The Voice is a seasonal newsletter for the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board (YESAB). YESAB conducts assessments on project proposals and makes recommendations to government Decision Bodies on whether a project should proceed, not proceed, or proceed with specific terms and conditions.
INTRODUCTION

In this edition, we explore site visits and industry tours and highlight some of the places we’ve been this summer. We describe YESAB’s first liquefied natural gas (LNG) related project submitted to the Watson Lake Designated Office and another LNG project submitted to the Executive Committee. A profile of our new Legal Counsel, assessment statistics and a question and answer section are also included. Fall is here, might as well read this.

DO YOU HAVE A TOPIC you would like to see in the next edition of The Voice? Let us know by contacting rob.yeomans@yesab.ca.

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ASSESSORS PREDOMINANTLY RELY ON PROponent DESCRIPTIONS OF PROJECT AREAS AND MAPS TO UNDERSTAND A PROJECT AND THE ASSOCIATED ACTIVITIES. HOWEVER, WHEN IT COMES TO UNDERSTANDING COMPLEX GEOGRAPHY AND ECOPOLY THERE IS NOTHING MORE BENEFICIAL THAN GOING TO THE SITE AND PUTTING YOUR BOOTS ON THE GROUND.

SITE VISITS ARE A GREAT WAY FOR OUR ASSESSMENT STAFF AND BOARD MEMBERS TO GET FAMILIAR WITH PROPOSED PROJECT LOCATIONS, ACTIVITIES AND PROONENTS. IT PROVIDES A WAY TO EXPLORE THE LOCATIONS OF PROPOSED ACTIVITIES AND ALLOWS FOR DISCUSSIONS WITH PROONENTS ABOUT POTENTIAL ADVERSE EFFECTS ASSOCIATED WITH THOSE ACTIVITIES. BEING ON-SITE ALLOWS ASSESSMENT STAFF TO TAILOR MITIGATIONS TO THE SITE WHERE APPROPRIATE, RATHER THAN RELYING ON STANDARD MITIGATION THAT MAY OR MAY NOT BE EFFECTIVE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE PROJECT OR ITS LOCATION.

IN SOME CASES ASSESSORS GO ON-SITE TO GET A CLOSER LOOK AT A SPECIFIC ISSUE RELATED TO THE PROPOSED PROJECT; IN OTHER CASES IT PROVIDES A VENUE FOR PROONENT ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH.

YESAB STAFF AND BOARD ALSO CONDUCT SITE TOURS OF EXISTING PROJECTS. SITE TOURS OF EXISTING PROJECTS ALLOW STAFF AND BOARD THE OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME FAMILIAR WITH THE OPERATIONS OF CERTAIN SECTORS OR PROJECT TYPES. SITE TOURS ALSO PROVIDE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK TO INDUSTRY LEADERS AND WORKERS ON-SITE WHICH HELPS ASSESSORS GAIN PERSPECTIVE AND INSIGHT FOR FUTURE PROJECT PROPOSAL SUBMISSIONS. THE ADDED VALUE IS A MORE COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT IN TERMS OF UNDERSTANDING THE PROJECT AREA AND ACTIVITIES WHILE IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL CHALLENGES AND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PROPOSED MITIGATIONS. THIS RESULTS IN MORE EFFECTIVE, PROJECT-SPECIFIC MITIGATION AND A BETTER UNDERSTANDING ABOUT A PARTICULAR INDUSTRY.

THIS SUMMER YESAB STAFF AND BOARD WENT ON A NUMBER OF SITE VISITS AND HAVE HIGHLIGHTED A FEW OF THEM IN THIS EDITION OF THE VOICE.

Steve Caram, Ken McKinnon, Keith Maguire, Andrew Reid, Cathy McFadyen, Dave Keenan and Kathie Thibaudeau of YESAB tour the former Faro Mine site.
Casino Tour

In preparation of Western Copper and Gold Corporation’s submission of a project proposal to the Executive Committee, six YESAB staff and Executive Committee members attended a tour of the Casino site. The Casino property is located 380 km northwest of Whitehorse and contains gold, copper and molybdenum resources. A proposal submission to the Executive Committee is expected for late 2013. During the tour YESAB reviewed proposed sites for major components of the proposed mine, including the open pit, mill, heap leach and tailings facility.

Northern Cross Oil and Gas Tour in Eagle Plains

Stephen Mills, Chair of YESAB and Bengt Pettersson, YESAB’s Executive Director, joined Bobbie Milnes and Amélie Morin of the Dawson City Designated Office staff on a tour of a Northern Cross oil and gas project. Northern Cross is currently exploring for oil and natural gas in the Eagle Plains region. The tour gave YESAB staff and Board an opportunity to see a drilling rig in action and tour other site infrastructure.

Faro and Mount Nansen Mine Site Tours

YESAB Board members and staff including: Ken McKinnon, Dave Keenan, Andrew Reid, Cathy McFadyen, Steve Caram, Kathie Thibaudieu and Keith Maguire visited the former Faro Mine and Mount Nansen Mine to understand the reclamation and closure activities that are being planned by the Assessment and Abandoned Mines Branch, Government of Yukon.

Patricia Randell, along with Bill Slater at Faro and Josee Perron at Mount Nansen, guided the group through the mine sites and described proposed reclamation work. The site visits provided a valuable opportunity to get an understanding of the reclamation options, the planned approach, and the challenges with these two sites. The Mount Nansen Mine site reclamation plan is expected to be proposed to the Executive Committee in the fall of 2014.

Old Crow, Yukon

Amélie Morin and Bobbie Milnes of the Dawson City Designated Office along with Ken McKinnon, Executive Committee member traveled to Old Crow, Yukon to host a YESAA 101 information session for the Vuntut Gwitchin Government and community members. The trip gave YESAB an opportunity to answer questions and discuss the YESAA process. YESAB hosted a community dinner that was well attended and allowed for continued discussion about YESAA.

The YESAB team also took a trip down the Porcupine River to Rampart House with Vuntut Gwitchin river guide Dennis Frost. They toured the historic site with the Vuntut Gwitchin Government’s Lands Manager Erika Tizya and the Heritage Interpreter Tracy Rispin. They also met with the North Yukon Renewable Resource Council to discuss current and potential projects in the area.

Placer Mines Dawson City

The Klondike Placer Miners Association hosted and organized a one-day placer mine tour near Dawson City in August. The tour included close to 15 government regulators and assessment staff. The tour helped regulators and assessors become more familiar with the operations associated with placer mining and see operations in action. Officials with Energy, Mines and Resources accompanied the group to help provide background information and help answer questions. Stephen Mills, Chair of YESAB, Executive Committee members Ken McKinnon and Dave Keenan, Mara Pollock, YESAB’s new Legal Counsel, and Rian Lougheed-Smith, Administrative Assistant for the Dawson City Designated Office attended from YESAB.

YESAB would like to thank all those communities, organizations and companies for hosting us during our site visits and tours this summer.
Annual Report Now Available

YESAB produces an annual report every fiscal year. The report highlights some of the work completed over the year and includes information about the assessment process, the Board and YESAB’s organizational structure. A summary of assessment statistics and activities undertaken by the Designated Offices and the Executive Committee are included. Information about YESAB’s Online Registry, communications and outreach efforts and a copy of the audited financial statements can also be found within the report.

Hard copies are sent to members on our mailing list and digital copies of past and current annual reports can be found on our website at www.yesab.ca. If you would like to receive a hard copy of YESAB’s Annual Report please ask to be added to our mailing list by contacting the YESAB Head Office at 867-668-6420 or email yesab@yesab.ca.

FEEDING YOU RSS THIS THANKSGIVING

YESAB’s new website supports Rich Site Summary (RSS). RSS is a format for delivering the latest web content about YESAB right to your email. The new feature allows you to easily stay informed about YESAB’s work by retrieving the latest content from the web site directly to your RSS reader or email program. It’s the easiest and fastest way to get current information about our work. RSS feeds can be linked to your email program or through a separate RSS reader program.

A variety of RSS readers are available for different platforms. Some popular feed readers include Feedly (iOS/Android/Web) and FeedReader (Windows). There are also a number of web-based feed readers available such as: My Yahoo, Bloglines, and NewsBlur (iOS/Android/Web).

To subscribe, just click on the RSS Feed button on the YESAB.ca website near the bottom of the homepage.
YESAB RECEIVES FIRST LNG RELATED PROJECTS

This summer the Watson Lake Designated Office received the first project for assessment that proposed the use of liquid natural gas (LNG). Yukon Electrical Company Limited and ATCO Gas proposed to modify the generators at the Watson Lake Power Plant to allow them to operate on a combination of natural gas and diesel. The Project will consist of two phases. In Phase I, one generator will be modified to bi-fuel use, a storage tank for liquefied natural gas (LNG) will be installed and monitoring of air emissions will occur. If Phase I is successful, Phase II will commence and five more generators will be modified to bi-fuel use. The LNG for the generators would be trucked to the Watson Lake Power Plant from southern Canada.

The use of LNG in Yukon has been an issue which has garnered a significant amount of public interest. For this project the public comment period was extended twice to allow participants the opportunity to review and consider the project proposal and provide comments. During the assessment, air quality, health and safety were valued components identified. Comments were received from members of the public as well as the Yukon Conservation Society, the Ross River Dena Council, the Liard First Nation and the Government of Yukon. After considering all the information provided, the Designated Office determined that the Project would have significant adverse environmental and socio-economic effects but that those effects could be mitigated by a number of terms and conditions listed in the Evaluation Report.

It was an interesting project and YESAB was happy with the level of engagement by the public. A few months later, YESAB received the second proposed LNG project submitted for assessment. In this case the proposed project activities required a screening by the Executive Committee. That screening has begun and information regarding the project can be found on the YESAB Online Registry, project number 2013-0115.
Is YESAB part of Yukon Government?
SHORT ANSWER: No
LONG ANSWER: YESAB is an independent arms-length body, responsible for the assessment responsibilities of the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act (YESAA) legislation and regulations and is funded by the Government of Canada.

Does YESAB conduct site inspections?
SHORT ANSWER: No.
LONG ANSWER: Assessors can conduct site visits prior to or during an assessment, however all inspection and enforcement duties are the responsibility of government regulators who issue the permits and authorizations.

How many project submissions did YESAB receive this past fiscal year?
SHORT ANSWER: 197
LONG ANSWER: YESAB experienced a significant drop in project proposal submissions in 2012-2013 compared to the 2011-2012 fiscal year. In fact, the 2012-2013 fiscal year had the lowest number of project proposal submissions since 2006 (YESAB opened its doors in November 2005). The previous year, 2011-2012, experienced the largest number of project submissions to date with a total of 325. YESAB receives an average of 269 project proposal submissions in a fiscal year. Above is a chart that compares the number of project submissions of four sectors during the past two fiscal years.
Executive Committee Screening Updates

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Executive Committee is comprised of Stephen Mills (Chair), Ken McKinnon and Dave Keenan. The Executive Committee is currently working on three project screenings highlighted below.

YUKON ENERGY CORPORATION - Whitehorse Diesel - Natural Gas Conversion Project (Project Number 2013-0115)

On August 8, 2013, the Executive Committee received a proposal from Yukon Energy Corporation (YEC) for the installation of three 4.4 MW natural gas fired generating units and decommissioning of two Mirlees diesel generating units. The Project includes up to four 166.5 m³ storage tanks and related infrastructure for transport, offloading, storage and vapourization of liquefied natural gas (LNG).

Since receiving the project the Executive Committee has determined that YEC has met its statutory requirement to consult with the Kwanlin Dun First Nation and the Ta’an Kwach’an Council under section 50(3) of the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act. As a result the Executive Committee has begun the adequacy review of the proposal. Under the Screening Rules the Executive Committee has up to 60 days to complete the adequacy review.

The project is located adjacent to the YEC Whitehorse property approximately two kilometers south of downtown Whitehorse. Dave Keenan is the Executive Committee lead for the project screening.

NORTH AMERICAN TUNGSTEN – Proposed Mactung Mine Project (Project Number 2008-0304)

North American Tungsten Corporation Ltd. (NATC) is proposing the construction, operation, decommissioning and closure of an underground tungsten mine in east-central Yukon. The proposed project is located approximately eight kilometres northwest of Macmillan Pass (on the North Canol Road approximately 250 km from Ross River) in the Mt. Allan area.

UPDATE: The Executive Committee released a request for supplementary information to NATC on January 4, 2013 after considering the comments received during the public review period of the Draft Screening Report. NATC must provide a response to the supplementary information request before the Screening Report can be finalized. NATC has announced that they will be removing the proposed new access road from the Project.

KETZA RIVER HOLDINGS – Proposed Ketza River Mine Project (Project Number 2011-0218)

Ketza River Holdings (KRH) is the proponent of the proposed Ketza River Mine, which was submitted to the Executive Committee in September 2011. The proponent proposes to mine approximately 49.5 million tonnes of material over a period of about five years at a milling rate of 1,500 tonnes per day. The project includes the extraction of material from nine open pits and two underground operations. The project includes the development and management of waste rock dumps, a tailings storage facility, a 200-person camp, and a three MW diesel generator amongst other mine infrastructure.

UPDATE: The Executive Committee released a supplementary information request on April 29, 2013 requesting additional information after reviewing the KRH response to the Adequacy Review Report. KRH must provide a response to the Supplementary Information Request (SIR) before the project can be assessed.

On September 13, 2013 KRH requested that the deadline for submission of responses to the SIR be extended to July 31, 2014. The Executive Committee agreed to the extension.
Mara was born in New Hampshire, U.S.A. but immigrated to Canada with her parents and brother as a young child. She grew up in Ottawa but spent her summers by the ocean with her relatives in Hawaii or with those in Connecticut. Mara went to McGill University in Montreal where she received a BA in Art History and a graduate Diploma in Environmental Studies. After a year of work and travel, she went to law school at the University of Windsor where she received her LL.B. She has worked in private practice as well as with the federal and Yukon Departments of Justice. Mara has practiced in a number of areas of law, however, her passion is for Aboriginal and environmental law. Mara is a people person who enjoys working with her clients to help them understand the legal context in which they work, and to find solutions to the challenges they face. This is Mara’s second time living in Whitehorse. Her first stint in the North was in 2010-2011, after which she returned to Ottawa. The call of the north was just too strong, however, so she has recently moved back to Whitehorse with her family. When not working, Mara is most likely to be found ice fishing with her family, drinking a strong cafe latte, or shopping for that perfect pair of shoes.
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