

REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

The primary objectives of the NIRB are set out in Article 12, Section 12.2.5 of the *Nunavut Agreement* and are confirmed by s. 23 of the *NuPPAA*. The purpose of screening is provided for under Article 12, Section 12.4.1 of the *Nunavut Agreement* and s. 88 of the *NuPPAA*.

As set out under Article 12, Section 12.4.4 of the *Nunavut Agreement* and s. 92(1) of the *NuPPAA*, upon conclusion of the screening process, the Board must provide its written report the Minister indicating one of three options:

- (a) a review of the project is not required;
- (b) a review of the project is required; or
- (c) the project should be modified or abandoned.

PROJECT OVERVIEW & THE NIRB ASSESSMENT PROCESS

On March 11, 2026, the NIRB received a referral to screen Whale Cove Gold Corp’s (WCGC) “Whale Cove Project Camp and Regional Exploration Expansion” project proposal from the Nunavut Planning Commission (Commission), with an accompanying positive conformity determination with the Keewatin Regional Land Use Plan; which noted that the project proposal is outside the area of an applicable land use plan. All documents received and pertaining to this project proposal can be accessed from the NIRB’s Public Registry by using any of the following search criteria or www.nirb.ca/project/126326.

- Project Name: Whale Cove Project Camp and Regional Exploration Expansion
- NIRB File No.: 25EA090
- NIRB Application No.: 126326

Table 1: NIRB’s Assessment Process

Date	Stage
December 9, 2025	Receipt of project proposal and positive conformity determination (Keewatin Regional Land Use Plan) from the Commission
December 9, 2025	Pursuant to s. 144(1) of the <i>NuPPAA</i> the NIRB requested the Proponent complete an online application to address information required for Screening
December 19, 2025	Receipt of online application from Proponent
December 19, 2025	Request(s) to Proponent for additional information in order to carry out screening pursuant to s. s. 144(1) of the <i>NuPPAA</i>
February 26, 2026	Proponent responded to information request(s) and provided additional information
February 26, 2026	Scoping pursuant to s. 86(1) of the <i>NuPPAA</i>
March 10, 2026	Public engagement and comment request (which included draft terms and conditions) was issued in English with translations provided once available
March 31, 2026	Receipt of public comments

Date	Stage
April 1, 2026	Proponent provided with an opportunity to address comments/concerns raised by public
April 11, 2026	Proponent responded to comments/concerns raised by public
May 4, 2026	<i>Modified</i> Notice of Screening and Comment Request
May 14, 2026	Comments received for <i>Modified</i> Notice of Screening and Comment Request
April 10, 2026	Pursuant to Article 12 s 12.4.5 of the <i>Nunavut Agreement</i> and s. 92(3) of the <i>NuPPAA</i> , an extension to the 45-day timeline for the provision of the Board's Report was requested from the Minister of Northern and Arctic Affairs
May 27, 2026	Issuance of Screening Decision Report

1. Project Scope

Location	Kivalliq region, eastern boundary of project approximately 14km northwest of the community of Whale Cove, up to 85 kilometres west-northwest
Objective	The Proponent intends to improve advanced mineral exploration efficiency through expansion of the existing exploration camp, increased drilling capacity, and an expanded exploration area.
Timeline	Operation phase: May 2026 to September 2027 Operation phase: September 2027 to September 2037 Closure phase: September 2037 to September 2038 Post-closure phase: September 2038 to September 2040

As required under s. 86(1) of the *NuPPAA*, the Board accepted the scope of the project as set out by WCGC in the proposal. The scope of the project proposal includes the following undertakings, works, or activities:

- Construct and increase permanent camp from 35-person camp to 100-person camp;
- Establishment and operation of a 20-person mobile camp within project area;
- Expand the regional exploration area to 200km²;
- Increasing the total number of operating drills from two (2) to four (4); and
- Update and renew type B water licence 2BE-PBP2025.

2. Inclusion or Exclusion to Scoping List

The NIRB has identified that previously assessed and approved activities associated with the Project will be considered in the current assessment, particularly with respect to potential cumulative impacts where previous approvals may still be in force.

3. Public Comments and Concerns

As outlined in Table 1 above, notices regarding the NIRB's screening of this project proposal were distributed to community organizations as well as to relevant federal and territorial government agencies, Inuit organizations and other parties with a request for interested parties to provide the Board with any comments or concerns regarding:

- Whether the project proposal is likely to arouse significant public concern; and if so, why;
- Whether the project proposal is likely to cause significant adverse eco-systemic or socio-economic effects; and if so, why;
- Whether the project proposal is likely to cause significant adverse impacts on wildlife habitat or Inuit harvest activities; and if so, why;
- Whether the project proposal is of a type where the potential adverse effects are highly predictable and mitigable with known technology, (and providing any recommended mitigation measures); and
- Any matter of importance to the Party related to the project proposal.

On or before March 31, 2026, the NIRB received comments from the following interested parties. Following this, the NIRB identifying that proposed project areas were added to the NIRB application and not covered by the previous conformity determination from NPC. After NPC positive conformity, NIRB sent out Modified Notice of screening and comment request on May 4, 2026, and comments were due May 14, 2026.

Table 2: Comments Received

Commenting Party	NIRB Doc ID No.
Kivalliq Inuit Association (KivIA)	360586
<i>Modified</i> Kivalliq Inuit Association comment (KivIA)	361266
Government of Nunavut (GN)	360545
<i>Modified</i> Government of Nunavut (GN)	361371
Crown – Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC)	360276
<i>Modified</i> Crown – Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC) comment	361359
Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO)	360543
Transport Canada (TC)	360055
Beverly & Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board (BQCMB)	360286
Ghotelnene K’odtineh Dene (GKD)	360295

a. Summary of Comments and Concerns Received

The following provides a summary of the comments and concerns received by the NIRB in relation to the “Whale Cove Project Camp and Regional Exploration Expansion” project proposal:

Kivalliq Inuit Association (KivIA)

- Recommends that the Proponent follow caribou protection measures from May 15 to July 15, and after that, mobile protection measures apply.
- Noted that the Proponent consulted the KivIA and community, and the community is in support of the project.

Modified Kivalliq Inuit Association comment (KivIA)

- No additional comments.

Government of Nunavut (GN)

- Recommends that the Proponent submit a comprehensive Wildlife Management Plan.
- Recommends that the Proponent update their Spill Contingency Plan to address GN comments. Recommends that archaeological requirements for specific Project components be addressed directly with the Proponent through Culture and Heritage's archaeological permitting and regulatory review processes prior to any ground disturbance, including any requirements for archaeological assessment, avoidance, buffering, monitoring, mitigation, and chance-find response.

Modified Government of Nunavut comment (GN)

- No additional comments.

Crown – Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC)

- Recommends that the Proponent consider spill contingency measures such as maintaining a regular inspection, ensuring spill kits are readily available at each fuel storage location, maintaining appropriate setbacks from waterbodies, and storing any used oil or fuel-contaminated materials in labelled, sealed containers and backhauling them to an approved facility for disposal or recycling.
- Recommends that the Proponent consider segregating waste streams so only appropriate combustible materials are incinerated (excluding non-combustibles) and confirming ash acceptance requirements with the receiving landfill and testing only if required by the facility prior to disposal.
- Recommends minimizing disturbance to sensitive terrain, including wetlands and drainage areas, and implementing erosion and sediment control measures where necessary.
- Recommends monitoring for permafrost settlement and ensuring proper reclamation of previously disturbed areas.
- Recommends that the Proponent continue its efforts to engage with potentially interested parties on its project proposal.

Modified Crown – Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC)

- No additional comments.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO)

- Recommended that the Proponent follow DFO's protective measures for fish and fish habitat, and standard codes of practice. Proponents are asked to respect the Nunavut in-water works restricted activity timing windows to protect fish during spawning and incubation periods when spawning fish, eggs and fry are vulnerable to disturbance or sediment.
- The Proponent should refer to the DFO's Interim code of practice: End-of-pipe fish protection screens for small water intakes in freshwater. The Proponent should also follow the DFO Protocol for Winter Water Withdrawal.
- Noted that it is the Proponent's Duty to Notify DFO if they have caused, or are about to cause, the death of fish by means other than fishing and/or the harmful alteration, disruptive, or the destructions of fish habitat.

Transport Canada (TC)

- Has no concerns but notes the project is subject to acts and regulations administered by TC.
- Works, such as water withdrawal, in navigable waterways are subject to the Canadian Navigable Waters Act (CNWA) and in some cases may require an approval under the CNWA. The Proponent is advised to self-assess using the Navigation Protection Program Project Review Tool to determine if approval under the CNWA would be required.

4. b. Comments and Concerns with respect to Inuit Qaujimaningit, Indigenous and Community Knowledge

The following is a summary of the concerns or comments received with respect to Inuit Qaujimaningit, Indigenous and Community Knowledge with respect to the project proposal:

Beverly & Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board (BQCMB)

- Recommending more information and clarity on:
 - Whether the proposed expansion footprint overlaps with calving or post-calving areas, as the BQCMB does not support the expansion proceeding in such areas
 - Whether the project area overlaps with other important habitat areas including migratory areas
 - Whether local caribou use or caribou harvesting may be affected
 - What caribou-specific mitigation, monitoring, oversight, and adaptive management measures are proposed
 - Whether seasonal timing restrictions are needed to reduce disturbance to caribou
 - How cumulative effects on caribou would be considered given other existing and foreseeable activities in the project area
 - Whether updated community engagement has occurred in relation to the current expansion, and how caribou-related concerns raised in consultation have been addressed.

Ghotelnene K'odtineh Dene (GKD)

- Emphasized the importance of the Beverly/Qamanirjuaq caribou herd to their culture, way of life, and the exercise of Section 35 rights, noting that caribou are central to their traditional practices and relationship with the land.
- Identified that the project area overlaps with important caribou habitat, including calving and post-calving areas, and noted that caribou use the area throughout multiple seasonal periods.
- Expressed concern, based on Indigenous knowledge and land use experience, that cumulative effects from multiple projects within the herd's range may contribute to increased stress on caribou and impacts to habitat.
- Further, there are few details on the operation, timing and potential locations of the 20-person mobile camp within the project area. Considering the location of the project area within critical caribou habitat, the operation of a 20-person mobile camp in addition to the substantial expansion of Vickers camp raises significant concerns about potential impacts to caribou and caribou habitat.

- As noted above, caribou are critical to our well-being, way of life and the exercise of our rights. On this basis, Ghotelnene K'odtineh Dene do not support the Whale Cove Project Camp and Regional Exploration Expansion project proposal.

5. Proponent's Response to Public Comments and Concerns

Due to the comments, and questions received from parties, the NIRB provided an opportunity for the Proponent to respond. The following is a summary of the Proponent's response to concerns:

Response to comments from the GN

- In response to comments requesting the Proponent provide a comprehensive Wildlife Plan, the Proponent provided an updated Wildlife Management Plan and would incorporate the GN's recommendations.
- In response to concerns regarding updates to the Spill Contingency Plan, the Proponent agrees with the recommendations and has updated their plan in accordance with the requests.
- In response concerns regarding archeological and paleontological sites, the Proponent notes that they will hire a qualified archeologist to conduct necessary archeological surveys in 2026, record sites and ensure the protection of heritage and culturally significant areas prior to camp construction and drilling.

Response to comments from CIRNAC

- In response to recommendations to update the Spill Contingency Plan, the Proponent agrees and has updated their plan to reflect these recommendations.
- In response to concerns regarding sewage waste and solid waste management, the Proponent agrees with the recommendations and will implement them.
- In response to concerns regarding land disturbance and site reclamation, the Proponent agrees with these recommendations and will implement them during the progressive closure of Pistol Bay Camp and future closure of Vickers Camp.
- In response to recommendations of continued consultation with interested parties, the Proponent acknowledges CIRNAC's recommendation and will continue to engage, train, employ and consult with land users and local Inuit.

Response to DFO

- In response to recommendations for the Proponent to comply with protective measures outlined by DFO, the Proponent thanks DFO for the recommendations and support of the project. The Proponent would continue to follow DFO guidance and best practices as outlined by the comments and recommendations.

Response to TC

- In response to recommendations that the Proponent do a self assessment, the Proponent agrees and will complete the *Canadian Navigable Waters Act* (CNWA) self-assessment and adhere to the CNWA for water withdrawal using information provided.

Response to GKD

- In response to concerns regarding significant negative impacts on caribou, the Proponent noted that they recognize and respect the importance of caribou to the GKD and shared their concern for the protection of caribou and their habitat. The Proponent also notes that they have updated their Wildlife Monitoring and Management Plan (WMMP) to strengthen caribou-specific mitigation.
- In response to concerns of greater assessment of the cumulative impacts to wildlife and wildlife habitat, particularly caribou, the Proponent notes that there is no active extraction in the vicinity of Whale Cove, the nearest operating projects being the Meliadine gold mine (25km north of Rankin Inlet) and Meadowbank gold mine (110 north of Baker Lake).
- Also notes that the remaining projects are diffusely spaced at increasing distances from this project proposal. They are low all low-intensity land uses for mineral exploration. They consist of temporary or seasonal camps, served by helicopter or fixed wing aircraft landing on short strips.
- The Proponent noted that they have applied to NIRB to conduct exploration activities centered at their Vickers camp, near the community of Whale Cove. These physical activities are low-intensity and reversible with no anticipated residual effects. Furthermore, to reduce potential impacts to wildlife, including caribou, the Proponent is committed to implementing the WMMP.
- Finally, notes that when assessed against the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (IAAC) connection principle, no nearby projects or communities present overlapping spatial or temporal effects nor have residual effects that could interact cumulatively with the proposed project.

Response to BQCMB

- In response to concerns regarding the protection of the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq caribou herds, the Proponent recognizes the importance of protecting caribou and their habitat within and near the proposed project area. As a result, the Proponent has recently updated their WMMP to reflect these comments.
- The Proponent notes that based on recent available data, the Project is not located within the currently identified core calving areas; however, they recognize that caribou distribution may vary between years and that animals may occur within the project area.
- The Proponent notes that they have implemented a conservative, trigger-based mitigation framework within the WMMP, including monitoring, setbacks, and operational controls, with the ability to suspend activities where required.
- In response to concerns regarding cumulative impacts on caribou, the Proponent notes the scale of this proposed project is small and focused on low impact exploration camp construction and activities, progressive closure of Pistol Bay Camp and a commitment to monitor caribou and manage our activities as outlined in the WMMP. Furthermore, given the project's isolation from nearby, foreseeable mining projects, there are no predicted cumulative effects on disturbance to caribou and caribou habitat.
- In response to concerns regarding updated community engagement, the Proponent noted that they have undertaken engagement with the Hamlet of Whale Cove, local land users, and Inuit organizations in relation to the proposed expansion. The Proponent remains committed to ongoing engagement with community members and welcome continued

dialogue to ensure that concerns are meaningfully reflected in project planning and implementation.

ASSESSMENT OF THE PROJECT PROPOSAL IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART 3 OF *NUPPAA*

In determining whether a review of the project is required, the Board considered whether the project proposal had potential to result in significant ecosystemic or socio-economic impacts. Table 3. The Board took particular care to consider Inuit Qaujimaningit, Indigenous and Community Knowledge in carrying out its assessment and determination of the significance of impacts.

Table 3: Summary of the Board’s Assessment of Factors s. 90 *NuPPAA*

Factor	Comment
The size of the geographic area, including the size of wildlife habitats, likely to be affected by the impacts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The physical footprint of the proposed project’s eastern boundary of project approximately 14km northwest of the community of Whale Cove, up to 85 kilometres west-northwest. ▪ The Project includes expansion of the existing exploration camp, increased drilling capacity, and expansion of the exploration area to approximately 200 km². ▪ While the direct physical footprint is limited to camp and drill sites, the Project occurs within the broader seasonal range of wildlife species, including the Beverly–Qamanirjuaq caribou herd. ▪ Indirect effects, such as aircraft activity and human presence, may extend beyond the immediate project footprint during operations.
The ecosystemic sensitivity of that area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Project is situated within a northern ecosystem characterized by slow recovery rates and seasonal wildlife use. ▪ The area forms part of the seasonal range of the Beverly Qamanirjuaq caribou herd, including areas associated with migration and calving periods. ▪ Although the Project is not located within identified core calving grounds, it is situated in proximity to these areas and within broader caribou habitat. ▪ Given the ecological sensitivity and seasonal wildlife use, activities during sensitive periods may result in increased ecological effects and require appropriate mitigation.
The historical, cultural and archaeological significance of that area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Project area lies within a landscape historically used for harvesting, travel, and cultural practices. While no confirmed archaeological sites have been identified within the immediate footprint, the region exhibits characteristics consistent with archaeological potential,

Factor	Comment
	<p>particularly in proximity to waterbodies and travel corridors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ground-disturbing activities such as drilling and camp establishment introduce the potential for interaction with unrecorded sites, necessitating precautionary measures.
<p>The size of the human and the animal populations likely to be affected by the impacts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proposed project could potentially impact local harvesting activities due to the close proximity to the community of Whale Cove. The Proponent notes that there is no active extraction in the vicinity of Whale Cove. ▪ The Project occurs within the range of wildlife species, including notably the Beverly Qamanirjuaq caribou herd. ▪ While the Project is limited to exploration activities and does not involve mining, there is potential for localized disturbance to wildlife during active operations. ▪ Given the importance of the caribou herd to regional ecosystems and Inuit harvesting activities, even limited disturbance may affect a broader animal population through displacement or altered movement patterns during sensitive periods.
<p>The nature, magnitude and complexity of the impacts; the probability of the impacts occurring; the frequency and duration of the impacts; and the reversibility or irreversibility of the impacts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The primary potential impacts are associated with temporary disturbance resulting from aircraft activity, drilling operations, camp presence, and localized ground travel. The magnitude of direct habitat alteration is expected to be low and spatially limited; however, indirect disturbance effects (e.g., noise and human presence) may extend beyond the immediate project footprint. ▪ The probability of wildlife disturbance would be higher during sensitive seasonal periods, particularly migration and calving, if activities overlap spatially and temporally with wildlife presence. ▪ Impacts would occur intermittently during active field seasons and are anticipated to be short-term in duration. Progressive reclamation measures reduce the likelihood of long-term physical alteration. ▪ Most potential effects are considered reversible following demobilization and site restoration; however, repeated seasonal disturbance within the broader region may contribute to cumulative behavioural effects over time, particularly for species such as the Beverly/Qamanirjuaq caribou herd.

Factor	Comment
<p>The cumulative impacts that could result from the impacts of the project combined with those of any other project that has been carried out, is being carried out or is likely to be carried out.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Table 4 identifies numerous past, present, and reasonably foreseeable mineral exploration projects within the broader region, including mineral exploration and research activities. While the Project individually represents a temporary and limited disturbance, it occurs within an active exploration landscape. The cumulative effect of multiple seasonal exploration programs, including aircraft activity, drilling operations, camps, and winter access routes, may increase the frequency and spatial extent of disturbance within the Beverly Qamanirjuaq caribou range over time. ▪ Incremental disturbance from multiple projects operating within overlapping migration routes and seasonal habitats may contribute to cumulative behavioural effects on wildlife. Accordingly, cumulative effects remain a relevant consideration in assessing the overall significance of impacts.
<p>Any other factor that the Board considers relevant to the assessment of the significance of impacts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The effectiveness of mitigation measures would depend on appropriate implementation, monitoring, and adaptive management. ▪ Engagement with Indigenous organizations and incorporation of Inuit Qaujimaningit and Indigenous Knowledge remain important considerations in project planning and adaptive management. ▪ Given the nature of the Project, the Board’s ability to rely on proponent-led mitigation measures and adherence to applicable guidelines is an important consideration in assessing overall impact significance.

Regulatory Requirements

The Proponent is also advised that the following legislation may apply to the Project:

Acts and Regulations

1. The *Fisheries Act* (<http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/F-14/index.html>).
2. The *Nunavut Waters and Nunavut Surface Rights Tribunal Act* (<http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/n-28.8/>).
3. The *Migratory Birds Convention Act* (<http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/M-7.01/>), the *Migratory Birds Regulations* (https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/C.R.C.,_c._1035/index.html) and the *Migratory Bird Sanctuary Regulations* (https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/C.R.C.,_c._1036/index.html).
4. The *Species at Risk Act* (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/s-15.3/>). Attached in **Appendix A** is a list of Species at Risk in Nunavut.

5. The *Nunavut Act* (<http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/N-28.6/>). The Proponent must comply with the proposed terms and conditions listed in the attached **Appendix B**.
6. The *Wildlife Act (Nunavut)* and its corresponding regulations (<http://www.canlii.org/en/nu/laws/stat/snu-2003-c-26/latest/snu-2003-c-26.html>).
7. The *Canadian Environmental Protection Act* (<http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-15.31/>). The Proponent is advised that the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act* lists calcium chloride (CaCl) as a toxic substance. The Proponent should assess alternatives to the use of CaCl as a drill additive, including biodegradable and non-toxic additives.
8. The *Canadian Navigable Waters Act* (<https://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/N-22/>).

Other Applicable Guidelines

9. Fisheries and Oceans Canada Protocol for Winter Water Withdrawal from Ice-covered Waterbodies in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut (http://registry.mvlwb.ca/Documents/W2010C0005/W2010C0005%20-%20Land%20Use%20Permit%20Application%20-%20DFO%20Water%20Withdrawal%20Protocol%20-%20Aug%2025_10.pdf)
10. Environmental Guidelines for the Management of Hazardous Waste, Government of Nunavut, Revised October 2010 (https://www.gov.nu.ca/sites/default/files/Guideline%20-%20General%20Management%20of%20Hazardous%20Waste%20%28revised%20Oct%202010%29_0.pdf).

Table 4: Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Projects Considered

NIRB Project Number	Project Title	Project Type
<i>Proposed Developments – undergoing assessment</i>		
26EN012	Cache Zone 2026	Mineral Exploration
25YN045	Arctic Coast – Nunavut Community-based Monitoring 2026/2027	Research
25EN080	Hook Lake	Mineral Exploration
26EN006	Victory Lake	Mineral Exploration
26EN014	Baker Basin Project	Mineral Exploration
<i>Present Projects – approved or in operation</i>		
16YN040	Western Hudson Bay Geoscience for Infrastructure Project	Research
25XN050	Airside Surfaces Rehabilitation – Whale Cove	Pits and Quarries
25YN021	Movement and chemical ecology of fishes in Hudson Bay	Research
25YN035	Water quality and sediment collection near Chesterfield Inlet, Whale Cove, Rankin Inlet, Baker Lake, Arviat, Naujaat and Coral Harbour	Research

NIRB Project Number	Project Title	Project Type
25YN044	Characterization of Shoreline Litter in the Canadian Arctic	Research
25YN076	Assessing changing cryohydrogeologic conditions with locally relevant landscape indicators in Nunavut, Canada	Research
25YN079	Why is mercury rising in some northern lakes?	Research
<i>Past Projects</i>		
24YN012	OPP 2.0 Baseline Shoreline Mapping 2024	Research
24YN016	Whale Cove Mobile Wind Resource Assessment Project	Research
25YN019	Western Hudson Bay beluga population abundance estimate	Research
25YN026	Impacts of Past Glacial Ice Sheets	Research

VIEWS OF THE BOARD

In considering the above factors, the Board has identified the following and respectfully provides its views regarding whether or not the proposed project has the potential to result in significant impacts. The NIRB has also proposed terms and conditions that would mitigate the potential adverse impacts identified.

Ecosystem, wildlife habitat and Inuit harvesting activities:

Valued Component	Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat (emphasis on Caribou)
Potential effects:	Project activities, including helicopter operations, drilling, construction and expansion of permanent camp, use and movement of mobile camp, expansion of project footprint and ground travel may result in disturbance to wildlife, including displacement from feeding, resting, migration, and calving areas.
Nature of Impacts:	Direct habitat alteration is expected to be limited and localized; however, indirect disturbance from helicopter noise and human presence may extend beyond the immediate project footprint. The Project occurs within the seasonal range of the Beverly Qamanirjuaq caribou herd, including areas associated with migration and adjacent to calving areas, where disturbance may have elevated ecological importance. Disturbance may result in behavioural responses such as avoidance of the area or altered movement patterns, particularly during sensitive periods. While impacts are anticipated to be temporary and reversible at the project scale, cumulative disturbance associated with multiple exploration projects in the region remains a relevant consideration.
Mitigating Factors:	Mitigation of wildlife disturbance is addressed through recommended terms and conditions requiring adherence to wildlife protection measures, seasonal restrictions, mobile caribou protection measures, and

	suspension of activities where caribou or muskox are present within defined distances. Additional measures include speed controls, wildlife right-of-way provisions, and avoidance of known migration routes and water crossings. Monitoring and reporting requirements would support adaptive response during operations.
Proposed Terms and Conditions:	Waste Management – 10 Noise - 19 Wildlife – General – 20 through 25 Migratory Birds – 26 and 27 Aircraft Flight Restrictions – 28 through 33 Caribou and Muskoxen Disturbance – 34 through 40 Drilling – General – 42 through 44 Drilling on Land – 45 through 49 Camps – 50 and 51 Land Use and Restoration – 52 through 56

Valued Component	Terrestrial Vegetation and Soils
Potential effects:	Localized disturbance to tundra vegetation, surface soils, and minor wetlands may occur due to foot traffic, overland travel, drilling, construction and expansion of the permanent camp, and the establishment, use and movement of the mobile camp.
Nature of Impacts:	Impacts are expected to be spatially limited; however, Arctic tundra ecosystems are characterized by slow recovery rates and shallow active layers, which may prolong regeneration following disturbance. Soil compaction and erosion may reduce habitat quality at a localized scale. Impacts are anticipated to be reversible with reclamation, though recovery may extend beyond a single season.
Mitigating Factors:	Potential disturbance to tundra vegetation and soils is addressed through limitations on the project footprint, progressive site reclamation, restrictions on camp placement, and requirements to prevent erosion and sediment transport. Fuel handling and waste management measures would reduce the risk of contamination to terrestrial environments.
Proposed Terms and Conditions:	Water courses/Water bodies – 8 Waste Management – 10 Fuel and Chemical Storage – 11 through 18 Road and Ground Disturbance – 41 Drilling – General – 42 through 44 Drilling on Land – 45 through 49 Camps – 50 and 51 Land Use and Restoration – 52 through 56

Valued Component	Freshwater Ecosystems
Potential effects:	Potential effects to freshwater ecosystems are primarily associated with the expansion of the project footprint, expansion and construction of permanent camp, use and movement of mobile camp, sediment

	mobilization, and the unintended release of fuel or drilling-related substances in areas adjacent to lakes, streams, or wetlands.
Nature of Impacts:	Northern freshwater systems are sensitive to physical disturbance and contamination. While no direct in-water works are proposed, the proximity of drilling and camp activities introduces a low-probability risk of deleterious substance release. With adherence to regulatory requirements, impacts are expected to be localized and temporary; however, spill events could result in more consequential effects.
Mitigating Factors:	Risks to freshwater ecosystems are addressed through required setbacks from water bodies, prohibition of deleterious substance release, erosion and sediment control measures, containment of drilling wastes, and spill response planning. Restrictions on water withdrawal practices would further reduce potential interaction with aquatic environments.
Proposed Terms and Conditions:	Water Courses / Water Bodies – 6 through 9 Waste Management – 10 Fuel and Chemical Storage – 11 through 18 Drilling – General – 42 through 44 Drilling on Land – 45 through 49

Valued Component	Harvesting and Land Use
Potential effects:	Exploration activities may temporarily overlap with harvesting areas or travel routes and may contribute to perceived or actual wildlife displacement of wildlife relied upon for harvesting.
Nature of Impacts:	Impacts are expected to be localized and temporary; however, harvesting activities are closely tied to seasonal wildlife movements. Disturbance during sensitive periods may indirectly affect harvesting success. In the regional context, cumulative exploration activity may influence broader harvesting patterns over time.
Mitigating Factors:	Potential interaction with harvesting activities is addressed through wildlife disturbance restrictions, seasonal activity limitations, consultation with local organizations, and requirements that project activities not interfere with traditional land use. Communication measures are intended to reduce access conflicts during active operations.
Proposed Terms and Conditions:	Wildlife – General – 20 through 25 Aircraft Flight Restrictions – 28 through 33 Caribou and Muskoxen Disturbance – 34 through 40 Other – 60 through 62

Socio-economic effects on northerners:

Valued Component	Archaeological and Cultural Resources
Potential effects:	Ground-disturbing activities may encounter previously unidentified archaeological or culturally significant sites.
Nature of Impacts:	Although no recorded archaeological or cultural sites have been identified within the immediate project footprint, the potential for

Valued Component	Archaeological and Cultural Resources
	previously unidentified sites cannot be ruled out. Disturbance to such resources would be irreversible and culturally significant. Accordingly, precautionary avoidance and reporting measures are necessary.
Mitigating Factors:	Protection of heritage resources would be addressed through required avoidance buffers, reporting procedures, and suspension of activities if archaeological or paleontological materials are encountered. Personnel awareness requirements would reduce the likelihood of inadvertent disturbance.
Proposed Terms and Conditions:	Heritage Sites – 57 through 59 Other – 60

Valued Component	Socio-Economic Conditions
Potential effects:	The Project may generate short-term employment and contracting opportunities during field operations. Economic benefits may include limited wages, service contracts, and procurement of local goods and services.
Nature of Impacts:	Socio-economic effects are expected to be localized and temporary due to the limited duration and small workforce associated with early-stage advanced exploration. Positive employment benefits are anticipated to be modest in magnitude and not broadly distributed. Given the remote location and temporary nature of activities, adverse socio-economic effects are expected to be minimal.
Mitigating Factors:	The Board has recommended measures encouraging continued engagement with local communities and consideration of local employment and contracting opportunities where feasible. Communication requirements would support transparency regarding project activities and timing.
Proposed Terms and Conditions:	General – 1 through 5 Other – 60 through 62

Significant public concern:

Valued Component	Public Concern
Potential effects:	Public concern relates primarily to wildlife protection, cumulative exploration pressure, and respect for harvesting rights.
Nature of Impacts:	Public concern appears precautionary in nature and reflects broader regional development activity rather than solely the footprint of the Project. These concerns highlight the importance of cumulative effects considerations and the need for appropriate mitigation and communication. Continued engagement and compliance with regulatory requirements are relevant to addressing these concerns.
Mitigating Factors:	Public concern is addressed through continued engagement, adherence to wildlife protection measures, implementation of seasonal restrictions, and compliance with applicable regulatory requirements. Reporting

	obligations and communication with affected communities support transparency throughout the exploration program.
Proposed Terms and Conditions:	General – 1 through 5 Fuel and Chemical Storage – 11 through 18 Wildlife – General – 20 through 25 Other – 60 through 62

Technological innovations for which the effects are unknown:

- No specific issues have been identified associated with this project proposal.

Administrative Conditions:

To encourage compliance with applicable regulatory requirements and assist the Board and responsible authorities with compliance and effects monitoring for project activities, the following project-specific terms and conditions have been recommended: 1-5.

In considering the above factors and subject to the Proponent’s compliance with regulatory requirements and the terms and conditions necessary to mitigate against the potential adverse environmental and social effects, the Board is of the view that the proposed project is unlikely to cause significant public concern and its adverse ecosystemic and socioeconomic impacts are unlikely to be significant, or are highly predictable and can be adequately mitigated by known technologies.

RECOMMENDED PROJECT-SPECIFIC TERMS AND CONDITIONS

The Board is recommending the following specific terms and conditions to apply in respect of the project:

General

1. Whale Cove Gold Corp (the Proponent) shall maintain a copy of the Project Terms and Conditions at the site of operation at all times and make it accessible to enforcement officers upon request.
2. The Proponent shall operate in accordance with all commitments stated in correspondence provided to the Nunavut Planning Commission (NPC File No.: 150945), and the NIRB (Online Application Form, February 26, 2026). This information should be accessible to enforcement officers upon request.
3. The Proponent shall operate the site in accordance with all applicable Acts, Regulations and Guidelines.
4. The Proponent shall ensure that it meets the standards and/or limits as set out in the authorizing agencies’ permits or licences as required for this project.
5. The Proponent shall ensure that all personnel, staff and contractors are adequately trained prior to commencement of all project activities, and shall be made aware of all operational plans, management plans, guidelines and Proponent commitments relating to the project.

Water courses/Water bodies (including fresh and marine waters)

6. The Proponent shall not extract water from any fish-bearing water body unless the water intake hose is equipped with a screen of appropriate mesh size to ensure that there is no entrapment of fish. Small lakes or streams should not be used for water withdrawal unless otherwise authorized by the appropriate authorizing agency.
7. The Proponent shall ensure that no disturbance of the stream bed, lakebed or the banks of any definable watercourse be permitted, except where deemed necessary for maintaining project-specific operational commitments or approved by a responsible authority in cases of spill management.
8. The Proponent shall implement erosion and sediment suppression measures on all areas during all project activities in order to prevent sediment or fugitive dust from entering any water body or surrounding environment. Erosion prevention measures may include berms or silt fences.
9. The Proponent shall not deposit, nor permit the deposit of any fuel, chemicals, wastes (including wastewater) or sediment into any water body. The Proponent should have in place an Emergency Spill Response Plan that is approved by the appropriate authorizing agency(ies).

Waste Management

10. The Proponent shall manage all hazardous and non-hazardous waste including food, domestic wastes, debris and petroleum-based chemicals (e.g., greases, gasoline, glycol-based antifreeze) in such a manner to avoid release into the environment and access to wildlife at all times until disposed of appropriately or at an approved facility.

Fuel and Chemical Storage

11. The Proponent shall locate all fuel and other hazardous materials a minimum distance away from the high-water mark of any water body and environmentally sensitive areas as required by the appropriate authorizing agencies. The materials shall be stored in such a manner as to prevent their release into the environment.
12. The Proponent shall use adequate secondary containment or a surface liner (e.g., self-supporting insta-berms and fold-a-tanks) when storing barreled fuel and chemicals at all locations.
13. The Proponent shall ensure that re-fuelling of all equipment occurs a minimum distance away from the high-water mark of any water body as required by the appropriate authorizing agencies.
14. The Proponent shall routinely inspect and document the conditions of fuel and hazardous material storage containers and containment areas as required by the appropriate authorizing agencies. Fuel containment areas shall be kept clear of debris, water and snow to facilitate inspections for leaks.
15. The Proponent shall have a Spill Contingency Plan in place at all fuel storage or transfer locations and shall ensure that appropriate spill response equipment and clean-up materials (e.g., shovels, pumps, barrels, drip pans, and absorbents) are readily available.
16. The Proponent shall follow the authorizing agencies' direction for management and removal of hazardous materials and wastes (e.g., contaminated soils, sediment and waste oil).

17. The Proponent shall ensure that wildlife deterrent systems are utilized at the time of a spill incident in order to avoid wildlife (terrestrial or marine) and migratory birds from being contaminated.
18. The Proponent shall ensure that all spills of fuel or other deleterious materials of 100 litres or more must be reported immediately to the 24-hour Spill Line at (867) 920-8130

Noise

19. All construction and road vehicles must be fitted with standard and well-maintained noise suppression devices.

Wildlife – General

20. The Proponent shall not substantially alter or damage or destroy any wildlife habitat in conducting this operation unless otherwise authorized by the appropriate authorizing agencies.
21. The Proponent shall not chase, weary, harass or molest wildlife. This includes persistently circling, chasing, hovering over, pursuing or in any other way harass wildlife, or disturbing large groups of animals.
22. The Proponent shall not hunt or fish, unless proper Nunavut authorizations have been acquired.
23. The Proponent shall ensure that all wildlife have the right-of-way on any roads or trails. Veh are required to slow down or stop and wait to permit the free and unrestricted movement of wil across roads or trails at any location.
24. The Proponent shall enforce safe speed limits for vehicles travelling along the road to er drivers have sufficient time to react in a safe manner if wildlife are encountered on or adjae the road or trail.
25. The Proponent shall ensure that drivers maintain spacing appropriate for driving and conditions, and speed limits, to ensure drivers have time to safely react to any wildlife on the 1

Migratory Birds and Raptors Disturbance

26. The Proponent shall carry out all phases of the project in a manner that protects migratory birds and avoids harming, killing or disturbing migratory birds or destroying, disturbing or taking their nests or eggs. In this regard, the Proponent shall take into account Environment and Climate Change Canada's Avoidance Guidelines. The Proponent's actions in applying the Avoidance Guidelines shall be in compliance with the Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994 and with the Species at Risk Act.
27. The Proponent shall not disturb or destroy the nests or eggs of any birds. If active nests of any birds are discovered or located (i.e., with eggs or young), the Proponent shall avoid these areas until nesting is complete and the young have naturally left the vicinity of the nest by establishing a protection buffer zone appropriate for the species and the surrounding habitat.

Aircraft Flight Restrictions

28. The Proponent shall not alter flight paths to approach wildlife and avoid flying directly over animals.

29. The Proponent shall plan flight paths that minimize flights over known habitat likely to have birds or concentrations of wildlife. Aircraft should avoid critical and sensitive wildlife areas at all times by choosing alternate flight corridors.
30. The Proponent shall restrict aircraft/helicopter activity related to the project to a minimum flight altitude of 610 metres (2,100 ft) above ground level except during landing, take-off or if there is a specific requirement for low-level flying, which does not disturb wildlife or migratory birds.
31. The Proponent shall avoid known concentrations of birds (e.g., bird colonies, moulting areas) by a lateral distance of 1.5 kilometre. If avoidance is not possible maintain a minimum flight altitude of 1,100 metres (3,500 feet) over these areas.
32. The Proponent shall ensure that aircraft do not, unless for emergency, touch-down in areas where wildlife is present.
33. The Proponent shall advise all pilots of relevant flight restrictions and enforce their application over the project area, including flight paths to/from the project area.

Caribou and Muskoxen Disturbance

34. The Proponent shall avoid interfering with any paths or crossings known to be frequented by caribou during periods of migration as identified by current land use plans in place and/or by Inuit Qaujimaningit.
35. The Proponent shall not locate any operation or undertake activities that could block or cause any diversion to migration of caribou or muskoxen.
36. The Proponent shall immediately cease activities likely to interfere with the migration or calving of caribou or muskoxen until such time as the caribou or muskox have passed.
37. The Proponent shall not construct or operate any camp, cache any fuel or conduct blasting within ten (10) kilometres, or conduct any drilling operation within five (5) kilometres of any designated caribou water crossings.
38. During the period of May 15 to July 15, the Proponent shall suspend all operations and activities outside the immediate vicinity of the camps. Restricted activities include, but are not limited to, air and vehicle traffic, loud or repetitive noise or vibration disturbances, low-level over flights, blasting, and use of mobile equipment including snowmobiles and all terrain vehicles, and personnel walking within sight of the caribou group(s), until the caribou are no longer in the immediate area. Should the results of localized monitoring satisfy the land use inspector the project operations may resume without disturbing pregnant caribou cows or cows with young calves the suspension may be lifted for the periods specified.
39. Should pregnant caribou cows, cows with young calves, or groups of 50 or more caribou be observed within one (1) kilometer of project operations at any time, the Proponent shall suspend all operations in the vicinity, including low level overflights, drilling, blasting/trenching, and use of snowmobiles and all terrain vehicles outside the immediate vicinity of the camp, until caribou are no longer in the immediate area.
40. During the period of April 14 to June 1 when muskoxen are present, the Proponent shall not approach muskoxen closer than one (1) kilometer. This includes all operations, including low-level over flights, blasting, and use of snowmobiles and all-terrain vehicles outside the immediate vicinity of the camps.

Road and Ground Disturbance

41. The Proponent shall not move any equipment or vehicles unless the ground surface is in a state capable of fully supporting the equipment or vehicles without rutting or gouging. Overland travel of equipment or vehicles must be suspended if rutting occurs.

Drilling – General

42. The Proponent shall not allow any drilling wastes to spread to the surrounding lands or water bodies.
43. The Proponent shall ensure that any deleterious substances (as defined in the *Fisheries Act*) resulting from its activities do not enter into any water bodies frequented by fish.
44. The Proponent shall ensure that all drill areas are constructed to facilitate minimizing the environmental footprint of the project area.

Drilling on Land

45. The Proponent shall not conduct any land-based drilling or mechanized clearing activities a minimum distance of the normal high-water mark of any water body as required by an authorizing agency.
46. If an artesian flow is encountered, the Proponent shall ensure the drill hole is immediately plugged and permanently sealed.
47. The Proponent shall ensure that all sump/depression capacities are sufficient to accommodate the volume of wastewater and any fines that are produced. The sumps shall only be used for inert drilling fluids, and not any other materials or substances.
48. The Proponent shall not locate any sumps within a minimum distance of the normal high-water mark of any water body as required by an authorizing agency.
49. The Proponent shall ensure all drill holes are backfilled or capped prior to the end of each field season. All sumps must be backfilled and restored to original or stable profile prior to the end of each field season.

Camps

50. The Proponent shall ensure that all camps are located durable surfaces, such as gravel or sand that is consolidated and can withstand repeated, heavy use. Measures shall be put in place to prevent erosion, trail formation and damage to the ground.
51. The Proponent shall not erect camps or store materials on the surface ice of lakes or streams, except that which is for immediate use.

Land Use and Restoration of Disturbed Areas

52. The Proponent shall use existing trails where possible during project activities on the land.
53. The Proponent shall ensure that the land use area is kept clean and tidy at all times.
 54. The Proponent shall avoid disturbance on slopes prone to natural erosion, and alternative locations shall be utilized.
 55. The Proponent shall remove all garbage, fuel and equipment at the end of each field season and/or upon completion of work and/or upon abandonment.

56. The Proponent shall ensure that all disturbed areas are restored to a stable or pre-disturbed state using Best Available Technology Economically Achievable (BATEA) upon completion of work and/or abandonment.

Heritage Sites

57. The Proponent shall ensure that archaeological and paleontological sites are not purposely or inadvertently disturbed by clients or staff as a result of project activities.
58. The Proponent shall ensure that all clients and staff are aware of the Proponent's responsibilities and requirements regarding archaeological or palaeontological sites that are encountered during land-based activities. This should include briefings explaining the prohibitions regarding removal of artifacts, and defacing or writing on rocks and infrastructure.
59. No activities shall be conducted in the vicinity (50 metres buffer zone) of any archaeological/historical sites. If archaeological sites or features are encountered, activities shall immediately be interrupted and moved away from this location. Each site encountered needs to be recorded and reported to the Government of Nunavut-Department of Culture and Heritage.

Other

60. The Proponent should engage with local residents regarding planned activities in the area and should solicit available Inuit Qaujimaningit or Indigenous Knowledge and information regarding current recreational and traditional usage of the project area which may inform project activities. Posting of translated public notices and direct engagement with potentially interested groups and individuals prior to undertaking project activities is strongly encouraged.
61. The Proponent shall ensure that project activities do not interfere with wildlife harvesting or traditional land use activities.
62. The Proponent should, to the extent possible, hire local people and access local services where possible.

MONITORING AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

In addition, the Board is recommending the following:

Annual Report

1. The Proponent shall submit a comprehensive annual report with copies provided to the Nunavut Impact Review Board, by March 31st of each year of permitted activities beginning March 31, 2027. The annual report must contain at least the following information:
 - a) A summary of activities undertaken for the year, including:
 - a map showing the approximate location of drill sites;
 - a map showing the location of the fuel cache;
 - a description of local hires, contracting opportunities and initiatives;
 - flight altitudes, frequency of flights and anticipated flight routes;
 - site photos;
 - b) A work plan for the following year, including any progressive reclamation work undertaken;

- c) A summary of community consultations undertaken throughout the year, providing copy of materials presented to community members, a description of issues and concerns raised, discussions with community members and advice offered to the company as well as any follow-up actions that were required or taken to resolve any concerns expressed about the project proposal;
- d) A log of instances in which community residents occupy or transit through the project area for the purpose of traditional land use or harvesting. This log should include the location and number of people encountered, activity being undertaken (e.g., berry picking, fishing, hunting, camping, etc.), date and time; and any mitigation measures or adaptive management undertaken to prevent disturbance;
- e) A discussion of issues related to wildlife and environmental monitoring, including the number of cease-work orders required as a result of proximity to caribou and any other wildlife;
- f) A brief summary of WMMP results as well as any mitigation actions that were undertaken. In addition, the Proponent shall maintain a record of wildlife observations while operating within the project area and include it as part of the summary report. The summary report based on wildlife observations should include the following:
 - 1. Locations (i.e., latitude and longitude), species, number of animals, a description of the animal activity, and a description of the gender and age of animals if possible.
 - 2. Prior to conducting project activities, the Proponent should map the location of any sensitive wildlife sites such as denning sites, calving areas, caribou crossing sites, and raptor nests in the project area, and identify the timing of critical life history events (i.e., calving, mating, denning and nesting).
 - 3. Additionally, the Proponent should indicate potential impacts from the project, and ensure that operational activities are managed and modified to avoid impacts on wildlife and sensitive sites.
- g) An analysis of the effectiveness of mitigation measures for wildlife;
- h) Summary of any heritage sites encountered during the exploration activities, any follow-up action or reporting required as a result and how project activities were modified to mitigate impacts on the heritage sites;
- i) Summary of its knowledge of Inuit land use in/near the project area and explain how project activities were modified to mitigate impacts on Inuit land use; and
- j) A summary of how the Proponent has complied with conditions contained within this Screening Decision, and all conditions as required by other authorizations associated with the project proposal.

In addition to the project-specific terms and conditions, the Board is recommending the following:

Change in Project Scope

1. Responsible authorities or Proponent shall notify the Nunavut Planning Commission and/or Parks Canada as appropriate, and the NIRB of any changes in operating plans or conditions, including phase advancement, associated with this project prior to any such change.

Copy of licences, etc. to the Board and Commission

2. The NIRB respectfully requests that responsible authorities submit a copy of each licence, permit or other authorization issued for the Project to the NIRB to assist in enabling possible project monitoring that may be required. Please forward a copy of the licences, permits and/or other authorizations to the NIRB directly at info@nirb.ca or upload a copy to the NIRB's online registry at www.nirb.ca.

Use of Inuit Qaujimaningit

3. The Proponent is encouraged to work with local communities and knowledge holders to inform project design, to carry out the project, and to confirm or validate the perspectives represented in publications, and reports as part of the project. Care should be taken to ensure that Inuit Qaujimaningit and local knowledge collected for the project is used with permission and is accurately represented.

Bear and Carnivore Safety

4. The Proponent should review the Government of Nunavut's booklet on Bear Safety, which can be downloaded from this link: http://gov.nu.ca/sites/default/files/bear_safety_-_reducing_bear-people_conflicts_in_nunavut.pdf. Further information on bear/carnivore detection and deterrent techniques can be found in the "Safety in Grizzly and Black Bear Country" pamphlet, which can be downloaded from this link: https://www.enr.gov.nt.ca/sites/enr/files/resources/safety_in_grizzly_and_black_bear_country_english.pdf.
5. There are polar bear and grizzly bear safety resources available from the Bear Smart Society with videos on polar bear safety available in English, French and Inuktitut at <http://www.bearsmart.com/play/safety-in-polar-bear-country/>. Information can also be obtained from Parks Canada's website on bear safety at the following link: <http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/pn-np/nu/quttinirpaaq/visit/visit6/d.aspx> or in reviewing the "Safety in Polar Bear Country" pamphlet, which can be downloaded from the following link: http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/pn-np/nu/quttinirpaaq/visit/visit6/~/_media/pn-np/nu/auyuittuq/pdf/shared/PolarBearSafety_English.ashx
6. Any problem wildlife or any interaction with carnivores should be reported immediately to the local Government of Nunavut, Department of Environment Conservation Office (Conservation Officer of Whale Cove, phone: (867) 869-9189).

Species at Risk

7. The Proponent review Environment and Climate Change Canada’s “Environment Assessment Best Practice Guide for Wildlife at Risk in Canada”, available at the following link:
http://www.sararegistry.gc.ca/virtual_sara/files/policies/EA%20Best%20Practices%202004.pdf. The guide provides information to the Proponent on what is required when Wildlife at Risk, including *Species at Risk*, are encountered or affected by the project

Migratory Birds

8. The Proponent review Canadian Wildlife Services’ “Key migratory bird terrestrial habitat sites in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut”, available at the following link: <http://publications.gc.ca/site/eng/317630/publication.html> and “Key marine habitat sites for migratory birds in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories”, available at the following link: <http://publications.gc.ca/site/eng/392824/publication.html>. The guide provides information to the Proponent on key terrestrial and marine habitat areas that are essential to the welfare of various migratory bird species in Canada.
9. For further information on how to protect migratory birds, their nests and eggs when planning or carrying out project activities, consult Environment and Climate Change Canada’s Incidental Take web page and the fact sheet “Planning Ahead to Reduce the Risk of Detrimental Effects to Migratory Birds, and their Nests and Eggs” available at: http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2013/ec/CW66-324-2013-eng.pdf

Heritage Resources

10. During the assessment, the NIRB has identified that no archaeology surveys have been conducted in the proposed project areas and that potential for the presence of archaeological resources is likely, therefore the Proponent shall contact the Department of Culture and Heritage to initiate a field archaeology assessment program prior to undertaking any land disturbance activities.

Caribou Management

11. Territorial and federal government agencies in Nunavut should work together with Regional Inuit Associations, co-management boards and industry to develop an action plan to identify and mitigate potential cumulative effects of human land use activities, including mineral exploration, on barren-ground caribou. This assessment of cumulative effects should occur at a regional scale (i.e., larger than individual project areas).
12. Territorial and federal government agencies update the Caribou Protection Map with updated data and information from the Beverly Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board.
13. As a result of expressed concerns regarding mineral exploration and the associated potential for cumulative effects on caribou and caribou habitat within the Kivalliq region, the NPC, territorial and federal government agencies should work together with Regional Inuit Associations, co-management boards, the public, and industry to develop a plan that identifies appropriate land use in these areas prior to potential mineral exploration. The

plan should identify and mitigate potential cumulative effects of human land use activities on barren-ground caribou on both localized and regional scales

14. The NPC should be aware of the public concerns regarding a perceived lack of protection for caribou and caribou habitat within the Kivalliq region of Nunavut. In developing a Nunavut-wide land use plan, the NPC may wish to consider formalized protection of important caribou habitat, and seasonal restrictions on potentially disruptive activities in these areas to minimize disturbance to caribou lifecycles and Inuit harvesting activities.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing constitutes the Board's screening decision with respect to the Whale Cove Gold Corp's "Whale Cove Project Camp and Regional Exploration Expansion". The NIRB remains available for consultation with the Minister regarding this report as necessary.

Dated May 27, 2026 at Iqaluit, NU.



Albert Ehloak, Chairperson

Attachments: Appendix A: Species at Risk in Nunavut
Appendix B: Archaeological and Palaeontological Resources Terms and Conditions for Land Use Permit Holders

APPENDIX A: SPECIES AT RISK IN NUNAVUT

Due to the requirements of Section 79(2) of the *Species at Risk Act*, S.C. 2002, c. 29 (*SARA*), and the potential for project-specific adverse effects on listed wildlife species and its critical habitat, measures should be taken as appropriate to avoid or lessen those effects, and the effects need to be monitored. Project effects could include species disturbance, attraction to operations and destruction of habitat. This section applies to all species listed on Schedule 1 of *SARA*, as listed in the table below, or have been assessed by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC), which may be encountered in the project area. This list may not include all species identified as at risk by the Territorial Government. The following points provide clarification on the applicability of the species outlined in the table.

- Schedule 1 is the official legal list of Species at Risk for *SARA*. *SARA* applies to all species on Schedule 1. The term “listed” species refers to species on Schedule 1.
- Schedule 2 and 3 of *SARA* identify species that were designated at risk by the COSEWIC prior to October 1999 and must be reassessed using revised criteria before they can be considered for addition to Schedule 1.
- Some species identified at risk by COSEWIC are “pending” addition to Schedule 1 of *SARA*. These species are under consideration for addition to Schedule 1, subject to further consultation or assessment.

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. All direct, indirect, and cumulative effects should be considered. Refer to species status reports and other information on the Species at Risk Registry at <http://www.sararegistry.gc.ca> for information on specific species.

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 undertaken in a way that is consistent with applicable recovery strategies and action/management plans.

Schedules of *SARA* are amended on a regular basis, so it is important to check the *SARA* registry (www.sararegistry.gc.ca) to get the current status of a species.

Updated: September 2024

Terrestrial Species at Risk¹	COSEWIC Designation	Schedule of SARA	Government Organization with Primary Management Responsibility²
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Special Concern	Schedule 1	Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC)
Common Nighthawk	Threatened	Schedule 1	ECCC
Eskimo Curlew	Endangered	Schedule 1	ECCC
Harlequin Duck	Special Concern	Schedule 1	ECCC
Harris's Sparrow	Special Concern	Schedule 1	ECCC
Horned Grebe	Special Concern	Schedule 1	ECCC
Ivory Gull	Endangered	Schedule 1	ECCC
Olive-sided Flycatcher	Threatened	Schedule 1	ECCC
Peregrine Falcon	Special Concern	Schedule 1	ECCC
Red Knot Islandica Subspecies	Special Concern	Schedule 1	ECCC
Red-necked Phalarope	Special Concern	Schedule 1	ECCC
Ross's Gull	Threatened	Schedule 1	ECCC
Rusty Blackbird	Special Concern	Schedule 1	ECCC
Short-eared Owl	Special Concern	Schedule 1	ECCC
Porsild's Bryum	Threatened	Schedule 1	Government of Nunavut (GN)
Transverse Lady Beetle	Special Concern	No Schedule	GN
Caribou (Dolphin and Union Population)	Endangered	Schedule 1	GN
Caribou (Barren-ground Population)	Threatened	No Schedule	GN
Caribou (Torngat Mountains Population)	Endangered	No Schedule	GN
Grizzly Bear (Western Population)	Special Concern	Schedule 1	ECCC
Peary Caribou	Endangered	Schedule 1	GN
Polar Bear	Special Concern	Schedule 1	ECCC
Wolverine	Special Concern	Schedule 1	GN
Atlantic Walrus (High Arctic Population)	Special Concern	No Schedule	Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO)
Atlantic Walrus (Central/Low Arctic Population)	Special Concern	No Schedule	DFO
Beluga Whale (Cumberland Sound Population)	Threatened	Schedule 1	DFO
Beluga Whale (Eastern Hudson Bay Population)	Endangered	No Schedule	DFO
Beluga Whale (Eastern High Arctic-Baffin Bay Population)	Special Concern	No Schedule	DFO
Beluga Whale (Western Hudson Bay Population)	Special Concern	No Schedule	DFO
Atlantic Cod (Arctic Lakes Population)	Special Concern	No Schedule	DFO
Fourhorn Sculpin (Freshwater Form)	Data Deficient	Schedule 3	DFO
Lumpfish	Threatened	No Schedule	DFO
Thorny Skate	Special Concern	No Schedule	DFO

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

² Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) 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. Populations that exist in National Parks are also managed under the authority of the Parks Canada Agency.

**APPENDIX B: ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND PALAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES TERMS AND
CONDITIONS FOR LAND USE PERMIT HOLDERS**



INTRODUCTION

The Department of Culture and Heritage (CH) routinely reviews land use applications sent to the Nunavut Water Board, Nunavut Impact Review Board and the Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada. These terms and conditions provide general direction to the permittee/proponent regarding the appropriate actions to be taken to ensure the permittee/proponent carries out its role in the protection of Nunavut’s archaeological and palaeontological resources.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- 1) The permittee/proponent shall have a professional archaeologist and/or palaeontologist perform the following **Functions** associated with the **Types of Development** listed below or similar development activities:

	Types of Development (See Guidelines below)	Function (See Guidelines below)
a)	Large scale prospecting	Archaeological/Palaeontological Overview Assessment
b)	Diamond drilling for exploration or geotechnical purpose or planning of linear disturbances	Archaeological/Palaeontological Overview Assessment and/or Inventory and Documentation and/or Mitigation
c)	Construction of linear disturbances, Extractive disturbances, Impounding disturbances and other land disturbance activities	Archaeological/Palaeontological Overview Assessment and/or Inventory and Documentation and/or Mitigation

Note that the above-mentioned functions require either a Nunavut Archaeologist Permit or a Nunavut Palaeontologist Permit. CH is authorized by way of the *Nunavut and Archaeological and Palaeontological Site Regulations*³ to issue such permits.

³ P.C. 2001-1111 14 June, 2001

- 2) The permittee/proponent shall not operate any vehicle over a known or suspected archaeological or palaeontological site.
- 3) The permittee/proponent shall not remove, disturb, or displace any archaeological artifact or site, or any fossil or palaeontological site.
- 4) The permittee/proponent shall immediately contact CH at (867) 934-2046 or (867) 975-5500 should an archaeological site or specimen, or a palaeontological site or fossil, be encountered or disturbed by any land use activity.
- 5) The permittee/proponent shall immediately cease any activity that disturbs an archaeological or palaeontological site encountered during the course of a land use operation until permitted to proceed with the authorization of CH.
- 6) The permittee/proponent shall follow the direction of CH in restoring disturbed archaeological or palaeontological sites to an acceptable condition. If these conditions are attached to either a Class A or B Permit under the Territorial Lands Act Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada directions will also be followed.
- 7) The permittee/proponent shall provide all information requested by CH concerning all archaeological sites or artifacts and all palaeontological sites and fossils encountered in the course of any land use activity.
- 8) The permittee/proponent shall make best efforts to ensure that all persons working under its authority are aware of these conditions concerning archaeological sites and artifacts and palaeontological sites and fossils.
- 9) If a list of recorded archaeological and/or palaeontological sites is provided to the permittee/proponent by CH as part of the review of the land use application the permittee/proponent shall avoid the archaeological and/or palaeontological sites listed.
- 10) Should a list of recorded sites be provided to the permittee/proponent, the information is provided solely for the purpose of the proponent's land use activities as described in the land use application, and must otherwise be treated confidentially by the proponent.

Legal Framework

As stated in Article 33 of the *Agreement between the Inuit of the Nunavut Settlement Area and Her Majesty the Queen in right of Canada (Nunavut Agreement)*:

Where an application is made for a land use permit in the Nunavut Settlement Area, and there are reasonable grounds to believe that there could be sites of archaeological importance on the lands affected, no land use permit shall be issued without written consent of the Designated Agency. Such consent shall not be unreasonably withheld. [33.5.12]

Each land use permit referred to in Section 33.5.12 shall specify the plans and methods of archeological site protection and restoration to be followed by the permit holder, and any other conditions the Designated Agency may deem fit. [33.5.13]

Palaeontology and Archaeology

Under the *Nunavut Act*⁴, the federal government can make regulations for the protection, care and preservation of palaeontological and archaeological sites and specimens in Nunavut. Under the *Nunavut Archaeological and Palaeontological Sites Regulations*⁵, it is illegal to alter or disturb any palaeontological or archaeological site in Nunavut unless permission is first granted through the permitting process.

Definitions

As defined in the *Nunavut Archaeological and Palaeontological Sites Regulations*, the following definitions apply:

“archaeological site” means a place where an archaeological artifact is found.

“archaeological artifact” means any tangible evidence of human activity that is more than 50 years old and in respect of which an unbroken chain of possession or regular pattern of usage cannot be demonstrated, and includes a Denesuline archaeological specimen referred to in section 40.4.9 of the Agreement between the Inuit of the Nunavut Settlement Area and Her Majesty the Queen in right of Canada (Nunavut Agreement).

“palaeontological site” means a site where a fossil is found.

“fossil” includes:

Fossil means the hardened or preserved remains or impression of previously living organisms or vegetation and includes:

- (a) natural casts;*
- (b) preserved tracks, coprolites and plant remains; and*
- (c) the preserved shells and exoskeletons of invertebrates and the preserved eggs, teeth and bones of vertebrates.*

Guidelines for Developers for the Protection of Archaeological Resources in the Nunavut Territory

(Note: Partial document only, complete document at: www.ch.gov.nu.ca/en/Archaeology.aspx)

Introduction

The following guidelines have been formulated to ensure that the impacts of proposed developments upon heritage resources are assessed and mitigated before ground surface altering activities occur. Heritage resources are defined as, but not limited to, archaeological and historical sites, burial grounds, palaeontological sites, historic buildings and cairns. Effective collaboration between the developer, the Department of Culture, and Heritage (CH), and the contract archaeologist(s) will ensure proper preservation of heritage resources in the Nunavut Territory. The roles of each are briefly described.

⁴ s. 51(1)

⁵ P.C. 2001-1111 14 June, 2001

CH is the Nunavut Government agency which oversees the protection and management of heritage resources in Nunavut, in partnership with land claim authorities, regulatory agencies, and the federal government. Its role in mitigating impacts of developments on heritage resources is as follows: to identify the need for an impact assessment and make recommendations to the appropriate regulatory agency; set the terms of reference for the study depending upon the scope of the development; suggest the names of qualified individuals prepared to undertake the study to the developer; issue an archaeologist or palaeontologist permit authorizing field work; assess the completeness of the study and its recommendations; and ensure that the developer complies with the recommendations.

The primary regulatory agencies that CH provides information and assistance to are the Nunavut Impact Review Board, for development activities proposed for Inuit Owned Lands (as defined in Section 1.1.1 of the *Agreement between the Inuit of the Nunavut Settlement Area and Her Majesty the Queen in right of Canada (Nunavut Agreement)*), and the Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, for development activities proposed for federal Crown Lands.

A developer is the initiator of a land use activity. It is the obligation of the developer to ensure that a qualified archaeologist or palaeontologist is hired to perform the required study and that provisions of the contract with the archaeologist or palaeontologist allow permit requirements to be met; i.e. fieldwork, collections management, artifact and specimen conservation, and report preparation. On the recommendation of the contract archaeologist or palaeontologist in the field and the Government of Nunavut, the developer shall implement avoidance or mitigative measures to protect heritage resources or to salvage the information they contain through excavation, analysis, and report writing. The developer assumes all costs associated with the study in its entirety.

Through his or her active participation and supervision of the study, the contract archaeologist or palaeontologist is accountable for the quality of work undertaken and the quality of the report produced. Facilities to conduct fieldwork, analysis, and report preparation should be available to this individual through institutional, agency, or company affiliations. Responsibility for the curation of objects recovered during field work while under study and for documents generated in the course of the study as well as remittance of artifacts, specimens and documents to the repository specified on the permit accrue to the contract archaeologist or palaeontologist. This individual is also bound by the legal requirements of the *Nunavut Archaeological and Palaeontological Sites Regulations*.

Types of Development

In general, those developments that cause concern for the safety of heritage resources will include one or more of the following kinds of surface disturbances. These categories, in combination, are comprehensive of the major kinds of developments commonly proposed in Nunavut. For any single development proposal, several kinds of these disturbances may be involved

- *Linear disturbances: including the construction of highways, roads, winter roads, transmission lines, and pipelines;*
- *Extractive disturbances: including mining, gravel removal, quarrying, and land filling;*

- *Impoundment disturbances: including dams, reservoirs, and tailings ponds;*
- *Intensive land use disturbances: including industrial, residential, commercial, recreational, and land reclamation work, and use of heritage resources as tourist developments.*
- *Mineral, oil and gas exploration: establishment of camps, temporary airstrips, access routes, well sites, or quarries all have potential for impacting heritage resources.*

Types of Studies Undertaken to Preserve Heritage Resources

Overview: An overview study of heritage resources should be conducted at the same time as the development project is being designed or its feasibility addressed. They usually lack specificity with regard to the exact location(s) and form(s) of impact and involve limited, if any, field surveys. Their main aim is to accumulate, evaluate, and synthesize the existing knowledge of the heritage of the known area of impact. The overview study provides managers with baseline data from which recommendations for future research and forecasts of potential impacts can be made. A Class I Permit is required for this type of study if field surveys are undertaken.

Reconnaissance: This is done to provide a judgmental appraisal of a region sufficient to provide the developer, the consultant, and government managers with recommendations for further development planning. This study may be implemented as a preliminary step to inventory and assessment investigations except in cases where a reconnaissance may indicate a very low or negligible heritage resource potential. Alternately, in the case of small-scale or linear developments, an inventory study may be recommended and obviate the need for a reconnaissance.

The main goal of a reconnaissance study is to provide baseline data for the verification of the presence of potential heritage resources, the determination of impacts to these resources, the generation of terms of reference for further studies and, if required, the advancement of preliminary mitigative and compensatory plans. The results of reconnaissance studies are primarily useful for the selection of alternatives and secondarily as a means of identifying impacts that must be mitigated after the final siting and design of the development project. Depending on the scope of the study, a Class 1 or Class 2 Permit is required for this type of investigation.

Inventory: A resource inventory is generally conducted at that stage in a project's development at which the geographical area(s) likely to sustain direct, indirect, and perceived impacts can be well defined. This requires systematic and intensive fieldwork to ascertain the effects of all possible and alternate construction components on heritage resources. All heritage sites must be recorded on Government of Nunavut Site Survey forms. Sufficient information must be amassed from field, library and archival components of the study to generate a predictive model of the heritage resource base that will:

- allow the identification of research and conservation opportunities;
- enable the developer to make planning decisions and recognize their likely effects on the known or predicted resources; and

- make the developer aware of the expenditures, which may be required for subsequent studies and mitigation. A Class 1 or 2 permit is required.

Assessment: At this stage, sufficient information concerning the numbers and locations of heritage resources will be available, as well as data to predict the forms and magnitude of impacts. Assessments provide information on the size, volume, complexity and content of a heritage resource, which is used to rank the values of different sites or site types given current archaeological knowledge. As this information will shape subsequent mitigation program(s), great care is necessary during this phase.

Mitigation: This refers to the amelioration of adverse impacts to heritage resources and involves the avoidance of impact through the redesign or relocation of a development or its components; the protection of the resource by constructing physical facilities; or, the scientific investigation and recovery of information from the resource by excavation or other method. The type(s) of appropriate mitigative measures are dictated by their viability in the context of the development project. Mitigation strategies must be developed in consultation with, and approved by, the Department of Culture and Heritage. It is important to note that mitigation activities should be initiated as far in advance of the construction of the development as possible.

Surveillance and monitoring: These may be required as part of the mitigation program.

Surveillance may be conducted during the construction phase of a project to ensure that the developer has complied with the recommendations.

Monitoring involves identification and inspection of residual and long-term impacts of a development (i.e. shoreline stability of a reservoir); or the use of impacts to disclose the presence of heritage resources, for example, the uncovering of buried sites during the construction of a pipeline.