporadically when foraging. If this work occurs in the roosting season, care should be taken to inspect roosting locations (trees and buildings) to ensure no roosts are present. The sooner this work begins in the spring, the less chance of impact there is.

Invertebrates

The gypsy cuckoo bumble bee and Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee are habitat generalists and occurs in a range of habitat including open meadows, farmlands, urban areas, and taiga (ECCC 2022; Government of Canada 2023). Both species are distributed throughout North America but has had significant declines in their southern range (ECCC 2022). In the summer they rely on pollen and nectar from a variety of flowers but often use those that occur in urban and disturbed



environments (e.g., white sweet clover [*Melilotus alba*] and common dandelion [*Taraxacum officinale*]) (ECCC 2022). In the spring and summer, both species parasitize the nests of other bumble bees, including the yellow-banded bumble bee, in underground rodent burrows and logs (ECCC 2022). Nests are abandoned following the active season once bees have left or died and in late July, this species disperses to overwintering sites (ECCC 2022). The requirements of overwintering sites are largely unknown, but in general, they are in the ground, in mulch or decomposing vegetation and rotting logs (ECCC 2022). Critical habitat has been defined as 10 kilometres surrounding extant occurrences. The Site is not currently listed as critical habitat in the recovery strategy (ECCC 2022). It is possible, that if present, overwintering residences could be disturbed. It is recommended that prior to the works, the Site be evaluated for presence of rodent burrows, mulch, rotting logs, and other overwintering habitats. If overwintering habitat is identified, then ground disturbance in proximity to these features should be avoided.

The transverse lady beetle and yellow-banded bumble bee are listed as special concern under the SARA. As such, there are currently no prohibitions (Government of Canada 2023; SARA 2022). Transverse lady beetles are habitat generalists, so they inhabit a wide range of habitats, including developed and cleared areas. In the fall, they congregate and undergo diapause, a period of suspended development. Overwintering adults tend to aggregate in well ventilated microhabitats such as under stones, and within rock crevices, grass tussocks, leaf litter, or tree bark. The Site should be evaluated for these features prior to ground disturbance. If identified, then ground disturbance should be avoided in proximity to these features. A possible threat is considered the spread of exotic lady beetles (primarily outside of the Yukon). As such, equipment and vehicles should be clean and free of materials prior to the work (COSEWIC 2016).

Similar to the other mentioned insects, the yellow-banded bumble bee is a habitat generalist. They inhabit urban parks and gardens and collect pollen from a wide variety of plant species. They nest underground, often in abandoned rodent burrows with downward sloping entrances. Queens overwinter by burrowing in loose soil or rotting trees. Potential nests should be identified and ground disturbance in proximity to these features should be avoided (COSEWIC, 2015).

Fish

Two fish species (Bull Trout, Shortjaw Cisco) were included as possible occurrences due to their potential to be in the Mackenzie River, which is directly adjacent to the Site.

Bull Trout have highly specific habitat requirements. They spawn in coarse substrate in smaller, slower moving streams and young juveniles remain in those for some time before moving to deeper faster moving water. They prefer areas with ample cover from overcut banks and overhanging vegetation. They tend to avoid developed stream banks (COSEWIC, 2012). The Site is not good habitat, with limited cover and fast-moving water, so the sediment sampling and surface water sampling near the shoreline is unlikely to affect their habitat. Shortjaw Cisco spend most of their time in the deepest parts of lakes and complete their whole life cycle there; they do not migrate as much as Bull Trout. Therefore, they are unlikely to inhabit the shallow, fast moving water that is found on site (COSEWIC, 2003). For both species and for aquatic health in general, care should be taken to ensure no contaminants enter the stream directly or indirectly.



Statement of Limitations

This report has been prepared and the work referred to in this report has been undertaken by SLR Consulting (Canada) Ltd. (SLR) for Public Services and Procurement Canada, hereafter referred to as the “Client”. It is intended for the sole and exclusive use of (Client). The report has been prepared in accordance with the Scope of Work and agreement between SLR and the Client. Other than by the Client and as set out herein, copying or distribution of this report or use of or reliance on the information contained herein, in whole or in part, is not permitted unless payment for the work has been made in full and express written permission has been obtained from SLR.

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Opinions and recommendations contained in this report are based on conditions that existed at the time the services were performed and are intended only for the client, purposes, locations, time frames and project parameters as outlined in the Scope of Work and agreement between SLR and the Client. The data reported, findings, observations and conclusions expressed are limited by the Scope of Work. SLR is not responsible for the impacts of any changes in environmental standards, practices, or regulations subsequent to performance of services. SLR does not warranty the accuracy of information provided by third party sources.

Closure

Thank you for retaining SLR to provide this service. We look forward to working with you again. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the undersigned at any time.

Regards,

SLR Consulting (Canada) Ltd.

DRAFT

DRAFT

Valerie Schmidt, R.P.Bio.
Ecologist
vschmidt@slrconsulting.com

Stephen Symes, M.Sc., P.Biol., R.P.Bio.
Senior Wildlife Specialist
ssymes@slrconsulting.com



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