

Meeting Minutes

Tłı̨chq̓ All-Season Road Corridor Working Group

December 15th, 2021



Date: 15 December 2021

Time: 9:00am – 12:00 pm Mountain Time

Location: Microsoft Teams and +1 867-675-1042 Conference ID: 888 608 08#

Attendees:

Cameron Wilson (Chair) – INF
Alexandra Sorckoff – DFO
Alicia Kelly – ENR
Anneli Jokela – WLWB
Benjamin Bey – INF
Binay Yadav – INF
Brandon Bradbury – Lands
Clint Ambrose – Lands
Dave Green – NSI
David-Scott McQuinn – ENR?
Devon Stephenson – NSI
Fraser Neave – DFO
James Hodson – ENR
Jessica Smart – NSMA
Janelle Kuntz – TG
Joelle Guedon – INF
Jon Posynick – INF
Kamran Ata – INF

Keenan Rudichuk – AE
Laurie McGregor – ENR
Mark Cronk – INF
Michael Birlea – TG
Naomi Smethurst – PWNHC
Nancy Enn – AE
Paul Vecsei – TG
Randi Jennings – WRRB
Jody Pellissey – WRRB
Ryan Fequet – WLWB
Salah Uddin – INF
Sheyenne Jumbo – INF
Stephanie Behrens – TG
Tammy Steinwand-Deschambeault – TG
Terry Brookes – INF
Yasir Jamal – INF
Ziaur Rahman – INF

Regrets:

Bruno Croft – ENR
Bruno Pigeon – NSI
Curtis Coleman – CGB
Gabriel Lacaille-Bernard – DFO
Ginger Gibson – TG
Glen MacKay – PWNHC
Grace Mackenzie – TG
Jessica Hurtubise – NSMA
Laura Meinert – WRRB
Lisa Nitszia – CGW
Patrick Stancombe – AE
Robert Cornell – NSI
Tyanna Steinwand – TG

1. Opening Prayer

Led by Tammy Steinwand-Deschambeault

2. Welcome and Opening Remarks

- Cameron Wilson, Chair: Welcomed everyone. The Tłı̨chq̓ All-Season Road (TASR) was officially opened on November 30th, 2021. There will be some minor construction will be ongoing for the next year. For these last two years, the highway was in the construction phase, it is now open to the public for its intended purpose, which changes the environment and how we continue to work together. Moving forward, use of the highway will not be as controlled as it was during construction. Outlined within the Terms of Reference (ToR), we have continued our efforts with the Corridor Working Group (CWG) for the next 5 years to monitor the impacts of the highway through operations and ensure our environmental stewardship along with everything else being done does not have adverse impacts on the wildlife or environment. Our commitment is to continue these CWG meetings, twice a year, over the next five years. The Tłı̨chq̓ are very important to this as they use the land traditionally (and have for thousands of years), they know what is happening to the land. It is important that we understand and listen to their concerns that may arise over the coming years. David R. Moore, who previously Chaired these meetings will no longer be doing so as the project construction is completed. Operations, Maintenance and Repair (OM & R) will be chairing these meeting moving forward.

3. Introduction of Participants

- Cameron Wilson: Opened for any new participants to introduce themselves and their positions.
- Mark Cronk, acting ADM: Thanked and congratulated everyone for their hard work, lots of great cooperation throughout the TASR project.

- Devon Stephenson, NSI: Introduced Justin Granjambe who is the site superintendent on the O&M side for NSI.
- Alicia Kelly, ENR: EA Assessment Biologist replacing Ariel Greenbelt, for the TASR.
- Jessica Smart, NSMA: Recently started with NMSA as the Conservation Planner.
- Alexandra Sorckoff, DFO: Not new, filling in for Gabriel Lacaille-Bernard.

4. Review of Agenda

- Quickly reviewed the agenda and meeting timeline.
- Please come on camera when you are speaking or presenting.

5. Matters arising from previous Meeting Minutes, review of action items

Item 1: Continued monitoring of Bison movements:

Benjamin Bey: INF is continuing to review all reports and monitor bison movement. They have been sighted at km 76 and are still moving north. There is no active community engagement as to how this problem should be solved. INF would like to organize an in-person engagement session for next year, to ask for options and work with ENR/NSI to design measures to prevent the bison from moving into the community.

Item 2: Engagement Plan and Traditional Knowledge (TK) being sought:

Benjamin Bey: to date, there is no TK being sought, due to COVID. INF would like to wait and to tie TK into the bison movement and how the community would like to prevent the bison from moving into the community, through an in-person engagement session – if COVID allows – the alternative would be organizing virtual event. Ben's door is open if anyone would like to share some advice or TK, on mitigating the impact of highway, can be sent anytime.

Cameron Wilson: traditionally the bison have never moved that far north, but now that the corridor is open, there is high concern of the bison ending up in the community.

Dave Green: NSI has confirmation that the bison have moved past km 54, with Ben's comment on km 76, this will have to be investigated. A couple of bison had moved northward up to km 54, in 2020, that was the full length of the TASR. In terms of tracking the bison movement and watching the fluid movement northward, the last reports we saw – attributed to movement along corridor – shows that a couple of bison had moved to km 54, in 2020. Observations were made in each work area, the fluid movement northward they furthest.

*Has been confirmed by Dave Green, NSI on Feb. 03, 2022 that the bison have been spotted at km 76.

Tammy Steinwand-Deschambeault: confirming where km 0 starts – is that right at Highway 3? km 76 bison sightings would mean that the bison are 35 km or so from Whati. With the harvest monitors, info should be shared with everyone. Suggestion to set up a system where info can be posted weekly.

Devon Stephenson: There is 21 km more up the alignment and then another 9.0 km to the community limit or 14 km to be right in the community. Taking it into account, that is 21 km plus approximately 14 km.

Cameron Wilson: from a risk and liability standpoint, signs will have to be posted if there are bison in the area. NSI and the project team will look into that. If a lot of bison were seen along the alignment, signs would have to be posted from a risk and liability standpoint.

Devon Stephenson: there are signs indicating where there are bison along the alignment. Data has also been collected, there are already warning signs located appropriately.

Item 3: Final Socio-Economic Report Card and concerns of liability and safety for the Community Government:

Tammy Steinwand-Deschambeault: will be presenting for Ginger, most of TG staff and consultants are on leave – The GNWT and TG have been working closely to prepare the reporting. The project has been hampered by the lack of commitment of funding from ITI as well as capacity. Raw data has been rolled out, meeting within the next year. Data can be shared once funding becomes available and will continue to work forward.

Item 4: Development of pamphlets to notify the public of current on-goings:

Michael Birlea: Paul was working with DFO to create the pamphlet in regard to fisheries management.

Benjamin Bey: the development of the pamphlet is still in progress but is not active, would like to finalize the final fisheries management plan before moving forward. Plan has been shared with the CWG members, reminder to review the plan and submit any comments/concerns back to INF.

Salah Uddin: Many factors involved with Bison Signage. We, i.e., ENR, TG and INF through coordination, need to keep in mind that wildlife monitoring is more than just bison.

Cameron Wilson: as part of the construction contract, wildlife signage has been and continues to be meaningfully installed. As our obligation, the public must be informed that they may encounter wildlife on the TASR.

Ryan Fequet, in chat: RE: Engagement Plan and Traditional Knowledge for Ben: is the movement of Bison the only topic that INF wants and/or is required to seek TK and/or conduct engagement on?

Benjamin Bey: Bison are not the only concern, we continue to use TK for a variety of topics, not just the movement of bison. TK was sought prior to construction and was incorporated into the design. We are open to receiving input/advice on any topic at any given time.

Item 5: Traffic counters sub-project:

Terry Brooks: we have been working with ENR, three counters were planned to be installed. Due to COVID only one unit was installed at unnamed bridge – now Boreal Caribou Creek – it is in place and is operating, reports should be coming from these. Next spring three more units will be installed if the weather and ground conditions permit.

Ryan Fequet, in chat: RE: Monthly reports – Where are the monthly reports available?

Terry Brooks: Monthly traffic reports are apart of maintenance projections, will verify and get back to everyone.

Devon Stephenson: Woodland Caribou Creek is where the one traffic counter is installed. It has been up and running since November 30, 2021, and data from these will be included in the monthly report that gets submitted to Cam's Group (Regional Project Manager – Troy, and Project Manager – Ceasar).

Tammy Steinwand-Deschambeault: TG is still finalizing our emergency services. If there is anything that needs to be addressed right away, a monthly report is a long wait time to have those reports – Enforcement along the road?

Terry Brooks: traffic counters are only counting the number of vehicles passing by; it includes no indication of speed or direction of the vehicle. These units are not to address safety concerns.

Cameron Wilson: the highway is now open and forms part of the Public Highways Act – Highway 9. It is now under operations and maintenance (O&M) – NSI has O&M contract, therefore there is always a presence along the highway. NSI is aware of the triggers if there is a MVA – motor vehicle accident, fatal accident or anything along those lines, NSI will inform the RCMP and provide support: close lanes or close the highway. GNWT's forces in Edzo will be travelling the highway informing Cam's project team of anything they may see. It is a compliance and licencing

issue, NSI has been in conversation with the RCMP in regard to reporting.

Tammy Steinwand-Deschambeault: Data to be included in monthly reports - Along Highway 3, regarding past accidents and fatalities, post-meetings and discussions were around prevention. It was shared that there is very little enforcement presence from highway patrol. TG is keen on prevention, with emergency services not sorted out, it brings worry.

Cameron Wilson: understood, it is a something that the governments – TG and GNWT – are continuing to work on, the challenges with this topic are for another forum.

Devon Stephenson: have been in communication with the RCMP, there is a reporting process. The monthly report will include accidents incidents, but mainly the quantity of vehicles using the alignment. Within 24 hours of an accident a formal report will be sent and 2 hours with a fatality.

Cameron Wilson: reminder to take pictures, for reporting regarding risk management insurance. Documentation is important. Bring people back onto the agenda.

6. General overview of the Tłıchǵ Government Highway and construction/operation updates

Devon Stephenson and Justin Grandjambe (NSI), presentation on O&M operations. Project has been very successful; it was a great achievement for all groups involved. Saw lots of happy faces.

Questions:

Tammy Steinwand-Deschambeault: schedule for the winter maintenance staff – How does this coincide with Cameron's staff schedule?

Devon Stephenson: crews driving from the north end (Whatì) start around 7am to complete and submit road reporting by 9am, for the crew from Behchokò to drive in. 7am – 4pm is the general time for works on the project. One person from either community will be on call. On the weekends, road reporting will continue as well as any maintenance required – snow removal – same schedule 7am – 4pm.

Cameron Wilson: During the winter hours two crews that run through the night – to reponed to any snow events – as travel public could be travelling at any given time. October 24th is when we switched to winter hours.

Justin Grandjambe: current working schedule is a 40-hour work week because this is still such a new project, we want all hands-on deck with a 5-day work week. Moving forward, we may move towards a 7-day on 7-day off schedule.

Cameron Wilson: within the contract – there is a note suggesting that there is a certain amount of time required to respond to a snowstorm/event. Highlighting that there are performance conditions within the contract, the project team staff oversees this. There is a commitment to respond to these types of events in real time.

Dave Green, NSI: summary presentation – end results of the project.

7. Regulatory Compliance: Updates, Expectations, Concerns, and Recommendations

Tłıchǵ Government, Tammy Steinwand-Deschambeault:

Wildlife – the Tłıchǵ Wildlife Monitors started December 1, they monitor harvesters, wildlife, and habitat. There are 3 crews with 2 monitors each, working schedule is 9-5 – including weekends, on a one-week on two-week off schedule. The recent meeting was on November 24 and 25, to discuss what has been completed to date identifying Tłıchǵ future plans, the process of requesting more funding for the program from ENR, and the need to submit an application to build a cabin for the monitors along the route.

Emergency response planning – the fire chief and MACA continue to work with the WCG and BCG on emergency response. In the past week the SAO of Fort Providence met with the SAOs from Whatì and Behchokò to describe their approach to local community-based response planning. The SAOs in both communities are now preparing job descriptions and equipment needs for fire chiefs to bring to councils for

approvals. MACA continues to support, the next meeting is in the third week of January. SAOs in both communities are focused on in-community response and not on the TASR road response. The team did receive a cost for a proposal to respond and provide services from Mr. Peter Siemens, however both SAOs only have the capacity to focus on community boundary response, not highway response. Looking at Measure 5.6 – development and implement in collaboration with local governments – the GNWT will develop and implementation of an effective ground ambulance and highway rescue action plan along the road that will be designed in collaboration with the TG, Tłıchǫ Service Agency CGB and CGW. We bring this forward again as a big concern, something needs to be put in place.

Signage – after verification with Tłıchǫ transcribers, have decided to set the signs up but in a way for them to be installed more permanently after the spring.

Community Government of Whatì:

SAO had sent her regrets due to duty travel.

Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board, Jodi and Randi:

Continuing to review the weekly environmental reports. In September, reviewed and approved the Caribou offset plan. The December board meeting approved a wildlife research permit for monitoring along the road, the interim boreal range plan and version 5.1 of the WWMP.

Wek'èezhì Land and Water Board, Ryan Fequet:

No update from the WLWB at this time.

Fisheries and Ocean Canada, Alexandra Sorckoff:

The DFO team did make it on site earlier this summer to review the culvert installed for the fish issue. No other update

Environment and Climate Change Canada:

No representative.

Department of Lands, Clint Ambrose:

To give a summary as inspectors under the land use permit: 46 inspections were completed over the last 2 years. No compliance issues, very great contractor, and sub-contractors – best project Lands has been a part of regarding compliance. There were minimal spills, any spills were relatively minor in nature and addressed immediately. Any concerns or unacceptable items were easily addressed. There were 14 incidents out of the 46 inspections that took place. These incidents were mainly drip tray issues, minor fuel spills, clean up, and camp waste management. Very pleased with the compliance of the contractor and sub-contractor.

Moving forward: the majority of quarries have been restored and were designed with restoration in mind. Majority of quarries along the route have been restored and reclaimed to satisfaction of the inspector, meeting obligations of the permit and applicable legislation. With construction complete and the road being new, lands will conduct a spring freshet inspection to ensure the ESC plans and measures are functioning in place as designed. With the NSI crew using the road on a consistent basis, they will be the eyes and ears to ensure things have been installed and are functioning correctly for this project – gives us reassurance that things will be done correctly. The main camp at km 19 + 800 has been demobilized, there are fuel stored there and a couple shops. Routine inspections will take place here when we are in the area for any other inspections or activities. If a quarry does recommence during the offset plan – now that it is approved – if there is any use of equipment or anything required to meet the needs of the offset plan, please keep Lands involved. NSI is aware that they have to communicate with us under the permit.

Environment and Natural Resources, James Hodson:

ENR is reviewing the weekly reporting as they are useful to ensure compliance with the WEMP. No major issues identified during the construction phase. There was one inspection conducted during the summer by a Renewable Resource Officer, no issues identified. Other updates include the submission of the Interim Wek'èezhì Range Plan that underwent public review, it has recently been approved by the WRRB. A report on the sustainable harvesting of boreal caribou was also released in September to assist in meeting the requirements of Measure 6.2; ENR has been meeting with the TG and NSMA to discuss the findings of the report. A meeting with the YKDFN was supposed to take place but was postponed until January.

8. BREAK

Break at 10:20. Resumed at 10:30.

9. Management and Monitoring Plans: Updates, Implementation, Outcomes, Constraints, Concerns, and Recommendations

Wildlife Management and Monitoring Plan:

ENR, James Hodson – presentation slides.

Cameron Wilson: the next four plans were covered by NSI – Dave Green – in item six during presentation, no objections to continue onto the next plans – Quarry Operations and Permafrost.

Water Monitoring Plan:

Waste Management Plan:

Fish and Fish Habitat Protection Plan:

Erosion and Sediment Control Plan:

Quarry Operations Plan and Permafrost Plan:

INF, Terry Brooks: not too much to add to what Clint Ambrose had to say regarding the quarry operations.

All quarries are officially closed with some requiring maintenance. As noted, some of the piles are on-going and will be for the next five years, there could also be some excavation of those sites and will be addressed when needed.

Issues relating to permafrost – the measuring of permafrost was put on hold until after construction was completed. Terry's team will have to go out and check the thermistor cables, in April-May 2022 to address the pictures that were sent in September 2021; there were cables above ground. Every thermistor will have to be checked and repaired as needed. The start of official thermistor readings will start next year – there will be two readings; one when the ground is at its warmest (April/May) and the other when the ground is at its coldest (February/March). We will be producing reports, graphs and charts as needed, as well as comparisons and the sharing of all information produced. There is a lot of interest for this information from the NWT Geological Survey because of the project area being in a sporadic permafrost section.

Questions:

David-Scott McQuinn: are the thermistor readings one-time readings?

Terry Brooks: They are one-time readings; continuous readings would have been ideal. Next time there will be downloadable thermistor readers.

Final Caribou Offset Plan:

INF, Benjamin Bey: worked on the plan for 2 years, led by Associated Engineering, Keenan Rudichuk.

Requirements for this measure have been met, the draft plan has been developed as well as the final plan. The plan was developed in collaboration with ENR. Moving forward, the plan will now need to be implemented, therefore requiring an implementation plan. There was no allocated budget for this phase, we are working to secure funding to continue with the next two phases this plan.

Questions:

Salah Uddin: Is there any rational factor on what Zone of Influence will differ for two cases (1) During Construction and (2) Post Construction phases so that the final Offsetting area (post-construction) can be benefited by having lesser value than presented in the report.

Keenan Rudichuk: It is not just the construction impact effect but the linear movement of Caribou also. I will look into that question to see if there are any options or possibilities, we will follow up.

Fisheries Management Plan:

TG, Paul Vecsei: The Lac La Martre FMP was submitted to the CWG for TASR, it is there for all to review and comment, no later than Dec. 22nd. Led by TG and DFO – in terms of authorship. History of the work on the FMP – working group was established in 2019, in 2020 work began with the goal of completion by 2021. We have also been working to have signage in place, meeting all measures of public outreach. Other outcomes of the work include the angler diary to monitor recreational activity. An important component of this includes the drop off and pick up box approach, this will allow for the collection and assessment of fisheries data. Another important outcome is the proposed variation order – down to zero – for inconnu near the Lac la Martre River below near the falls, this zone is where migratory fish, coming from afar, move to so they can spawn. The species use this area, any disturbance here can be of great dangers and impact the biomass of fish.

Annal Reports and Reviews:

INF, Benjamin Bey: We are in the process of the second annual WWMP review, version 5.1 was recently approved by the WRRB. The final 5.2 version will be submitted to ENR and the WLWB by late-January. The annual EA report was also submitted to the MVEIRB, the next annual WL report will be done prior to the end of March 2022.

10. Engagement Plan

Harvest Monitoring Study Design – EA Measure:

Janelle Kuntz, TG Consultant –

- Present day: monitoring program was developed in response to several measures and continues to be a work in progress since July 2020. A working committee was developed and is comprised of local elders and knowledge holders. Together, TG and the committee created ToR and a monitoring work plan in anticipation of the road opening. Work completed and outcomes to date include: 3 committee meetings – virtual and semi-virtual, held focus groups to establish baseline conditions for various areas of interest along the highway, a track survey was also completed to understand baseline conditions over the winter months. This summer, prior to the road opening, a vegetation survey was completed to better understand vegetation in relation to proximity to the road. There are now 6 Tłıchq trained – through Blyth and Bathe – monitors who are now doing highway monitoring and checks, reporting any sightings of animals, and are communicating with harvesters on the land. There is also a voluntary harvester program in place, this was created through collaboration with the local community members to voluntarily report harvesting in and around TASR as well as within the communities.
- Moving into 2022: TG will continue to work with ENR to discuss ongoing monitoring now that the road is in operation. We are also hoping to do a dust collection study to see if there are any impacts to vegetation, repeat monitoring from the previous year now that there is baseline data collection, and are looking to set up wildlife cameras along the road.

Questions:

Benjamin Bey: dust collection study – what would the study inform us of?

Janelle Kuntz: it was brought as a concern by the traditional knowledge holders and elders one of the key concerns, is the amount of dust coming from the road affecting the vegetation along the road – will vegetation be impacted in a way that would further affect the wildlife in the area, overall reducing the opportunity to harvest animals such as moose and caribou or adversely impacting their habitat. To what extent is dust impacting the moose and caribou in the area – this is a study we are hoping to do in the next year.

Benjamin Bey: INF would be interested in viewing the data, as would ENR.

11. Summary of meeting expectations and moving forward

Summary:

- Although minor construction will be continuing for the next year, the project is now in the operational phase. A lot of the items that were of environmental concern during the construction phase will be moving towards the impact of the actual highway having on the environment and wildlife.
- Moving into the highway being fully functional, we are not able to control movement along the highway as we did when it was in the construction phase.

Action items moving forward:

- Continued monitoring of Bison movements
- Traditional Knowledge being sought from the Tłıchq
- Traffic counters and permafrost monitoring
- Establishing Emergency Services/Emergency Response – more wholesome approaches.

12. Discuss possible dates for next meeting

Cameron Wilson: next tentative meeting date: June 14, 2022 or earlier on June 7, 2022.

- Meeting tentatively set to Tuesday, June 7, 2022, but will coordinate with Liza – CGW.

Benjamin Bey: when aiming for an in-person meeting we will have to communicate with the Community Government for Whatì to see what works best with them, in the event we are able to travel.

Tammy Steinwand-Deschambeault: reminder that in the terms of reference, one meeting is to be in Whatì. Recommendation to plan for that and connect with Lisa for the summer meeting to take place there.

13. Closing Remarks

Cameron Wilson: thanked everyone for attending the meeting, sharing information and perspectives. Hopefully the next meeting can be in person in Whatì.

Tammy Steinwand-Deschambeault: Harvest Monitoring Reports – there has been a lot of requests of the sharing of this information. TG will meet with the rest of team to discuss the timing of the reporting and will be shared with parties interested. Mahsi cho to everyone for participating in the meeting. With the road being open, Chief Daniels shared during the council meeting that you can feel the excitement for Christmas with the road now being open. A lot of great things have been happening, with the road only being open a couple of weeks.

14. Closing Prayers

Meeting Adjourned: 11:30 am MT

Legend:

AE - Associated Engineering / Associated Environmental
CANNOR - Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency
CGB - Community Government of Behchokò
CGW – Community Government of Whatì
DFO - Department of Fisheries and Oceans
EA – Environmental Assessment
ECCC - Environment and Climate Change Canada
ECE - GNWT Dept of Education, Culture and Employment
ENR - GNWT Dept of Environment and Natural Resources
FIN - GNWT Dept of Finance
INF - GNWT Dept of Infrastructure
Lands - GNWT Department of Lands
MACA – Municipal and Community Affairs
NSI - North Star Infrastructure
NSMA - North Slave Métis Alliance
PWNHC – Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre
TG – Tłıchq Government
WLWB - Wek'èezhì Land and Water Board
WMMP – Wildlife Management and Monitoring Plan
WRRB - Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board
WSCC – Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission
YKDFN - Yellowknives Dene First Nation