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Via email: licensing@nunavutwaterboard.org

Attention: Ms. Beaulieu

RE: 121011 2BE-MEA0813 Distribution Review

Environment Canada (EC) has reviewed the information supporting the renewal application submitted to the Nunavut Water Board (NWB). The following specialist advice has been provided pursuant to the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act 1999*, the pollution prevention provisions of the *Fisheries Act*, the *Migratory Birds Convention Act*, and the *Species at Risk Act*.

Agnico-Eagle Ltd., Exploration Division, is applying to the NWB to renew for a five year term, water license 2BE-MEA0813 which supports exploration activities in the area of the Meadowbank Gold Mine. Continued activities include prospecting, trenching, drilling, and geophysics activities.

Based on a review of the proposed renewal, EC provides the following comments for the NWB's consideration:

General

- Subsection 36(3) of the *Fisheries Act* specifies that, unless authorized by federal regulation, no person shall deposit or permit the deposit of deleterious substances of any type in water frequented by fish, or in any place under any conditions where the deleterious substance, or any other deleterious substance that results from the deposit of the deleterious substance, may enter any such water. In the definition of deleterious substance (section 34(1)) the *Fisheries Act* includes "*any water that contains a substance in such quantity or concentration, or that has been so treated, processed or changed, by heat or other means, from a natural state that it would, if added to any other water, degrade or alter or form part of a process of degradation or alteration of the quality of that water so that it is rendered or is likely to be rendered deleterious to fish or fish habitat or to the use by man of fish that frequent*

that water.” Subsection 36(3) makes no allowance for a mixing or dilution zone at the point of deposit.

- Reviewing the 2012 Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) Water Use Inspection Report for the project, EC notes that the sump on site was not functioning properly. EC recommends that performance issues with the sump design and capacity be resolved by the proponent.
- All sumps, spill basins, and fuel caches should be located in such a manner as to ensure that their contents do not enter any water body, and are to be backfilled and re-contoured to their pre-disturbance condition when they are no longer required.

Drilling

- Land-based drilling should not occur within 30 m of the high water mark of any water body unless approved by the NWB and AANDC.
- Chemical additives or drilling muds used in connection with this drilling program shall be disposed of such that they do not enter any water body either by surface or ground water flows.
- EC assessed inorganic chloride salts and concluded that these salts in high concentrations are harmful to the environment. As a result, the proponent should ensure that when using calcium chloride (CaCl₂) for drilling purposes that return water is contained and located in such a manner as to ensure that the contents do not migrate into any waterbody frequented by fish. Please note that the proponent should not rely on permafrost integrity to contain and isolate drilling wastes.

Spill Contingency Plan

- The Plan does not confirm whether tanks are bermed, nor describe berm capacity. Even if tanks are double walled, leakage from a valve could occur and the clean-up would be considerably more extensive if unbermed. EC recommends the use of secondary containment, such as self-supporting insta-berms, for storage of all barreled fuel rather than relying on natural depressions to contain spills.
- Refuelling should not take place below the high water mark of any water body and shall be done in such a manner as to prevent any hydrocarbons from entering any water body frequented by fish. EC recommends that spill prevention measures, such as drip pans should be used when refuelling equipment.
- A spill kit, including shovels, barrels, absorbents, etc., should be readily available at all locations where fuel is being stored or transferred in order to provide immediate response in the event of a spill and should accommodate 110% of the capacity of the largest fuel storage container.
- Please note that according to the Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada's (AANDC) “Guidelines for Spill Contingency Planning” (April 2007), all releases of harmful substances, **regardless of quantity** are to be reported to the NWT / NU 24-hour Spill Line, (867) 920-8130 if the release is near or into a water body, is near or into a designated sensitive environment or sensitive wildlife habitat, poses imminent threat to human health or safety, poses imminent threat to a listed species at risk or its critical habitat, or is uncontrollable.

Wildlife and Species at Risk

- Section 6(a) of the *Migratory Birds Regulations* states that no one shall disturb or destroy the nests or eggs of migratory birds. If active nests are encountered during project activities, the nesting area should be avoided until nesting is complete (i.e., the young have left the vicinity of the nest). The Proponent should consult the fact sheet “Planning Ahead to Reduce Risks to Migratory Bird Nests” available at: <http://www.ec.gc.ca/paom-itmb/>

- EC recommends that food, domestic wastes, and petroleum-based chemicals (e.g., greases, gasoline, glycol-based antifreeze) be made inaccessible to wildlife at all times. Such items can attract predators of migratory birds such as foxes, ravens, gulls, and bears. Although these animals may initially be attracted to the novel food sources, they often will also eat eggs and young birds in the area. These predators can have significant negative effects on the local bird populations.
- Section 5.1 of the *Migratory Birds Convention Act* prohibits persons from depositing substances harmful to migratory birds in waters or areas frequented by migratory birds or in a place from which the substance may enter such waters or such an area. The following comments are pursuant to the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA), which came into full effect on June 1, 2004. Section 79(2) of SARA, states that during an assessment of effects of a project, the adverse effects of the project on listed wildlife species and its critical habitat must be identified, that measures are taken to avoid or lessen those effects, and that the effects need to be monitored. This section applies to all species listed on Schedule 1 of SARA. However, as a matter of best practice, EC suggests that species on other Schedules of SARA and under consideration for listing on SARA, including those designated as at risk by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC), be considered during an environmental assessment in a similar manner. The Table below lists species that may be encountered in the project area that have been assessed by COSEWIC as well as their current listing on Schedules 1-3 of SARA (and designation if different from that of COSEWIC). Project impacts could include species disturbance, attraction to operations and destruction of habitat.

Terrestrial Species at Risk potentially within project area ¹	COSEWIC Designation	Schedule of SARA	Government Organization with Primary Management Responsibility ²
Peregrine Falcon	Special Concern (<i>anatum-tundrius</i> complex ³)	Schedule 1	Government of Nunavut
Short-eared Owl	Special Concern	Schedule 1	Government of Nunavut
Wolverine (Western population)	Special Concern	Pending	Government of Nunavut

¹ The Department of Fisheries and Oceans has responsibility for aquatic species.

² EC has a national role to play in the conservation and recovery of Species at Risk in Canada, as well as responsibility for management of birds described in the *Migratory Birds Convention Act* (MBCA). Day-to-day management of terrestrial species not covered in the MBCA is the responsibility of the Territorial Government. Thus, for species within their responsibility, the Territorial Government is best suited to provide detailed advice and information on potential adverse effects, mitigation measures, and monitoring.

- For any Species at Risk that could be encountered or affected by the project, the proponent should note any potential adverse effects of the project to the species, its habitat, and/or its residence. All direct, indirect, and cumulative effects should be considered. Refer to species status reports and other information on the Species at Risk registry at www.sararegistry.gc.ca for information on specific species.

- If Species at Risk are encountered or affected, the primary mitigation measure should be avoidance. The proponent should avoid contact with or disturbance to each species, its habitat and/or its residence.
 - Monitoring should be undertaken by the proponent to determine the effectiveness of mitigation and/or identify where further mitigation is required. As a minimum, this monitoring should include recording the locations and dates of any observations of Species at Risk, behaviour or actions taken by the animals when project activities were encountered, and any actions taken by the proponent to avoid contact or disturbance to the species, its habitat, and/or its residence. This information should be submitted to the appropriate regulators and organizations with management responsibility for that species, as requested.
 - For species primarily managed by the Territorial Government, the Territorial Government should be consulted to identify other appropriate mitigation and/or monitoring measures to minimize effects to these species from the project.
 - Mitigation and monitoring measures must be taken in a way that is consistent with applicable recovery strategies and action/management plans.
- All mitigation measures identified by the proponent, and the additional measures suggested herein, should be strictly adhered to in conducting project activities. This will require awareness on the part of the proponents' representatives (including contractors) conducting operations in the field. EC recommends that all field operations staff be made aware of the proponent's commitments to these mitigation measures and provided with appropriate advice / training on how to implement these measures.
 - Implementation of these measures may help to reduce or eliminate some effects of the project on migratory birds and Species at Risk, but will not necessarily ensure that the proponent remains in compliance with the *Migratory Birds Convention Act*, *Migratory Birds Regulations*, and the *Species at Risk Act*. The proponent must ensure they remain in compliance during all phases and in all undertakings related to the project.

If there are any changes to the project EC should be notified, as further review may be necessary. Please do not hesitate to contact me by either telephone at (867) 975-4631 or email at Paula.C.Smith@ec.gc.ca.

Regards,



Paula C. Smith
A/Senior Environmental Assessment Coordinator

cc: Carey Ogilvie, Head, EA-North, EA and Marine Programs Division, EC