



***Independent Environmental Monitoring Agency***

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February 27, 2012

Mark Cliffe-Phillips  
Executive Director  
Wek'eezhii Land and Water Board  
P.O. Box 32  
Wekweti NT X0E 1W0

Dear Mr. Cliffe-Phillips

**Re: Summary Evaluation and Work Plan  
for the Fish Component of the 2012 AEMP**

The Agency has reviewed the BHP Billiton (BHPB) proposal for the fish sampling program as part of the 21012 Aquatic Effects Monitoring Program (AEMP) for the Ekati Mine.

We note that the Agency and others supported the use of slimy sculpin as an early warning indicator species during the last three-year review of the AEMP so we are pleased to see that BHPB intends to carry out some sampling of this species in 2012. We also support BHPB's further investigations into the spatial distribution of fish exposure to hydrocarbons. We believe that the company should take the same approach to investigate the spatial distribution of possible fish exposure to incinerator emissions.

The Agency has some concerns about the limited scope of the sampling program and we believe that all of the AEMP lakes that were previously sampled for fish should be retained. This would be consistent with the stated objective of understanding the spatial distribution of fish exposure to contaminants of concern.

While we support efforts to reduce the impacts of the sampling on local fish populations, if there are incidental mortalities, every effort should be made to collect as much information as possible from the fish sacrificed. All incidental mortalities should be sampled for metals and exposure to hydrocarbons and incinerator emissions. We have highlighted some further discrepancies with the proposed sampling program in our comments in the attached table.

The Agency is also pleased to see that Aboriginal community members will be involved in the sampling program and that the DELT program has been retained, along with additional analysis for fish palatability. We encourage BHPB to fully document Traditional Knowledge that may be gathered during the sampling program and how those insights may be used by the company to improve its monitoring program and understanding of the environment and/or effects of the mine.

We look forward to a decision by the Board on this important matter. We are available to discuss any of our comments and recommendations at your convenience.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W.A. Ross".

Bill Ross  
Chairperson

cc. Society Members  
Bruce Hanna, Fisheries and Oceans  
Lisa Lowman, Environment Canada