

Response to comments on project proposal 26YN036: Water quality and fish health near Kugluktuk

The proposed project includes several different sampling programs related to water quality and fish health. Samples from some programs (e.g., community-based fish sampling) are collected by Inuit harvesters as part of their traditional land use activities. Participants will follow their customary, respectful land use practices when collecting these samples. For other sampling programs where participants are contracted and/or directed by the Kugluktuk Hunters and Trappers Organization (HTO) to collect samples (e.g., water sampling, targeted fish sampling), the measures described in the responses below will apply.

Kitikmeot Inuit Association

Comment topic: Timing and wildlife

Response: All sampling activities will be conducted by community members who are experienced in traveling on land and water, including safe management of wildlife interactions. Sampling activities will be scheduled to avoid times and locations with high use of wildlife (e.g., caribou migrations). Participants will be respectful of wildlife and conduct sampling activities following traditional practices. A bear monitor will be designated during extended sampling periods on-shore or overnight camping trips. Participants will bring a firearm for all land-based activities and bear spray will be provided.

Operations

All waste, fuel containers, and temporary infrastructure (e.g., tents) will be removed from camping locations, following leave-no-trace principles. Secure storage containers will be made available for food and waste, to minimize potential wildlife attractants. Portable berms for secondary containment will be procured for potential temporary storage of fuel (gas and white gas) during overnight trips and spill kits will be provided for overnight and/or long distance trips that will require refueling of equipment.

Inclusion of Inuit Qaujimaqatugangit (IQ)

There are no current plans to formally record Inuit knowledge. All research is being planned with Inuit community members and will be conducted, analyzed, and interpreted by Inuit community members. Youth and Elders will be involved in research activities whenever possible, to facilitate sharing Inuit knowledge and skills. Research priorities are identified by the elected HTO board, as well as informal discussions with Inuit community members.

Government of Nunavut

The Government of Nunavut did not have any comments on the proposed research.

CIRNAC

Fuel management, secondary containment, and spill contingency planning

Portable berms for secondary containment will be procured for potential temporary storage of fuel (gas and white gas) during overnight trips. Fuel will be stored a minimum of 40 m from water. Spill kits will be provided for overnight and/or long distance trips that will require refueling of equipment. Spill kits will include instructions and emergency contact numbers.

Bedrock drilling, anchor materials, and potential water quality risks

Bedrock drilling will be minimal (1-2 holes measuring 5/8 of an inch in diameter and 1-1.5 inches in depth at each location; no more than 5 locations). Holes will be drilled above the high water mark, to reduce potential leaching into water sources. Rain and other water sources are expected to be neutral, which will also minimize leaching. The size, location, and number of holes is not expected to meaningfully elevate acid rock drainage above natural weathering.

Anchor materials will be made of marine grade stainless steel whenever possible, or other non-corrosive material if marine grade stainless steel is not available.

Terrain degradation and permafrost protection

There will be no ATV travel over wet or sensitive tundra. All travel will be on existing trails. Helicopter landings will be on bedrock or rock outcrops whenever safe and possible.

Consultation with interested parties

The Hamlet of Kugluktuk, Kitikmeot Inuit Association, and the Government of Nunavut have and will continue to be consulted about project activities. Indeed, some of the sampling programs will be funded by these parties. Updates on activities are provide to community members on Facebook and posters, and results will be shared when available at workshops and/or open houses and in results booklets. The above-mentioned parties (Hamlet, KIA, GN) will receive reports as part of annual funding and/or permitting requirements.

As mentioned above in response to a comment by the KIA, there are no current plans to formally record Inuit knowledge, but there will be Inuit involvement in all steps of the proposed research and ample opportunities to share Inuit knowledge and traditional skills. All sampling will be conducted by community members who are experienced land users and harvesters, and who can provide input and guidance on how to safely and appropriately conduct sampling activities. Sampling activities will provide employment opportunities for community members, either through honoraria for donated samples (e.g., samples from fish harvested from subsistence nets) or contracts (e.g., water sampling). Training will be provided in fish and water sampling. Supplies will be procured locally, when possible.