



## **PROJECT PROPOSAL: GRAYS BAY ROAD AND PORT, FIELD RESEARCH PROGRAM**

### **Introduction**

The Grays Bay Road and Port (GBRP) Project (Project) is a proposed transportation corridor that will permanently connect a deep-water port at Grays Bay / *Kogloктоаkyok* on the Coronation Gulf to the northern terminus of the Tibbitt-Contwoyto Winter Road at the former Jericho Mine, Nunavut (NU; Project Area). The Project is being proposed by West Kitikmeot Resources Corp. (WKR) and is currently subject to screening by the Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB; file # 24XN038), with a review under Part 3 of the *Nunavut Planning and Project Assessment Act* anticipated to commence in the near future.

### **Purpose**

In support of advancing the design of the Project and of assessing impacts of the Project on the biophysical and socio-economic environment in an anticipated future environmental and socio-economic impact review in the coming years, WKR commenced field studies in July 2024. These studies are a continuation of, or are supplemental to, baseline studies screened and undertaken historically.

To further advance impact assessment and design aspects, WKR needs to undertake additional studies (the Program). Some scope and scale aspects of these studies have not been the subject of impact screening by the NIRB; the purpose of this submission is to initiate impact screening and authorization issuance to allow for the Program to commence in early 2025.

The Program is a continuation of that previously considered by the Nunavut Planning Commission (NPC) in 2024 (#150391), and subsequently amended (#150523).

### **Scope**

Generally, the Project involves workers accessing land and waters within the Project Area collecting biophysical environmental data, to maintain existing and install new scientific instrumentation required to support environmental data collection, and undertake design-related studies including geotechnical drilling.

More specifically, the Program involves the following, at a minimum:

- Design-related studies to support Project planning advancement, including
  - Marine- and land-based geotechnical drilling largely focused in the port area;
  - Geochemical assessment of proposed quarries along the road corridor, including, but not limited to, sampling and drilling;
  - Terrain stability and permafrost assessments, including, but not limited to, collecting permafrost samples with a drill, characterizing soil, measuring ground temperature, and sampling soils/sediments.
- Terrestrial wildlife surveys to inform the environmental baseline and related impact assessment including
  - Ground nest searches and shoreline bird surveys consisting of shoreline transects largely focused in the port area;
  - Observations using recording devices, such as autonomous recording units and motion activated cameras placed on stands which will be visible on the land.
  - Aerial track and trail surveys conducted by helicopter;
- Marine mammal studies to inform the environmental baseline and related impact assessment, including
  - Crewed aerial surveys using fixed-wing aircraft;
  - Vessel-based surveys using boats, including, but not limited to, the Martin Bergmann or equivalent.
- Marine and freshwater aquatic life surveys to inform the environmental baseline and related impact assessment, including
  - Intertidal and subtidal habitat and aquatic life surveys using transects, quadrats, and remotely operated vehicles;
  - Aquatic life sampling using nets, traps, and video recording.
- Marine and freshwater sediment and water sampling to inform the environmental baseline and related impact assessment, with some samples analyzed in the field using handheld portable scientific instrumentation.
- Vegetation and rare plant surveys to collect rare plant occurrence data, identify unique and uncommon plant communities, validate eco site mapping results, and identify traditional use plant occurrences.
- Meteorological instrumentation installation, maintenance and replacement, as needed at the pre-existing meteorological tower at the port site.
- Ambient noise studies using sound meters and ocean bottom hydrophones (terrestrial and marine placement respectively) wherein equipment such as buoys, ropes, may be visible on the water or on the shore near the port site where installed.
- Oceanographic studies including, but not limited to, prevailing current direction and speed by deploying instrumentation such as an Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler (buoys, ropes, etc., may be visible on the water or on the shore near the port site where installed).
- Archaeology studies to survey and document Archaeological and Paleontological Sites within the port and road footprint.

Instrumentation may remain in place for the foreseeable future until data collection endpoints are reached. All equipment used for scientific data collection is intended to operate without disturbing or impacting wildlife or land users within proximity to the equipment. Additional related studies arising from the impact assessment process may also be undertaken. No permanent infrastructure is being proposed for installation to support this program.

## Location

The Project location remains unchanged from what was submitted to the NPC in relation to File # 150391. For the purposes of continued baseline data collection, the Project Area is amended to include the maximum extents of the Project to allow for baseline assessment of valued components throughout their respective Regional Study Areas pursuant to NIRB file #24XN038. To further define the boundaries of the proposed research activities, additional spatial geometries have been included in this application to illustrate where each major activity is largely focused. Activities may occur outside these proposed major activity boundaries as required, but activities will remain within the maximum project extent.

## Transportation & Facilities

For the duration of the field program, workers will reside in existing accommodation facilities<sup>1</sup>, a marine watercraft equipped with live-aboard accommodation facilities, or a temporary emergency shelter when required.

For the duration of the field program, workers will continue to utilize drummed fuel<sup>2</sup> stored in existing authorized facilities<sup>1</sup> or new drum caches including amounts >4,000 L. WKR does not anticipate that further fuel cache locations are required at this time; however, should this change based on site conditions and seasonal considerations, cache relocation will occur in discussion with the Inspector. Any emergency shelters and fuel drum caches established will be removed at the end of the program.

Workers will travel to the study locations by helicopter, fixed wing aircraft or boat, and carry out their work on foot, by aircraft, drill, or boat, as applicable.

## Timing & Duration

The majority of the Program is expected to occur in 2025, with geotechnical drilling commencing in early spring, and additional studies occurring in snow-free months in 2025. Despite this, a Program duration extending until the start of road and port construction, which is currently scheduled for 2030, is planned to allow for continued data collection as may be required for detailed engineering and to satisfy commitments made during the impact assessment review process, and unplanned delays that may arise due to weather and logistical constraints.

## Equipment and Material Use

Equipment planned for use is largely related to access scientific data collection and personnel transport, and includes the following, or similar:

- Survey instruments including remotes cameras, data loggers and remote operated vehicles;
- Rotary and fixed wing aircraft;
- Boats;
- Handheld portable scientific instrumentation;
- Stationary scientific instrumentation;

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<sup>1</sup>Such as 20EN001, 2BM-ULU2030 Blue Star Gold Corp.'s Ulu Gold Project or 17EN059, 2BE-2328 West Kitikmeot Resources Corp.'s Arcadia Bay Property, or the Grays Bay Cache (67.79857, -110.855838) housing less than 4,000 litres.

<sup>2</sup> 205 L steel drums

- Drill rigs;
- Snowmobiles;
- Barges;
- Other additional supporting equipment as required;
- Related supporting equipment such as generators and pumps.

Materials planned for use are largely related to fuel for access and power, including gasoline, diesel, jet fuel and propane, as well as for drilling support, and related equipment maintenance (i.e. lubricants and coolants). In addition to fuel, drilling supplies used may include salt, and inert flocculants and lubricants.

### **Regulatory Context**

The NIRB previously commenced a review of aspects of the Project historically, and most recently under Part 3 of the *Nunavut Planning and Project Assessment Act*, until it was terminated in February 2022 (NIRB File No. 17XN011). Baseline studies undertaken historically by prior proponents for aspects of the project scope were also screened by the NIRB (NIRB File No. 04YN073, 07YN055, 17YN067).

The 2024 Program was found to be exempt from screening by the NPC (#150391), while various supporting authorizations were issued. The scope presented herein amends #150391 and is subject to screening. It is expected that similar authorizations will continue to be required, as well as a water licence, at a minimum.

## Alternatives

Alternatives to the Program and alternative means of carrying out the Program have been considered and are summarized below:

- Alternatives to carrying out the Program:
  - *Do nothing:* While doing nothing will minimize activity on the land, doing nothing does not allow for compilation of a current and complete data dataset and related future completion of a robust impact assessment.
  - *Defer works:* While deferring works will minimize activity on the land, delaying the start of work increases the timeline required to carry out the project, which can, in turn, result in increased costs due to inflation and increased future data collection needs as datasets age and require updating. Deferring work also limits the availability of near-term employment and training opportunities available to local and Indigenous businesses and workers as related input into socio-economic well-being.
- Alternative means of carrying out the Program:
  - *Camp establishment:* WKR has considered multiple options for its camp facilities in during periods of data collection including:
    - Establishing a new camp for researchers;
    - Opening the Arcadia Bay exploration camp (also owned by WKR);
    - Utilizing existing nearby camp facilities including the High Lake exploration camp, Ulu exploration camp, Tree River lodge, Lupin mine site, Jericho mine site;
    - Housing workers in nearby communities (i.e. Kugluktuk, Yellowknife).

The preferred means of carrying out the scope involves conducting the Program with workers based out of existing nearby camp facilities for reasons of timeliness and efficient use of resources. Workers carrying out marine assessments may stay on board the research vessel as accommodations are available.

## Engagement

A tour of Kitikmeot communities took place between April 15 and May 7<sup>th</sup>, and again between October 28<sup>th</sup> and November 15<sup>th</sup> including visits to Kugluktuk, Cambridge Bay, Kugaaruk, Taloyoak, and Gjoa Haven. During these visits WKR introduced itself as the proponent, discussed the Grays Bay Road and Port Project, the Project development schedule, and upcoming environmental baseline studies field program. The discussions were followed by a question-and-answer period for feedback on the Project. Where available, meetings were held with hamlet staff and elected representatives, Kitikmeot Inuit Association staff, hunters and trappers organizations staff and directors and staff with the Nunavut Impact Review Board and the Nunavut Water Board. Communications with interested parties are ongoing remotely and virtually, with the next series of in-person engagements in Kitikmeot communities planned for Spring 2025.