



NIRB File No.: 25YN017
Commission File No.: 150680

May 30, 2025

To: The Honourable Margaret Nakashuk
Minister Responsible for Nunavut Arctic College
926 Sivumugiaq
Iqaluit, NU
X0H 3H0

Sent via email: mnakashuk6@gov.nu.ca and sbaines6@gov.nu.ca

Re: Screening Decision for NASA Ames Research Center’s “Mars Exploration through Analog-site Drilling (MEAD)” Project Proposal, Qikiqtani Region

Dear Honourable Minister:

On March 20, 2025, the Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB or Board) received a referral to screen NASA Ames Research Center’s “Mars Exploration through Analog-site Drilling (MEAD)” project proposal from the Nunavut Planning Commission (Commission), with an accompanying positive conformity determination with the North Baffin Regional Land Use Plan.

Pursuant to Article 12, Sections 12.4.1 and 12.4.4 of the *Agreement between the Inuit of the Nunavut Settlement Area and Her Majesty the Queen in right of Canada (Nunavut Agreement)* and section 87 of the *Nunavut Planning and Project Assessment Act (NuPPAA)*, the NIRB commenced screening this project proposal and assigned it file number **25YN017**.

Following the assessment of all material information provided, the NIRB is recommending that a review of NASA Ames Research Center’s “Mars Exploration through Analog-site Drilling (MEAD)” project is not required pursuant to s. 92(1)(a) of the *NuPPAA*. Pursuant to s. 92(2)(a) of the *NuPPAA*, the NIRB has determined that specific terms and conditions are appropriate for this project.

Accordingly, the NIRB is issuing the attached Screening Decision Report dated May 30, 2025, to the responsible Minister(s). The Screening Decision Report provides, among other things, the regulatory framework, project overview and the NIRB’s assessment process, factors relevant for the determining significance of impacts, and recommended project-specific terms and conditions.

Please note that the project proposal will not be enclosed and the information related to the project proposal is accessible from the NIRB's Public Registry at www.nirb.ca/project/126161.

The Board only addresses these notice letters to those individuals considered to be a “responsible Minister with decision-making authority” for the project as set out under the *NuPPAA*. Regulatory Authorities and other Authorizing Agencies associated with a proposed project (e.g., Regional Inuit Associations, Nunavut Water Board) will continue to be copied on the Notice of Release of the Screening Decision Report. The NIRB is providing these parties with notice and access to the Board's Screening Decision Report as required under s. 200(2) and in support of these parties in the fulfillment of their responsibilities under the *NuPPAA* and the *Nunavut Agreement* to address, and as appropriate, implement, to the fullest extent possible, any relevant NIRB recommendations contained in the Screening Decision Report.

We look forward to receiving a response from the responsible Minister and the NIRB remains available for consultation with the Minister regarding this report as necessary. If you have any questions or require clarification, please do not hesitate to contact the NIRB's Director, Operations, Tara Arko at (867) 983-4611 or tarko@nirb.ca.

Sincerely,



Albert Ehaloak
Acting Chairperson
Nunavut Impact Review Board

Enclosure (1): Screening Decision Report, NIRB File No.: 25YN017 (May 30, 2025)

cc: Lootie Toomasie, Nunavut Water Board
Olayuk Akesuk, Qikiqtani Inuit Association
The Honourable Rebecca Chartrand, P.C., MP, Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency