

Meeting Minutes

Tłıchq All-Season Road Corridor Working Group Culture Centre, Whatı December 12, 2019



PARTICIPANTS:

Cameron Wilson (Chair) – Infrastructure (INF)
David Moore – Assistant Deputy Minister, INF
Stu Niven – INF
Benjamin Bey - INF
Ziaur Rahman –INF
Salah Uddin - INF
Yasir Jamal – INF
Terry Brooks – INF
Krista March – INF
Felix Cirelli– North Star Infrastructure (NSI)
Caroline Walmsley – NSI
Devon Stephenson – NSI
James Williams – NSI
Keenan Rudichuk – Associated Environmental
Olivia Sroka – Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO)
Ryan Fequet – Wek’èezhì Land and Water Board (WLWB)
Laura Watkinson – Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO)
Alexandra Sorckoff – DFO
Jessica Hurtubise – North Slave Metis Alliance

James Hodson – Environment and Natural Resources (ENR)
Marie Nietfeld – ENR
Bruce Croft - ENR
Katie Bakker – Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency (CANNOR)
Arusa Shafi – CANNOR
Randi Jennings – Wek’èezhì Renewable Resources Board (WRRB)
Aimee Guile - WRRB
Loretta Ransom – ENR
Jonas Sangris – Yellowknives Dene First Nation
Tammy Steinwand – Tłıchq Government (TG)
Stephanie Behrens - TG
Michael Birlea – TG
Violet Camsell-Blondin – TG
Lisa Nitsiza – Whatı Senior Administrative Officer
Naomi Smethurst – Education, Culture and Employment

1. Opening Prayer

Prayer provided by Michel Louie Rabesca

2. Welcome and Opening Remarks

3. Introduction of Participants

4. Review of Agenda

5. Matters arising from previous Meetings Minutes

6. Overview of the TASR Project

Presentation provided by Felix Cirelli and Devon Stephenson of NSI and Caroline provided the NSI environmental presentation. Comments and discussions raised by corridor working group (CWG) members throughout or after the presentation are outlined below.

Stephanie: Will local monitors be hired again?

Caroline: Yes they will.

Tammy: With any sighting of animals especially coyotes, are they advising the community about these animals? Members are out trapping and for their safety they should know.

Caroline: Yes we are letting ENR know about the sightings and ENR is advising the community.

Naomi: What is next to be developed in regards to pits you mentioned km 53 pit 48?

Felix: Will provide a list.

Tammy: Is waste on site being monitored and inspected daily?

Felix: Most of the garbage is at the main camp and it is removed daily.

David: What was being done with the blasting wastes?

Felix: The waste from blasting is being burned on site, any explosives provided are dealt with on site also and ashes go into a container to be disposed of.

James: What is the Christmas Schedule?

Felix: We will be closed during Dec 20 – mid January with very little crew on site. Maybe 5 or 6 crew to keep things monitored.

Keenan: Blasting with animals around, how do you deal with that?

Caroline: The last blast scared them out to approximately 500 meters. Moose ran off and there were bison sighted at km, 45, approximately 40. At km 10 there were a few caribou sightings a few weeks back. But otherwise we don't see animals at our blasting sites.

7. Break

8. Regulatory Compliance: Update, Expectations, Concerns, and Recommendations

Updates provided by each organization are outlined below as well as discussions raised by CWG members.

Update from the Tłı̨cho Government

Tammy: Welcomed everyone and introduced Stephanie and Michael from Tłı̨cho. They are pleased to see the road being developed. We are working with many groups, they meet on a regular basis and will play in an important role in the managing impacts on construction and operation of the project now and after the road is complete. We work closely with NSI with hiring of Tłı̨cho members. It takes everyone working together to continue that level of partnership and looks forward to working collaborating with everyone on this important infrastructure project for our community.

Update from the Community Government of Whatı̨

Lisa: Welcome, I have been a part of many working groups. It is great to see the progress from the beginning of time, 6 years of being involved in seeing this project finally breaking the ground. We are looking at improving our community by infrastructure, getting tourism on board and increase our population to approximately 600-800 and want to make sure that the community is ready for these changes.

Stu: With the Tuk highway, he was there months ago and spoke to many people regarding the changes from the highway and everyone is very positive about it. Might be a great idea to reach out to them and find out what they learned from the highway opening and the changes it has on the community.

Lisa: They had Annie come from Tuk to speak with council about the road, what happened when the road opened, they weren't ready, and she gave advice as to what to do to be prepared. You need a plan in place for tourists when they show up and a plan for infrastructure system in place for when the trucks need tire repair or truck repair in case of truck breakdown. She gave a great deal of help to council, and made council realize that they aren't ready for all the changes that will come with this road opening, so they now realized they need to step up and get things ready. This weekend they have a strategic plan meeting with council and will look at the previous plan and see what they need to add. This road will change how we operate compared to the winter road. How they shop for the office and it will change how they stock up on items as well.

David: Has the community thought about the opposite, capital and commercial opportunities so they can sell south?

Lisa: We do have a land plan in place, we have an area for industrial, recreation and residential. We have had people come forward and ask about our residential lots. We are also looking at a third route to the

airport.

Update from the Wek'èezhì Land and Water Board

Ryan: Presentation was given on an overview of how the WLWB is involved in the TASR Project. Review of all 13 plans in total and 4 plans that are still pending. Discussion on pits and testing that is being done. Submittals before the pits can open.

Stephanie: Testing that is being done on the soil/rock, washed material.

Felix: The testing that is done needs to be sent to the lab to get the results that everything is deemed clean and appropriate to use the soil/rock to build the highway.

Felix: Right now it looks like pit 48 will be submitted at the end of the week along with 2B, 3, 21B in version 2.0 of the Quarry Operations Plan (QOP). Regarding pits 1001, 68A & 109 results will be provided in the New Year in version 3.0.

Tammy: How often do the board meet regarding WLWB?

Felix: Once a month

Ryan: We require that the QOPs are submitted 90 days in advance.

Tammy: More discussion is needed regarding testing and working with WLWB.

David: Are the quarry sites known and why not just go in and get the samples and get it done ahead of time? Is that possible? What does it mean if they aren't ready in time?

Ryan: Its means they can't start construction.

Felix: Samples are not always easy to get, the weather, the snow covering the ground; NSI is doing what they need to do.

Tammy: This is something we need to discuss more and speed things up.

Terry: Gave some history on the testing. They do some testing and investigations on the pits. We had information to pass along. NSI came in and we gave them some information, NSI wanted to do more and get more info. Some things that were done by GNWT are now 2 year olds. Doing something in 90 days, the snow is covering and so it can't be done. New information has come forward, is this perfect, no it isn't, there are some lessons learned. We are all doing the best effort we can. We wanted to move forward, we wanted employment for the communities, we could of delayed the construction but we didn't we wanted to move ahead.

Stu: At tomorrow's meeting at 1:20pm we will discuss details and get into the weeds on this. Let's park it and work together tomorrow in the meeting on this item.

Felix: Type A Water license is ongoing and we plan on submitting the application for this.

Update from the Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board

Randi: The Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board manages wildlife, plants, forests and protected areas within Wek'èezhì through the use of available traditional and scientific knowledge on behalf of Tłı̨ç hq Citizens and other members of the public. The Fish and Fish Habitat Plan, the Draft Caribou Offset Plan and the Wildlife Management and Monitoring Plan are all of interest to the WRRB. One question I do have is whether there has been any talk on the Integrated Fisheries Management Plan? It is in development. We have no new information to provide and I look forward to receiving the weekly environmental reports for review

Update Environmental and Natural Resources

James from ENR, gave a brief speech on their role in relation to the TASR project.

Update Department of Lands

No members present to provide an update.

Update Environment and Climate Change Canada

No members present to provide an update.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada

A brief update, first big involvement was providing advice for Fish and Fish Habitat process and our next involvement is with regulatory review process regarding the water crossing. They (NSI) keep us updated on what is happening.

9. BREAK

10. MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING PLANS

Updates provided implementation, outcomes, constraints, concerns and recommendations.

Wildlife Management and Monitoring Plan (WMMP)

James provided a presentation. Overall the plan is to show the impact can be managed on site, monitor those impacts and get results. During the construction we monitor where the animals are, providing GPS and maps on where they are. Our commitment right now is to monitor it for 5 years, first 5 years of operations. Trying to see if they are avoiding the road during the construction, where they cross the road and how they use it. Monitor the traffic on the road and on the ground as well as the day-to-day monitoring of wildlife. For Boreal Caribou, we put out 20 collars in 2017, 5 in 2018 7 in 2019. 30 collars are out there right now. We don't plan to put anymore out. We try to put collars on some that are close to the road and some that are not. Survival is high at 95% which is really good. Every spring we do the classification survey to see how many calves are out there. Population trend is increasing. Also we did a survey to see how many moose and bison are in the area, how many are in the study area so we can compare, we found 27 groups of bison and 34 groups of moose, minimum estimate. For 2019 we did a bear den survey along the road and will come back. We covered the whole road alignment, 80 meter buffer around it. We found 2 potential bear den sites, unoccupied. We will go back and check it out later to follow up to see if it is actually occupied. Caribou alignment survey we are doing a very big study area; we will use an aircraft to track them and try to count and classified them. This will start late February and will last 10 days. Wolf survey there is 4 areas this winter, Dehcho, South Slave, North Slave Region. That is a different type of survey; we found wolf tracks to find the packs. This is the plan for this winter.

Tammy: The road coming into Whati, will we see Bison at our backdoor?

James: Ya that is one of the things we will monitor. They do.

Tammy: Is there a way they cannot cross the bridge?

James: Good question we will see what we can do if this happens.

Ziaur: The bear den around km 65 and 70, what is the plan we need to be aware of? Caroline from NSI is working with ENR and checking to see if it is active or not and will decide what to do.

Water Monitoring Plan

Caroline: In terms of the plan we aren't doing any of the necessary requirements yet until we have the approved plan but with the weather conditions right now we aren't able to do water samples right now. We are getting some samples from some of our larger crossings.

Waste Management Plan

In terms of the Waste Management Plans it's approved, we have an amendment in for the water license to use a lagoon at the main camp and are under review. Once we get approval on the lagoon the Waste Management Plan will be revised to include the amendment.

Fish and Fish Habitat Protection Plan

We are currently putting in our temporary bridges and working very closely with DFO.

Adaptive Management Plan

Again we are still working with the plan and implementing it as requires.

Erosion and Sediment Control Plan

We are implementing that, the culverts we have in place that may have to get raised in the year before spring due to the sediment.

Quarry Operation Plan

Terry: Not much more to update as James gave a detailed presentation we have decided on some action plans and worked on non-compliance action and we are going through them.

Permafrost Management Plan,

Terry: We wanted to do the geotechnical investigation, we have 80 holes, to see what the ground type is like, in 24 we put thermistors. Only about 4 recorded and we have seen permafrost but very low. They are close to the water bodies, vegetation around there. This permafrost is very warm, and once everything is removed, trees etc. this permafrost will go. We don't have these same large ice lands as other projects like Tuk. The initial plan was to save the permafrost, but there is no need because it will melt. We have a very strong base line where the temperature is. Over the next 10 years the permafrost will be gone.

Caribou Habitat Offset Plan

Keenan provided an overview of how the scope was designed. Three workshops were held with Elders, Harvesters and some public. The Plan was driven by these workshops. The draft was submitted on July 31, 2019 to the Board. Two main options were proposed and 8 different measure to support those 2 offset options.

There is a ton of work that needs to be done, we met the measure but the work is not yet completed. An operational implementation plan is intended to determine how, when, where, and who.

Primary option was for linear feature restoration. Challenges and risks to caribou, restoring the existing corridor. Most of all the trails out there are being used by residents. So figuring out which linear corridors to restore and leave is a big question. It's a big discussion that needs to happen with other Indigenous groups already engaged.

Second option that was proposed was reforestation; the forest around the all season road has burned in a vast area in the last 40 year and what that does is open the forests' to other predators. So with reforestation you can grow back that forest faster than it would natural and provide security cover so they can't seek caribou. Understand that reforestation in this part of Canada is very difficult, short growing season and weather has an impact on the success of reforestation. Careful planning is required to ensure successful reforestation, if that Option is selected.

Felix: The alignment has been set along the highway. We have 21 pits identified and until we know more we can't count on those pits as part of the plan.

There is still a lot of work to be done, and the plan cannot be finalized until we have a clear indication of the total project footprint in relation to the existing linear corridor. The Final Caribou Habitat Offset Plan is due 90 days prior to the public opening of the road.

11. Engagement Plan

Multiple engagement triggers that the Board has directed the GNWT-INF to consult the TASR Corridor Working Group on. Ben will review each point.

- The only air horns we are using are for blasting notification. We haven't had to use for wildlife on site.
- What have been used to get the animals off site when they have come into the area? Caroline can't answer that question

- Use of helicopters use and caribou data, they have to follow GNWT guidelines when it comes to site. More discussion
- NSI is doing a very good job with reports of wildlife incidents and have not had any fatalities on site.
- Installation of traffic counters will be put aside until construction is completed.
- Aimee Guile: Extent of wetlands, how is the construction affecting the area? There are no wetlands at the moment, it is very dry. Please advise if anything comes up.
- Harvest Study Design to be completed in collaboration with the TG as part of harvest monitoring component of the WMMP.
- Tammy wanted to add the Harvest Study Design incorporated into Traditional Knowledge (TK), I went back and looked at the measure and some of that is related to monitoring and gathering information from harvesters along TASR and also making reference from the other communities as well. So right now we have a program and within the program each community works with harvesters to gather information. And a report is done on what's been harvested and where. That is one thing they started 2 years ago and will continue with that and can help with this. Also look at trapping and other types of harvesting. A lot of it is related to TK and we have a lot of TK info in our office. We want to ensure that Tłıcho way of doing things are used respected and always looked at as trying to keep with Tłıcho way of life, new comers and workers in the area. The TK info is what it is referring too. Right now Stephanie is new to our team as Wildlife Biologist we are also looking at getting more staff in that division and hope they will help in gathering info in this area also.
- NSI took into account the TK knowledge and ways; signage at crossings will be considered, traditional trails and routs, all will be identified.
- Alternative technical approaches to be integrated into TK
- Tammy going through the list some of these items we need to go back and see where they are coming from exactly to help figure out what is needed
- Strategies for bison management, Caroline explained that they have not caused a problem so far. They seem to avoid the area where we are working.
- The Blasting protocols are going well and if anything changes we will consult and make a plan.
- Nest pre clearing, NSI is working on a plan for this.
- Weekly updates from Project Co on location and types of construction activities are being reported on a weekly basis at our NSI and GNWT Weekly meetings.
- WMMP does not exclude any wildlife monitoring, again addressed on our weekly reporting and we also advise ENR if there are any wildlife spotted.
- Extend of Wetlands, was specific to Moose Habitat survey to be done.

12. SUMMARY OF MEETING EXPECTATIONS GOING FORWARD

- Any presentations to be shared with the CWGminutes.

13. DISCUSS POSSIBLE DATES FOR NEXT MEETING

Much discussion June 3rd and 17th was proposed. We will go with June 3, 2020 in Whatı.

14. CLOSING REMARKS

Cameron: Overall there was a lot of discussion on the environmental and the success of building the road. The task is now to get things on track and meet our obligations and carry forward with construction. All the updates were very informative. We are very pleased with the work that is done and the work they continue to do. David Moore, Assistant Deputy Minister, will be taking over as chair of the Corridor Working Group and moving forward I will still attend as a participant.

Closing prayer provided by local elder. Meeting adjourned at 2:15PM