SCREENING SCOPING DOCUMENT FOR THE CLEARWATER MULTI-USER ACCESS PROJECT PURSUANT TO THE CEAA

Canadian Environmental Assessment Registry Number: 10-01-59994

June 2011

PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to outline the proposed scope of the Clearwater Multi-User Access Project for the purposes of conducting an environmental assessment. The scope of project involves identifying components that should be considered as part of the project to conduct a federal environmental assessment. This document has been used to obtain public comment on the proposed scope of the project and the proposed scope of the environmental assessment. Comments from the public have been included in this final Screening Scoping Document.

REQUIREMENT FOR A FEDERAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Transport Canada (TC) and Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) have identified that parts of the Clearwater Multi-user Access Project, submitted by Ledcor CMI Ltd, will need federal approvals and authorizations under Section 5 of the *Navigable Waters Protection Act* and Section 35 of the *Fisheries Act*, to proceed. TC and DFO are Responsible Authorities under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* (CEAA) and will have to complete an environmental assessment that meets the requirements of the CEAA before approving any part of the work.

Health Canada and Environment Canada have identified themselves as Federal Authorities for the project and may provide advice regarding the potential significance of environmental effects within their departmental areas of expertise.

The purpose of completing an environmental assessment in accordance with the requirements of the CEAA is to ensure that the responsible authorities carefully consider the significance of potential environmental effects associated with the project, allow opportunities for public input, promote communication with aboriginal peoples and coordinate the environmental assessment process with the provincial government, prior to making a decision that would in part or in whole allow the project to proceed. In this case, the decision relates to the potential issuance of regulatory approvals by both TC and DFO.

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

The proposed Clearwater Multi-User Access Project is a 30 km long, 40 m wide all-season access road in the Rural Municipality of Wood Buffalo, Alberta. The road will provide access from Highway 69 to an existing network of resource roads that connect to the east Athabasca Highway. The project requires bridge construction over the Clearwater River, along with 17 other crossings of various watercourses along the proposed route. The bridge over the Clearwater River will have three spans and two in-water piers. The approximate footprint of each pier is 13 m^2. The piers will be constructed using work platforms on a temporary bridge.

FEDERAL SCOPE OF PROJECT

The scope of project refers to the various components of the development that are considered to be part of the project for the purpose of completing an environmental assessment (EA).

TC and DFO present the following proposed scope of the project:

- Construction, operation, maintenance and decommissioning of the following, including all works associated with:
  - 30 km of new high grade gravel road, including clearing, road works, staging and storage areas, borrow pits, and any associated drainage works;
  - a new three span bridge over the Clearwater River;
  - 17 watercourse crossings along the proposed road route; and
  - any compensation works to offset the loss of productive capacity of fish habitat.

The project as proposed by Ledcor is not identified in the *Comprehensive Study Regulations* of CEAA. As such, a screening level environmental assessment will be conducted.

FACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED

This section defines the factors that will be considered in the EA. The responsible authorities need to consider the factors outlined in Section 16 of the CEAA, while considering the definitions of “environment”, “environmental effect”, and “project” set out in CEAA. The following factors will be considered:

- the environmental effects of the project, including the environmental effects of malfunctions or accidents that may occur in connection with the project and any cumulative environmental effects that are likely to result from the project in combination with other projects or activities that have been or will be carried out;

- the significance of the effects referred to in the previous bullet;

- comments from the public that are received in accordance with the CEAA and its regulations;

- measures that are technically and economically feasible and that would mitigate any significant adverse environmental effects of the project;

- the purpose of the project; and

- alternative means of carrying out the project that are technically and economically feasible and the environmental effects of any such alternative means.

SCOPE OF FACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED

The responsible authorities propose that the following scope of factors be considered in the screening.

The assessment will consider potential effects the project may have on the environment and other aspects considered to be Valued Ecosystem Components (VECs). Impacts with respect to spatial and temporal boundaries may vary depending on the VEC, and the assessment of these impacts should consider:

- timing/scheduling of project activities;
- natural variations of each VEC;
- time required for recovery from an impact;
- Cumulative effects, including effects from other activities likely to occur as a result of road construction and improved access to new areas. i.e. increased mineral exploration or other natural resource based industry undertakings likely to benefit from better ground access to new areas; including cumulative impacts resulting from improved access for recreational activities, hunting and fishing; and
- The project in relation to the Clearwater-Christina Rivers Management Plan, the Draft Lower Athabasca Regional Land Use Plan and the Canadian Heritage River Designation.

Valued Ecosystem Components (VECs) of interest in this area may include but are not limited to the list in Table 1 on the following page.

Table 1: VECs and Factors

Environmental Component	Factors
Physical Environment	Surface and groundwater quality Surface and groundwater quantity (e.g. changes to flows/volumes/directions, etc.) Air quality Climate and meteorology Terrain, soils and geology Erosion and sedimentation
Biological Environment	Vegetation and plant communities Wetlands Wildlife and wildlife habitat Biodiversity Ecologically sensitive or significant areas, species of conservation concern, including species at risk (e.g. caribou) and their habitats Aquatic environment (e.g. aquatic life, fish and fish habitat) Amphibian and reptile populations Migratory birds and their habitats Plant or animal species identified under the Species at Risk Act (SARA)
Human Environment (i.e. indirect effects resulting from a direct change in the environment)	Current use of lands and resources for traditional purposes by aboriginal persons Human health effects including noise, air quality, drinking and recreational water quality, country foods (e.g. fish, wild game, garden produce, berries) Physical and cultural heritage including effects on the heritage values associated with the Clearwater River (designated as a Canadian Heritage River) Structures/sites of archaeological significance

PROPOSED SPATIAL AND TEMPORAL BOUNDARIES

The consideration of the environmental effects in the EA needs to be conceptually bound in both time and space. This is more commonly known as defining the study areas and time frames, or spatial and temporal boundaries of the EA.

Study areas should include all relevant components of the environment, including the people, biota, land, water, air, and other aspects of the natural and human environment. Study boundaries should be defined taking into account ecological, technical, and social considerations. The spatial boundaries must reflect the geographic range over which the project's environmental effects may occur, even if these effects extend beyond the project footprint.

The project footprint includes the area where new construction takes place, as well as areas or structures that are being decommissioned or abandoned.

The temporal boundaries for the EA should establish the time period for the project-specific and cumulative effects and should at a minimum address the planning horizon of the project. Temporal boundaries should be clearly established in the environmental assessment to indicate the baseline conditions against which the predicted effects are being analyzed. Temporal boundaries may vary based on the VEC being considered and the baseline environmental data available for comparison. Where possible and appropriate, predicted environmental and cumulative effects should be assessed against a temporal boundary as close to pre-disturbance conditions as possible; however it is recognized that for some VECs, this may not be achievable or appropriate. As such, the proponent should provide an explanation of the temporal boundaries selected for each VEC (or group of VECs) and justification should be provided.

CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT REGISTRY

Pursuant to subsection 55(1) of the Act, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Registry (the Registry) has been established to provide timely notice of the EA and to facilitate public access to records related to the EA. The Registry consists of a project file and an Internet Site. The Internet Site will contain key records about the EA including:

- Notice of Commencement
- Notice of Termination (if applicable)
- Summary description of the project, including the scope of the project
- Description of factors and scope of those factors
- Screening Report (when available)
- Any other information considered appropriate

The Internet Site of the Registry can be accessed at the following address. The Registry Number is 11-01-59994.

http://www.ceaa.gc.ca/050/details-eng.cfm?evaluation=59994

ASSESSING ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The environmental assessment will include an evaluation of the nature and extent of the residual adverse environmental effects after applying mitigation measures where possible. A determination of whether the adverse environmental effects are likely to be significant will be included along with the methods employed to reach this determination. The proponent should clearly identify the methodology used in the evaluation and it is recommended that the following document prepared by the Canadian Environmental Assessment agency be used to guide the effects assessment:

- Determining Whether A Project is Likely to Cause Significant Adverse Environmental Effects (1994)
- Assessing Environmental Effects on Physical and Cultural Heritage Resources (1996)

For additional reference Health Canada also has a publication entitled *Useful Information for Environmental Assessments*, which can be found at the following web link:

www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ewh-semt/pubs/environ_assess-eval/index-eng.php

EFFECTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT ON THE PROJECT

The environmental assessment will take into account how the environment could adversely affect the project, include consideration of the effects of severe weather events, such as extreme drought, abnormal precipitation, runoff/flooding, fire, earthquakes, rockfalls, etc. The environmental assessment will take into account any potential effects of climate change on the project, including an assessment of whether the project is sensitive to changes in climatic conditions during its lifespan.

CUMULATIVE EFFECTS ASSESSMENT

Cumulative effects are residual effects on the environment (i.e. impacts that occur after mitigation measures have been put in place) combined with the environmental effects of past, present, and future projects or activities. Cumulative effects can also result from the combination of different individual environmental effects of the project acting on the same environmental component. The effects of this project will be considered together with those of other projects and activities that have been, or will be carried out, and for which the effects are expected to overlap with those of the project (i.e. overlap in same geographic area and time).

A description of the methodology used for cumulative effects assessment is required. In addition to the guidance documents identified previously, the following practitioners guide should be used for reference:

- Cumulative Effects Assessment Practitioners Guide (CEAA, 1999).

MITIGATION MEASURES

Mitigation measures to eliminate, reduce or control adverse environmental effects will be considered. The environmental assessment will identify mitigation measures that are technically and economically feasible and that would mitigate identified adverse environmental effects arising from the proposed project.

MONITORING PROGRAM

The proponent should identify and describe all proposed monitoring plans both during and after construction that will be used to verify the accuracy of the environmental assessment and determine the effectiveness of proposed mitigation measures.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

The responsible authorities have considered all comments received by the public in accordance with Section 18(3) of CEAA. A record of how comments have been considered and, where appropriate, incorporated into the environmental assessment, has been prepared and is available upon request.

Please contact Transport Canada as indicated below for more information.

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The public will also be invited to participate by reviewing the environmental assessment screening report when it is available. It is anticipated that the draft Environmental Screening Report for the Clearwater Multi-user Access project will likely be posted on the CEAR for public review in Fall 2011.