

West Point First Nation
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September 5, 2003

Vern Christensen
Executive Director
Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board
Box 938, 200 Scotia Centre (5102-50th Ave.)
Yellowknife, NT, X1A 2N7

Dear Mr. Christensen,

At the current time, an environmental review process is being carried out relating to the possible construction of a Mackenzie Gas Pipeline. The West Point First Nation has not been directly involved in this process to date because it has not been identified as an 'affected' community. However, based on a Traditional Fishery Project study that was completed in May of this year, the West Point First Nation (WPFN) is asking that the environmental assessment for the Mackenzie Gas Pipeline project include a review of the potential impacts of increased barge traffic, associated with the pipeline project, on the K'atá'o Deh (Hay River) to Tsá Tú (Beaver Lake) shipping corridor.

More specifically, the West Point First Nation is very concerned about the impact of increased shipping on water quality and fish stocks in this corridor. The West Point First Nation depends to a great extent on both domestic and commercial fish harvesting in this area and has documented, through the above noted traditional knowledge study, a decline in water quality and fish stocks due to the cumulative impact of commercial fishing and industrial development in the Hay River area. Further decline is not acceptable.

The *West Point First Nation Traditional Fishery Project Report* identified the following key concerns:

Special Areas

The most significant area of concern to the WPFN people is the Tsá Tú / Nducho (Beaver Lake / Big Island) area. There is universal agreement that these areas need to be protected both on land and water. It is an area of great production, of everything from fish, to ducks, to moose and caribou.

There is also a general consensus that the entire area (anywhere from 2-5 miles inland and out into the lake) from Kátá'o Deh through Tsá Tú to the Dehcho, and along the north shore of Tucho from Nducho through Tsácho Kñ Ehda (Moraine Point) should be protected. Key locations within this area include Tthechílaa, Three Islands, and K'itsi Ehda. The other general area of concern is the entire K'ágee Tú watershed. In particular, several respondents emphasized the importance of the creeks running into Tatá'aílí from the south (from the Nagáh Shíh) and west (along the K'ágee Deh), and N.E. along the shore. (JN.C.) These areas include most of the WPFN traditional fishing, hunting and gathering locations.

Resource Development

The respondents expressed a variety of concerns about the future development of the area. Underlying all of the specific issues they mentioned is a feeling of unease over the increase in the general pollution of the land and the water that is likely to arise from development. People do not want the 'garbage', the waste products, and the 'accidents' of careless development polluting their land.

Increased Shipping

Respondents expressed concern over:

- The potential for barges to leak fuel into the lakes and rivers, undetected and/or unreported. (K.T.)
- The potential for barges sinking, especially those that might be carrying chemicals or other significant pollutants. (N.C.)
- Increased traffic scaring the fish and disrupting fishing activities.
- Increased traffic 'stirring up' feeding areas in shallower water. (N.C.)

The Report recommended, among other things, that:

All proposed resource development projects, including projects that will lead to increased barge traffic, must incorporate fish and water studies into their environmental assessment process. WPFN must be directly involved in these studies.

The West Point First Nation Council is willing to meet with representatives of your organization to discuss our concerns in more detail. We must note that these concerns were expressed strongly by the elders and traditional harvesters within our community.

In the meantime, we ask that you take these concerns seriously and ensure that potential environmental impacts to this area due to the Mackenzie Gas Pipeline project are thoroughly researched and properly addressed. Mahsi.

Yours truly,

Chief Bobby Cayen

Chief Robert Cayen Jr.

cc. Grand Chief Herb Norwegian, Deh Cho First Nations
Chief Roy Fabian, K'át'l'odééche First Nation
Chief Berna Landry, Deh Gah Got'ie First Nation
Chief Lloyd Chicot, K'ágee Tu First Nation

