

# The EKATI MONITOR

Newsletter of the Independent Environmental Monitoring Agency

Issue 9, March 2012

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Water Licence Renewal	1
Grizzly Bear Monitoring	1
Traditional Knowledge	2
Agency Communications	2
ICRP Approval	3
Environmental Impact Report	3
About the Agency	4
Director Profile	4

## Water Licence Renewal



The EKATI Diamond Mine's current water licence will expire in August 2013. The Agency met with BHP Billiton (BHPB), Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) and Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) to discuss the upcoming renewal of Ekati's water licence. BHPB plans to apply to renew its water licence in April 2012.

Elevated levels of some contaminants (nitrate from blasting, chloride from deep groundwater, and some metals naturally found in rock) have been found downstream of the mine. While these levels appear to be safe, the Agency wants to make sure that these contaminants of concern are properly managed. There should also be a plan in place to take action when there are early warning signs or limits of acceptable change have been reached.

It will be important to think about how long the next licence should be good for, as the mine is expected to close in about 2019. It is not clear whether a separate water licence would be required for closure and reclamation.

BHPB is scheduling meetings with the communities to discuss the water licence renewal.

## Grizzly Bear Monitoring Program

Last year, we recommended BHPB move forward with a grizzly bear monitoring program based on the successes of the wolverine hair snagging work done by the Ekati, Diavik and Snap Lake diamond mines and GNWT. BHPB agreed and late last year proposed a regional program that would be funded by all three diamond

mines with the GNWT providing some support.

The Agency is pleased with the leadership BHPB has shown. We hope the program can go forward in 2012. The study should provide a better understanding of how many grizzly bears there are in the region and how they are distributed.



# Traditional Knowledge Workshop

In December, the Agency hosted a workshop in Yellowknife on Traditional Knowledge (TK). The Agency, BHPB, Government of Canada (AANDC) and several community representatives gave presentations.



BHPB is funding TK community projects and has recently hired a TK advisor to help better focus its efforts. Lutsel K'e Dene talked about their TK project with BHPB to bring

together previous interviews and mapping studies about hunting, fishing, trap-

ping, place names, burials and industrial uses. The Goyatiko Language Society presented on its efforts to preserve recordings of interviews with Yellowknives Dene elders. Workshop participants also heard about a Kugluktuk project investigating the impacts of development on caribou and involving the training of community researchers. The North Slave Metis Alliance said it would like to begin a community heritage project to document indigenous North Slave Metis. AANDC talked about its collaboration with Aboriginal peoples in contaminated sites work.

We continue to encourage BHPB to better document its use of TK at Ekati in its environmental monitoring and management, and reclamation planning.

Visit our website at

[www.monitoringagency.net](http://www.monitoringagency.net)

to view correspondence, meeting minutes, photos, background documents and other information about Ekati. Our website also features our Ekati Timeline, which shows important events in the history of the Ekati Mine.

## Agency Communications

As part of our mandate, the Agency stores, distributes and makes information about the Ekati Mine available to Aboriginal peoples and the general public. We also serve as a way for people to communicate any environmental concerns about Ekati to BHPB, the GNWT and Government of Canada (AANDC).

In an effort to improve our communications, we developed a **Communications Plan**. The Plan, completed in late 2011, summarizes the Agency's current communications initiatives and key messages (what we want to say), defines our communications objectives and outcomes (what we want to happen), and looks at options for improving

our communication tools (how we communicate and get our message out). Each year, we will review the Plan and its results. To review our Communications Plan, please visit our [website](#).

We also recently hired Allison Anderson as our new Communications and Environmental Specialist. Her previous experience includes working on fisheries issues and with several environmental organizations. Allison has lived in the north since 2005.



# Interim Closure and Reclamation Plan

BHPB's water licence requires the company to have an Interim Closure and Reclamation Plan (ICRP) for the Ekati Mine. The last plan was approved in 2002. In 2007, BHPB submitted a revised ICRP, beginning a long and complicated process. To help improve the ICRP, the WLWB set up a Working Group, in which the Agency was an active participant.



The biggest issues were the reclamation of the mine pits and how to clearly lay out the remaining research to be done to properly close the mine and measure success. The WLWB agreed that the pit lakes should be joined to the surrounding watershed if water quality is acceptable and fish should be part of that system. A framework was developed and agreed upon for a series of reclamation research plans.

In 2010, the WLWB gave conditional approval of the ICRP. BHPB had to make some further changes to

the ICRP, including allowing fish into the pit lakes and clearer reclamation research plans. In November 2011, the WLWB gave full approval to the latest version of the ICRP. The Agency is pleased with the progress BHPB has made on closure and reclamation planning. Detailed annual progress reports will be required, and the Agency will review these very carefully.

The next step in closure planning is to make sure that there is enough money set aside for reclamation so that the public is not at risk. This process has begun. BHPB will prepare an estimate of how much it thinks it would cost for an outside contractor to carry out all the reclamation work.

AANDC has committed to work with BHPB and may come up with its own estimated cost. The Agency expects to be consulted during this process, before submissions are made to the WLWB, who will set the final amount. This amount may then be divided up amongst the water licence, Environmental Agreement and other approvals.

## Diamond Quiz

**What is financial security?**

Answer: This is money set aside by a private developer to make sure that certain work is done to protect the environment and human health. The full cost for an independent contractor to carry out the work should be set aside. The money set aside can take several forms, including cash or a letter from a bank.

# Environmental Impact Report 2012

Every three years, BHPB is required to put together an Environmental Impact Report (EIR), a special report that documents the environmental changes at the Ekati mine from the very beginning. Longer term effects and how BHPB manages these impacts are also to be covered in the report. BHPB is required to consult with the Agency and others as it is putting the report together.

To avoid problems that happened with the last EIR in 2009, it was agreed that BHPB would consult with interested parties on the methodology, contents and findings of the EIR a lot earlier in the process. We are pleased to report that BHPB has started this work, and we look forward to an improved report in July or August of this year.



# Independent Environmental Monitoring Agency

## CONTACT US!

P.O. Box 1192  
#203, 5006 Franklin Avenue  
Yellowknife NT X1A 2N8  
Phone: (867) 669-9141  
Fax: (867) 669-9145  
E-mail: [monitor1@yk.com](mailto:monitor1@yk.com)

## DIRECTORS

**Bill Ross** (Chairperson)  
appointed by  
BHPB/Canada/GNWT

**Tim Byers** (Vice-  
Chairperson) appointed by  
Akaitcho Treaty 8

**Jaida Ohokannoak**  
(Secretary-Treasurer)  
appointed by  
Kitikmeot Inuit Association

**Tony Pearse**  
appointed by  
Tłı̄chq̄ Government

**Kim Poole**  
appointed by  
BHPB/Canada/GNWT

**Laura Johnston**  
appointed by  
BHPB/Canada/GNWT

**Sheryl Grieve**  
appointed by  
North Slave Métis Alliance

## STAFF

**Kevin O'Reilly**  
Executive Director

**Allison Anderson**  
Communications and  
Environmental Specialist

The Agency is a public watchdog for environmental management at BHP Billiton's (BHPB) Ekati Diamond Mine. The Agency was set up under the 1997 Environment Agreement, a legal document requiring BHPB and the federal and territorial governments to respect and protect the environment and the land-based way of life of the Aboriginal Peoples of the area.

The Agency reviews BHPB's environmental reports and plans, visits the Ekati mine site and listens to community and public concerns. We make recommendations to BHPB and various regulatory agencies on how best to protect the environment at Ekati.

We are set up as a non-profit Society in the Northwest Territories. Our Board has seven directors appointed by seven Society members:

- Akaitcho Treaty 8 (Łutsel K'e Dene First Nation and Yellowknives Dene First Nations)
- Tłı̄chq̄ Government
- Kitikmeot Inuit Association
- North Slave Métis Alliance
- Government of Canada (AANDC)
- Government of the Northwest Territories
- BHP Billiton Canada Inc.

**WE INVITE** your feedback  
on The Ekati Monitor.  
Send your comments to  
[monitor2@yk.com](mailto:monitor2@yk.com)  
or call us at  
(867) 669-9141.

The Agency directors are independent of the appointing parties. The directors work together in the best interests of the people affected by the Ekati Mine and the environment.

Our Yellowknife office has two staff members and a resource library with lots of information about the Ekati Mine.

If you have questions or concerns about Ekati, please contact us!

## Director Profile: Tim Byers



Tim Byers was appointed to the Agency by Akaitcho Treaty 8 First Nations (YKDFN and LKDFN) in May 2001. Tim has been the Agency's Vice-Chairperson since 2004.

Tim is an independent consultant living in Manitoba. He has been working on projects in the Canadian Arctic since 1980 specializing in studies of fish, Arctic seabirds and marine invertebrates. Tim has assisted Aboriginal communities in documenting their indigenous environmental knowledge.

Tim is keenly interested in seeing more Aboriginal youth become engaged in the environmental sciences, as well as Traditional Knowledge being used more effectively in environmental monitoring, research and impact assessments.

