



Briefing Note

22 August 2013

The Issue

What is the role of the ?ehdzo Got'įnę Gots'ę́ Nákedı (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board, "the Board") in commenting on development applications? This briefing note outlines how we understand our responsibilities.

Our Land Claim Mandate

The ?ehdzo Got'¡ne Gots'é
Nákedı is the "main instrument
of wildlife management" in the
Sahtú Region. Objectives that
guide us in commenting on
development applications are in
Chapter 13, the "Wildlife
Harvesting and Management"
section of the land claim.

13.1.1(a) to protect for the
future the right of participants to
gather, hunt, trap and fish
throughout the settlement area
at all seasons of the year;

13.1.1(b) to conserve and protect wildlife and wildlife habitat and to apply conservation principles and practices through planning and management;

13.1.1 (e) to involve participants in a direct and meaningful manner in the planning and management of wildlife and wildlife habitat;

13.1.1 (f) to integrate planning and management of wildlife and wildlife habitat with the planning and management of all types of land and water use in order to protect wildlife and wildlife habitat.

Stepping Into Our Role

The Board and Shale Oil Exploration in the Sahtú

The Sahtú has experienced an exploration boom since 13 shale oil leases were awarded in 2011 and 2012. There has been a lot of concern about impacts to wildlife and wildlife habitat. The exploration boom has exposed the Board's responsibility to provide meaningful input in environmental assessments.

When licensing and permitting applications are submitted and deemed complete, the Sahtú Land and Water Board (SLWB) has 42 days to make a decision on whether to issue a permit/license or request more information. The Board must be prepared to respond quickly and with the best available knowledge. Our knowledge comes from expert consultants in traditional knowledge and science.

Last fall the Board commissioned a report entitled *Role of the SRRB in Environmental Assessment: Reflections and Recommendations*. The report analyzed how the Board can best respond to industry applications.

The Board works to provide specific recommendations related to our mandate in wildlife management. It is important that these can be enforced through terms and conditions of the program. For example, the Board might recommend alternate routes or alternate methods to do the work that have less impact on wildlife and wildlife habitat. They might recommend using "best practices" that have been demonstrated elsewhere.

Making a Difference

The Board has made a difference with some of our recommendations and suggestions over the past year. Here are some examples:

- Increased sampling frequency in groundwater and surface water monitoring plan.
- Use of tracers in fracking fluids, which would be traced back to fracking fluids in case of any groundwater contamination.
- Use of the Alberta Environment Standard for Baseline Water Testing for Coalbed Methane operations in the groundwater and surface water monitoring plans.

How We Fit into the Big Picture

The Board is only one of many organisations and individuals that provide comments on development applications. Each of these bodies has their own expertise and focus in providing comments:

- NWT Environment and Natural Resources
- Environment Canada
- National Energy Board
- AANDC (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada)
- ?ehdzo Got',ne (Renewable Resources Councils)

The Board seeks to add value to the pool of comments. Our mandate is huge, since responsibility for wildlife also includes their habitat, the land and water that they depend on to survive. As a co-management board, we have a unique combination of traditional knowledge and science to draw upon.

The Board is in the process of developing a guide outlining industry best practices in reducing development impacts on wildlife and wildlife habitat. We want to help make this shale oil play a model of wise planning and decision-making so that wildlife will remain healthy in this region for many generations to come.

Environmental Assessments

An important lever held by the Board is its ability to recommend that an application be referred to the Mackenzie Valley Review Board for environmental assessment. The Board carefully considers many factors prior to calling for an environmental assessment, including:

- Could the proposed project push impacts over a critical wildlife threshold?
- Does the proposed method raise concerns?
- Could the conditions imposed set an important precedent for future projects?
- Has the proponent shown willingness to address community concerns and participate in a formal, ongoing adaptive management system?

The Board's Relationship with ?ehdzo Got'įnę (Renewable Resources Councils)

The ?ehdzo Got'ıne also have an important role in wildlife and habitat management. The land claim requires that the Board work closely with ?ehdzo Got'ıne as a source of knowledge for good decisions:

13.9.5 The Board shall consult regularly with Renewable Resources Councils with respect to matters within the Board's jurisdiction.

One of the Board's top priorities is to deepen its collaboration with ?ehdzo Got'įnę in environmental assessment work. Our staff meet with ?ehdzo Got'įnę to seek their input on development applications.

We also help ?ehdzo Got'ıne in understanding applications and voicing their concerns. While working in a collaborative spirit, the Board also maintains its independent decision-making authority.



Contact information

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