

Rationale for entering into a new land lease from the Qikiqtani Inuit Association to operate radio repeaters in Paquet Bay and Cape Weld, on Inuit-Owned Land outside the boundaries of Sirmilik National Park of Canada, in Nunavut

Issue

Sirmilik National Park of Canada, through the Nunavut Field Unit Superintendent, seeks the approval of the Executive Director, Quebec and Nunavut Region, to enter into a land lease from the Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA) for the purpose of operating radio repeaters on Inuit-Owned Land (IOL) at Paquet Bay and at Cape Weld. The application for this 10-year land lease (April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2032) will incur a Community Land and Resource Committee (CLARC) fee of \$750.00 and a QIA land lease fee of \$500.00.

Background

The VHF radio network in Sirmilik National Park supports routine park operations, public incident response, as well as occupational safety. Upgrades to this network are scheduled for July 2022 to expand existing coverage and to conduct routine servicing.

Repeaters are positioned on geographic high points, which providing the greatest coverage areas, but some of these optimal locations are outside of park boundaries (see map in Appendix). One existing and one proposed repeater site are indeed located on parcels of IOL administered by QIA.

An existing repeater at Paquet Bay is situated on IOL parcel PI-13/37G, where it provides coverage through a long, remote inlet through which Inuit routinely travel. A land lease must be secured to continue operating the repeater at this site.

A new repeater is proposed for installation at Cape Weld, on IOL parcel PI-11/38A,B, to expand coverage in the eastern part of the network where reception is currently poor. This region is frequently used by Inuit from Pond Inlet and is likely to see increased operational use by Parks Canada in maritime operations for Tallurutiup Imanga National Marine Conservation Area in the coming years. Installing this repeater will also require a land lease.

Repeaters at both of these locations will contribute to public safety and operational effectiveness, serving areas that are routinely visited by Parks Canada staff, by Inuit engaging in traditional activities on the land and sea, and sometimes by park visitors and researchers.

Land lease locations

The Appendix map shows the geographic locations of existing and planned (Cape Weld) radio repeaters in Sirmilik National Park. Photos and coordinates for the Paquet Bay repeater and proposed Cape Weld repeater are also provided in the Appendix.

Implications

1) Achievement of program objectives

Leasing land to operate radio repeaters at Paquet Bay and Cape Weld will help achieve program objectives and targets in the *Sirmilik National Park Management Plan* (2016). It will also help Parks Canada meet required levels of service for search and rescue response and readiness, as identified in the *Nunavut Field Unit Public Safety Plan* (2014) (*currently under review*).

Improved radio communications also support staff in meeting Parks Canada's Hazard Prevention Standard by adhering to Safe Work Practices (SWPs) in the course of their operational duties. Operational SWPs require that staff maintain communication during fieldwork; VHF radio provides a means to relay messages between field teams and also with the park office.

2) Relationship to approved management plans

As per *Management Plan* Objective 2.3, Parks Canada is responsible for ensuring that all park users can undertake safe and enjoyable experiences as a result of visitor safety planning, prevention, and response in cooperation with partners. Reliable communication systems play an important role in ensuring safe park operations and coordinating public safety responses.

3) Environmental implications

Impacts associated with repeater operation at these sites are expected to be minimal. Equipment at each site occupies a footprint of approximately 5 m² and consists of components in waterproof housing and with steel supports. Systems run autonomously on solar power and require servicing visits about every 2 years; they can be picked up and moved by helicopter, if required.

A project proposal to continue operations at Paquet Bay and install a new repeater at Cape Weld will be submitted to the Nunavut Planning Commission (NPC), the authority designated under the Nunavut Planning and Project Assessment Act (NuPPAA), for completing conformity determination on IOL. The proposal may then proceed to the Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB) for impact assessment.

4) Social and economic implications

Improved network coverage will facilitate better communication capabilities during public safety responses by the Agency and community partner Pond Inlet Search & Rescue. Benefits are expected to extend to all park user groups who may receive assistance through public safety responses in the future.

5) Operational implications

Radio repeaters at these two locations will support reliable operational communications in areas that are remote and can present hazardous conditions for air, sea, sea ice, and land travel. The coverage provided by repeaters at both locations is expected to especially benefit Parks Canada and Pond Inlet Search & Rescue, user groups most likely to be in coverage areas during routine activities.

6) Implications for parties

Well-positioned radio communication infrastructure benefits Parks Canada, its staff, and members of the public who may require incident response services provided by the Agency within park boundaries. Pond Inlet Search & Rescue and Bylot Island Field Station (operated by Université Laval) have written permission from Parks Canada to use select frequencies and will also benefit from network improvements.

7) Likely public response and impact

The radio repeater network at Sirmilik National Park has been in continuous operation for nearly two decades, over which time repeaters have been upgraded and added to improve the network. VHF radio is seen as an effective means of backcountry communication in the Pond Inlet area, and local public frequencies are well used by members of the community. It is anticipated that leasing land to operate repeaters at Paquet Bay and Cape Weld will receive little to no negative public response owing to the frequencies' use by Parks Canada and Pond Inlet Search & Rescue to support public safety. Repeaters are located on high points that are not easily accessed or seen and are unlikely to be visited (other than by staff).

8) Implications for future actions of the program

The Sirmilik radio repeater network may be further expanded in the future to support operations within Tallurutiup Imanga National Marine Conservation Area (TINMCA), which occupies an extensive marine area adjacent to the park.

Recommendations

The recommendation is to proceed with entering into a land lease with Qikiqtani Inuit Association for the purpose of radio repeater operations at these two sites over a 10-year term.

Submitted by:



Superintendent,
Nunavut Field Unit

Date

Appendix

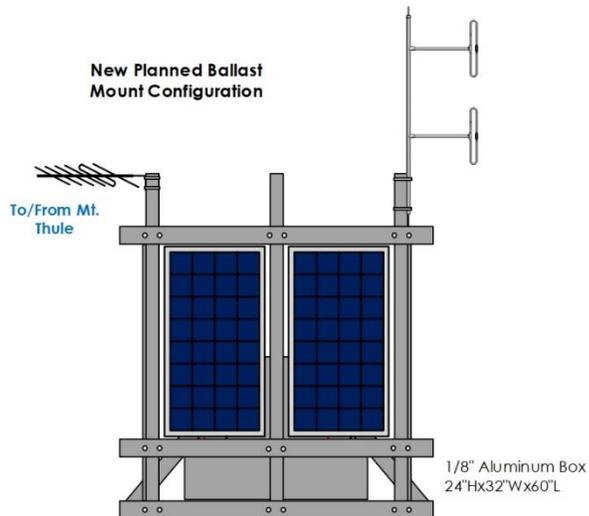


Map: Radio repeater network at Sirmilik National Park, including the existing Paquet Bay repeater and proposed Cape Weld repeater locations.

Cape Weld repeater (proposed)

Location: 72° 33.351' N, 75° 48.8742' W (800 m elevation)

IOL Parcel: PI-11/38AB



Paquet Bay repeater (existing)

Location: 71° 55.794' N, 78° 12.715' W (680 m elevation)

IOL parcel: PI-13/37G

