



Sahtu Land Use Planning Board

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May 25, 2009

Chief Raymond Tutcho
Deline First Nation

Peter Menacho, President
Deline Land Corporation

Russell Kenny, President
Deline Renewable Resources Council

Re: Great Bear Lake Watershed Management Plan & the Sahtu Land Use Plan

Dear Sirs,

Thank you for your letter dated March 17, 2009 regarding the approval of the Great Bear Lake Watershed Management Plan. We understand your frustration with the length of time it has taken to advance the Sahtu Land Use Plan and that this has delayed approval and implementation of the Great Bear Lake Watershed Management Plan (GBLWMP). The Planning Board has had considerable upheaval in recent years which has slowed progress. That cannot be changed. Let us instead focus on how we can move forward together.

As you know, the Board recently released Draft 2 of the Sahtu Land Use Plan. In it, we included a term to give legal force to the Great Bear Lake Watershed Management Plan as requested by your organizations and INAC. In the Plan and Letter of Transmittal, we pointed out that there are issues with the approval and implementation of the Great Bear Lake Watershed Management Plan and that collaboration will be required between our Board, your organizations, INAC and GNWT to resolve them. The concerns relate to some of the terms and wording used in the GBLWMP. The Planning Board had incorporated the major terms of that document into Draft 1 and Working Draft 2 of the Sahtu Land Use Plan. The Board received wide spread comment that the terms of the Plan were not appropriate or approvable, including specific comments on terms and wording pulled directly from the GBLWMP.

While there was participation from representatives of the federal and territorial government in developing the GBLWMP, our understanding is that there was never broad consultation outside the immediate working group to determine whether the Plan was appropriate and acceptable to the Parties, especially if it is to be given legal force under the Sahtu Land Use Plan. In addition, the Board will have difficulty in determining conformity of applications against many of the terms in the GBLWMP so we want to see revisions to make the terms clearer. In your letter, you suggested that only minor amendments are required to update the GBLWMP. Our impression from comments and our own review is that significant amendments may be required to the GBLWMP. In short, we do not believe the GBLWMP is approvable as currently written, so it cannot be advanced for approval at this time.



We have flagged this as the most significant issue to be addressed in the planning process. We want to call a meeting as soon as possible between our Board, your organizations, INAC and the GNWT to discuss how to move forward cooperatively. We need to discuss the nature and significance of amendments required to the GBLWMP and jointly identify the process, timeframe and resources needed to carry out this work.

We will be in Deline for consultations on Draft 2 of the Sahtu Land Use Plan on June 15-16. We will begin discussions with you at that time to go over the issues. We will be in Yellowknife for consultations from June 29-30. If you are in agreement, we could hold a meeting on either of those afternoons in Yellowknife with your organizations, the GNWT and Canada. Alternatively, we are happy to book a meeting in Deline in July with all 3 Parties. Please contact Heidi Wiebe at (403) 984-3916 or Heidi.wiebe@shaw.ca to let her know your preference.

The Board understands that this may not be the response you were hoping for. Unfortunately, we do not see a speedy approval of the GBLWMP at this time based on the information we have. We are very committed to completing an approvable Sahtu Land Use Plan over the next few years and ensuring that it captures the spirit and intent of the work done through the Great Bear Lake Watershed Plan in a way that can be readily approved and implemented. We look forward to working with you to complete this important work.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Judith Wright-Bird'.

Judith Wright-Bird
Chairperson
Sahtu Land Use Planning Board

CC: Ethel Blondin-Andrew, Chairperson, Sahtu Secretariat Incorporated
Trish Merrithew-Mercredi, Regional Director General, INAC
Gary Bohnet, Deputy Minister, Environment and Natural Resources, GNWT