



MR. STEVE LOUTITT  
DEPUTY MINISTER  
DEPARTMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE  
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

March 1, 2021

## **Approval of the Annual Review of the Tłıchǵ All-Season Road Wildlife Management and Monitoring Plan (WMMP)**

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Thank you for the Department of Infrastructure's (INF) submission on January 29, 2021 of Version 4.2 of the Tłıchǵ All-Season Road (TASR) Wildlife Management and Monitoring Plan (WMMP). As per Measure 10-2, Part 3 of the Mackenzie Valley Review Board's *Report of Environmental Assessment and Reasons for Decision* for the Tłıchǵ All-Season Road (TASR) project (EA-1617-01), the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) is required to conduct an annual public review of the TASR WMMP. ENR understands that Version 4.2 of the WMMP is the ultimate outcome of the annual review process initiated in fall 2020.

In September 2020, INF submitted version 4.0 of the TASR WMMP to the Wek'èezhì Land and Water Board (WLWB). A 30-day public review period was undertaken, with submissions made to the WLWB's Online Review System by Environment and Climate Change Canada, Tłıchǵ Government, WLWB and Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board (WRRB). In consultation with ENR staff, INF developed responses to comments received, revised the WMMP to address the comments and, on November 6, 2020 submitted Version 4.1 of the TASR WMMP to the WRRB as a management proposal under Section 12.5.1 of the Tłıchǵ Agreement. In a letter to INF on December 7, 2020, the WRRB indicated its approval of the Version 4.1 of the TASR WMMP as submitted. On January 29, INF submitted Version 4.2 of the TASR WMMP to ENR and the WLWB, triggering the 30-day period for an approval decision.

ENR staff have reviewed Version 4.2 of the TASR WMMP in the context of the comments submitted to the ORS and responses provided in the *Table 3 - WMMP Conformance Table* and outstanding commitments identified in ENR's annual public review initiation letter of August 20, 2020. ENR's primary concern in this review was to ensure that legislated criteria for WMMP content identified in subsection 95 (2) of the *Wildlife Act* and elaborated upon in the WMMP Process and Content Guidelines continue to be met, while also encouraging INF to ensure that the views of other parties are duly considered.

I am satisfied that INF, in consultation with ENR and North Star Infrastructure, has satisfactorily responded to reviewer comments and recommendations made during the first annual public review of the WMMP.

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ENR notes that Version 4.2 of the WMMP included a minor change to section 2.8.2 (paragraph 2 – 1<sup>st</sup> sentence, page 2-13) to clarify that the intent of the 2019 Migratory Bird Survey was to “confirm the occurrence or otherwise of Species At Risk birds, which may determine if additional mitigation measures are required.” ENR agrees that this wording change is consistent with the intent of Measure 10-1.

ENR notes that INF’s response to Tłıchǫ Government Comment 5 on the WLWB’s Online Review System states that “NSI will continue to opportunistically conduct the Thermal Imaging Device Pilot Study during construction. Additional details related to weather conditions, ambient temperature, and an estimate of distance from the animal will be recorded. Additionally, specific details on devices used will be provided in the Water License Annual Report. Thermal imaging devices are currently being used and not night vision and the field form will be corrected manually each time it is filled out.” However, version 4.2 of the WMMP no longer includes mention of the thermal imaging device in Appendix F – Pre-Blast Surveys Procedure (pages F-16 to F-19). ENR requires that the use of thermal imaging devices be added back in to Appendix F – Pre-Blast Surveys Procedure, including additional variables in the pre-blast survey report form for weather conditions, ambient temperature and an estimate of distance from the animal. INF will provide ENR with an updated version of Appendix F that includes these additions within 30 days. ENR also requires INF to include details and results of the thermal imaging study in the Annual Water Licencing report.

Attachment 1 to this letter provides a list of commitments from INF’s responses to reviewer comments on the WLWB’s Online Review System which ENR expects to be addressed prior to the next annual public review of the WMMP (September 2021).

Subject to the above-noted condition regarding resubmission of Appendix F and reporting of thermal imaging results, I hereby approve Version 4.2 of the WMMP as the plan under which INF will operate.

Please contact Dr. James Hodson, Manager, Habitat and Environmental Assessment, Wildlife and Fish Division, at (867) 767-9237, extension 53227 or [james.hodson@gov.nt.ca](mailto:james.hodson@gov.nt.ca) if you have any questions.



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Attachment

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## Attachment

### **List of Commitments for inclusion in next year's version of the Tlicho All Season Road Wildlife Management and Monitoring Plan.**

- 1) GNWT-INF will respond to ECCC's Comment 1 on the Migratory Bird Survey Report in Appendix G of the WMMP.
- 2) From the response to ECCC Comment 2, GNWT-ENR will provide information in the next annual report on the number of TASR crossings by collared caribou each year (or by season/year; starting in March 2017), the number of times collared boreal caribou occurred within the 4-6 km buffers around the road alignment in weekly or 2-day reporting intervals outlined in Appendix D, and the number of times such instances triggered additional mitigation measures, and information on any collared caribou mortality.
- 3) From the response to ECCC Comment 4, management and control plan for rare and exotic plant species will be prepared in consultation with GNWT-ENR prior to the next scheduled surveys; one year after construction; and five years thereafter.
- 4) From response to Tłıchǫ Government Comment 6, ENR and INF have agreed in principle to install additional traffic counters at the north and south ends of the TASR alignment.
- 5) From response to Tłıchǫ Government Comment 7, GNWT will meet with the Tłıchǫ Government prior to the next annual update of the WMMP to further discuss alternative study designs that do not exclusively rely on collars.
- 6) From the condition outlined in ENR approval letter of Version 4.2 of the WMMP, INF will ensure that the revised Appendix F is included in the version for the next public review period.
- 7) INF will include details and results of the thermal imaging study in the Annual Water Licencing report