



AGNICO EAGLE

HOPE BAY MINE

Aquatic Effects Monitoring Plan

JANUARY 2026
VERSION 4

Revisions


Version #	Date	Section	Summary of Changes	Author
0	December 2016	Throughout	Initial Plan	TMAC
1	December 2017	Throughout	Update to FEIS	TMAC
2	April 2018	Throughout	Update to comprehensive plan that includes Doris and Madrid-Boston, and that includes non-point source AEMP sampling as well as MMER-EEM monitoring requirements for lakes receiving permitted discharge.	Agnico Eagle
3	September 2018	Throughout	Update to incorporate new MDMER requirements and technical comments.	Agnico Eagle
4	January 2026	Throughout	<p>Changes throughout this version of the plan are not significant and represent a clean-up of existing roles, responsibilities, and processes. Additional changes include minor clarifications and updates.</p> <p>Additions are marked in right-hand margin as follows:</p> 	Agnico Eagle
		Figure 1-1 Figure 3.1-1a Figure 3.1-1b Figure 4.2-1	Updated all figures.	
		Table 1.3-1	Updated to reflect current role titles and responsibilities.	
		Section 2.1.1	Included freshwater withdrawal from Patch Lake.	
		Table 3.2.2	Added soluble reactive Silica and soluble Nitrogen to Water Quality Variables.	
		Section 3.2.2	Included pH and specific conductivity profiling for water profiling.	
		Section 5.2	Updated to include latest MDMER reports.	

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Glossary

Term	Definition
AEMP	Aquatic Effects Monitoring Program
Agnico Eagle	Agnico Eagle Mines Limited
ANCOVA	Analysis of covariance
ANOVA	Analysis of variance
BACI	Before-after-control-impacts
Benthos	Benthic invertebrates
CALA	Canadian Association for Laboratory Accreditation
CCME	Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment
CoC	Chain of custody
CPUE	Catch-per-unit-effort
DELTs	Deformities, erosion, lesions, and tumours
DFO	Fisheries and Oceans Canada
ECCC	Environment and Climate Change Canada
EEM	Environmental Effects Monitoring
FEIS	Final Environmental Impact Statement
GN	Government of Nunavut
CIRNAC	Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
KitIA	Kitikmeot Inuit Association
MDMER	Metal and Diamond Mining Effluent Regulations
NIRB	Nunavut Impact Review Board
NWB	Nunavut Water Board
The Belt	Hope Bay Belt
the Plan	Aquatic Effects Monitoring Plan
the Mine	Hope Bay Mine
QAQC	Quality assurance and quality control
TIA	Tailings Impoundment Area
TSS	Total Suspended Solids
WLWB	Wek'èezhii Land and Water Board

1. Introduction

The Hope Bay Mine (the Mine) is a gold mining development owned by Agnico Eagle Mines Limited (Agnico Eagle) in the West Kitikmeot region of mainland Nunavut. The Mine property is approximately 153 km southwest of Cambridge Bay on the southern shore of Melville Sound and contains a greenstone belt (the Belt) that runs 80 km in a north-south direction varying in width between 7 km and 20 km.

The Mine area has been actively explored and developed since the late 1980s and consists of three developments: Doris, Madrid, and Boston (Figure 1-1). Agnico Eagle operates under Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB) Project Certificate No. 003 (Doris) and No. 009 (Madrid and Boston), as well as Type A Water Licence 2AM-DOH1335 (Doris and Madrid) and 2AM-BOS1835 (Boston). Doris is the northernmost development situated near Roberts Bay. The Madrid and Boston developments are in the north-central and southernmost parts of the Belt.

This *Aquatic Effects Monitoring Plan* (the Plan) describes the Aquatic Effects Monitoring Program (AEMP) for the freshwater environment to be conducted and evaluated over the entire Hope Bay Belt.

The primary goals of the AEMP described by the Plan are to evaluate potential Mine effects on the surrounding freshwater environment during the construction and operation of the Mine, verify predictions from the Madrid-Boston Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS; TMAC 2017), support current and future Fisheries Authorizations, and provide a mechanism to respond to potential Mine effects in the freshwater environment through mitigation and management actions. The Plan focuses on Aimaokatalok Lake, which will receive treated discharge from the Mine, and lakes adjacent to proposed infrastructure that have the greatest potential to receive non-point-source inputs such as runoff (e.g., Doris, Patch, Stickleback, and Wolverine lakes) and could be affected by water loss due to permitted water withdrawal and groundwater seepage into the mines through underground workings (e.g., Doris, Imniagut, Ogama, P.O., Patch, P.O., Wolverine, and Windy lakes). The Plan is harmonized with the Environmental Effects Monitoring (EEM) of the Metal and Diamond Mining Effluent Regulations (MDMER; SOR/2002-222) under the *Fisheries Act* (1985) to provide a comprehensive AEMP that assesses point and non-point inputs into the Mine lakes.

This Plan considers information from technical comments received following the Madrid-Boston FEIS Final Hearing and Type A Water Licence technical meetings (Cambridge Bay, May 2018), the Madrid-Boston FEIS submission (December 2017), the draft Environmental Impact Statement technical meetings (Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, June 2017), and the Doris Project Type A Water Licence technical meetings (Cambridge Bay, September 2016). The Plan further considers guidance outlined in the *Metal Mining Technical Guidance for Environmental Effects Monitoring* (Environment Canada 2012), the *Guidelines for Designing and Implementing Aquatic Effects Monitoring Programs for Development Projects in the Northwest Territories: Overview Report* (INAC 2009), and the *Guidelines for Adaptive Management - a Response Framework for Aquatic Effects Monitoring* (WLWB 2010). The monitoring, evaluation of effects, and the management response framework described in the Plan have been adapted from the *Doris Aquatic Effects Monitoring Plan* (TMAC 2016) that was developed in consultation with and approved by

the Nunavut Water Board (NWB), the Kitikmeot Inuit Association (KitlA), the NIRB, Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC), and Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO).

This Plan is intended primarily for use by Agnico Eagle and its contractors to guide appropriate freshwater effects monitoring associated with the Mine. The monitoring and the evaluation of the potential Mine effects are designed to confirm if mitigation measures are performing as planned, and if not, then management responses will be developed to eliminate or reduce the potential for downstream environmental effects. The Plan is a “living document” and may be updated based on regulatory changes, Mine-related changes, or changes to existing mitigation measures. All updates to the Plan will be submitted to the NWB.

Figure 1-1. Hope Bay Mine Location

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CLIENT: Agnico Eagle Mines Ltd.
GIS NUMBER: HB-01-300-01

DATE: 09 June 2025

PROJECTION: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 13N
SCALE: 1:300,000 when printed at 8.5x11

1.1. Objectives

The purpose of this Plan is to assess the potential effects of Mine activities on the freshwater environment, assess predictions of the Madrid-Boston FEIS (TMAC 2017), and comply with requirements set forth in the Mine permitting and licensing processes. The objectives of the Plan are aligned with the definition of the “Aquatic Effects Monitoring Plan” as outlined in the Water Licence 2AM-DOH1335.

The main objectives of the Plan are to demonstrate that Mine activities are not adversely affecting the aquatic environment by:

- Detecting potential short- and long-term changes in lakes potentially influenced by activities of the Mine;
- Meeting the conditions of the applicable Type A Water Licences for the Mine;
- Comparing the results of the program to predictions made in the *Madrid-Boston FEIS* (TMAC 2017);
- Assessing the efficacy of mitigation measures applied to the Mine activities;
- Developing a management framework that provides a mechanism to respond to potential Mine-related effects in select Mine lakes; and
- Using the management framework to identify additional mitigation measures that will avert or reduce Mine-related effects in Mine lakes.

This Plan is designed to address these objectives by monitoring the receiving environment in the short-term (annually) and the long-term (during construction and operation). The sampling design allows for the detection of potential changes in the receiving environment, which would inform whether management and mitigation measures are effective. The Plan contains an aquatic response framework such that if potential effects are detected in the freshwater environment, they can be investigated and additional mitigation measures considered to eliminate or reduce the effect. Together, these measures form an effective strategy to achieve environmental protection in the Mine area by limiting the potential for adverse effects in the freshwater environment.

1.2. Relevant Legislation and Guidance

Table 1.2-1 provides a summary of federal and territorial regulations governing this Plan and associated guidelines. Additional Agnico Eagle plans and standards designed to manage sources of potential compounds to the freshwater environment were submitted as part of the Madrid-Boston FEIS (TMAC 2017) and the Doris Mine amendment (TMAC 2015), including the *Spill Contingency Plan*, the *Doris-Madrid Water Management Plan*, the *Boston Water Management Plan*, the *Air Quality Management Plan* among others.

Table 1.2-1. Regulations and Guidelines Pertinent to the Aquatic Effects Monitoring Plan

Regulation	Year	Governing Body	Relevance
<i>Environmental Protection Act</i>	1988	Government of Nunavut (GN)	Governs the protection of the Nunavut environment including land, air, water, and organisms therein.
<i>Nunavut Land Claim Agreement Act</i>	1993	GN	Grants Inuit rights to land, water, and land-fast ice in the Nunavut settlement area.
<i>Environmental Rights Act</i>	1988	GN	Grants all Nunavut residents the ability to launch an investigation.
<i>Nunavut Waters Regulations</i>	2013	NWB	Licence for mining and milling undertaking to use water and deposit of waste in relation to the construction, operation, closure, and reclamation.
<i>Fisheries Act</i>	1985	DFO	Prohibits any work or undertaking that would cause the harmful alteration, disruption, or destruction of fish habitat.
<i>MDMER Regulations (Section 36 of Fisheries Act)</i>	2002	ECCC	Prohibits the deposit of deleterious substances into waters frequented by fish, unless authorized by regulations under the Fisheries Act or other federal legislation.
Guideline	Year	Issued by	Relevance
<i>Canadian Environmental Quality Guidelines</i>	1999 – as amended to date	Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME)	Provides guidance on water quality for the protection of aquatic life.

1.3. Plan Management and Execution

The Plan will be reviewed regularly and updated as necessary with approvals from the NWB. Personnel responsible for implementing and updating the Plan and undertaking the AEMP sampling and reporting are identified in Table 1.3-1.

Table 1.3-1. Roles and Responsibilities

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Role	Responsibility
Environmental Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall responsibility for and implementation of the Plan; Provide the on-site resources to operate and maintain the monitoring program in accordance with this Plan; and Provide input on modifications to design and operational procedures to improve operational performance. Review and update this Plan as required; Support implementation of this Plan; and Ensure staff conducting monitoring are trained in AEMP monitoring and quality assurance and quality control procedures.
Environmental Supervisor / Environmental Consultants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct AEMP sampling; Report issues, irregularities, and non-compliances with the AEMP sampling program to the Environmental Director; Ensure sampling gear is safe and operational;

Role	Responsibility
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure monitoring is conducted safely;• Maintain and review AEMP records; and• Complete required AEMP reporting.

2. Rationale for AEMP Design

The AEMP is a comprehensive program that considers Mine-related effects on the freshwater environment and reflects the potential Mine effects assessed in the *Madrid-Boston FEIS* (TMAC 2017) and *Revisions to TMAC Resources Inc. Amendment Application No. 1 of Project Certificate No. 003 and Water Licence 2AM-DOH1335* (TMAC 2015). The monitoring program design, environmental indicators, and sampling methodologies and frequencies are based on potential effects related to Mine development, and the program considers past baseline data sampling locations, methodologies, and sample collection timing. Where possible, the AEMP has been harmonized with MDMER requirements (SOR/2002-222) and EEM guidance (Environment Canada 2012) so the monitoring data can be used by both the AEMP and MDMER EEM programs to more robustly assess potential Mine effects to the surrounding freshwater environment.

2.1. Potential Mine Effects on Freshwater Environment

The greatest potential for effects in the freshwater environment due to Mine activities are predicted to be changes in surface water quantity and quality and are discussed below.

2.1.1. Surface Water Quantity

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The Mine has the potential to affect surface water quantity by direct water withdrawal for domestic and industrial activities, and through water inflow into the mines. Water will be pumped from Doris, Patch, Aimaokatalok, and Windy lakes. Water withdraw rates are specified in the water licenses. Underground mines will be developed as part of the Mine: Doris, Madrid, and Boston. Crown pillar recovery will occur at Doris, Madrid North and Boston. Doris and Madrid will mine within a portion of the taliks beneath Doris, Patch, and Wolverine lakes in the Doris Watershed. Groundwater within these taliks will be saline and is expected to seep into the underground mines. This inflow will be intercepted and conveyed to the marine environment, with the groundwater predicted to be recharged with water from the overlying lakes. This will remove these water quantities from the freshwater systems, which could affect lake levels and stream flows, and by extension, fish habitat. The Boston mine will remain in permafrost and is not expected to intercept taliks. Further, water withdrawn from Aimaokatalok Lake for domestic and industrial use at Boston will be treated and returned to the lake or its watershed, reducing the potential for effects on water quantity in this lake and its watershed.

2.1.2. Surface Water Quality

The Mine has the potential to affect freshwater surface water quality directly due to the discharge of treated water during operations and indirectly due to runoff of site and mine contact water and the use of explosives (i.e., nitrogen inputs) during the construction and operations phases. The direct discharge of treated water will only occur in western Aimaokatalok Lake during Boston operations and will be discharged in compliance with MDMER requirements.

Mine infrastructure and activities that may cause indirect inputs to nearby freshwater during construction and operations include:

- Mining activities;
- Waste rock and ore storage;
- Sediment and pollution control ponds;
- Explosives storage and use;
- Quarry crushing;
- Fuel storage and fuelling stations;
- Road construction and use; and
- Tailings deposition and storage.

Changes to surface water quality in the Mine lakes also have the potential to affect sediment quality and biological organisms such as primary producers, secondary producers, and fish.

2.2. Mitigation of Potential Effects

Agnico Eagle has several management and monitoring plans that prevent or minimize potential effects to the freshwater environment (Table 2.2-1). To date, the water and air management practices outlined in the various plans have been effective in mitigating effects to the freshwater environment during the construction and operation of the Doris Mine.

Table 2.2-1. Agnico Eagle Documents and Programs Related to the Aquatic Effects Monitoring Plan

Document Title	Relevance
<i>Doris-Madrid Water Management Plan</i> <i>Boston Water Management Plan</i>	Management of contact water from the site, Tailings Impoundment Area (TIA) and underground
<i>Air Quality Management Plan</i>	Management of dust and air-borne emissions
<i>Groundwater Management Plan</i>	Management and minimization of groundwater inflow to the mine
<i>Waste Rock, Ore, and Mine Backfill Management Plan</i> <i>Water and Ore/Waste Rock Management Plan for Boston Site</i>	Management of waste rock and ore contact water
<i>Domestic Wastewater Treatment Management Plan</i>	Management of treated domestic wastewater discharge
<i>Spill Contingency Plan</i>	Spill response procedures to minimize spill effects
<i>Phase 2, Doris Tailings Impoundment Area - Operations, Maintenance, and Surveillance Manual</i> <i>Boston Tailings Management Area - Operations, Maintenance, and Surveillance Manual</i>	Management of treated TIA discharge
<i>Quality Assurance and Quality Control Plan</i>	Approved sampling practices
<i>Hazardous Waste Management Plan</i>	Describes proper handling, storage and disposal procedures for hazardous wastes
<i>Non-Hazardous Waste Management Plan</i>	Describes proper handling, storage and disposal procedures for non-hazardous wastes

The efficacy of the mitigation measures pertaining to aquatic effects outlined in the various Mine management plans will be evaluated through this Plan. These management plans are continuously updated to reflect improvements to mitigation measures identified through the Plan implementation process.

Mitigation measures protective of aquatic life implemented at the Mine include:

- Sediment control measures for works in or near waterbodies and watercourses, such as use of silt fences or coconut matting at drainage points;
- Minimizing vegetation clearing;
- Implementation of erosion control measures, such as capping of soils exposed during construction activities with rock;
- Implementation of blasting restrictions near water outlined in DFO's *Guidelines for the Use of Explosives In or Near Canadian Fisheries Waters* (Wright and Hopky 1998);
- Treatment of discharges where necessary to maintain compliance with MDMER and/or Water Licence discharge criteria;
- Screening of water intakes to prevent impingement or entrainment of fish;
- Construction of stream crossings in a manner that does not interfere with fish passage, constrict channel width, or reduce flows and in accordance with DFO recommendations;
- Reuse of water where possible and practical; and
- Minimizing groundwater inflows.

2.3. AEMP Monitoring Components

The management and mitigation measures outlined above prevent or reduce the potential for, and magnitude of, effects to the freshwater environment. However, the potential remains for Mine activities to affect aquatic habitat through changes to lake levels and stream flows, and changes to surface water quality from treated discharge to Aimaakatalok Lake and runoff to other lakes in the Mine area. These potential Mine contributions could affect other aquatic components such as sediment quality and the biota that reside in these freshwater systems. This, in combination with regulatory requirements and guidance, has informed the selection of aquatic components that will be monitored under this Plan.

2.3.1. Water Quantity

Changes to lake water levels and stream flows may affect the quantity and quality of fish habitat. Water levels and streams flows in Doris, Ogama, P.O., Patch, Wolverine, Imniagut, and Windy lakes and their outflows may decrease through permitted water use and if lake water moves into the groundwater to replace the talik water that has seeped into underground mines. If this occurs, lower water levels downstream in Little Roberts and Glenn lakes may occur. To confirm these potential effects are not greater than those predicted following mitigation, lake water levels and selected stream flows will be

monitored and results will be compared to baseline information and FEIS predictions, and will be used to inform potential habitat offsetting under applicable Fisheries Authorizations.

2.3.2. Water Quality

Water quality in the Mine lakes could be affected by point (treated discharge) and non-point (runoff) sources, and if concentrations of particular water quality variables increase above certain levels (e.g., CCME guidelines for the protection of aquatic life), aquatic life could be affected. Treated water discharged to Aimaokatalok Lake will meet MDMER discharge criteria, which will be confirmed by end-of-pipe monitoring prescribed under the MDMER. EEM water quality monitoring related to this treated discharge will be conducted in the Aimaokatalok Lake receiving environment as required under the MDMER (Environment Canada 2012; SOR/2002-222).

Runoff from Mine activities is predicted to mainly affect Stickleback, Wolverine, and Aimaokatalok lakes during construction and operations (TMAC 2017), while Doris and Patch lakes are immediately proximal to Mine infrastructure. Given this, water quality will be monitored in these lakes and results will be evaluated against CCME guidelines for the protection of aquatic life and assessed to determine if concentrations are increasing in these lakes due to Mine activities.

2.3.3. Sediment Quality

Treated discharge and site runoff may contribute particulate matter and other constituents to the water of lakes near Mine activities, and these may interact with the sediments where they could affect aquatic life if concentrations increase above a certain level. Sediment quality will therefore be monitored in the same lakes as water quality to determine if concentrations are increasing due to Mine activities. All CCME sediment parameters will be evaluated to ensure that Mine activities are not affecting freshwater life.

2.3.4. Phytoplankton Biomass

Treated discharge and site runoff may contribute nutrients to lakes near Mine activities, and if particular nutrients (e.g., nitrogen and phosphorus) naturally limit primary production in these lakes, alteration of water quality could lead to increased primary production. Phytoplankton are the dominant primary producers in lakes, and phytoplankton biomass levels are estimated using the main photosynthetic pigment, chlorophyll *a*. Chlorophyll *a* concentrations will be measured in the same lakes as water and sediment quality to evaluate potential Mine effects through nutrient inputs.

2.3.5. Benthic Invertebrates

Treated discharge and site runoff have the potential to contribute particulate matter and associated constituents to the waterbodies near the Mine. This could affect the water and sediment chemistry, and potentially the health of benthic invertebrates (benthos) that are in contact with the water and sediments. As a result, benthos will be monitored as part of the AEMP program to determine if potential changes to water and sediment quality are affecting the benthic biota of lakes near the Mine.

Under MDMER, a benthic invertebrate community study related to treated discharge will be required in Aimaokatalok Lake if the concentration of the discharge in the exposure area is greater than 1% at 100m from the final discharge point (Schedule 5, subsection 9(1)(b)).

2.3.6. Fish

Treated discharge has the potential to affect fish populations by decreasing fish health and affecting the biological resources used by fish. Under MDMER, a fish population study related to treated discharge will be required in Aimaokatalok Lake if the concentration of the discharge in the exposure area is greater than 1% at 250 m from the final discharge point (Schedule 5, subsection 9(1)(a)). Further, MDMER requires fish tissue monitoring if the annual mean end-of-pipe total mercury (Hg) or total selenium (Se) concentrations in the treated discharge exceed 0.1 µg/L or 5 µg/L, respectively, or if a single concentration of total selenium exceeds 10 µg/L (Schedule 5, subsections 9(1)(c) and (d)). Should these studies be required, an appropriate monitoring program following sampling recommendations in the *Metal Mining Technical Guidance for Environmental Effects Monitoring* (Environment Canada 2012) will be developed in the MDMER First Study Design and carried forth under the Plan.

3. Monitoring

This chapter describes the study areas, monitoring schedule, sampling methods, analysis, and the quality assurance and quality control (QAQC) procedures used to fulfil the objectives outlined in Section 1.1.

3.1. Study Design

3.1.1. Study Areas

AEMP monitoring will be conducted in exposure lakes where Doris, Madrid, and Boston activities are most likely to occur. Monitoring will take place in Aimaokatalok, Doris, Patch, Stickleback, Windy, and Wolverine lakes (Figures 3.1-1a and 3.1-1b) as these lakes are adjacent to or downstream of most Mine activities and the associated taliks in which mining will occur. Ogama, P.O., Imniagut, Glenn, and Little Roberts lakes will also be monitored for water level and ice thickness to verify predictions made in the Madrid-Boston FEIS (TMAC 2017) and to support applicable Fisheries Authorizations. Stream flows at select lake outflows will also be monitored to support applicable Fisheries Authorizations.

Doris Lake monitoring, along with monitoring at Aimaokatalok, Patch, Stickleback, Wolverine, and Windy lakes will provide information needed to assess potential non-point-source aquatic effects related to the Mine, including runoff and water drawdown. Ogama, P.O., Imniagut, Glenn, and Little Roberts lakes will be monitored specifically for potential effects related to water drawdown. Water, sediment, and biological communities will be sampled at the deep basins of each lake (Aimaokatalok [Aim-Deep], Stickleback, Wolverine, Patch, and Doris Lake) to characterize potential non-point-source effects and/or align with historical sampling locations (Figures 3.1-1a and 3.1-1b). An additional sampling location in Aimaokatalok Lake (Aim-West) downstream of the treated water discharge will also be monitored (Figure 3.1-1b).

Monitoring in Aimaokatalok Lake will also be aligned with MDMER requirements (SOR/2002-222) and EEM guidance (Environment Canada 2012) as sampling will be conducted within the near-field discharge exposure area (Aim-EEM) as predicted by the hydrodynamic mixing model results (TMAC 2017; Appendix V5-4E; Figure 3.1-1b).

Monitoring for the AEMP and MDMER EEM will also occur in the deep basin of a reference lake (Reference Lake B) beyond the influence of Mine activities. Reference Lake B has been sampled annually since 2009 using methods consistent with MDMER EEM guidance, and will provide information on regional changes that may be occurring in the aquatic environment (Figure 3.1-1a).

Figure 3.1-1a. AEMP and MDMER EEM Study Areas, and MDMER EEM Replicate Stations, Northern Hope Bay Belt

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FIGURE 3.1-1A AEMP AND MDMR EEM STUDY AREAS, AND MDMR EEM REPLICATE STATIONS, NORTHERN HOPE BAY BELT

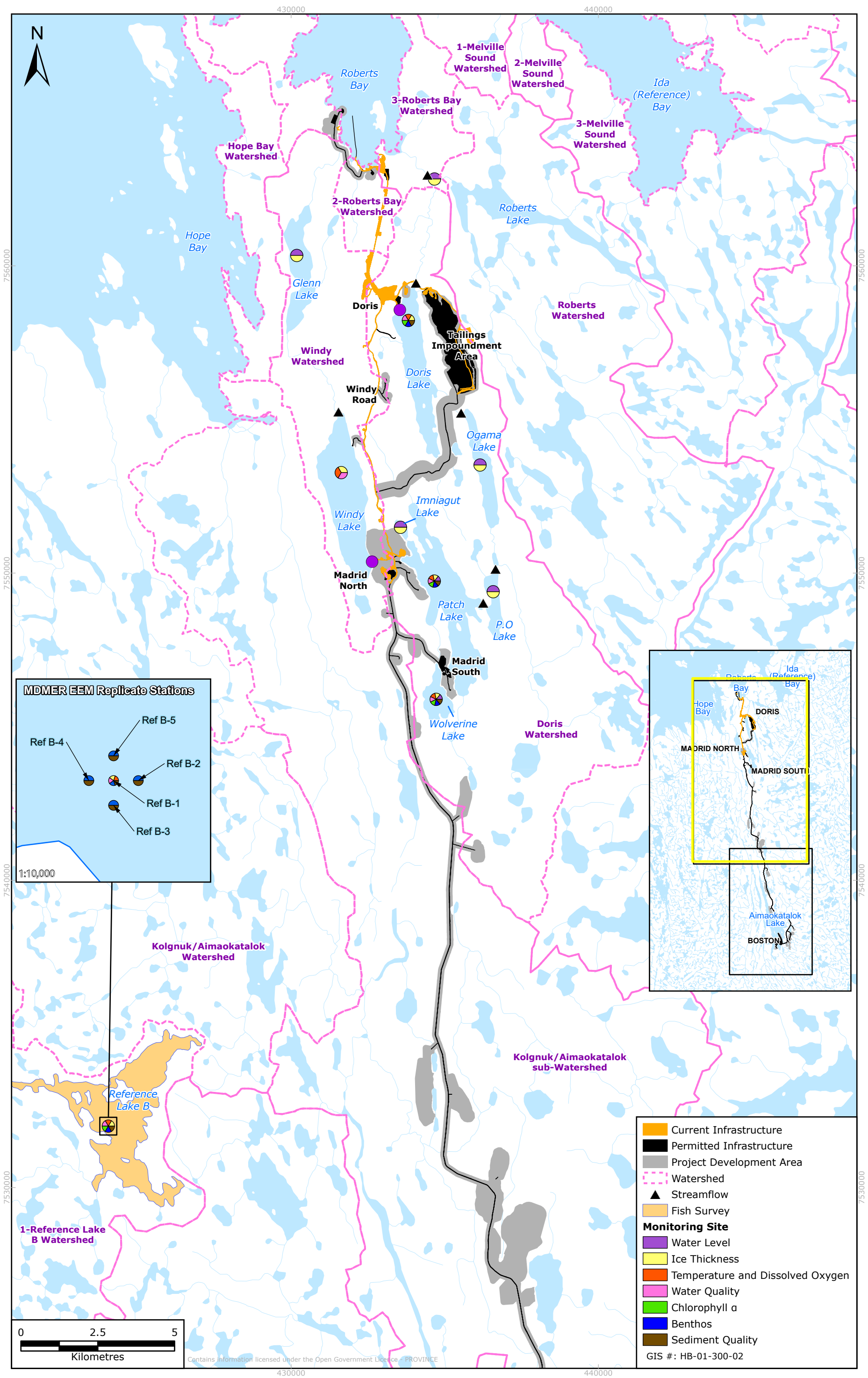
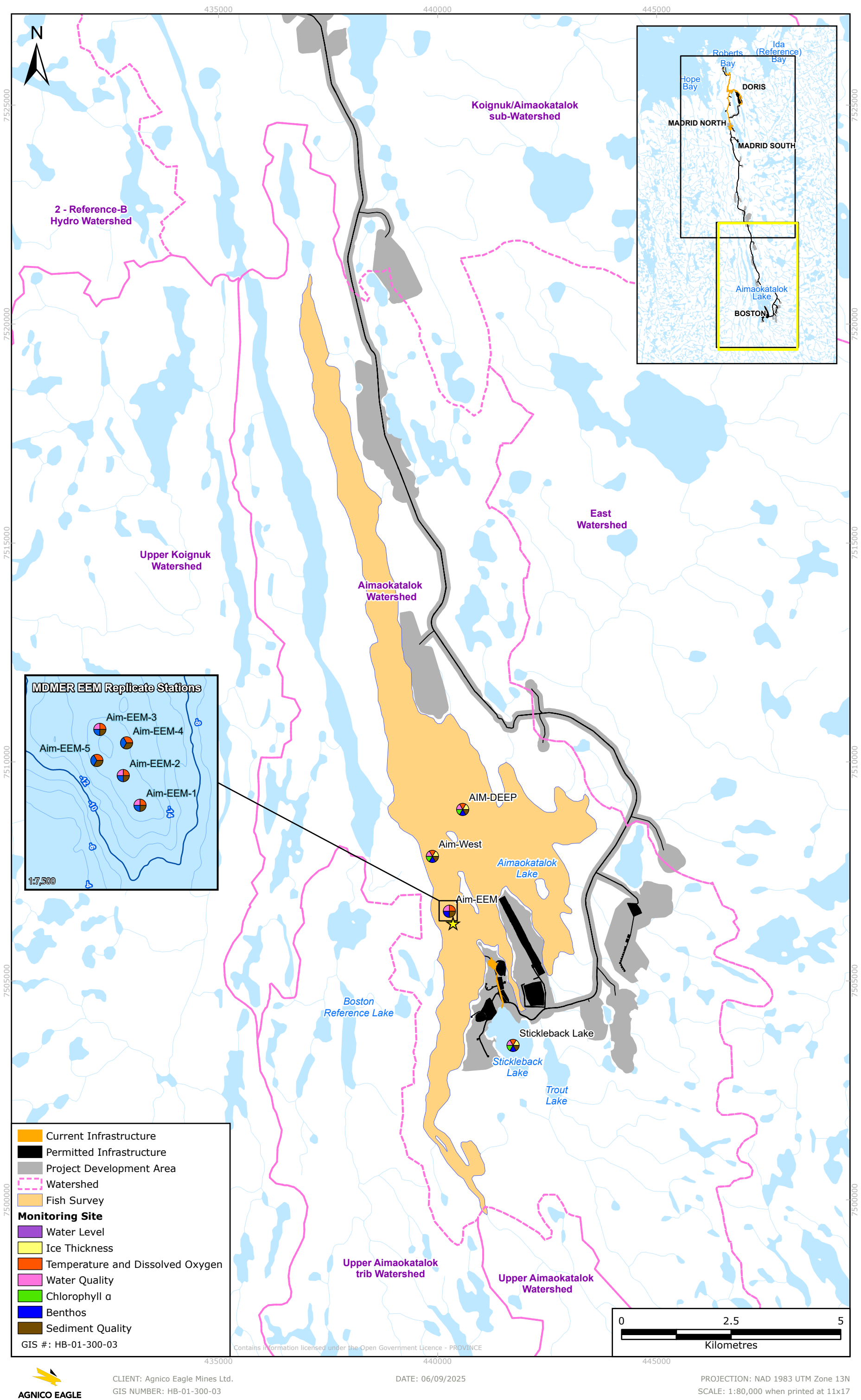


Figure 3.1-1b. AEMP and MDMER EEM Study Areas, and MDMER EEM Replicate Stations, Southern Hope Bay Belt

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FIGURE 3.1-1B AEMP AND MDMR EEM STUDY AREAS, AND MDMR EEM REPLICATE STATIONS, SOUTHERN HOPE BAY BELT



3.1.2. Monitoring Schedule

Aquatic effects monitoring components have been selected to address the potential Mine effects as described in Section 2. Similarly, the monitoring schedule has been tailored to address the Mine development and operational sequence, and is tied to periods during which Mine effects may occur. Table 3.1-1 outlines the Mine-specific monitoring triggers (such as water level changes, non-point-source inputs, and/or permitted discharge) that will initiate and drive the monitoring schedule.

Table 3.1-1. Study Area Descriptions and Monitoring Triggers

Watershed	Study Area	Description	Monitoring Trigger	Reason
Windy Watershed	Windy Lake	Windy hydrological monitoring station	Doris and Madrid Construction and Operations	Direct potable water withdrawal (increased accommodation at Doris)
	Glenn Lake	Accessible location near exposed bedrock	Doris and Madrid Construction and Operations	Indirect potable water withdrawal; downstream of Windy Lake
Doris Watershed	Wolverine Lake	Deep basin representative of lake and accessible location near exposed bedrock	Madrid South Construction and Operations	Groundwater inflows; Indirect inputs due to proximity
	Patch Lake	Deep area in center of lake representative of lake and accessible location near exposed bedrock	Madrid Construction and Operations	Groundwater inflows; Indirect inputs due to proximity
	Imniagut	Accessible location near exposed bedrock	Madrid Operations	Groundwater inflows
	P.O. Lake	Accessible location near exposed bedrock	Madrid Operations	Groundwater inflows
	Ogama Lake	Accessible location near exposed bedrock	Madrid Operations	Groundwater inflows
	Doris Lake	Deep basin representative of lake and Doris hydrological monitoring station	Doris and Madrid Construction and Operations	Direct water withdrawal; groundwater mine inflows; Indirect inputs due to proximity
			Boston Operations	Direct water withdrawal
Doris Watershed (cont'd)	Little Roberts Lake	Accessible location near exposed bedrock	Doris and Madrid Construction and Operations	Indirect water withdrawal and mine inflows; downstream of Doris Lake
			Boston Operations	Indirect water withdrawal; downstream of Doris Lake
Aimaokatalok Watershed	Stickleback Lake	Deep basin representative of lake	Boston Construction and Operations	Indirect inputs due to proximity
	Aimaokatalok Lake – Deep (Aim-Deep)	Deep basin representative of lake	Boston Construction and Operations	Indirect inputs due to proximity
	Aimaokatalok Lake – West (Aim-West)	Basin in western Aimaokatalok Lake	Boston Construction and Operations	Permitted discharge

Watershed	Study Area	Description	Monitoring Trigger	Reason
	Aimaokatalok Lake – EEM (Aim-EEM)	MDMER EEM sampling area	Discharge to Aimaokatalok Lake - MDMER	Permitted discharge
Reference	Reference Lake B	Deep basin representative of lake, reference area for AEMP and MDMER EEM programs	Doris, Madrid, and Boston Construction and Operations	Reference area for AEMP and MDMER EEM

During Madrid North construction and operations, Mine activities have the potential to affect Windy and Glenn lakes (direct and indirect potable water use); Patch Lake (groundwater inflows and proximity); Imniagut, Ogama, and P.O. lakes (groundwater inflows); and Doris and Little Roberts lakes (direct and indirect water use and water loss to groundwater inflows). These lakes will be monitored during Madrid North construction and operations.

During Madrid South construction and operations, Mine activities have the greatest potential to affect Wolverine and Patch lakes (groundwater inflows and proximity); Imniagut, Ogama, and P.O. lakes (groundwater inflows); Doris and Little Roberts lakes (direct and indirect water use and water loss to groundwater inflows); and Windy and Glenn lakes (direct and indirect potable water use). These lakes will be monitored during Madrid South construction and operations.

During Boston construction and operations, Stickleback Lake and Aimaokatalok Lake (Aim-Deep sampling area; Figure 3.1-1b) will be sampled for non-point source effects over the deepest section of the lakes. Following treated discharge to Aimaokatalok Lake, sampling will also be conducted at a near-field discharge exposure area (Aim-EEM; selected based on the hydrodynamic mixing model results (TMAC 2017; Appendix V5-4E)) and mid-field discharge exposure area (Aim-West).

The Doris Mine has been operating since late 2016 and has the potential to affect Doris Lake through its proximity to Mine activities and future groundwater inflows to the mine. Doris Lake has been monitored annually under the AEMP since 2010.

The monitoring schedule and sampling frequency for each of the Plan's environmental monitoring components are outlined in Table 3.1-2.

Table 3.1-2. Monitoring Schedule and Sampling Frequency

Monitoring Parameter	Schedule and Frequency
AEMP Program	
Water Level and Stream Flow	Continuous recording during open-water season or year round
Ice Thickness	Annually (April)
Temperature and Dissolved Oxygen Profile	2× per year (April, August)
Water Quality	2× per year (April, August)

Sediment Quality	once every 3 years (August)
Phytoplankton Biomass (as chlorophyll <i>a</i>)	Annually (August)
Benthic Invertebrates	once every 3 years (August)
MDMER EEM Program	
Temperature and Dissolved Oxygen Profile	4× per year (April, July, August, September)
Water Quality	4× per year (April, July, August, September)
Sediment Quality	once every 3 years, if benthic invertebrate monitoring is triggered by MDMER (August)
Benthic Invertebrates	once every 3 years, if triggered by MDMER (August)
Fish	once every 3 years, if triggered by MDMER (August)

Monitoring frequency outlined in this table applies to periods during which monitoring is triggered as outlined in Table 3.1-1.

For the AEMP, water levels at the monitored lake stations will be recorded year-round or during the open-water season (depending on the hydrometric station), and stream flows at select lake outflows will be monitored during the open-water season. Ice thickness will be measured at each AEMP lake station in April. Water quality and physical profiles of temperature and dissolved oxygen will be collected in April (under ice) and August (open water). Phytoplankton biomass (as chlorophyll *a*) sampling will be conducted annually in August and benthic invertebrate and sediment quality sampling will be conducted every three years during August. Sampling will be conducted on a similar schedule in Reference Lake B for all environmental components, except water level, which will not be monitored in the lake.

MDMER EEM monitoring will be conducted in Aimaokatalok Lake and Reference Lake B. MDMER-related water quality sampling and physical profiling will occur four times per year (in April, July, August, and September), while MDMER-related sediment quality and benthic invertebrates will be sampled every three years if benthic invertebrate sampling is triggered by MDMER requirements. Fish sampling will also be conducted every three years if triggered by MDMER requirements.

This Plan has been developed with a focus on construction and operations phases. The Plan will be re-evaluated prior to closure to determine the appropriate closure monitoring, and monitoring under temporary closure (Care and Maintenance) will be re-evaluated with interested parties if Agnico Eagle enters this phase. The *Agnico Eagle Care and Maintenance Plan* outlines procedures as undertaken during Care and Maintenance. EEM monitoring will continue in Aimaokatalok Lake and Reference Lake B as required by MDMER.

3.2. Monitoring Components and Effects Analysis

The sampling program will include the collection of water level, stream flow, ice thickness, physical limnology, water quality, sediment quality, phytoplankton biomass (as chlorophyll *a*), and benthic

invertebrate data. Fish and benthic invertebrates in Aimaokatalok Lake and Reference Lake B will also be monitored as per MDMER requirements (Schedule 5, section 9). A summary of the AEMP and MDMER EEM sampling is presented in Table 3.2-1.

3.2.1. Water Level, Stream Flow, and Ice Thickness

The objectives of the lake level, stream flow, and ice thickness monitoring are to confirm the water loss predictions from the Madrid-Boston FEIS and to inform potential fisheries offsetting under applicable Fisheries Authorizations. Lake level and stream flow monitoring stations could be de-activated in the future if the modelling predictions are validated and fisheries offsetting measures are carried forth.

Methods

Lake water levels will be measured continuously year-round in Doris Lake and during the open-water season (approximately June to October) at Windy, Glenn, Patch, Imniagut, Ogama, P.O., Little Roberts, and Wolverine lakes (Figure 3.1-1a, Table 3.2-1). A pressure transducer paired with a data logger will be installed in each lake, and data will be recorded in 15-minute intervals and downloaded either monthly (Doris Lake) or a minimum of semi-annually (remaining stations). The water surface will be surveyed and tied to the monitoring station datum (either local or geodetic, as applicable).

Stream flow data will be collected at the outflows of Doris, Little Roberts, Windy, Patch, Ogama, and P.O. lakes. Manual flow measurements will be made throughout the open-water season and will be correlated with lake level measurements to develop station-specific rating curves at all flow monitoring stations. Rating curves allow the continuous lake level data to be converted to continuous stream flow data at the lake outflows. Rating curve equations will be developed using standard methods outlined by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO 2010). Once developed, a minimum of three sets of manual stream flow measurements will be made annually, spread across the open water season, to cover high and low flow periods.

Table 3.2-1. AEMP and MDMER EEM Sampling Details, Hope Bay Mine

Monitoring Parameter	Lakes Sampled	# of Sampling Areas/Lake	# of Replicate Stations/Area	Depths Sampled	# of Field Subsamples/Replicate Station	Sampling Device
AEMP Program						
Water Level and Stream Flow (* lake level only)	Doris Glenn* Imniagut* Little Roberts Ogama Patch P.O. Windy Wolverine*	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	Transducer, data logger, current meter
Ice Thickness	Aimaokatalok (Deep and West sampling areas) Doris Glenn Imniagut Little Roberts Ogama Patch P.O. Windy Wolverine Stickleback Reference Lake B	2 in Aimaokatalok, 1 in other lakes	1	N/A	1	Manual measurement with metred rod
Temperature and Dissolved Oxygen Profile, Secchi depth	Aimaokatalok (Deep and West sampling areas) Doris Patch Stickleback Windy Wolverine Reference B	2 in Aimaokatalok, 1 in other lakes	1	Entire water column	1	Temp-DO meter; Secchi disk
Water Quality	Aimaokatalok (Deep and West sampling areas) Doris Patch	2 in Aimaokatalok, 1 in other lakes	1	1 m below surface at all sites; additional sample at 2 m above water-sediment interface in	n=2 at 1 m below the surface at the shallow lakes (Stickleback and Wolverine); n=1 to 2 at each depth in	GO-FLO or Niskin sampling bottle

Monitoring Parameter	Lakes Sampled	# of Sampling Areas/Lake	# of Replicate Stations/Area	Depths Sampled	# of Field Subsamples/Replicate Station	Sampling Device
	Stickleback Windy Wolverine Reference B			deeper sites (> 6 m depth)	deeper (> 6 m depth) lakes (target of 10% replication), discrete samples	
Sediment Quality	Aimaokatalok (Deep and West sampling areas) Doris Patch Stickleback Wolverine Reference B	2 in Aimaokatalok, 1 in other lakes	3	Lake bottom	1	Ekman grab
Phytoplankton biomass (chlorophyll <i>a</i>)	Aimaokatalok (Deep and West sampling areas) Doris Patch Stickleback Wolverine Reference B	2 in Aimaokatalok, 1 in other lakes	1	1 m below the surface	3 discrete samples	GO-FLO or Niskin sampling bottle
Benthic Invertebrate Density and Taxonomy	Aimaokatalok (Deep and West sampling areas) Doris Patch Stickleback Wolverine Reference B	2 in Aimaokatalok, 1 in other lakes	5	Lake bottom	3 samples pooled in the field	Ekman grab; 500 µm sieve
MDMER EEM Program						
Temperature and Dissolved Oxygen Profile, Secchi depth	Aimaokatalok (EEM) Reference B	1	5 in Aimaokatalok, 1 in Reference B	Entire water column	1	Temp-DO meter; Secchi disk
Water Quality	Aimaokatalok (EEM) Reference B	1	3 in Aimaokatalok, 1 in Reference B	1 m below the surface and 2 m above water-sediment interface	1 to 2 at each depth (target of 10% replication), discrete samples	GO-FLO sampling bottle
Sediment Quality (if benthic invertebrate)	Aimaokatalok (EEM) Reference B	1	5	Lake bottom	1	Ekman grab

Monitoring Parameter	Lakes Sampled	# of Sampling Areas/Lake	# of Replicate Stations/Area	Depths Sampled	# of Field Subsamples/Replicate Station	Sampling Device
sampling is required under MDMER)						
Benthic Invertebrate Density and Taxonomy (if required under MDMER)	Aimaokatalok (EEM) Reference B	1	5	Lake bottom	3 subsamples pooled in the field	Ekman grab; 500 µm sieve
Fish Population and Tissue (if required under MDMER)	Aimaokatalok Reference B	N/A	N/A	N/A	Ninespine Stickleback n=60 fish/lake (20 male/20 female/20 immature); including 8 fish/site same sex/size for tissue metals sex/size† Lake Trout: 100 fish/lake†	Sinking and Floating Gill Nets, Beach Seine, Minnow Traps

Notes:

N/A = Not applicable

† Samples sizes indicated are from Environment Canada (2012) but these may not be attainable in Arctic lakes.

Discrete under-ice lake level measurements will also be collected in April at Patch, Imniagut, Ogama, P.O., Windy, Glenn, Little Roberts, and Wolverine lakes. The water surface will be surveyed through an augured hole and tied to the monitoring station bench marks. The survey will be performed using a Real Time Kinematic system, total station, or rod and level depending on field conditions at each monitoring station. The lake bottom depth will also be measured using a depth sounder or a weighted, metred line.

Ice thickness measurements will be taken once each year in April concurrent with all lake level measurements and water quality sampling. The measurement will be taken through an augured hole using a metred rod.

Effects Analysis

Water level and ice thickness data will be examined to determine if water level reductions in lakes within the Doris and Windy watersheds are consistent with predictions made in the Madrid-Boston FEIS. Results will inform potential offsetting under applicable Fisheries Authorizations in consultation with DFO, the KitIA, and the Inuit Environmental Advisory Committee.

Quality Assurance and Quality Control

The collection and analysis of water level and stream flow data will follow procedures outlined in the 2014 Hydrology Report (ERM Rescan 2014). A number of field- and desk-based procedures will be used to assess the reliability of data collected from the hydrometric station. Field QAQC procedures will include following accepted water level surveying procedures and using stable benchmarks (such as bedrock).

Field crews will be trained to employ consistent methods for measuring ice thickness to ensure comparability of data.

3.2.2. Water Quality

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The objectives of the AEMP water quality monitoring are to assess if Mine activities are affecting the local freshwater environment, confirm the water quality predictions in the Madrid-Boston FEIS, confirm the water quality predictions from the near- and far-field plume mixing modelling exercises (e.g., TMAC 2017; Appendices V5-4B and V5-4E), and comply with MDMER EEM water quality monitoring requirements (Schedule 5, sections 7 and 8). The Plan harmonizes the AEMP and MDMER EEM by sampling water quality in Aimaokatalok Lake and Reference Lake B during the same periods and at similar depths for each program and using these data to jointly assess water quality in these lakes.

Methods

Water quality sampling will be conducted in April and August of each year at the AEMP stations in Aimaokatalok (Deep and West sites), Stickleback, Doris, Patch, Windy, and Wolverine lakes as well as Reference Lake B. All sampling will be conducted annually during the construction and operational phases of the Mine, except in Windy Lake where water quality samples will be collected annually during construction and the first 2 years of operations to verify predictions under the FEIS (NWB Commitment #1; Technical Comment KIA-NWB-08). If the FEIS predictions are confirmed in Windy Lake, sampling will cease until future monitoring for the closure and post-closure phases is developed.

Water quality sampling will also be conducted in April, July, August, and September at the two MDMER EEM study areas (Aimaokatalok Lake (Aim-EEM) and Reference Lake B (Figures 3.1-1a and 3.1-1b and Table 3.2-1)), and will follow the recommendations of Environment Canada (2012). Water quality samples for the AEMP and MDMER EEM programs will be collected at the surface (1 m depth; 1 m below the ice in winter) at all lake sites and near the bottom at sites deeper than 6 m (2 m from sediments) using an acid-cleaned discrete sampling device (e.g., GO-FLO or Niskin). Duplicate samples will be collected at the shallow lake stations (Stickleback and Wolverine lakes) and replicate samples will be collected at 10% of the total deep station samples.

All water samples will be collected using laboratory-approved clean sampling bottles, with personnel wearing powder-free vinyl gloves. Samples will be preserved with the appropriate chemicals and properly labelled and stored. All samples will be sent to a Canadian Association for Laboratory Accreditation (CALA)-certified analytical laboratory for analysis of the water quality variables listed in Table 3.2-2 (except temperature and dissolved oxygen which will be field-measured). Water quality samples collected from MDMER EEM sampling areas (Aim-EEM and Reference Lake B) will be analyzed for total cyanide and radium-226 as required under the MDMER (Schedule 5, subsection (7)(d)). Total and free cyanide will also be monitored at three AEMP sampling areas: Aim-Deep and Aim-West in Aimaokatalok Lake and Reference Lake B (Technical Comment KIA-NIRB-19).

Table 3.2-2. Water Quality Variables

Variable	Variable
Physical Tests	Total Metals (<i>cont'd</i>)
Conductivity ^b	Calcium (Ca)
Dissolved Oxygen (Field-measured) ^{a,b}	Cesium (Cs)
Hardness (as CaCO ₃) ^b	Chromium (Cr) ^{a,b}
pH ^{a,b}	Cobalt (Co) ^b
Temperature (Field-measured) ^{a,b}	Copper (Cu) ^{a,b}
Total Suspended Solids ^{a,b}	Gallium (Ga)
Turbidity ^a	Iron (Fe) ^{a,b}
Water Depth	Lead (Pb) ^{a,b}
Anions and Nutrients	Lithium (Li)
Alkalinity, Total (as CaCO ₃) ^b	Magnesium (Mg)
Ammonia, Total (as N) ^{a,b}	Manganese (Mn) ^b
Bromide (Br)	Mercury (Hg) ^{a,b,d}
Chloride (Cl) ^{a,b}	Molybdenum (Mo) ^{a,b}
Fluoride (F) ^a	Nickel (Ni) ^{a,b}
Nitrate (as N) ^{a,b}	Phosphorus (P)
Nitrite (as N) ^a	Potassium (K)
Soluble reactive silica	Rhenium (Re)
Total Phosphorus ^{a,b}	Rubidium (Rb)
Total nitrogen	
Sulphate (SO ₄) ^b	
Organic Carbon	Selenium (Se) ^{a,b}
Dissolved Organic Carbon	Silicon (Si)
Total Organic Carbon	Silver (Ag) ^a

Variable	Variable
Cyanides	Sodium (Na)
Free Cyanide ^{a,f}	Strontium (Sr)
Total Cyanide ^{b,e,f}	Tellurium (Te)
Radiological	Thallium (Tl) ^{a,b}
Radium-226 ^{b,c,e}	Thorium (Th)
Total Metals	Tin (Sn)
Aluminum (Al) ^{a,b}	Titanium (Ti)
Antimony (Sb)	Tungsten (W)
Arsenic (As) ^{a,b}	Uranium (U) ^{a,b}
Barium (Ba)	Vanadium (V)
Beryllium (Be)	Yttrium (Y)
Bismuth (Bi)	Zinc (Zn) ^b
Boron (B) ^a	Zirconium (Zr)
Cadmium (Cd) ^{a,b}	Dissolved Metals
	Zinc (Zn) ^a

Notes:

Unless otherwise indicated, variables will be analyzed in a CALA-accredited laboratory using standard methods.

a Variables for which there are CCME water quality guidelines for the protection of aquatic life (CCME 2018b).

b Variables subject to EEM Water Quality Monitoring Study (MDMER, Schedule 5, subsection 7(1)(b) to (d)).

c Radium-226 monitoring in receiving waters will be discontinued if effluent monitoring test results show that end-of-pipe concentrations are less than 0.37 Bq/L for 10 consecutive weeks (MDMER, subsection 13(2)).

d Mercury monitoring in receiving waters may be discontinued if effluent monitoring test results show that end-of-pipe concentrations are less than 0.10 µg/L in 12 consecutive samples (MDMER, Schedule 5, subsection 4(4)).

e Total cyanide and radium-226 will be monitored at the MDMER EEM sampling areas (Aim-EEM and Reference Lake B).

f Total and free cyanide will be monitored at three AEMP sampling areas: Aim-Deep, Aim-West, and Reference Lake B.

Temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH and specific conductivity profiling will be conducted using a calibrated temperature-dissolved oxygen meter. Each open-water profile will extend from the surface to approximately 1 m above the sediment surface, with values recorded every 1 m. Under-ice profiling will begin just below the base of the ice layer (approximately 2 m) and will extend to 1 m above the sediments. All data will be recorded onto field sheets with the applicable meta-data such as date, time, personnel, weather, calibration data, and ice thickness measurements.

Analysis of Effects

For AEMP program sites, water quality variables with CCME guidelines will be evaluated for potential effects using qualitative (graphical) and quantitative (statistical) analysis methods. Profile data (temperature and dissolved oxygen) will be evaluated qualitatively. Non-CCME variables will be reported in the appendices of the annual AEMP report and could be evaluated for Mine effects if warranted.

The statistical analysis of CCME water quality variables will employ either a before-after-control-impact (BACI) design or a trend analysis to assess potential Mine-related effects based on the robustness of the temporal dataset for each lake. For a BACI design, 'before' data would include data collected before the start of construction and operations, while 'after' data would include data collected after the start of construction and operations. Reference Lake B would be the 'control' component and other monitoring sites would be the 'impact' components. The interaction between the 'before-after' and 'control-impact' terms is the BACI effect of interest. If sufficient years of data are available for a particular AEMP lake

(based on examination of dataset by the program statistician), a trend analysis using LOESS (locally weighted smoothing) regression will be used as an alternative to the BACI design. In this instance, the trend in a water quality variable over time at an exposure lake will be compared to both a slope of zero and the trend at Reference Lake B to determine if there is evidence of a change over time and whether the change is also evident at the reference site. Potential effects will be assessed at a significance level of 0.05.

Results of the AEMP analysis of effects will be interpreted and adaptively managed within the context of a Response Framework (see Section 4) to detect and pre-empt adverse changes in water quality.

For the MDMER EEM monitoring sites (Reference Lake B and discharge area in Aimaokatalok Lake), the water quality data will be reported in the appendices of the AEMP and will aid in the interpretation of the broader water quality and biology in Aimaokatalok Lake.

Quality Assurance and Quality Control

Quality assurance measures will include the training of environmental staff who will carry out the sampling as well as QAQC procedures such as using certified laboratories for water quality analyses and using lab-approved clean bottles and high quality preservatives. On-site quality control measures will include the use of chain of custody (CoCs) forms to track shipped samples and collecting travel blanks, field blanks, and replicate samples to assess potential sources of contamination and variability in the sampling program. The travel and field blanks are designed to identify sources of contamination during the collection and transportation of water samples, while replicate samples identify potential *in situ* variability within the sampling environment.

Rigorous QAQC measures will be followed at the analytical laboratory and will include identifying holding time exceedances and using split samples and spiked samples (using certified standards) to track laboratory precision and ensure that data quality objectives are met.

3.2.3. Sediment Quality

The objectives of the AEMP sediment quality monitoring are to evaluate Mine effects in nearby lake sediments, confirm the sediment quality predictions in the Madrid-Boston FEIS, assess the performance of sediment and erosion control measures near Mine lakes, support the interpretation of water quality and biological monitoring results, and comply with MDMER EEM sediment quality monitoring requirements (Schedule 5, subsection 12(1)(e)). Sediment sampling under MDMER EEM is intended to support benthic invertebrate studies; therefore, sediments will only be sampled at the EEM sampling areas if a study of the benthic invertebrate community is triggered under Schedule 5, subsection 9(1)(b) of the MDMER. The Plan harmonizes the AEMP and MDMER EEM by sampling sediment quality in Aimaokatalok Lake and Reference Lake B in August every 3 years using similar methods and using these data to jointly assess sediment quality in these lakes.

Methods

Surficial sediment quality samples will be collected using an Ekman grab sampler and will be collected concurrently with benthic invertebrate sampling. Three replicate samples will be collected from each AEMP sampling area (Aimaokatalok [Aim-Deep and Aim-West], Doris, Patch, Stickleback, and Wolverine lakes; Figures 3.1-1a and 3.1-1b and Table 3.2-1) as has been done historically, and five replicates will be collected from each MDMER EEM sampling area (Aim-EEM and Reference Lake B; Figures 3.1-1a and 3.1-1b and Table 3.2-1). Each sediment sample will be carefully transferred onto a plastic tray, and the top 2 to 3 cm of sediment will be removed and homogenized in a plastic bowl using a plastic spoon and placed into two containers: one for particle size and one for sediment chemistry. All samples will be kept cool and sent to an accredited analytical laboratory within the appropriate holding times.

Samples will be analyzed for the sediment quality variables outlined in Table 3.2-3.

Table 3.2-3. Sediment Quality Variables

Variable	Variable
Physical and Nutrients	Total Metals (<i>cont'd</i>)
% Moisture	Lithium (Li)
pH	Magnesium (Mg)
Particle Size ^b	Manganese (Mn)
Total Nitrogen	Mercury (Hg) ^a
Total Organic Carbon ^b	Molybdenum (Mo)
Total Metals	Nickel (Ni)
Aluminum (Al)	Phosphorus (P)
Antimony (Sb)	Potassium (K)
Arsenic (As) ^a	Selenium (Se)
Barium (Ba)	Silver (Ag)
Beryllium (Be)	Sodium (Na)
Bismuth (Bi)	Strontium (Sr)
Boron (B)	Sulphur (S)
Cadmium (Cd) ^a	Thallium (Tl)
Calcium (Ca)	Tin (Sn)
Chromium (Cr) ^a	Titanium (Ti)
Cobalt (Co)	Uranium (U)
Copper (Cu) ^a	Vanadium (V)
Iron (Fe)	Zinc (Zn) ^a
Lead (Pb) ^a	

^a Variables for which there are CCME sediment quality guidelines for the protection of aquatic life (CCME 2018a).

^b required for EEM benthic invertebrate survey

Analysis of Effects

For the AEMP monitoring stations, sediment quality variables that have CCME guidelines will be evaluated for potential Mine-related effects using graphical analysis as well as a BACI or trend analysis as described for water quality. Results of the AEMP analysis of effects will be interpreted and adaptively managed within the context of a Response Framework (see Section 4) to detect and pre-empt potential adverse

changes in sediment quality. Non-CCME variables will be reported in the appendices of the annual AEMP report and could be evaluated for Mine effects if warranted.

For the MDMER EEM monitoring stations (the exposure and control areas in Aimaokatalok Lake), the sediment quality data will be reported in the appendices of the AEMP and will aid in the interpretation of the broader water quality and biology in Aimaokatalok Lake.

Quality Assurance and Quality Control

The QAQC program for sediment quality sampling will include the collection of replicates to account for within-site variability and the use of CoC forms to track samples. Rigorous QAQC will be followed at the analytical laboratory to ensure that data quality objectives are met.

3.2.4. Phytoplankton Biomass (as chlorophyll *a*)

The objective of the AEMP phytoplankton biomass monitoring is to assess the trophic status of the Mine lakes that could be affected by nutrient inputs from point-source discharge and non-point source runoff.

Methods

Triplicate samples will be collected for phytoplankton biomass (as chlorophyll *a*) at the AEMP stations (Figures 3.1-1a and 3.1-1b; Table 3.2-1) from 1-m depth using a discrete sampling device. Each replicate sample will be collected in a foil-wrapped bottle and filtered onto a 0.45 µm filter. The volume of water filtered will be recorded, the filter frozen, and samples sent to a laboratory for analysis of chlorophyll *a*.

Analysis of Effects

Potential changes in phytoplankton biomass will be evaluated using qualitative (graphical) analysis and a BACI or trend analysis similar to that described for water quality, with chlorophyll *a* as the response variable. Results of the analysis of effects will be interpreted and adaptively managed within the context of a Response Framework (see Section 4).

Quality Assurance and Quality Control

The QAQC program for chlorophyll *a* sampling will include collecting the water in an opaque bottle (to prevent further photosynthesis), keeping the filtered sample frozen at all times prior to analysis, collecting replicate samples, and using CoC forms to track sample shipment.

3.2.5. Benthic Invertebrates

The objectives of the AEMP benthic invertebrate monitoring are to determine if Mine activities are affecting benthic invertebrate communities in nearby lakes, confirm the assessments in the Madrid-Boston FEIS, and comply with MDMER EEM benthic invertebrate monitoring requirements. Under MDMER, a benthic invertebrate community study related to treated discharge will be required in Aimaokatalok Lake if the concentration of the discharge in the exposure area is greater than 1% at 100 m from the final discharge point (Schedule 5, subsection 9(1)(b)). The Plan harmonizes the AEMP and MDMER EEM by sampling benthic invertebrates in Aimaokatalok Lake and Reference Lake B in August

every 3 years using similar methods for each program and using these data to jointly assess the abundance and diversity of benthic invertebrates in these lakes due to Mine activities.

Monitoring of the benthic invertebrate community will follow the sampling recommendations in the *Metal Mining Technical Guidance for Environmental Effects Monitoring* (Environment Canada 2012), and the evaluation of effects will be based on the effects endpoints recommended in the MDMER (Schedule 5, subsection 12(1)).

Methods

Benthic invertebrates will be collected using an Ekman grab sampler. Five replicate samples will be collected from each AEMP sampling area (Aimaokatalok (Aim-Deep and Aim-West), Doris, Patch, Stickleback, and Wolverine lakes; Figure 3.1-1a and 3.1-1b and Table 3.2-1) and from each MDMER EEM sampling area (Aim-EEM and Reference Lake B; Figure 3.1-1b and Table 3.2-1). Each benthos replicate sample will consist of a composite of three pooled field subsamples. Each pooled sample will be sieved to 500 µm, preserved with formalin, and sent to a taxonomist for identification and enumeration. Benthos samples will be collected concurrently with the sediment quality samples.

Analysis of Effects

The benthos endpoints or indicators that will be evaluated include: total density, Simpson's evenness index, taxa richness, and Bray-Curtis similarity index. For the AEMP monitoring stations, potential changes in benthos indicators will be evaluated using graphical analysis as well as a BACI or trend analysis as described for water quality. Results of the AEMP analysis of effects will be interpreted and adaptively managed within the context of a Response Framework (see Section 4).

For the MDMER EEM sampling areas in Aimaokatalok Lake and Reference Lake B, potential changes in benthos indicators will be evaluated using graphical analysis as well as a BACI or trend analysis as described for water quality. The critical effects sizes given in the MDMER (Schedule 5, subsection 1(2)) and Environment Canada (2012) will be used to evaluate the magnitude of effects for benthos indicators. To confirm a discharge-related effect on benthos, there would need to be a similar type of effect (same direction from zero) found for the same benthos indicator in studies from two consecutive three-year phases of EEM biological monitoring (Environment Canada 2012).

Quality Assurance and Quality Control

The QAQC program for benthos sampling will include the collection of subsamples and replicates to account for within-site variability and the use of CoC forms to track samples.

A re-sorting of randomly selected sample residues will be conducted by the taxonomist on a minimum of 10% of the benthos samples to determine the level of sorting efficiency. The criterion for an acceptable sorting will be that more than 90% of the total number of organisms will be recovered from the initial sort. The number of organisms initially recovered from the sample will be expressed as a percentage of the total number after the re-sort (total of initial and re-sort count). Any sample not meeting the 90% removal criterion will be re-sorted a third time.

3.2.6. Fish

The objective of the EEM fish population monitoring is to comply with MDMER fish monitoring requirements if such a study is triggered (fish population and/or fish tissue). Under MDMER, a fish population study related to treated discharge will be required in Aimaokatalok Lake if the concentration of the discharge in the exposure area is greater than 1% at 250 m from the final discharge point (Schedule 5, subsection 9(1)(a)). Further, MDMER requires fish tissue monitoring if the annual mean end-of-pipe total mercury (Hg) or total selenium (Se) concentrations in the treated discharge exceed 0.1 µg/L or 5 µg/L, respectively, or if a single concentration of total selenium exceeds 10 µg/L (Schedule 5, subsections 9(1)(c) and (d)).

If triggered, fish population surveys will be undertaken in Aimaokatalok Lake and Reference Lake B (reference area; Figures 3.1-1a and 3.1-1b) to determine if the treated discharge has affected fish abundance or biological status. A fish tissue survey will also be initiated in exposure and reference areas if triggered by mercury and/or selenium concentrations in the treated discharge at end-of-pipe. The objective of a fish tissue study would be to determine if fish in the exposure area are safe for human consumption.

Methods

Fish Population Survey

If triggered, fish monitoring will follow EEM guidance (Environment Canada 2012). Fish population and health sampling will be conducted on two target species, Lake Trout (*Salvelinus namaycush*) and Ninespine Stickleback (*Pungitius pungitius*), once every three years according to the schedule outlined in Table 3.1-2. Sampling will focus on Aimaokatalok Lake where point-source, treated discharge effects are most likely to be detected, and Reference Lake B where effects will not be present (Figure 3.1-1a and 3.1-1b).

Lake Trout are a large-bodied, long-lived species and thus highly susceptible to long-term population level effects from lethal sampling. To avoid any negative effects on population size and structure, non-lethal biological sampling will be employed for Lake Trout. Non-lethal sample sizes of up to 100 adults are recommended for each site (Environment Canada 2012); however, it is recognized that this may not always be attainable for Lake Trout in northern waterbodies. Lethal sampling will be employed on the small-bodied, short-lived, Ninespine Stickleback. The objective will be to collect data from 20 mature male, 20 mature female, and 20 juvenile Ninespine Stickleback from each lake. EEM guidance suggests that greater numbers of juvenile small-bodied fish be captured for a robust analysis of age; however, a minimum of 60 lethal samples of Ninespine Stickleback may also be unattainable in some Arctic lakes. The EEM guidance document recognizes that this number samples is unlikely to be caught in many waterbodies (Environment Canada 2012).

Fish population and health surveys will take place every three years in August using gillnets for Lake Trout, and beach seines and minnow trapping for Ninespine Stickleback. Sampling locations will be determined randomly and conducted throughout each lake to collect fish of all species and determine an unbiased catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE) within lakes. To meet power requirements with the low sample sizes,

individual fish selected for tissue metal sampling should be of the same sex and approximate size (Environment Canada 2012). Therefore, if random sampling does not result in sufficient sample size to meet these requirements, additional sampling may be conducted using targeted methods. For example, sampling for Ninespine Stickleback may be conducted at a specific area of the lake, or a single gillnet mesh size may be used to capture Lake Trout of a certain size. CPUE for these methods will be recorded separately so as not to bias the results of the random sampling.

Survival, growth, reproductive, and condition parameters will be collected from the fish and compared between sites and over time to properly assess changes in fish populations and health over the life of the mine. Lethal sampling of Ninespine Stickleback will measure and assess all the biological variables and effects endpoints listed in Table 3.2-4, while only a subset of variables will be assessed from non-lethal sampling of Lake Trout.

Table 3.2-4. Fish Biological Variables and Effects Endpoints

Effects Endpoints	Biological variables	Lake Trout	Ninespine Stickleback
Survival	Age frequency	X	X
	Length frequency	X	X
Growth	Length at age	X	X
	Weight at age	X	X
Condition	Body weight at length	X	X
	Liver weight at body weight		X
	DELT	X	X
Reproduction	Gonad weight at body weight		X
	Gonad weight at length		X
	Egg Size		X

The estimates of survival, growth, condition and reproduction will be based upon measurements conducted on individual fish. Live sampled fish will be identified to species, given a unique sample number, measured for fork length to the nearest 1 mm and weighed to the nearest 0.1 g using a calibrated electronic balance. Information on the external deformities, erosion, lesions, and tumours (DELTs) and pectoral fin rays and scale samples will be collected and placed in labeled envelopes. For lethally sampled fish (Ninespine Stickleback), each individual will be identified to species, given a unique sample number, measured for total length to the nearest 1 mm and weighed to the nearest 0.01 g using a calibrated electronic balance. Once dissected, livers will be weighed to the nearest 0.001 g. Because Ninespine Stickleback will be used for the reproductive endpoint, it is unlikely that the minimum of 100 eggs will be met to measure egg weight (Environment Canada 2012). As such, gonad weight (ripe ovary weight) and egg size will be used as variables for the reproductive endpoint (Table 3.2-4). Information on the internal and external DELTs, and pectoral fin rays and scale samples will be collected and placed in labeled envelopes. Ageing structures will be non-lethally sampled from Lake Trout by taking the first four pectoral fin rays. Otoliths will be removed from Ninespine Stickleback for ageing analysis.

Fish Tissue Survey

If triggered, fish tissue data will be incorporated into the fish health sampling program. Tissue samples from Lake Trout and Ninespine Stickleback will be collected and analyzed for metals and moisture content. For each species, a minimum of eight samples of the same sex and approximate body size will be collected from Aimaokatalok Lake and Reference Lake B (Environment Canada 2012) every three years in August. To avoid negative effects on population size and structure, non-lethal sampling using tissue plugs will be undertaken for Lake Trout. Tissue plugs will be collected from Lake Trout for analysis using methods developed by Baker et al. (2004), whereas Ninespine Stickleback will be sacrificed for whole-body tissue metal analysis.

Analysis of Effects

Descriptive summary statistics will be reported for all collected biological parameters. Potential effects to fish size (length and weight) and age will be determined using analysis of variance (ANOVA). All ANOVA assumptions will be met prior to analysis, including normally distributed populations, equal variances between populations, and sample independence. If populations or variances are unequal, the appropriate transformation will be applied before the ANOVA.

The remaining effects endpoints, except DELT, will be analyzed for statistical differences and interactions between the exposure and reference sites using analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). Assumptions of normality and constant variance will be met before an ANCOVA is applied. The assumption of equal regression slopes will also need to be met for relative fecundity to control for variability in weight. However, for most of the endpoints (excluding relative fecundity), the slope of the natural log of the dependent variable and covariate is the endpoint of interest (e.g., the slope of $\ln(\text{weight})$ and $\ln(\text{length})$ is condition). Thus, it is the differences in slope that indicates significant effect, and the assumption of equal regression slopes will not apply.

Potential differences in DELT characteristics between exposure and reference sites will be compared using the chi-squared (χ^2) test.

For fish population and health endpoints, the critical effects sizes summarized in the MDMER (Schedule 5, subsection 1(2)) and Environment Canada (2012) will be used to evaluate the magnitude of effects. For fish tissue mercury concentration, an effect on fish usability is defined as a measurement of total mercury that exceeds 0.5 mg/kg wet weight of fish tissue taken from an exposure area and that is statistically different from and higher than the mercury concentration in fish tissue measured in a reference area (MDMER, Schedule 5, section 1). For fish tissue selenium concentration, there is no threshold concentration given in the MDMER; therefore, an effect on fish usability is defined as a concentration of selenium in fish tissue taken from an exposure area that is statistically different from and higher than the fish tissue selenium concentration measured in a reference area.

To confirm a discharge-related effect on fish population and health or fish tissue, there would need to be a similar type of effect (same direction from zero) found for the same endpoint in studies from two consecutive three-year phases of EEM biological monitoring (Environment Canada 2012).

Quality Assurance and Quality Control

QAQC measures will be followed throughout the data, field, and laboratory phases. Data quality will be screened for entry errors and will be checked for outliers using the appropriate boxplot, residual plot or quantile-quantile plot. In the field, all personnel will have suitable expertise to conduct surveys and perform dissections. All standard operating procedures will be followed. Proper sampling gear (e.g., dissecting equipment) and methods (e.g., electrofishing) will be employed by personnel while in the field. All sampling information will be appropriately documented, preserved (as necessary), stored, and shipped. CoC forms will be used to track all sample shipments.

Fish samples will be analyzed by accredited laboratories with trained staff. If sub-sampling is required (e.g., fecundity, egg size), efficiency and accuracy results of the technique must be documented and the information used to calculate appropriate correction or scaling factors to minimize potential differences in methods and efficiency. All records of lesions, parasites, and other deformities will be noted.

4. Response Framework

4.1. Background

Potential Mine-related effects to the freshwater receiving environment will be adaptively managed through the implementation of a Response Framework, which links the results of the AEMP to management actions so that significant adverse effects can be avoided. The Response Framework is largely based on the concepts presented in the *Guidelines for Adaptive Management — a Response Framework for Aquatic Effects Monitoring* (WLWB 2010). The Response Framework is founded on the concept of comparing monitoring results to an ‘action level’, which is “*a magnitude of environmental change which [...] triggers a management action*” (WLWB 2010). The Response Framework is the “*systematic approach to responding when the results of an aquatic effects monitoring program indicate that an action level has been reached*” (WLWB 2010).

This framework was adapted from the Doris AEMP (TMAC 2016) that was reviewed and approved by the NWB, the KitIA, the NIRB, ECCC, CIRNAC, and DFO during the 2AM-DOH Water Licence amendment process.

4.2. Objectives and Approach

The overarching objective of the Response Framework is to protect the freshwater receiving environment in the Hope Bay Mine area. The Response Framework acts as an early-warning system with defined action levels that trigger monitoring and/or management actions within an adequate timeframe so that significant adverse effects do not occur. The Response Framework consists of the following components:

- Appropriate benchmarks and action levels such that Mine-related environmental effects are investigated, and if necessary, mitigated, prior to any significant environmental effect occurring;

- A procedure by which Mine-related environmental effects are assessed against defined action levels;
- A procedure for reporting exceedances of action levels;
- A procedure for developing Response Plans and proposing mitigation actions that may be implemented if action levels are exceeded; and
- A procedure for submitting Response Plans, and defining the process for reviewing and amending the Response Plans.

The Response Framework defines the process by which the results of the AEMP are compared to the benchmarks or triggers associated with pre-defined action levels, and the potential management responses initiated in response to reaching an action level. Figure 4.2-1 presents an overview of how the AEMP feeds into the Response Framework. The action levels used to screen the results of the AEMP are assigned the magnitudes 'low', 'medium', and 'high', which correspond to increasing magnitudes of effects to the aquatic environment, culminating in the exceedance of a 'significance threshold'. A significance threshold is defined as *"the magnitude of environmental change which, if reached, would result in significant adverse effects"* (WLWB 2010). Setting low, medium, and high action levels below the significance threshold requires that mitigative action (if necessary) is taken well before a significant threshold is reached, so that any potentially adverse trends are stopped or reversed by the implementation of management actions in response to exceedances of action levels.

4.3. Significance Thresholds

A significance threshold is a level of change in any monitored variable that would be unacceptable to reach because it would result in a significant adverse effect to the aquatic environment (WLWB 2010). The significance thresholds are specific to each component of the AEMP.

For water quality and/or sediment quality and/or phytoplankton biomass, the significance threshold is defined as:

- The water and/or sediments and/or phytoplankton biomass of the monitored lakes have changed in such a way that a healthy aquatic ecosystem can no longer be supported.

For benthic invertebrates, the significance threshold is defined as:

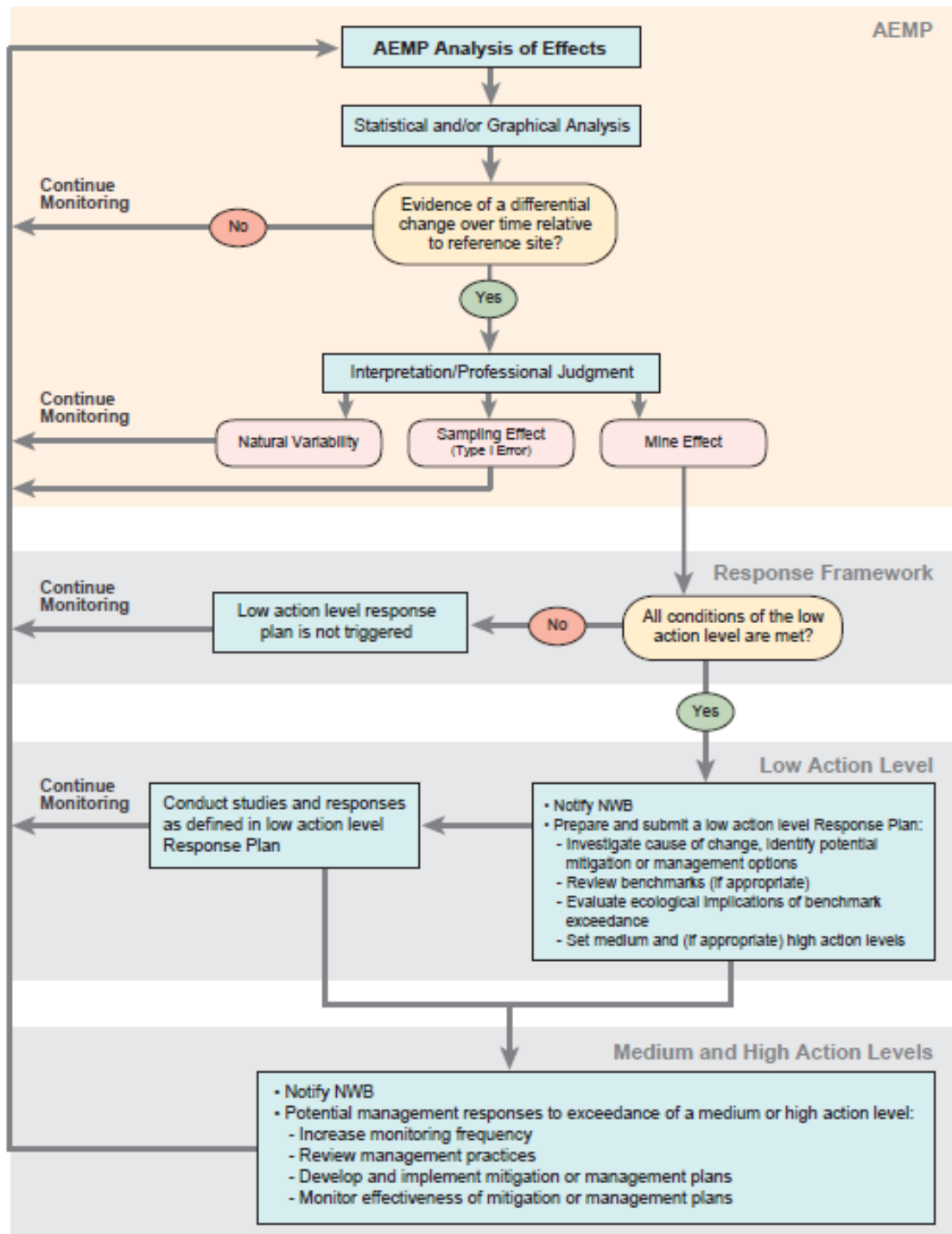
- The benthic invertebrates in the monitored lakes have changed in such a way that sufficient food for fish is no longer available.

4.4. Action Levels

The Response Framework includes three tiers of action levels: low, medium, and high. Low action levels are defined below for each monitored component. Medium and, if appropriate, high action levels will only be defined within the low action level Response Plan once the low action level is reached for any monitoring component (WLWB 2010). In some cases, the definition of the high action level may be

deferred if specific and appropriate rationale is provided (e.g., additional research is required). The low action level for each monitored component is based on baseline data, and/or water or sediment quality guidelines, and/or recommended critical effects sizes for that component. Variation in monitored components within the normal baseline range, as defined by the data collected to date, will be considered negligible and will not trigger the low action level.

Figure 4.2-1. AEMP Analysis of Effects and Response Framework



4.4.1. Water Quality

The benchmarks used for water quality variables are the CCME water quality guidelines for the protection of aquatic life (CCME 2018b), presented in Table 4.4-1. Note that if the CCME guideline for a particular variable is updated after the submission of this Plan, the most up-to-date guideline will be used as a benchmark.

Table 4.4-1. Freshwater Water Quality Benchmarks

Indicator	Variable	Benchmark ^a
pH	pH	6.5 – 9.0 pH units
TSS	TSS	Maximum average increase of 5 mg/L from background (for clear-flow waters; long-term exposure)
Turbidity	Turbidity	Maximum average increase of 2 NTUs from background (for clear-flow waters; long-term exposure)
Dissolved Oxygen	Dissolved Oxygen	9.5 mg/L (cold-water biota: early life stages); 6.5 mg/L (cold-water biota: other life stages)
Anions	Chloride	120 mg/L (long term)
	Fluoride	0.12 mg/L
Nutrients	Total Ammonia as N	pH- and temperature-dependent ^b
	Nitrate as N	3 mg/L (long term)
	Nitrite as N	0.06 mg/L
Total Metals	Aluminum	0.005 mg/L (if pH < 6.5); 0.1 mg/L (if pH ≥ 6.5)
	Arsenic	0.005 mg/L
	Boron	1.5 mg/L
	Cadmium	0.00004 mg/L for hardness (as CaCO ₃) of < 17 mg/L; $10^{(0.83[\ln(\text{hardness})]-2.46)}/1000$ mg/L for hardness of ≥ 17 to ≤ 280 mg/L; 0.00037 mg/L for hardness of > 280 mg/L (long term)
Total Metals (<i>cont'd</i>)	Chromium	0.001 mg/L (hexavalent); 0.0089 mg/L (trivalent)
	Copper	0.002 mg/L for hardness (as CaCO ₃) of < 82 mg/L; $0.2 * e^{(0.8545[\ln(\text{hardness})]-1.465)}/1000$ mg/L for hardness of ≥ 82 to ≤ 180 mg/L; 0.004 mg/L for hardness of > 180 mg/L
	Iron	0.3 mg/L
	Lead	0.001 mg/L for hardness (as CaCO ₃) of ≤ 60 mg/L; $e^{(1.273[\ln(\text{hardness})]-4.705)}/1000$ mg/L for hardness of > 60 to ≤ 180 mg/L; 0.007 mg/L for hardness of > 180 mg/L
	Mercury	0.000026 mg/L
	Molybdenum	0.073 mg/L
	Nickel	0.025 mg/L for hardness (as CaCO ₃) of ≤ 60 mg/L; $e^{(0.76[\ln(\text{hardness})]+1.06)}/1000$ mg/L for hardness of > 60 to ≤ 180 mg/L; 0.15 mg/L for hardness of > 180 mg/L
	Selenium	0.001 mg/L
	Silver	0.00025 mg/L
	Thallium	0.0008 mg/L
	Uranium	0.015 mg/L

Indicator	Variable	Benchmark ^a
Dissolved Metals	Zinc	$e^{(0.947[\ln(\text{hardness})]-0.815[\text{pH}]+0.398[\ln(\text{DOC})]+4.625)]}/1000$ mg/L for hardness of 23.4 to 399 mg/L, pH of 6.5 to 8.13, and DOC of 0.3 to 22.9 mg/L; 0.007 mg/L for hardness (as CaCO ₃) of 50 mg/L, pH of 7.5, DOC of 0.5 mg/L
Cyanide	Free Cyanide	0.005 mg/L (as free cyanide)

Notes:

^a Source: *The Canadian Water Quality Guidelines for the Protection of Aquatic Life, Summary Table (CCME 2018b)*. Note that when multiple guidelines are given (e.g., short and long term), the most conservative (i.e., lowest) guideline is included in the table.

^b The CCME guideline for total ammonia depends on pH and temperature. For circumneutral freshwater (pH 6.5 - 7.5) at conservative temperatures (15 °C), the guideline for total ammonia as N is 1.83 to 18.1 mg/L.

For each assessed water quality variable, the following conditions must be met for an exceedance of the low action level:

- Identification of a statistically significant and potentially adverse change¹ from baseline conditions when assessing the results of the AEMP for that water quality variable;
- The concentration of the water quality variable is outside of the normal range based on baseline concentrations;
- The concentration of the water quality variable exceeds 75% percent of a water quality benchmark; and
- The absence of a similar change at the reference location.

4.4.2. Sediment Quality

The benchmarks used for sediment quality variables are the CCME sediment quality guidelines for the protection of aquatic life (CCME 2018a), presented in Table 4.4-2. Note that if the CCME guideline for a particular variable is updated after the submission of this Plan, the most up-to-date guideline will be used as a benchmark. For each assessed sediment quality variable, the following conditions must be met for an exceedance of the low action level:

- Identification of a statistically significant increase in concentration from baseline conditions when assessing the results of the AEMP for that sediment quality variable;
- The concentration of the sediment quality variable is outside of the normal range based on baseline concentrations;
- The concentration of the sediment quality variable exceeds 75% percent of a sediment quality benchmark; and
- The absence of a similar change at the reference location.

¹ For most water quality constituents, only an increase would be considered a potentially adverse change; however, for dissolved oxygen concentration, only a decrease would be considered potentially adverse, and for pH, a change in either direction would be considered potentially adverse.

Table 4.4-2. Freshwater Sediment Quality Benchmarks

Sediment Quality Variable	Benchmarka (mg/kg)	
	ISQG	PEL
Arsenic	5.90	17.0
Cadmium	0.60	3.50
Chromium	37.3	90.0
Copper	35.7	197
Lead	35.0	91.3
Mercury	0.170	0.486
Zinc	123	315

Notes:

ISQG = Interim Sediment Quality Guideline; PEL = Probable Effects Level

^a Source: The Canadian Sediment Quality Guidelines for the Protection of Aquatic Life, Summary Table (CCME 2018a).

Phytoplankton Biomass (as Chlorophyll *a*)

All of the following conditions must be met for an exceedance of the low action level for chlorophyll *a* concentration:

- Identification of a statistically significant change from baseline conditions when assessing the results of the AEMP for chlorophyll *a*;
- The concentration of chlorophyll *a* is outside of the normal range based on baseline concentrations; and
- The absence of a similar change at the reference location.

4.4.3. Benthic Invertebrates

All of the following conditions must be met for an exceedance of the low action level for benthos community indicators (i.e., total density, Simpson's evenness index, taxa richness, and Bray-Curtis similarity index):

- Identification of a statistically significant decrease from baseline conditions when assessing the results of the AEMP for benthic community indicators;
- The benthos indicator is less than the normal range based on baseline levels;
- The absence of a similar decrease at the reference location; and
- The magnitude of the decrease exceeds the critical effects size of ± 2 within-reference-area standard deviations (SD), as recommended by Environment Canada (2012).

4.5. Response Plans

If a low action level is exceeded, a Response Plan will be developed that contains the following components:

- General description of the monitoring component or variable;
- Determination or confirmation of the action level exceedance;
- Likely cause(s) of the exceedance;
- Ecological consequences of the exceedance;
- Proposed monitoring and management responses;
- Definition of medium and, if appropriate, high action levels; and
- A proposed schedule for responses and any additional reporting.

These Response Plans will be specific to the environmental variable for which a low action level response has been triggered.

4.5.1. Low Action Levels

For low action levels, the Response Plan will include the setting of medium and potentially high action levels if the trigger is confirmed to be Mine-related. In some cases, the definition of the high action level may be deferred if specific and appropriate rationale is provided (e.g., additional research is required). Monitoring and management response actions for a low action level Response Plan will be largely investigative, and may include the following:

- An investigation to verify the source(s) of observed change;
- A comparison to predictions made in the evaluation of effects (TMAC 2015, 2017);
- The evaluation or confirmation of ecological relevance;
- Increased monitoring frequency;
- The planning or initiation of an issue-specific information collection program or study to define the magnitude, spatial extent, and reversibility of the effect;
- A review of the water or sediment quality benchmark or development of a site-specific objective; or
- The identification of possible mitigation options.

If a likely cause can be identified, management responses for a low action level may include updates to best management practices or standard operating procedures to improve the mitigation or avoidance of the Mine-related effect.

4.5.2. Medium and High Action Levels

The management response actions in medium or high action level Response Plans will usually involve greater intervention to reflect the increased risk of exceedance of significance thresholds. These plans will incorporate options identified during investigations when the low action level is exceeded. Additional monitoring and management responses in medium and high action level Response Plans may include the following:

- An investigation to verify the causes(s) of observed change;
- Investigation of mitigation options;
- Increased monitoring frequency;
- Monitoring additional aquatic components;
- Further review of the water or sediment quality benchmarks or development of site-specific objectives;
- Review and revision of facility water use and groundwater management practices to reduce water loss from Mine lakes;
- Selecting, planning for, and implementing a mitigation option such as modification of management plans, and/or modification of water and air quality management practices; or
- An assessment of the effectiveness of implemented mitigation options as part of the Response Plans for the variable in question.

4.6. Cyclical Monitoring and Reporting Process

The environmental monitoring data collected through the AEMP will be fed into the Response Framework for assessment against action levels. The assessment will be conducted annually as part of the AEMP. If an action level exceedance is observed, a Response Plan will be prepared and submitted to the NWB along with the annual AEMP report or at a later date if approved by the NWB. Response Plans will also be reviewed and amended or updated as required.

5. Reporting

5.1. Annual AEMP Report

Following each AEMP monitoring year, an annual report will be prepared and submitted to the NWB by March 31 of the following year for distribution at their discretion. The annual report will include the following:

- All raw monitoring data obtained during that year of monitoring, including that collected under the MDMER EEM program in Aimaokatalok Lake;
- A summary of annual Mine activities;
- Description of the methods used for data collection;
- Description of QAQC measures and results;
- A detailed evaluation of effects on the monitored components and variables;
- Results from the evaluation of effects, in text and figures;
- Conclusions from the evaluation of effects; and
- Response plans as triggered through the Response Framework.

5.2. MDMER Reports

V4

5.2.1. Study Design Report

MDMER requires that a first study design be submitted to an authorization officer within 12 months of the mine becoming subject to MDMER (Schedule 5, section 10) and six months before biological monitoring is initiated (Schedule 5, subsection 11(1)). Subsequent interpretative reports are required every 36 months following the due date of the previous report.

The First Study Design Report was submitted in January 2021 (Minnow 2021). The subsequent Phase 2 EEM Program Study Design was submitted to ECCC in January 2024, following the requirements of the MDMER (Schedule 5, section 13).

5.2.2. Interpretative EEM Reports

Pursuant to Schedule 5, subsection 12(1) of the MDMER, the first interpretative report will be submitted within 36 months after the mine becomes subject to MDMER. Each subsequent interpretative report shall be submitted to ECCC not later than 36 months after the day on which the previous interpretative report was required to be submitted.

This First Interpretative Report was submitted in January 2023. As per the regulatory guideline, the Interpretative Report for the Phase 2 EEM will be submitted to ECCC on or before February 1, 2026, following the requirements of the MDMER (schedule 5, section 15).

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