



EA 1415-01

Summary of Community Scoping Sessions

Prairie Creek All-Season Road and Airstrip,
Canadian Zinc Corporation

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Introduction – The Community Scoping Process

The following is a summary of the primary issues identified at the community scoping sessions for the proposed Prairie Creek all-season road and airstrip. The sessions were held in Nahanni Butte (June 9th), Fort Liard (June 10th), and Fort Simpson (June 11th).

Each of the sessions began with a presentation from the Mackenzie Valley Review Board (Review Board) staff describing the environmental assessment process. Emphasis was placed on the purpose of scoping: to identify and prioritize the issues from the affected communities. Following the Review Board presentation, the developer, Canadian Zinc Corporation (CanZinc), gave a presentation describing the proposed project. CanZinc described the proposed route and how traffic and use along the road would compare with the approved winter access road.

The primary issues identified were:

- in Nahanni Butte, the effect of the all-season road on harvesting in the area
- in Fort Liard, the effect on the Liard Highway (Hwy 7)
- in Fort Simpson, the effect on the wildlife in the area and the overall effect on Nahanni National Park Reserve.

This briefing describes the issues and concerns raised in each community.

Nahanni Butte (June 9th)

Nahanni Butte considered itself to be the most affected community, with the project being “in [their] backyard.” Overall, Nahanni Butte considered the proposed all-season road to be a major change from the approved winter road. The primary issues related to the possible effects to various traditional uses of the land. The following subsections outline the major issues presented in Nahanni Butte.



Figure 1 Community scoping session in Nahanni Butte

Harvest and Traditional Use

Nahanni Butte residents harvest throughout the area and the Nahanni National Park Reserve (NNPR). Community members stated that they have traditional harvesting routes and trap-lines in the area. Traditional harvesting includes: fishing, moose, sheep, caribou, water fowl and fur-bearers. The concerns are:

- direct disturbance of wildlife
- increased access will result in further wildlife disturbances which could reduce hunting success
- improved access for outside hunters may increase the hunting pressure
- improved access could open the area to more exploration and further development which would be undesirable

To mitigate the effects from improved access, residents recommended that the road should be controlled and that this should be paid for by CanZinc.

Contamination and Accidents along the Road and at Transfer Facilities

The specific issues and concerns were:

- Spills to water and downstream effects
- Spill response planning
- Aerial spread of concentrate
- Storage of concentrate - the location of storage facilities and how spill risks can be minimized
- Protection of wetlands
- The effect of avalanches, rock slides, and mudslides

Water and Aquatics

The concerns were focussed on sensitive areas for wetlands, fish and wildlife. Participants expressed concerns about impacts to creeks, rivers and wetlands, and to the fish in them. The specific issues and concerns were:

- Sediment and erosion control
- Protection of wetlands
 - Sensitive wetland areas between Second Gap and Silent Hills, near the Tetcela Transfer Facility, and between Second Gap and Wolverine Pass
- Protection of fish bearing streams with particular importance to:
 - Beaver Dam creek, Fish Trap Creek, Blue Fish Creek

Road Design

The specific issues and concerns were:

- The permanent all-season footprint
- Gravel sources

Community members requested that CanZinc consider doing Phase 1 of the project only (and keep Phase 2 as winter only). They thought that this would reduce the economic risk.

Other Issues and Concerns

The specific issues and concerns were:

- Permafrost degradation
- Need to amend the existing IBA
- Risk of increased money bringing alcohol and other social problems into Nahanni Butte
- Post closure reclamation cost

Fort Liard (June 10th)

Fort Liard's concerns were centred on the effects to the Liard Highway (Hwy 7). The opinion of the residents was that the highway is already in poor shape and increased traffic will adversely affect the highway. The Acho Dene Koe (ADK) first nation deferred to Nahanni Butte for consideration of the impacts of the all-season road since the road is within Nahanni Butte's traditional area. The following subsections outline the primary issues and concerns presented in Fort Liard.

Effects to Liard Hwy

The specific issues and concerns were:

- Damage to highway from increased truck traffic
 - Cumulative effects from oil and gas trucks, concentrate and fuel trucks
 - Increased dust from increased summer use
 - Effect on elders who live near the highway and traditionally use the areas near the highway
- Maintenance and management of the highway
 - Who will pay for increased maintenance? GNWT? CanZinc?

Community members asked whether it would be possible to pave or seal the road for dust management. In addition, CanZinc stated that there is an existing MOU for use on Hwy 7 with the winter road operation.

- Safety
 - Road is too narrow for industrial traffic and there are only a few pull outs
 - Possible accidents with tourist traffic (i.e. RVs)
 - Speed of industrial trucks drivers
 - Accidents and collisions
 - In particular with wildlife (moose and buffalo)
- Spills
 - Contamination of surface water (including from the barge)
 - Cumulative impacts from spills given upstream oil and gas development (including fracking)
 - Notification of spill events

The community suggested that surface water monitoring was required and recommended using Aboriginal inspectors. In addition, it was recommended that there needs to be communication and consultation with the community about any changes to and spills along the highway.

Accidents on the All-Season Road

The specific issues and concerns were:

- Effect of mudslides, rockslides and washouts with respect to accidents along the road
- Safety along the road

Fort Simpson (June 11th)

The predominant concerns raised in Fort Simpson related to the effect of the road on wildlife in the area and the overall integrity of the land. The specific concerns are outlined in the following sections.

Wildlife

The specific issues and concerns were:

- That increased access will increase the amount of disturbance
- Impacts from increased access by sport hunters and fishers
- Disrupting wildlife movement corridors
- Disturbance to wildlife from increased noise
- Impacts to wildlife breeding, calving and nesting
- Protection of sensitive wildlife habitats
- Seasonal impacts of airstrip on plateau
- Habitat fragmentation
- Truck collisions with wildlife

To address these concerns, it was recommended that additional season wildlife studies be completed, identifying the most sensitive areas and times. Important areas identified during the session were: wetlands (nesting, moose) and Grainger Pass (sheep, moose, and caribou).

Fish and Aquatics

The specific issues and concerns were:

- Impacts to spawning areas
- Sediment and erosion control

The Tetcela Transfer Facility location was identified as important for fish and wildlife.

Project Design

The specific issues and concerns were:

- Sources of fill

- Sharp bends and steepness in the road
- Design considerations
- Location of the airstrip

Overall, participants commented that the road should be carefully planned and designed in a way that minimizes risks. For example, given the steepness of the terrain and the sharp bends, they recommended runaway lanes be considered. A question was also raised about whether it would be possible to accommodate the airstrip by widening the road.

Spills and Contamination

The specific issues and concerns were:

- Toxic spills of concentrate and fuel
- Effects of dust
- Contents of trucks – the public wants to know what is being trucked

National Park

The specific issues and concerns were:

- Harvesting in Nahanni National Park Reserve (Fort Simpson residents harvest in Nahanni National Park Reserve)
- Wilderness quality of park
- Conflicts with Parks Canada mandate (ecological and cultural integrity)
- Conflicts with Dene principles
 - Does this road support Dene principles (see brochure on Public Registry)?
 - “Decisions on the land must be long-term to be spiritually right”
- Cumulative effects with the road (inside and outside of Nahanni National Park Reserve)
- Closure and reclamation of the road
 - How long will re-vegetation of road take? Slow re-vegetation and recovery rates
 - Will the road be reclaimed?
- Long-term integrity of the park – the park is for future generations

Effects of Environment on the Road

The specific issues and concerns were:

- overland flow, flash floods, changing climate trends, permafrost changes in the mountains

Liard Hwy

The specific issues and concerns were:

- Impacts from increased traffic
- Effects on summer traffic

- Wildlife impacts between Liard Hwy and Liard River
- Dust on Liard Hwy

Other Issues and Concerns

The specific issues and concerns were:

- Who will pay for long-term maintenance
- That there is a benefit from the existing road bed

The participants considered the all-season road to be a brand new project and commented that communication to date with the Deh Cho has been good.