

The EKATI MONITOR

Issue 22, Fall 2020

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Agency Staff and Directors with Dominion Staff near the Panda Diversion Channel at the Ekati site during our July 2019 site visit.

IEMA Office Update

After taking the precautionary step to close the office in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic, IEMA (the Agency) has taken steps to reopen the office to the public as of September 1, 2020.

We ask that you call or email ahead of time if you plan to visit the office so we know to expect you. To continue to meet GNWT COVID guidelines, visitors must sign in, use hand sanitizer at the door, and wear a mask into the office. We can provide a mask if you do not have one.

For any COVID-related updates, visit our website www.monitoringagency.net or follow us on Facebook or Twitter.

Mársi, mahsi, qujannamiik, quana, merci, thank you for your understanding.

Coming to the office? Contact us.

Call: 867-669-9141 or Email: monitor2@monitoringagency.net

Ekati Operations & COVID-19 Update

Though the mine remains in care and maintenance operation mode since temporarily shutting down in March of this year due to the COVID pandemic, environmental monitoring at the site continues albeit at a reduced capacity. Dominion has provided two major updates to the Wek'èezhii Land and Water Board since their temporary shutdown about how they plan to meet compliance under their licences, permits, and the Environmental Agreement. The updates have been thorough and have explained aspects of monitoring that have had to be altered and why. To see the full list of changes to operations and challenges, [click here](#).

The Agency remains in regular contact with Dominion through weekly meetings to ensure we have the most up to date information. As always, we continue to monitor environmental programs and reports as they are received, and keep Society Members and the public informed of any major changes or announcements.



Aerial image of the Misery Pit and Waste Rock Storage Area.

Ever wonder what happens to open pits once they're done being mined? Check out this issue's *Ekati Fact* on the last page.

Photo Courtesy of Dominion Diamond Mines ULC.

Ekati Sale Update

As a direct result of the shutdown in March, and cancelling of diamond sales around the world due to COVID, Dominion entered into insolvency protection on April 21, 2020. The way forward was to put the mine and its assets up for sale. Dominion's parent company Washington Group was the only bidder in this sale process, and the sale was to be finalized in court on October 7, 2020.

Washington Group and insurance companies that hold some of the securities for the mine could not come to an agreement on key factors for the sale to go through. The sale to Washington Group did not proceed.

On October 23, Dominion applied to the Court to extend insolvency protection beyond its current November 7 expiry date to December 15, 2020. This extension will allow the company more time to secure a buyer. Dominion remains optimistic that there is interest from other potential buyers who did not get a chance to place a bid in the first round.

Project Review Updates

There were very few active project processes over the last few months, as the Ekati mine remains in care and maintenance mode, and projects have mostly been on hold. However the Agency did participate in some important review processes which are featured below.

→ 2019 Wildlife Effects Monitoring Program (WEMP) Report – July 17, 2020

The Agency acknowledged that overall the report provided a lot of good detail in many aspects of wildlife monitoring. However, there continue to be gaps that the Agency continues to suggest are not being adequately addressed. Our recommendations this year were directed to ENR to ensure these issues are addressed under Section 95 of the Wildlife Act. They include identifying specific triggers in the WEMP that result in management actions, more accurate depictions of caribou distribution and movement at the site (including assessing the utility of geo-fence collars which collect more frequent locations closer to mine and industrial infrastructure), and ensuring the release of an updated wildlife camera monitoring report in fall of 2020. To read our full response, [click here](#).

→ 2019 Air Quality Monitoring Program (AQMP) – July 20, 2020

The feedback provided by the Agency for the 2019 AQMP Report was for the purpose of informing future AQMP annual report processes.

The Agency continues to encourage the amalgamation of the AQMP with the Jay Project Air Quality Emissions and Monitoring and Management Plan (AQEMMP) into a single, site-wide air monitoring plan. Doing so would strengthen overall air quality monitoring at Ekati. [See our comments here](#).

→ 2019 EA & WL Annual Report and Summary Report – August 17, 2020

As part of the Environmental Agreement (EA) and Water Licence (WL) annual reporting process, a Summary Report is published in tandem with the more technical, scientific Annual Report. This is to ensure the information is accessible and understood by a wider audience, and the Agency believes this is critical to the sharing of this important information.

The Agency believes the 2019 EA & WL Summary Report was unsatisfactory. Key information, including exceedances of selenium and mercury in fish tissue samples (which were originally left out of the 2018 report, and were to be mentioned in this year's report but were not), geochemical results of waste rock pile seepages, and how Dominion is implementing Traditional Knowledge and programs into environmental management at the Ekati site, is missing from the Summary Report. The Agency put forth three recommendations to improve future EA & WL Summary Reports. [Read our letter here](#).

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Who Are We?

HEMA (the Agency) is the public watchdog for environmental management at the Ekati mine. The Agency was created in 1997 under the Environmental Agreement, which requires Dominion Diamond Mines ULC (Dominion) and the federal and territorial governments to protect the environment and land-based way of life of Indigenous peoples of the area.

The Agency makes recommendations to Dominion, government, and regulators on how best to protect the environment at Ekati. The Agency's Board has seven Directors appointed by our Society Members. Our Directors are independent of their appointing parties and work together in the best interests of the environment and the people affected by Ekati.

Our Society Members are:

- Akaitcho Treaty 8 (Łutsel K'e and Yellowknives Dene First Nations)
- Tłıchǵ Government
- Kitikmeot Inuit Association (KIA)
- North Slave Métis Alliance
- Government of Canada (Crown Indigenous Relations & Northern Affairs Canada—CIRNAC)
- Government of the Northwest Territories
- Dominion Diamond Mines, ULC

We have two staff members and a resource library of information about Ekati in our office in Yellowknife. Feel free to contact us if you have questions or concerns about the Ekati mine.

Ekati Fact: Closing Open Pits

What happens to open pits once mining is done?

Pit closure is a big part of interim closure and reclamation planning at Ekati.

Some pits are already no longer in use at the site and are slated to be used as repositories for processed kimberlite (tailings) and water (Beartooth, Koala/Koala North, and Panda). The others (Fox, Lynx, Misery, Pigeon, and Sable) are slated to be filled with fresh water from nearby lakes after the mine is closed. The ultimate goal is to reclaim pits as lakes and reconnect them to their respective watersheds.

For more info, see Dominion's latest [Interim Closure & Reclamation Plan \(3.0\)](#).



Mining of Beartooth Pit was finished in 2009. The pit now contains water and processed kimberlite (front right in this image). Photo Courtesy of Dominion Diamond Mines ULC.