

The EKATI MONITOR

Issue #3, September 1999

Newsletter of the Independent Environmental Monitoring Agency

Agency hosts AGM in July

"This [the work of the Agency] is the kind of work that should have been done a really long time ago." Grand Chief Joe Rabesca of the Dogrib Treaty 11 Council stated at the Annual General Meeting of the Independent Environmental Monitoring Agency Society.

The second Annual General Meeting of the Society was held July 8th, 1999 in Yellowknife. The meeting was attended by six of the seven Members of the Society, and after presentations by some of the Directors, the floor was open to Members for comment.

Overall, there was a feeling of satisfaction with the work of the Agency this year. The North Slave Metis Alliance (NSMA) noted that it supports the pro-active and

cautious approach to environmental management that the Agency has shown through its work. One of the major topics of discussion was the increased community consultation being undertaken by the Agency's Board of Directors. Government, BHP and Aboriginal organizations thanked the Agency for its efforts over the year.

The second Annual Report of the Agency was presented at the AGM, and officially released. Copies of the Annual Report can be picked up or requested from the Agency office in Yellowknife, and can soon be viewed on the Agency website at www.monitoringagency.net

Related Story: [Monitoring Agency Makes Recommendations to Regulatory Bodies and BHP](#)

Who Are We?

The Independent Environmental Monitoring Agency, a public watchdog for environmental management at Ekati Diamond Mine of 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

Bill Ross (Vice-Chairperson) appointed by Dogrib Treaty 11 Council

Francois 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

Tony Pearce appointed by BHP/Canada/GNWT

Administrative and management services are provided by:

Alexandra Thomson, Manager

Vacant, Administrative Assistant



Proposed Project Expansion at Ekati-An Update.

Under the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act (MVRMA), the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board (Review Board) has been established. The Review Board is replacing federal government departments such as DIAND, Fisheries and Oceans and, the Department of the Environment as the main body undertaking environmental assessments. The Review Board was established to



ensure that environmental impacts of proposed developments receive careful consideration prior to development as directed under the Saku and Gwich'in Land Claims Agreements. The Review Board is conducting the environmental assessment for the proposed expansion of the Ekati Diamond Mine.

The proposed expansion at the Ekati Diamond Mine includes the mining of three new kimberlite pipes, Sable, Pigeon and Beartooth. The Agency will be participating in the review process established by the Review Board to ensure that its concerns respecting environmental issues of the new developments at Ekati are considered. This will include such things as monitoring the effects this expansion will have on wildlife and lakes and rivers. By monitoring the different aspects of the project, problems can be noted early and prevented from getting worse. Initial concerns regarding the expansion include the possibility of a new drainage system being affected. This may dramatically increase the area and water resources currently being impacted by the mine. Also included in the expansion is a new, all-weather road. The addition of a road may have impacts on the wildlife of the area; possibly affecting migration patterns and overall use of the area. The Agency would like to not only monitor for impacts, but also help the parties involved find possible alternatives that would reduce impacts.

Wildlife Management and the Misery Road

The Misery kimberlite pipe is located approximately 29 kilometers southeast of BHP's mine main camp. It is one of the next pipes to be mined, and a new access road is to be built. Due to the length of the road, several measures are required to ensure that the effects on the land and the wildlife are minimized.

In December of 1998, the Monitoring Agency sent a letter to BHP expressing interest in helping develop a "wildlife-friendly road". To make it easier for wildlife to cross BHP plans to build the majority of the road less than three meters in height, making berms along the sides unnecessary. In addition, at major caribou crossings, the sides of the road will be more gently sloped than normal. Drivers will have better visibility

as a result of these design improvements. The road will be built with large rock, and then covered with crushed rock that will enable better footing for wildlife. BHP has indicated willingness to close the road for portion of the year coinciding with caribou migration. In addition, training will be provided by BHP to employees and visitors to increase their awareness about animal/vehicle interactions.

BHP committed to consult communities on the design of the road during the Wildlife Effects Workshop in February 1999. The Agency awaits receipt of detailed design information on the road and a process for meaningful community involvement.

How to reach us

The Independent Environmental Monitoring Agency has moved! We can now be contacted at our

"NEW" Street Address:
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5004 Franklin Ave.
Yellowknife, NT

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Yellowknife, NT
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monitor@yk.com

Website:
www.monitoringagency.net

Aquatic Effects Monitoring at Ekati

BHP's Aquatic Effects Monitoring Program was set up to track changes in the physical, chemical and biological characteristics of lakes and rivers potentially affected by BHP's land use activities. One of the effects noted in 1998 was the presence of increased phytoplankton in several lakes within the Koolah watershed. This was noted as far downstream as Slipper Lake, which is the last lake in the drainage before reaching Lac de Gras. This increase in phytoplankton was likely the result of increased concentrations of phosphorus, an important plant nutrient originating in Kodiak Lake.

Phosphorus loading has been occurring in Kodiak Lake in recent years, the result of many activities including the building of the Panda Diversion Channel and the release of treated sewage into the lake. Mitigation measures have been implemented; treated sewage is now being dumped in Long Lake and the Panda Diversion channel has been stabilized to reduce the amount of sediment being deposited into the lake.



There will still be a problem with internal loadings of phosphorus from lake sediments. Some of this phosphorus may continue to enter the watershed and result in elevated primary production and oxygen deficits for years to come.

Monitoring Agency makes recommendations to Regulatory Bodies and BHP.

The 1998-1999 Annual Report of the Independent Environmental Monitoring Agency was released at the second Annual General Meeting on July 8th, 1999. Similar to last year's report, it contains a list of recommendations to regulatory bodies related to the BHP Diamond Mine Project.

1 Recommendation One:

The Agency recommends that BHP provide greater detail regarding its Environmental Management System.

2 Recommendation Two:

The Agency recommends that BHP include the Wastewater and Tailings Management Plan and the Waste Rock Management Plan, as well as the results of related studies carried out by BHP, in the next version of the Operational Environmental Management Plan.

3 Recommendation Three:

The Agency recommends that the appropriate authorities act on the Panel's recommendation for the federal government to develop a policy for the inclusion of traditional knowledge in environmental assessment.

4 Recommendation Four:

The Agency recommends that the Aboriginal organizations and BHP should further develop their collaboration, through the establishment of the Ekati TK Working Group. The Agency will continue to support the parties to encourage them to develop a collaborative action plan. Such a plan could showcase examples of "good practice" from across the North and facilitate the development of a common understanding on how traditional knowledge can best be incorporated into environmental management.

5 Recommendation Five:

The Agency recommends that Aboriginal knowledge and expertise be used in the design stage of the BHP project expansion, as discussed elsewhere in this Annual Report. Project expansion offers an opportunity for the direct use of traditional knowledge into the assessment and environmental management of roads and other developments. project.

6 Recommendation Six:

The Agency recommends that DIAND and the governments of NWT and Nunavut develop and implement a cumulative effects monitoring program for the Bathurst caribou herd. As a first step, a workshop involving Aboriginal communities, wildlife ecologists, co-management bodies and government managers should be organized to identify the key components of the monitoring program.

7 Recommendation Seven:

The Agency recommends that the program for sampling during the open-water season continue as before with the modifications to sampling methodology and frequency that were agreed to by participants at the Aquatic Effects Monitoring Workshop in February 1999.

8 Recommendation Eight:

The Agency recommends that the winter oxygen sampling in lakes included in the sampling design become an integral part of the sampling program.

9 Recommendation Nine:

The Agency recommends that consideration be given to classifying Grizzly Lake as a potentially affected rather than a reference lake. The elevated nitrate levels in this lake suggest that it is being affected by wind-borne residues from explosives used in mining. It lies less than a kilometre from the existing Panda Pit and less than two kilometres from the future Beartooth Pit. It should be replaced by another reference lake farther away.

10 Recommendation Ten:

The Agency recommends that Lorry and Leslie Lakes be included in winter surveys of oxygen conditions, since oxygen profiles are a good indication of the trophic status of lakes like these.

11 Recommendation Eleven:

The Agency recommends that studies of the effects of nutrient loading and past sewage discharges continue at Kodiak Lake and downstream.

12 Recommendation Twelve:

The Agency recommends that an assessment be made of the effects of sewage effluents on water quality in Long Lake, with particular attention to potential effects on water quality flowing out of the lake.

13 Recommendation Thirteen:

The Agency recommends that BHP conduct the necessary mineralogical studies to ensure long-term and safe disposal of the schist from the Misery pit.

14 Recommendation Fourteen:

The Agency recommends that when the results of the 1999 field season tailings studies are completed, BHP use the findings to update its Tailings Management Plan and its Abandonment and Restoration Plan.

15 Recommendation Fifteen:

The Agency recommends that BHP submit more timely information on its exploration activities within the claims block to the Agency.

16 Recommendation Sixteen:

The Agency recommends that DIAND amend the NWT Waters Regulations to include appropriate thresholds for dewatering such that larger scale operations would fall under a Class A license application regime.

Staff Changes at the Agency

Over the past two years, staff for the Monitoring Agency has been provided through a contract with GeoNorth. The Agency has decided to hire its own staff and has now hired a new Manager.

Alexandra (Alex) Thomson has been employed with the Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB) for the past two and a half years as the Senior Research/Trainer. NIRB is the environmental impact assessment agency for Nunavut. She will be starting at the Agency on September 27th and an Administrative Assistant will also be hired shortly.

