

Meeting Minutes

TŁJCHQ ALL-SEASON ROAD CORRIDOR WORKING GROUP

June 16th, 2021



Date: 16 June 2021

Time: 9:00am – 12:00 pm Mountain Time

Location: Microsoft Teams and +1 867-675-1042 Conference ID: 515 456 994#

Attendees:

David Moore (Chair) – INF
Mark Cronk – INF
Alicia Kelly – ENR
Benjamin Bey – INF
Binay Yadav – INF
Bruno Pigeon – NSI
Dave Green – NSI
Devon Stephenson – NSI
Fraser Neave – DFO
Gabriel Lacaille-Bernard – DFO
Ginger Gibson – TG
Grace Mackenzie – TG
Clint Ambrose – Lands
Brandon Bradbury – Lands
James Hodson – ENR
James William – NSI
Jessica Hurtubise – NSMA
Jessica Smart – NSMA
Joelle Guedon – INF
Jon Posynick – INF

Kaitlyn Baker – CANNOR
Kamran Ata – INF
Keenan Rudichuk – AE
Laura Meinert – WRRB
Laurie McGregor – ENR
Paul Vecsei – TG
Randi and Jody – WRRB
Ryan Fequet – WLWB
Razvan Birlea – TG
Salah Uddin – INF
Sheyenne Jumbo – INF
Stephanie Behrens – TG
Tammy Steinwand-Deschambeault – TG
Terry Brookes – INF
Tyanna Steinwand – TG
Yasir Jamal – INF
Ziaur Rahman – INF

Regrets:

Cameron Wilson – INF
Adrian Paradis – CANNOR
Glen MacKay – ECE
Johanne Black – YKDFN
Louisa Wedzin – CGB
Machel Thomas – YKDFN
Naomi Smethurst – ECE
Nancy Enn – AE
Robert Cornell – NSI
Zabey Nevitt – TG
Community Government of
Whatì
ECCC

1. Opening Prayer

Led by Tammy Steinwand-Deschambault

2. Welcome and Opening Remarks

Tammy Steinwand-Deschambault: Challenging months due to COVID-19 but there has been ongoing commitment to the project, the environment, and the safety of workers. Thanks to the GNWT for protective steps to keep COVID-19 out of our small communities. People from Whatì are looking forward to TASR releasing access to the rest of the territorial highway system, outside communities are also looking forward to visiting Whatì.

* Ginger – is on emergency calls, if there are any questions please leave them for a later point. Will be in and out of today's meeting.

3. Introduction of Participants

- Welcome and greetings from chair, David R. Moore (INF), Infrastructure Assistant Deputy Minister.
- Housekeeping items: keep cameras off and mics on mute when you are not presenting. A good suggestion from Terry Brooks – bandwidth is usually a challenge with teams/online meetings, keep videos off unless you are presenting.

4. Review of Agenda

- This meeting is for information sharing and to satisfy EA Measure 14-3. This provides a good opportunity to give updates, regulatory requirements, and results from the various departments (ENR, NSI, DFO, TG, AE, INF)
- Engagement plan and the next steps: substantial completion of the project is scheduled for this November; this is likely the last scheduled CWG meeting during the construction period.

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

- INF to develop a plan to tie-in Th̄chq Highway with Whatì Access Road at KM 97.
 - Ben - INF has been working on this internally and weighing the different options. For the construction on design part, I will call on Ziaur and I talk about the regulatory part of this process.
 - Ziaur - as you know TASR is ending at KM 97, however, the Whatì Community Government, raised a concern about the remaining 13 km into the community that it needs improvement. In response, the site has been visited twice to identify the scope of work that is required on the remaining 13 km. Currently, INF is working on the design of the road and permitting. Once the permit has been approved, technical investigations will happen for a bridge design and final road design. Once finalized, the construction stage will commence.
 - Ben - permitting status - LUP permit application and WL application has been submitted to the WLWB. If there are no delays with the permitting processes and approvals, we are hoping to start the geotechnical study early August 2021. WL will be in place for next year.
- Ginger - Emergency Repose Working Group, working with MACA on Accident Response
*Not at meeting during this time
- Continued monitoring of Bison movements
 - Ben - with construction put on pause for the winter season (Dec-May), documentation of bison sightings was not very adequate during this period. Once construction resumed documentation of the sightings showed that they are still limited to the southern half of the road up to KM 45. This summer, I will be following this closely to see if they are still limiting themselves to the southern part of the road. If they are moving up and begin to cross Lac La Marte, I will communicate with Whatì and ENR to put measures in place to prevent them from moving into the community. They have not yet crossed the 50km mark.
 - Tammy - The bison are eventually going to be coming in, we (CWG) should start brainstorming on measures needed for that.
- Caribou Habitat Offset Plan - Final submission to WWRB
 - Ben - update will be given later in this program by consultant, Keenan (AE). They are on course to meet the deadline and looking to submit by the end of June/early July to meet the 90 days prior (deadline) to the opening of the road.
- Th̄chq Government update on TK workshop and WMMP Coordinator
 - Tammy - interviews have been done with the community Elders from Whatì.
 - Tyanna - Will give an in-depth update later.
- Terry Brooks: Thermistor locations and how they are being protected
 - Terry - question back to NSI if they are protected, tripods and flagging have been placed at the sites, hopefully, that is not making them an easy target the last time they were on site. The thermistor reading program for the permafrost plan had been suspended during construction, just wanted to have the sites protected so that they can be easily found during operations when the program resumes; just a flag to NSI to ensure they are being protected. Don't want to lose any thermistor sites due to accidents as it would be expensive to redrill and reinstall. No notice to the public (i.e., informative signs on the devices, do not touch, etc.) is needed for these, they are small and underground.
- Safety update:
 - Ziaur - since construction started in 2019, the team has been working cooperatively with all other departments and organizations (WLWB, WRRB, DFO, Lands, ENR, TG, ECE, Community Governments). Environmental safety is a priority for the team. If there were any kind of issues or concerns that turned up on site, professional opinions were sought on how to resolve any type of issues. In regard to COVID, in March 2020, the team (INF, NSI, WSCC, TG) worked together to develop an exposure control plan. During the peak construction season, around 270 personnel were on site with ensured safety.

Questions

- Ryan to Ben (in chat): does INF anticipate being able to submit the outstanding information for the Whatì rehabilitation applications before the end of day this coming Sunday?
Ben - we are working with structures, there is only one outstanding request. We are working on getting back to the Board by Sunday. The information will be coming.

6. General overview of the Tłı̨chǫ Government Highway: updates on construction activities and schedule

- Devon Stancombe and Bruno Pigeon (NSI): summary on construction updates, upcoming construction, environmental updates and operation and maintenance activities.

Questions

- Ryan (WLWB): rumors that TASR may open early to accommodate the ongoing elections, is this being discussed?
 - Devon: there have been discussions to host tours prior to the elections but the road will not be opening prior to the set date of November 30, 2021.
- James (ENR): when will signage be put up? We are looking for a sense of timing, whether it is possible to have discussion on wildlife signage.
 - Bruno: we are happy to have discussion about signage and will involve GNWT. Signs will be in both English and Tłı̨chǫ.
- Tammy (TG) requests that highway signage be in both languages as much as possible.

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

Community Government of Whatì – not present, busy with elections.

- Ginger Gibeson (Firelight Group): Whatì Community Government has been participating as an active member in implementing TASR EA Measures 5-1, 5-2 and 5-3 (i.e., the Socio-Economic, Emergency Management Measures, and Community Well-being).

Tlı̨cho Government

- Tyanna Steinwand: Working on TASR Caribou Monitoring Plan Measures 6-2, 7-1, 7-2, 9-1. Finalized the scope of work and the budget has been submitted. Currently working to establish a group of 4 harvesters to help with baseline studies, planning a volunteer harvester reporting program, and working toward a Tłı̨chǫ Staff checkpoint on the road alignment to be stationed during winter hunting season.

Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board

- Jody and Randi: the WRRB has been actively involved, sitting in on meetings, helping with the Fisheries Management Plan, and reviewing the weekly Environmental Reports. The board was able to go on a tour of the highway on May 27th. Currently waiting for the Caribou Offset Plan and the Interim Boreal Caribou Range Plan for review and approval.

Fisheries and Ocean Canada

- Gabriel: with the Fish and Fish Habitat Protection Program – First CWG and will be replacing Olivia Sroka. Conducted a site visit with Kiewit to observe crossings and progression of construction of the road. Satisfied with the current work being done. At KM 46.2, Kiewit had to install a culvert to allow for a fish passage on a stream that had been missed during the fish habitat assessment. There are still a couple of necessary tweaks, we are currently working together to ensure there will be a long-term fish passage at that location.
- Paul (TG) on behalf of Fraser Neave (DFO -Fisheries Management) said he would be in and out of the call, there is a joint DFO-TG presentation later in this meeting.

Wek'èezhì Land and water board

- Ryan: continue to comply with the permit and licenses, nothing to report.

Department of Lands

- Clint: no concerns over the winter season. Made it through the winter with no incidents or unexpected releases from fuel tanks or equipment. Regular inspections continue to be conducted with Brandon Bradbury; they are starting to ramp up. There was a minor incident at James River during freshet, but it was resolved in collaboration with Kiewit where all inspector concerns were addressed. Kiewit ensured compliance through their approved management plans, very impressed by the diligence of Kiewit. Communication was great and follow up reports were received within 30-days of the incident; we are pleased with the response and measures put in place. Throughout this incident, there were mentions of the

permafrost plan, sediment erosion control plan and the adaptation (heard from Kiewit) on how to best prevent future incidents from occurring along all locations of the project. Adaptive management will be implemented to ensure environmental protection has been put in place by the contractor and subcontractor and it is greatly appreciated. There are no major environmental concerns noted, routine inspections will continue. Compliance side of the LUP has been on the right track.

Tłıchǫ Government

- Ginger: acknowledges GNWT, NTHSSA, they have been strong movers in the development of the socio-economic report card, especially gathering the data. The final social-economic reporting will be coming soon (in November) and will be prepared for the Chief and this (CWG) group. Emergency management personnel have been working closely with MACA as they oversee the delivery and provision of services. An analysis has been done, and that is in play and what is deemed weak; when an accident occurs on the road, there is no ability to respond. This is a great concern to MACA, Behchokǫ and the Community Government of Whatı. There is no way forward to address this issue currently, it would require a large investment of infrastructure in the area. Smaller measures currently include the ability to have call reception/centres. There are larger concerns for liability and safety from the Community Government that are not actively being addressed at this point in time.
- Tyanna: for the wildlife monitoring program, two committee meeting (January/April) that have taken place so far with 9 members and 2 youth. The committee helps develop the WMP and provide input to the things that they want to do. In April, James Hodson (ENR) presented to the committee members to inform them on different monitoring programs/approaches, which was every helpful. We want to develop a Voluntary Harvest Report Program with logbooks. Posters and radio announcements will be used to inform people before the road opens in November. A baseline conditions reports was conducted with the elders and is being finalized. We are also going to hire 4 road monitors for harvesting, jobs descriptions have been done up, we just need to advertise. Once the monitors have been hired, we are looking at sending them to Tuk to job-shadow monitors along the ITH Highway. Approaches are being explored to develop a checkpoint on the highway, we will need to seek additional funding for operations. Elders and harvesters have mentioned that the vegetation and fish should be monitored, so Paul and DFO have been looking to monitoring fish at the four bridges. Jen with the Wilfred Laurie University has started looking into doing vegetation work. Highway signage (28) have been developed in collaboration with the elders and we would like to put them up, we have been communicating with Ziaur.

Environment and Natural Resources

- James: Leading the development on Interim Caribou Range Plan, it will be finalized and submitted to WWRB by August. In repose to measures 6-1 part 1 and 6-2, we are currently getting a report done to look at modelling sustainable harvest rates on caribou harvesting. Also following along the weekly environmental reports.

8. BREAK

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

Environment and Natural Resources

- James: WWMP presentation. No questions.

NSI: David Green and Bruno Pegin:

- Water Monitoring Plan: no significant difference since the last update in December.
- Waste Management Plan: monitoring takes place, there are no non-compliance issues. We would like to bring back the bottle recycling program to give back to the communities.
- Fish and Fish Habitat Protection Program: 46 +220 culvert, issue; we are being proactive with the DFO to create the fish crossings, continue to follow our measures, and no in-water construction activities are planned moving forward.
- There was an erosion sediment control incident on James River – North approach, West-side in the spring where the exposure of muskeg sections in the ditch line that greatly increased the amount of water being routed southward to the river. The Sediment Control Plan and design

elements are currently being reviewed to ensure there the plan is sufficient moving forward. Currently closing up some of the exposed ditch sections through muskeg north of James River and are continuing to look for final solutions for erosion and sediment control on the project once the temporary crossings are out.

- WWMP presentation: no major impacts to wildlife, we are implementing mitigation when interacting with wildlife and following plans without issue.
- Continuing to collaborate with the Lands inspectors to monitor any issues or concerns they may have.
- Spill Management and Reporting: 93 spills to date, vast majority have been very low-volume spills, we are following our Kiewit protocols on reporting to the environmental department. Seeing significant slow-down in spill events; construction is not as busy as last season. Most common cause of the spills are leaking hoses on equipment and the wear and tear when it comes to hydraulics. There are adaptive management plans in place where we have a pro-active management system with the equipment having scheduled maintenance.
 - o Bruno: (in chat) – We do have a preventive maintenance program at 250 and 500h for each piece of equipment. This includes visual inspection of the hoses and replacement prior to their life span end.

INF Quarry Plants & Permafrost Plan

- Terry Brooks: All quarries on southern end of project are currently inactive, quarries on the upper end are active at this point in time. There will be some quarry work near the end of the construction phase. I will be going out this fall to inspect thermistor sites to ensure they are still working, findable and active. The thermistor reading program will start next winter when the ground temperatures begin to stabilize. I have also been working with James (ENR) to put in portable traffic counters this fall before the road opens. ENR wants traffic counts in relation to wildlife harvesting and related activities.
 - o Question from Stephanie Barend (in chat) - How long will the traffic counters be put in place for?
 - o James – in the WWMP, we are committed to monitoring for at least 5 years. There is also permanent road traffic counter in place by NSI.
- Ziaur: one traffic counter will also be installed and managed by NSI.
 - o Terry: do you have a schedule for when they would be installed and what type of counters will be installed?
 - o Devon: we will send you the information.

AE – Final Caribou Habitat Offset Plan

- Keenan: the report is in its final stages of writing, will be sent to Ben soon and then submitted to the WRRB for approval. As apart of the plan, we developed an implementation framework appendix that outlines major items and things to consider as we move into the habitat offset plan. It includes clear timelines and commitments for INF to meet. We have also quantified burrow sources (thanks to NSI for providing footprints) and mapped the existing linear and polygonal features within 10km of TASR and Highway 3, in collaboration with James (ENR). These areas are the first-cut off candidate offset locations to complete the work. It is ready to be submitted on our end.

Fisheries Management Plan by DFO & TG

- Paul (TG): presentation on Tlich Highway Fisheries. There will be a pamphlet that summarizes all fisheries related changes and regulations for the public as well as a required Angler Diary; it is a self-monitoring type survey/form that they have to fill out and submit. It will be in both languages: Tlich and English.
- Ben: as Paul said, we are planning on developing the pamphlet so the public can know exactly what is going on, in addition to the plan itself. It is still in the working stages. One of the directives of the measure is to submit plans to the group for input, we hope that in 2 weeks time the CWG will be receiving the plan, when received, please review, and send any comments you may have back.
 - o Ryan (in chat): Is the pamphlet Ben mentioned being developed in collaboration with the TG?
 - o Ben: yes, TG and DFO, everything is going through TG.

- Ben: We (INF) have three major reports required to submit to the WLWB and one to the MVRB. Two annual WL reports have been submitted to the WLWB for 2019 and 2020, this year's will be submitted sometime in March. The EA Annual Report has also been submitted to the MVRB for 2019 and 2020, the 3rd one will be submitted this year in October. We also have the first annual review of the WMMP for 2020 which has been submitted and approved by ENR and the WLWB. No changes are anticipated to the WMMP prior to its annual review.

10. Engagement Plan

Ben: The Harvest Monitoring study design is to satisfy Measure 7-1, last year I worked with TG and ENR, TG was to work in collaboration with ENR. Any updates from James or Tyanna on this EA Measure?

James: no updates from ENR, Tyanna mentioned it earlier.

Open floor suggestion period:

Ben: actively asking for input on how to collect TK, what forum would be appropriate for collecting TK. Would like the group to consider a discussion on this so we can improve our monitoring and management plans. If anyone has suggestions or comments on the management plans, feel free to provide your input, you can also get back to me with suggestions at a later time.

Salah: in regard to item 9, DFO and TG, in terms of fisheries related signage that the TG is requesting (i.e., "no sport fishing"), is it related to DFO management? Would like clarification to help us understand the significance of those signs.

Ben: I will connect with Paul and we will figure out how to move forward.

Ben asking Ginger: looking for input on how we can collect TK at this point.

Ginger – I will reach out to the appropriate groups and get a team together. We like doing TK work, especially working with the elders as it helps to build the information we have.

Question from Ryan (in chat) – When is the annual meeting in Whatì expected to take place? and will this be coordinated with any other public meetings RE TASR? (e.g., next TASR WG meeting or other).

11. Summary of meeting expectations and moving forward

Summary:

- To reiterate, this is the last CWG meeting during the construction phase. Road opening is scheduled for November 30th, 2021.
- Parties have made many adaptations as a result of COVID-19 at the TASR work site to keep everyone safe.
- The Caribou Habitat Offsetting plan is in its final stages, the WRRB will be reviewing pending approval.
- Construction was on pause for the winter season with regular inspections conducted by Lands, there were no concerns or compliance issues. Compliance and collaboration with the contractor and sub-contractor have also been great, any issues were resolved within a timely manner. Construction resumed with the Highway 3 tie-in now complete and all quarries on the southern end of the project are inactive with the upper end quarries remaining active.

Action Items:

- Continue to monitor bison movements regarding proximity to Whatì as construction progresses.
- Highway signage to be put up with collaboration between TG, NSI and ENR.
- Terry: Traffic counters sub-project, collaboration between INF and ENR?
- Paul TG: developing pamphlets to notify the public of current on-goings.
- Ben: Engagement plan and TK input being sought.
- Ginger: Final Social-Economic Report Card and concerns of liability and safety for the Community Government.

12. Discuss possible dates for next meeting

- Next tentative meeting dates are December 14, 15, or 16, 2021, and to take place in Whatì if COVID-19 restrictions allow. Polls will be sent out to group members for choosing a date that works best for everyone. Meetings need to happen twice a year.

13. Closing Remarks

- David Moore thanked the group for their collaboration, invited final remarks, and looks forward to seeing folks in December.
- Devon (NSI) gave appreciation for everyone in attendance.
- Meeting minutes will be drafted and sent out for review.
 - The audio has also been recorded.

14. Closing Prayers

Meeting Adjourned: 11:51am 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
NSI - North Star Infrastructure
NSMA - North Slave Métis Alliance
TG - Tlicho 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