



Meeting Minutes

TŁJCHQ HIGHWAY CORRIDOR WORKING GROUP

December 7th, 2022

Date: 07 December 2022

Time: 11:00am – 3:15 pm Mountain Time

Location: Explorer Hotel & Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

Alicia Kelly – ENR
Benjamin Bey – INF
Cameron Wilson – INF (Chair)
Chris Tourangeau – ENR
Chuck Hubert – MVEIRB
Clementine Bouche – MVEIRB
Clint Ambrose – LANDS
Daniel Drimes – INF
Dana Harris – DFO
Ziaur Rahman – INF
Dave Green – NSI
Devon Stephenson – NSI
Garry Snyder – INF
Grace Mackenzie – TG
Janelle Kuntz – TG
Joelle Guedon – INF
Karine Gignac – Lands

Laura Meinert – WRRB
Lisa Nitsiza – CGW
Lisa Worthington – ENR
Michael Birlea – TG
Paul Gauthier – TG
Paul Vecesi – TG
Rafael Castro – NSI
Ryan Fequet – WLWB
Sally Wong – DFO
Sheyenne Jumbo – INF
Simon Toogood – MVEIRB
Tammy Steinwand-Deschambeault – TG
Tatiana Leclerc – DFO
Terry Brookes – INF
Yasir Jamal – INF
Ziaur Rahman – INF

Regrets:

Binay Yadav – INF
Bruno Pigeon – NSI
Gary Brennan – INF
Jessica Hurtubise – NSMA
Jody Small – ECCC
Morgan Moffit – HSS

1. Opening Prayer

Led by Tammy Steinwand-Deschambeault.

2. Welcome and Opening Remarks

- Welcome and greetings from chair, Cameron Wilson (INF), Regional Superintendent for the North Slave.
- Revisions to the Terms of Reference (ToR) have been sent out, 5.1 and 5.3 reference 14.3, draft ToR have been sent out and still be discussed when item 8. Apologize on behalf of the GNWT for excluding the social issues.
- Housekeeping items: ringers off, review of emergency exits and muster point, washrooms are down the hall. Reminder that the meeting is being recorded for minute taking.

3. Introduction of Participants

4. Review of Agenda

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

- Continue to monitor bison movement toward Whatì

- Ben, INF: TG is incorporating monitoring of bison movement in their monitoring programs. Monitoring is ongoing.
- TG to start a bison monitoring program
 - TG will update later.
- TG: Development of a TASR Engagement Plan for the Tł̓chq Highway Monitoring Program (HMP) with Elders and Harvesters
 - TG will update later.
- INF: TASR first responders as an Essential Plan
 - MACA is working with the community, MACA is not here, will defer this to another time. INF will find someone to get an update and update the group later.
- New signage process for roads goes through NSI
 - Ziaur, INF: if additional signage was to be put up, an application has to be completed and submitted to Design and Technical Services (DTS), Transportation, and it will be passed to NSI for review.
 - Cam, INF: any signs within the right-of-way (ROW) need to be reviewed. There is a robust application process for public and highway safety reasons.
- INF: warning of bison/caribou in area; Bison Control construction sign when leaving Whatì, same as a km 0.
 - Alicia, ENR: what is meant by bison control?
 - Ben, INF: Bison might stray to the community and become an issue for the residents. We are monitoring how far they go and work with the community and ENR to limit how far they can go. The right word is not ‘control’ but prevent them from endangering/entering the community. It is more of a safety issue.
 - Alicia, ENR: if signs are going to be installed, they will have to be approved by ENR.
 - Laura, WRRB: in regard to bison control, if the GNWT were to try to control the bison, it would have to come to the WRRB as a management action/plan for approval. “Control” may not be the right wording here.
 - Ben: community engagement would happen if the GNWT were to come up with a bison management plan. The farthest bison are being seen is km 76, there is no concern regarding them yet.
 - Laura: is the community of Whatì coming today?
 - Ben: yes, they will pop into the meeting later on as they are in a different meeting next door.
 - Cam: the community was concerned about the bison coming into the community; if they were getting close then a plan would be discussed and would be brought to the WRRB.
- TG: Asked for signage to be posted about who is allowed to harvest trees and fish to prevent altercation.
 - Cam: Asked Lands to comment.
 - Clint, Lands: some signs are arriving on Friday, will work with Gary and the contractor to determine where they need to be along the highway.
 - Gary, INF: they have been submitted to Construction and Design, once that review has been done, INF will work with the with NSI on putting them up.

6. Lunch Break

7. General overview of the Tł̓chq Government Highway: updates on construction activities and schedule

- Devon, NSI: provided operational updates through a PowerPoint presentation.
- Cam, INF: comment on the vegetation growing within ROW and if NSI has a migratory bird protocol in place.

- Devon, NSI: confirmed there is no actual vegetation in the ROW but in the ditch lines, the small growth helps with the erosion and sediment control.
- Cam, INF: reminder that the GNWT has a Migratory Bird Protocol in place.

8. Updated Terms of Reference

- Cam, INF: the Terms of Reference (ToR) as amended include the socio-economic factors as they pertain to the environmental, this would be up to the Department of Health and Social Services (HSS). As INF was not meeting this commitment, it is recommended that HSS is invited to all meetings moving forward and report their findings or on whatever matter they have.
- Ben, INF: To give background on why the ToR have been updated: recap of the concerns raised during the last working group meeting, so we have updated the ToR to include socio-economic discussions. The original ToR describes the commitment to model the CWG after the ITH CWG, which was specific to environmental issues. With the Tłıchq Highway, a different WG was determined to handle the social issues, handled by HSS. This is the reason social issues had been previously excluded from this group. HSS will be invited and will have a time slot moving forward. ToR have also been updated to reimburse travel expenses from those traveling from outside communities. Other suggestions from the WLWB and WRRB have not been reflected in the ToR yet, would like to have a separate meeting to discuss. The suggestion to release meeting minutes within seven days after the meeting would be difficult to do as INF does not have the manpower/dedicated staff to do so.
 - Ryan, WLWB: seven days is a typical best practice, if INF would like to suggest another number, we would be happy to discuss.
 - Ben, INF: ToR say two months after the meeting takes place; if that is too long, we can shorten it down to one month.
- Laura, WRRB: reviewing the ToR. Were any Elders invited today?
 - Ben, INF: TG previously identified the Elders to come to these meetings.
 - Cam, INF: the intent is that TG and CGW would bring the Elders, it would not be appropriate for the GNWT to choose Elders to be invited.
- Cam, INF: reminder that the agenda is sent out in advance of meetings and people are asked to provide input, so the CWG is not walking into topics last minute.
- Janelle, TG: comments from Tammy: there is a strong desire to have these meetings in Whatì or Behchokò to increase Elder participation, it would make it easier for Elders to attend and to open the meetings to the public to encourage more community participation. The culture could also be incorporated by including opening prayers by local Elders and drumming.
 - Ben, INF: reviewing the ToR, it states that one of the meetings should be held in Whatì. It was unclear as to where the other meeting should take place. But INF is open to having the meeting alternate between Whatì and Behchokò
 - Janelle: TG is also open to co-chairing and help planning for these meetings.
- Janelle, TG: There is also a request to update the name of the CWG, would like to update the name in the ToR to “Tłıchq Highway” or “Highway 9”.
 - Ben, INF: There are no issues with that.
- Janelle, TG: Roles and responsibilities: can presentations be shared one week in advanced to review materials? Can the ToR be reviewed bi-annually? Can the SAOs from both Whatì and Behchokò be invited, there is a new SAO in Behchokò; we can share his contact info.
 - Ben, INF: Comments and will be taken into consideration.
- Ryan: what are the next steps for the ToR? Will discussions happen outside of this forum to review all of the suggestions that have been made and not yet incorporated into the ToR? Or is now the time to discuss them?
 - Cam, INF: All suggestions mentioned today are being recorded and will be incorporated as soon as we can. They will eventually be reflected in the ToR and shared in advanced of the next meeting.

9. Updates, Expectations, Concerns, and Recommendations

Tłıchq Government

- Janelle: provided an update through a PowerPoint presentation.
 - Ben, INF: question on caribou range planning being underway - is TG working with ENR on that?
 - Lisa, ENR: a working group meeting took place last week and TG was a part of it.

Community Government of Whatì

- Lisa, CGW: it has been one year since the road opened, there have been good and bad impacts. Positive aspects include shopping for the household is no longer done last minute to bring on the winter road, lots of youth have been attending more recreational activities, youth got to attend the Arctic Winter Games tryouts, more sightseeing, have seen lots of wildlife along the Highway. Lots of community members are happy with the year-round road. The CGW is getting ready for tourism, take a look at the CGW social media page where events are posted. Lots of tourism activities are coming up, starting to prepare a day-use area, and are planning for festivals and sporting tournaments. There are many ATV and walking trails in place. The community is also working to have chip-seal done before the next election in 2025 and will be a dust-free community.
- Lisa, CGW: the negative aspects of the road include more alcohol and substance use as there is an easier access to it. There has also been an increase in the number RCMP calls is a concern from the public and council. There is a fire chief in the community on a 2-year contract but there is a concern of where emergency response fits into this. Alcohol use is the biggest concern right now.

Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board

- Laura, WRRB: quick update, we are part of the Boreal Range Plan Caribou Working Group, Mackenzie Wood Bison Working Group and are working on approvals on just fisheries and wildlife in general.

Wek'èezhì Land and Water Board

- Ryan, WLWB: the Tłıchq Highway (TH) has various authorizations; we have inspectors in the room who are the eyes and ears on the ground. All inspection reports are available on the website. The current permits and licence expire around 2026, there will need to be discussions prior to that date to ensure INF has the permits they need.

Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board

- Chuck, MVEIRB: thanked GNWT for revising the ToR. It is appreciated that the group has been broadened to reflect the intent of the measures. The Review Board pays attention to the results of these meetings to know the measures are being implemented and their effectiveness. It may be too early to determine the effectiveness but, in the future, we look forward to seeing what works and what can be improved.

Fisheries and Ocean Canada

- Tatiana, DFO: not many updates since the last meeting. Will be chatting about the FMP with TG later in the agenda.

Department of Lands

- Clint, Lands: Not too much going on now that construction is done. The km 19 maintenance shop and km 0 camp still in place and under the Land Use Permit (LUP). On the north side of the La Martre River, a minor amount of restoration was completed due to requirements LUP. Keeping an eye on monitoring for spills. Quarry management operations have been great, kudos to NSI.

Environment and Natural Resources

- Chris, ENR: 123 timber cutting permits have been issued, 59 more wood cutting permits. 15 of them are from kms 8-12.

10. Break

11. Management and Monitoring Plans

Wildlife Monitoring and Management Plan

- Alicia, ENR: the WWMP is being implemented by NSI, INF and ENR. ENR has a lead role in monitoring the impacts of the project on wildlife at a regional scale. GNWT committed to monitoring impacts for at least five years after the road opens to the public; we are now in year one. Intent of the plan is to show how impacts to wildlife and wildlife habitat from construction and operation of the road will be managed and monitored and ensure that the results of monitoring are reported. Species that are being monitored by ENR near the TH area include Boreal Caribou, Moose, Bison, Wolves, and Black Bear, brief updates on each were provided. ENR's monitoring programs are focused on Boreal Caribou, Moose, Bison and Barren-ground Caribou; Barren-ground caribou have not been observed near the area of the Highway in several years, but if they return to this area then more intensive monitoring such as patrols along the road will be triggered. GNWT is also required by EA Measure 6-1, Part 2 to monitor abundance, movements, and predation rates by predators. ENR is working with INF on the Construction Phase Comprehensive Report; it is on track to be completed March 2023. Some of the CWG members can expect to be contacted by the Contractor to provide information required for the report, they are working to determine the impact of construction on the wildlife. Brief updates on species monitoring were also provided.
 - Janelle, TG: question on the distressing of the trapped bear that occurred this summer. The bear was trapped, and the monitors were not able to respond or release the bear; the bear died of dehydration. A letter was sent by the TG, has there been any progress or response on this?
 - Alicia, ENR: bear mortalities in traps are extremely uncommon. As a result of this mortality a number of changes were implemented: the checking time is now twice a day in-person, and we are working to decrease the response time. Prioritizing a fast response time and to have a wildlife officer release the bear rather than the bear remaining in the trap until ENR arrives are also changes being made.

Caribou Habitat Offsetting Plan

- Ben, INF: to satisfy Measure 6-3, the final plan was approved by the WRRB. Next steps are to develop an implementation plan and then to implement the plan. There are no budget allocations for these next two phase. FMB gave a positive response; within the next two years we will be focusing on the implementation of the Final Plan. Will be working with the community to identify areas to offset; this is a long-term project: 5-10 years to develop and implement the plan. Ben also provided an update on INF's wildlife cameras through a PowerPoint presentation.

Waste Management & Erosion and Sediment Control

- NSI provided an update through a PowerPoint presentation.
 - Alicia Kelly, ENR: question on the mentioned bear incident, was it a vehicle collision?
 - Dave, NSI: confirmed it was a vehicle collision.

Quarry & Permafrost Plans

- Terry, INF: not much to add as major construction is complete. Compliments to NSI on operations. Bad news on the Permafrost Plan. There were 20 boreholes for thermistors: 14 were not found, three were found damaged, three may still be operational. We now have less ability to monitor the permafrost. Of the 20 or so thermistors that were in, the coldest was maybe -1 to 1.5 degrees Celsius, this is an area of very sporadic permafrost. There is warm permafrost now that the ESC is done so permafrost will probably be gone in seven years or so. With the permafrost and insulation barriers gone - a question for the technical team: would it be valuable to reinstall those thermistors? If so, a new drilling program will be required, maybe in three to five years due to the stripped vegetation.
- Chuck, MVEIRB: What would the value of this information be to the Mackenzie Valley Highway?

How would you recommend greater survivability next time?

- Clint, Lands: we could offset from centre of alignment.
- Terry, INF: Not sure about greater survivability. We have the locations in the plans but not sure if the importance was relayed to the contractors. The conceptual idea at the beginning of the project does not always work out once things get changed, like alignments. When the thermistors were initially put in, the design was tentative.
- Terry, INF: INF is also working on switching the Quarry Permit for Pit # 105 from NSI to INF.

Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) by DFO & TG

- Paul, TG: recap that the FMP has been completed. As the next step, various public outreach documents were created, which included an angler's form and information pamphlet to give people an idea of the angling in the area. The falls are also being developed to become a proper tourist site. As a protective measure, a sign was developed to put up near the La Martre River as it was identified as a sensitive location.
- All of the outreach steps have been completed. A small working group is meeting with DFO to sort out the last bit of changes. With the change in staffing there are a few things left to sort out, the next meeting will be the final stage. The next meeting update on this will tell how many pamphlets have been printed and what signage has been put up.

DFO Update

- Dana, DFO: Working with DOF monitoring team to roll out the monitoring plan on the culverts and crossings along the TH. It is a survey the monitors will fill out, looking to collaborate with TG. Hoping to roll it out for the next freshet and meeting with TG in the new year.
 - Laura, WRRB: monitoring plan done by DFO will have to come to the WRRB for review.
 - Gary, INF: any new works along the highway, please touch base with the North Slave Construction Manager so we can notify NSI.

Annual Reports and Review

- Ben, INF: Annual EA Report has been submitted. ENR and INF will be working on the comprehensive report for the WMMP; it may also include the annual review for the WMMP.

12. Social, Health and Well-being impacts

- Cam, INF: no representative from HSS. HSS has sent their regrets. However, TG updated the group on behalf of HSS as TG and HSS are working collaboratively on the social issues
- Janelle, TG: no additional comments on this topic at this time.

13. Engagement Plan

- Ben, INF: opened the floor for discussion, reminder to the group that INF is seeking input on TK and noted the [CBC news article](#) that talks about the benefits of the TH from a local perspective. Would also like to bring up lessons learned from the CWG perspective as another project, how can we improve on the environmental components, would like to hear from the group.
- Devon, NSI: it has come to NSI's attention that there are many activities occurring on the Highway that NSI is unaware of. Please notify NSI if you or your groups are going to be conducting work along the highway, or within the ROW, and keep the lines of communication open. If NSI comes across of something (i.e., an empty vehicle and people are in the bush doing monitoring) we will have to act accordingly, coming from a safety point of view, giving us more information to keep people safe and accounted for is important. Would just like more information on what everyone is doing out there.

14. Summary of Meeting Expectations and Moving Forward

- Cam, INF: INF will go back and review the ToR to get it out to the CWG. None of the suggestions brought up during this meeting are difficult to implement. INF will take these items from the ToR and agenda to review and will work to streamline it in some way.
- Cam, INF: What we have seen today is that we are able to come together and work together and refine the ToR and possibly the agenda; these are things we keep coming to. Cam will work with Ben and his team to make sure we don't come back to topics that have already been covered. My wish is not to condense it, but that discussion stays on topic in a meaningful way.
- Allicia, ENR: suggestion to include off-road access as a topic at the next meeting. With the road being narrow and people pulling off the road harvesting, are there thoughts of adding more pull-outs for people to access the road cutting locations? Construction is also gearing up to improve the community access road. Does it fall under the same regulations? Or is it an INF project that does not require regulation?
 - Ziaur, INF: there is a plan to improve the access road. The 12-kilometre road is not a part of this P3 project. INF is working with the Tl̥ch̥q Investment Corporation and has a separate LUP, WL and QP. It will not have a CWG meeting such as this, but updates can be provided if the CWG wishes. To address the pull-out concern: there are two pull-outs that have been designed up to standards and TAC guidelines. We cannot build additional pull-outs
 - Cam, INF: there is no commitment to provide something at this time, we are looking at it and keeping it in mind. We understand the challenges but currently do not have a solution.
 - Gary, INF: there have been discussions regarding this issue, once the scope is better understood and a better idea of the locations, a meeting with ENR will take place to determine a long-term solution.
 - Cam, INF: apologies that we do not have a fulsome answer at this time.

15. Discuss Possible Dates for Next Meeting

- Cam, INF: Next meeting date tentatively set for June 14th, 2023, in Whatì and the following winter one in Behchok̥. Will get the meeting minutes out as soon as we can and respond to the ToR suggestions.

16. Closing Remarks

- Cam, INF: thanked everyone for coming out. With the respectfulness shown today, we are moving in the right direction. Look forward to seeing everybody at the next meeting.

17. Closing Prayers

One minute of silence.

Meeting Adjourned: 3:15 pm MT

Legend:

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
ITI – Industry, Tourism and Investment
Lands – GNWT Department of Lands
NSI - North Star Infrastructure
NSMA – North Slave Métis Alliance
MVEIRB – Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board
TH – Tłıchǵ Highway
TG – Tłıchǵ Government
WLWB – Wek’èezhìi Land and Water Board
WMMP – Wildlife Management and Monitoring Plan
WRRB – Wek’èezhìi Renewable Resources Board
WSCC – Workers’ Safety and Compensation Commission
YKDFN – Yellowknives Dene First Nation