

Sahtú Environmental Research and Monitoring Forum

Terms of Reference

Approved by consensus

February 20, 2014

Background

Many environmental research and monitoring programs and projects are underway in the Sahtú Region, and the need for this work is expanding with the emerging shale oil play in the Tulit'a District. On November 5-7, a meeting including representatives of Sahtú organisations, government and industry reached a consensus that such programs and projects should be well coordinated, with strong input from Sahtú communities.

As a consequence, Sahtú organizations and the Government of the Northwest Territories (led by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources) have agreed to create a Forum that will support research and monitoring proponents and Sahtú organisations in sharing priorities, plans and proposals, providing feedback and guidance, coordinating objectives and activities. The aim is to more effectively address important issues in the Sahtú.

Vision

Environmental monitoring and research programs and projects in the Sahtú are coordinated and conducted in ways that reflect regional and community priorities, engage communities, value both western science and traditional knowledge, and support wise decision-making.

Purpose

The Sahtú Environmental Research and Monitoring (ERM) Forum will support environmental research and monitoring by providing a venue for discussing plans and accommodating the priorities and traditional knowledge of Sahtú communities.

Objectives

The Forum will address the following objectives in supporting environmental research and monitoring in the Sahtú Region:

- Identify regional priorities and research gaps
- Build cross-cultural understanding
- Support and protect traditional knowledge processes
- Support regional and regulatory decision-making
- Identify opportunities for: collaborative research involving communities; communication; information-sharing; and cross-cultural interpretation of research results.

Guiding Principles

The Forum is cross-cultural, and our processes are based on the following principles of mutual respect:

- All comments are important
- All members can openly share their opinions
- Decisions are made by consensus.
- Be open-minded/don't judge
- Information is plain language and shared with communities
- Stay focused on objectives
- Think past, present, and into the future

Forum Structure

The Forum is comprised of a Chairperson, Forum Membership, and Forum Support Group.

Chairperson:

- The Forum is led by a Chairperson who is appointed by a consensus decision of the group. The appointment is reviewed annually.
- The Chairperson works with the Forum Support Group to set meeting Agendas, and facilitates meetings.

Forum Membership:

The Forum consists of representation from each of the five Renewable Resources Councils in the Sahtú Region; Sahtú community youth, the Territorial, Federal, and Aboriginal governments, industry, and the Sahtú Renewable Resources Board.

- The majority of the members are Sahtú beneficiaries.
- Alternates are delegated to ensure consistent membership and attendance.
- The Forum may identify additional delegates by consensus to participate as needed.

The membership should include people with a range of qualifications, including:

- Aboriginal harvesters
- Strong communicators
- Training in traditional knowledge and science
- Leadership abilities
- Action oriented
- Passionate

Forum Support Group:

- The Forum Support Group consists of staff from the Sahtú Renewable Resources Board, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR), Government of Northwest Territories, and the Central Mackenzie Explorers Group (CMEG).
- The Forum Support Group assists the Chair in planning and organizing Forum activities, and delivery of plain language and technical documents and reports at least once per year, including.
 1. Written advice on research and monitoring coordination.
 2. A rolling five year research blueprint, with annual updates.

3. Assessments of research and monitoring in the Sahtú.
4. Assessments of progress on Forum objectives, and updated Terms of Reference.

Roles of Forum Members

Forum members assist in achieving the objectives of the Forum in the following ways:

- Attend meetings or send an alternate.
- Be prepared – read background material before each meeting.
- Review and provide feedback on documents distributed by email.
- Provide guidance to the Forum.
- Report back to communities or organizations.

Meeting Frequency

- The Forum meets in person at least twice per year.
- At least two additional meetings by teleconference will likely be required, with a frequency to be determined according to workload.
- Meetings will be held in Sahtú communities as much as possible.

Reimbursement of Meeting Costs

Meeting costs including travel expenses and honoraria for Forum members, as required, will be reimbursed by the Government of the NWT per their funding guidelines or through other funding systems that may be determined in the future.