

# The EKATI MONITOR

Issue #2, March 1999

Newsletter of the Independent Environmental Monitoring Agency

## BHP Applies to Expand Ekati Mine Project

BHP is applying to expand the Ekati mine to include 3 new kimberlite pipes. The company is hoping to drain the water held in Sable and Beartooth Lakes to mine the diamonds beneath. BHP has applied for new leases for the Pigeon and Sable pipes. A haul road to connect the Sable pit to the processing plant has also been proposed. Development of the Beartooth pipe will not require a new lease as it falls under existing plans. Applications are also being made for other changes to the project, including how mine-area water will be stored and discharged near the Misery pit (on the north shore of Lac de Gras).

Many environmental issues will need to be considered during the review of these applications. The proposed mine pit at Sable Lake is located in a different area from the other developments. How is the area used by wildlife? How will a mine pit change this? What effect will the new road have on wildlife movement? The proposed road cuts through two eskers, and the area between them appears to be a productive wetland habitat. The proposed development at Sable Lake is of additional concern to the Monitoring Agency as it is located in a new drainage system that ends in Exeter Lake rather than Lac de Gras. How will this affect fish and water quality?

Water released from the Misery pit area will be diverted to a series of small lakes before entering Lac du Sauvage. Effects of this change on the aquatic environment are unknown.

The Ekati Diamond Mine is growing, and it will continue to do so over its lifetime. Because of this, upcoming decisions affecting the environment must be made carefully.

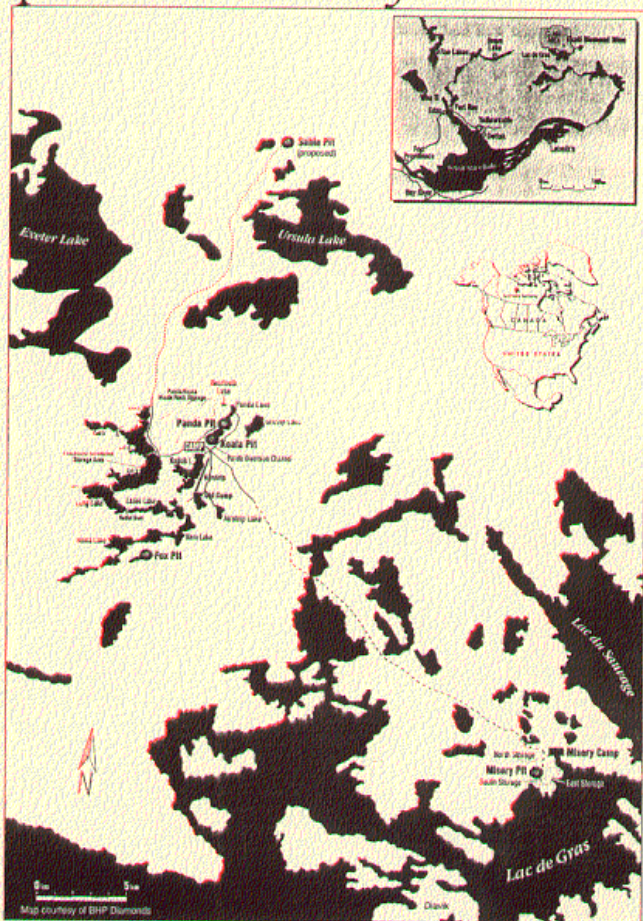
The Agency is not a regulatory authority, and is not responsible for issuing leases or licenses. However, it is committed to ensuring that government regulatory officials are aware of these questions during their environmental review and permitting of the proposed developments. Part of the Agency's mandate is to help ensure that the environmental regulation of the Ekati mine is effective. In keeping with this, the Agency has offered its assistance and advice to regulators when considering these changes to the project, and will provide input to ensure that wise environmental decisions are made. In this case, the Agency has specific concerns about fish and aquatic environments, and how the potential cumulative effects of development may affect wildlife.

### Agency Commends DIAND

Although the current mine at Ekati has already undergone environmental review, these new proposals were not included. For these, BHP needs the approval of various authorities, including approval from the NWT Water Board.

DIAND is the authority in charge of issuing land leases. Initially, BHP applied for permits for these new developments as though they were simple extensions to current land-use permits. DIAND, however, did not accept the applications because they felt that BHP was proposing new kinds of activities that do not fit under the existing leases. DIAND then suggested that BHP submit applications for entirely new permits.

The Monitoring Agency commends DIAND for ensuring that appropriate information is submitted with these project changes so that more careful consideration can be given to these applications and the related environmental effects.



## Who We Are

The Independent Environmental Monitoring Agency, a public watchdog for environmental management at Ekati Diamond Mine at Lac de Gras, was created as a condition of the Environmental Agreement signed by BHP, Canada and GNWT January 6th, 1997. The

mandate of the Agency is spelled out in Article IV of that Agreement. The Independent Environmental Monitoring Agency Society consists of BHP, Canada, GNWT, Kitikmeot Inuit Association, Dogrib Treaty 11 Council, Akaitcho Treaty 8, and North Slave Metis Alliance.

#### Directors appointed to the Agency are:

Red Pedersen (Chairperson) appointed by Kitikmeot Inuit Association  
Tony Pearce (Vice-Chairperson) appointed by Dogrib Treaty 11 Council  
François Messier (Secretary-Treasurer) appointed by BHP/Canada/GNWT  
Fikret Berkes appointed by North Slave Metis Alliance  
Peter McCart appointed by BHP/Canada/GNWT  
Kevin O'Reilly appointed by Akaitcho Treaty 8  
Bill Ross appointed by BHP/Canada/GNWT

#### Administrative and management services are provided by:

Hal Mills (Manager)  
Matt Bender (Monitoring Coordinator)  
Alan Ehrlich (Monitoring Coordinator)



## Lutsel K'e Hosts Monitoring Agency

In response to an invitation from Chief Florence Catholique, the Monitoring Agency traveled to Lutsel K'e to meet with the community in late October. The Agency met with Chief Catholique, Elders, and the Wildlife, Lands and Environment Committee to discuss environmental issues concerning the Ekati mine. The Agency also held a community feast, where directors and staff had the chance to

talk and meet with many community members. Residents of Lutsel K'e expressed their interest and concern over many environmental aspects of the Ekati mine. Community members were particularly concerned over the possible effects of Ekati on fish and wildlife, and on the environmental effects that Ekati may have in combination with the proposed Diavik mine. People also wanted to know how BHP plans to



bring the Ekati mine site back to more natural conditions after the mine closes down, and suggested that the Monitoring Agency help to promote the use of Traditional Knowledge in mine management.

The Monitoring Agency found the visit helpful and informative, and

### What wildlife is being monitored at Ekati?

As part of its Wildlife Effects Monitoring Program, BHP is involved in several ongoing studies which look into the effects of the mine on these animals:

- Caribou
- Grizzly Bear
- Wolves
- Wolverines
- Upland Breeding Birds
- Loons
- Birds of Prey



## Agency Pleased with 1998 BHP Wildlife Monitoring Report

A recent review of the 1998 Wildlife Effects Monitoring Program has concluded that many improvements to wildlife monitoring have been made this past year. The Board of the Independent Environmental Monitoring Agency was pleased with the overall quality of the report and felt the document set a standard of quality for environmental monitoring at Ekati. Specifically, the Agency was impressed

with the overall quality of the information provided, and felt that the report did a good job of showing how wildlife effects monitoring fits into everyday life at the mine site. Although the effects of diamond mining on wildlife will not be completely clear for several years, the Agency is pleased to note that in 1998, BHP was clearly taking wildlife monitoring seriously.

## Traditional Knowledge Workshop in N'Dilo: A Success!



How can traditional knowledge be used to help manage the environmental effects of a diamond mine? That was the main question addressed at a recent workshop held in N'Dilo on December 9th and 10th. The workshop was organized and facilitated by the Monitoring Agency at the request of Aboriginal organizations. Representatives of the Kitikmeot Inuit Association, Dogrib Treaty 11, Yellowknives Dene, Lutsel K'e Dene and the North Slave Metis Alliance participated at the workshop, alongside BHP and Monitoring Agency representatives.

Under the Environmental Agreement, BHP is required to fully consider traditional knowledge as well as scientific knowledge for the environmental management of Ekati. In

addition to Aboriginal organizations sharing their experiences in conducting traditional knowledge research, the workshop was an opportunity for BHP to describe their own environmental management plans so that participants could better understand the process.

The aim of the workshop was to serve as a starting point for linking traditional knowledge research that Aboriginal organizations want to conduct with the information needed by BHP for the environmental management of Ekati. By the end of the workshop, a resolution had been unanimously carried by all organizations to work cooperatively in furthering discussions on incorporating traditional knowledge into the environmental management of Ekati.

## Monitoring Programs at Ekati

At present time, the Monitoring Agency is assembling a complete list of things currently being monitored at Ekati. This list will include everything from air quality, aquatics, and archaeology, for example, to spills, and waste management. The list will be available in March, 1999.



## Monitoring Agency Web Site

The Independent Environmental Monitoring Agency has a new web address, at:

[www.monitoringagency.net](http://www.monitoringagency.net)

The site includes:

- Information about the Agency such as 'who we are' and 'what we do'
- The Environmental Agreement
- The 1997-98 Annual Report
- The Aboriginal and Community Issues Report from the BHP and Water Board EA Hearings
- Agency Resource Centre Listings
- The Ekati Monitor Newsletter
- Hotlinks to other related site

The public is invited to contact the office of the Independent Environmental Monitoring Agency to pass on concerns about the environmental management of the Ekati Diamond Mine, or to learn about the Monitoring Agency's activities.

### How to Reach Us

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