

## **Project Description - Summary**

# **Project 6 - All-Season Road Linking Manto Sipi Cree Nation, Bunibonabee Cree Nation and God's Lake First Nation**

**Prepared for:**

**Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency  
Manitoba Sustainable Development**

**Submitted by:**

**Manitoba Infrastructure**

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## **1 GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONTACTS**

### **1.1 Nature of the Project and Proposed Location**

The communities of Manto Sipi Cree Nation, Bunibonibee Cree Nation, God's Lake First Nation and God's Lake Narrows Northern Affairs Community, on the east side of Lake Manitoba, rely primarily on winter road and air travel to transport people and goods. In 2008, the Government of Manitoba announced a strategic initiative to provide improved, safer and more reliable transportation services to connect the remote communities on the east side of Lake Winnipeg with the rest of Manitoba. The Manitoba East Side Road Authority (ESRA) was established as a provincial Crown Agency to manage the East Side Transportation Initiative (ESTI) to increase transportation opportunities for communities on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. ESRA however, has been absorbed into Manitoba Infrastructure (MI), Remote Road Operations which will continue to manage the project.

The first all-season road initiated in this regional transportation network (Project P1) connects Provincial Road (PR) 304 (near Hollow Water First Nation) to Berens River First Nation and Berens River Northern Affairs Community (SNC-Lavalin, 2009), and is currently under construction. Two additional sections of all-season road connecting Berens River First Nation to Poplar River First Nation (Project P4) and Pauingassi First Nation and Little Grand Rapids First Nation (Project P7a) are currently in process for approval. Project P4 is being reviewed under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act 2012*, (CEAA, 2012) and *The Environment Act of Manitoba* (MEA), while Project P7a is being reviewed under MEA.

An all-season road linking Manto Sipi Cree Nation, Bunibonibee Cree Nation and God's Lake First Nation is also proposed (Project P6). The proposed alignment consists of approximately 138 kilometres (km) of all-season road on a new right-of-way (ROW) on provincial Crown land (Map 1). There are three road sections that will begin at the Reserve boundaries and generally head west and southwest approximately 72 km from Manto Sipi Cree Nation, southeast 36.5 km from Bunibonibee Cree Nation and northwest 29.9 km from God's Lake First Nation where the three sections intersect.

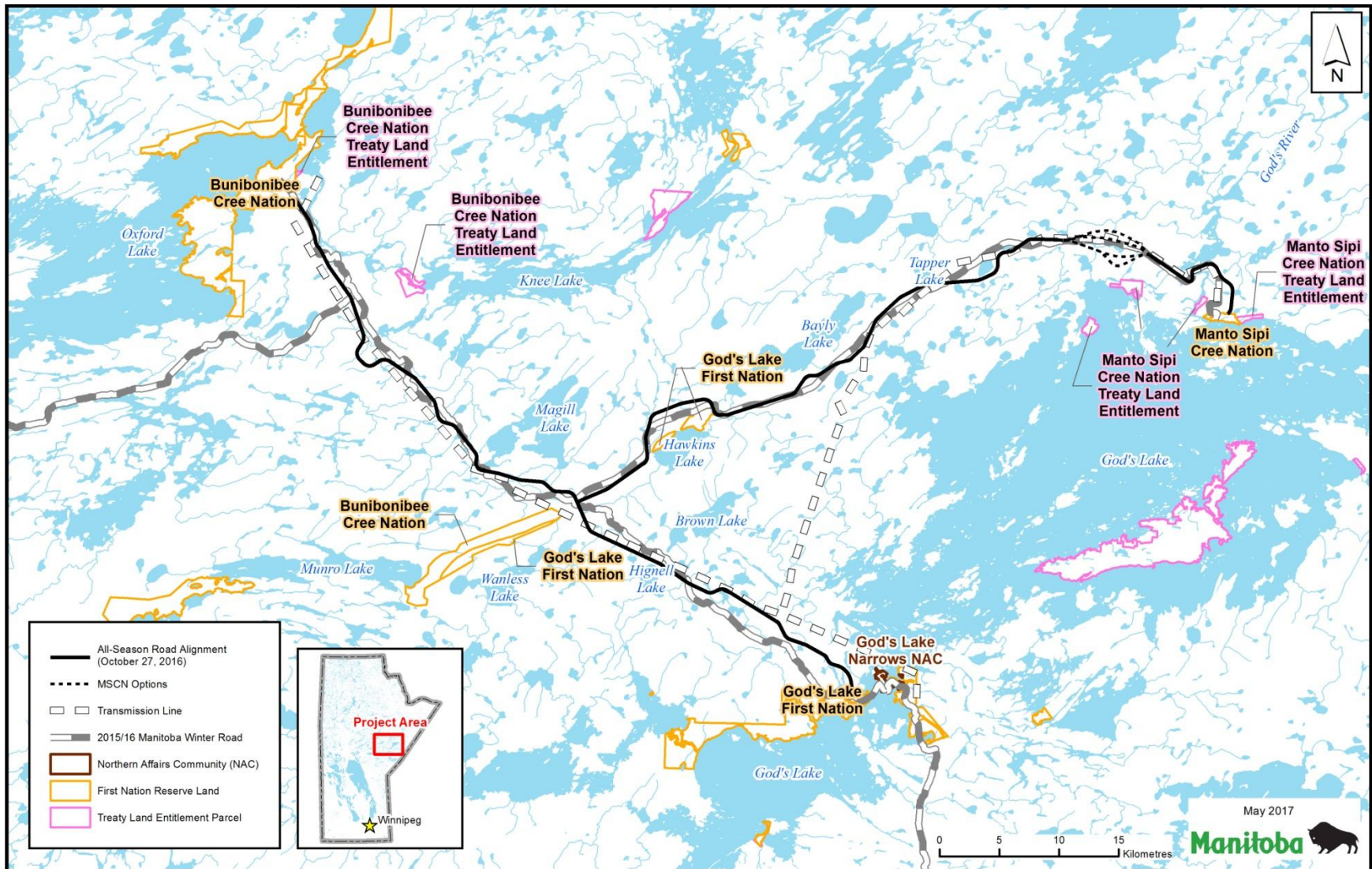
An existing on-Reserve access road will connect to the proposed Project 6 all-season road at the Bunibonibee Cree Nation boundary, whereas on-Reserve access roads will need to be constructed separately at Manto Sipi Cree Nation and God's Lake First Nation to connect to the all-season road that will terminate at the Reserve boundaries. The approval for these on-Reserve access roads will be subject to separate approvals by Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). The purpose of the proposed Project is to link the communities.

The all-season road linking the communities will be a gravel-surface public highway, with a design width of 10 metres (m), a design speed of 100 kilometres/hour (km/h), and a posted speed of 90 km/h. The road will generally follow the current winter road alignment, with up to two major water crossings (bridges) over God's River and Magill Creek.

### **1.2 Proponent Information**

#### **1.2.1 Name of the Project**

The project name is "Project 6 – All-Season Road linking Manto Sipi Cree Nation, Bunibonibee Cree Nation and God's Lake First Nation" (the Project).



Map 1: Proposed Project P6 – All-Season Road linking Manto Sipi Cree Nation, Bunibonibee Cree Nation and God's Lake First Nation

### **1.2.2 Name of the Proponent**

The proponent of the proposed Project is Manitoba Infrastructure, Remote Road Operations. The Province of Manitoba will provide funding for the proposed Project.

### **1.2.3 Address of the Proponent**

The address of the proponent is:

1420 – 215 Garry Street  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
R3C 3P3

### **1.2.4 Chief Executive Officer**

Manitoba Infrastructure is a government department and therefore does not have a Chief Executive Officer, as such refer to the principal contact person identified in Section 1.2.5.

### **1.2.5 Principal Contact Person**

The principal contact person for the Project Description and for environmental matters related to the proposed project is:

#### **Mr. Kimber Osiowy**

Manitoba Infrastructure  
Manager, Environmental Services  
Address:  
1420 – 215 Garry Street  
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R3C 3P3

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## **1.3 Jurisdictions and Other Parties Consulted**

Discussions on an all-weather road network on the east side of Lake Winnipeg have been ongoing since 1999 with other stakeholders in addition to the local communities. These discussions have included information regarding the proposed Project as part of the larger network. Those engaged in discussion with Remote Road Operations include regulatory authorities, east side communities, Aboriginal leadership organizations, industry and other key stakeholders.

Manto Sipi Cree Nation, Bunibonibee Cree Nation, God's Lake First Nation and God's Lake Narrows Northern Affairs Community have been engaged throughout project planning and during preparation of the Project Description. These communities are in the vicinity of the all-season road, are most likely to be directly affected by the proposed Project, and can provide relevant information to the environmental assessment for the Project. Remote Road Operations has provided a copy of the Project Description to each of these communities.

## **1.4 Environmental Assessment Requirements**

### **1.4.1 Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012 (Canada)**

The proposed Project is on provincial Crown land (approximately 138 km) and is a designated project under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012* (CEAA, 2012). Therefore, the proposed Project may require an environmental assessment under the CEAA, 2012, subsequent to federal and public review of this Project Description under the provisions of that legislation.

### **1.4.2 The Environment Act (Manitoba)**

The proposed Project involves construction of approximately 138 km all-season road on a new ROW on provincial Crown land and requires an Environment Act Licence under *The Environment Act* (Manitoba), Classes of Development Regulation as a Class 2 development, pursuant to that legislation.

## **1.5 Regulatory Requirements**

In addition to the environmental assessment and licensing requirement under *The Environment Act* (Manitoba) noted above, provincial permits and approvals will be sought as required for road construction activities such as vegetation removal, camp development, burning, and quarry development. Applicable provincial legislation includes *The Crown Lands Act*, *The Mines and Minerals Act*, *The Wildfires Act*, *The Dangerous Goods Handling and Transportation Act*, and *The Workplace Safety and Health Act*.

Remote Road Operations will also seek permits and authorizations under other federal legislation, which may include approvals from Transport Canada under the *Navigation Protection Act* and authorization from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), under the federal *Fisheries Act*, for the crossing of God's River. If required, licenses under the *Explosives Act* will be sought from Natural Resources Canada for storage of explosives.

Both provincial and federal regulatory requirements are described in more detail in Section 4.3 of this report.

## **1.6 Regional Planning Context**

The proposed Project will not be taking place in a region that has been subject to an environmental study under s. 74 of CEAA, 2012. The area has, however, been subject to a number of regional planning initiatives that have included environmental considerations. These planning initiatives and their relation to the proposed Project are summarized below.

In 2000, Manitoba launched the East Side Planning Initiative (ESPI) to bring together local communities, First Nations, industry, and environmental organizations to develop a vision for land and resource use on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. It was expected that this process would result in an overall blueprint for the area to address the boreal forest, protected areas, traditional activities, transportation needs and economic development.

In 2004, a status report entitled *Promises to Keep* was submitted to government and included recommendations for boreal protection and community development (East Side Planning Initiative, 2004). In 2005, the name of ESPI was changed to Wabanong Nakaygum Okimawin (WNO) to reflect First Nations people, who make up about 96% of the population in the area.



In 2007, Manitoba signed an accord with WNO First Nations, reinforcing a foundation for comprehensive traditional area land use planning, and ultimately, a broad area plan for the east side of Lake Winnipeg. Under the WNO Accord, individual First Nations are to develop traditional land use plans.

The East Side Large Area Transportation Network Study, which followed in 2009, identified potential transportation infrastructure improvements that would provide year-round access to the communities on the east side of Lake Winnipeg (SNC-Lavalin, 2011). The final report of that study was completed in 2011 and recommended an all-season road network for the region. Various route options for an all-season road linking Manto Sipi Cree Nation, Bunibonibee Cree Nation and God's Lake First Nation were considered. The alignment that generally follows the existing winter road alignment was selected as the preferred routing corridor, taking into consideration technical and environmental constraints, and community preferences such as avoiding sensitive areas and waterbodies, and following existing transmission lines.

Subsequent discussions with Manto Sipi Cree Nation, Bunibonibee Cree Nation and God's Lake First Nation and God's Lake Narrows Northern Affairs Community along with information from Traditional Knowledge (TK), terrain analysis, and archeological, wildlife and fisheries investigations have refined the route to the current proposed road alignment.

## **2 PROJECT INFORMATION**

### **2.1 Project Overview**

As part of the ESTI, Remote Road Operations is proposing the construction of Project 6, an approximately 138 km all-season road linking Manto Sipi Cree Nation, Bunibonibee Cree Nation and God's Lake First Nation. The proposed all-season road will eventually connect these communities to PR 373 through proposed future segments of the transportation initiative network; PR 373 to Wasagamack (Project P2) and Anderson Junction to Bunibonibee (Project P5), as the communities are currently serviced only through winter road access or air.

The proposed Project will consist of approximately 138 km of an all-season road along a new ROW on provincial Crown land (Map 1). The location of an 8 km section of the alignment near Manto Sipi Cree Nation is still being discussed with the community. Where terrain permits it will follow the current winter road alignment. The road will be built to the Manitoba design standard of secondary arterial road and will be designed as a 2-lane gravel highway, with a 10 m top width, and a design of 100 km/hr. The proposed Project will require replacement of the existing bridge at God's River and may also require construction of a new bridge crossing Magill Creek. In addition, culverts will be required for smaller watercourse crossings and local drainage. The alignment crosses undeveloped land in the Boreal Shield Ecozone (Smith et al., 1998), and is located within the Hayes River watershed, draining into Hudson Bay via regional streams and rivers.

The purpose of the Project is to link the three First Nation communities to improve linkages among the communities of Manto Sipi Cree Nation, Bunibonibee Cree Nation and God's Lake First Nation and opportunities for community members to benefit from construction employment and economic opportunities while working towards meeting objectives of the ESTI.

## **2.2 Provisions of Regulations Designating Physical Activities**

The proposed Project is approximately 138 km long, and will be located on a new ROW on provincial Crown land. Therefore, s. 25(c) of the *Regulations Designating Physical Activities* (the *Regulations*) pursuant to the CEAA, 2012 applies:

**s. 25** *The construction, operation, decommissioning and abandonment of a new (c) all-season public highway that requires a total of 50 km or more of new right of way;*

No other provisions of the *Regulations* apply.

## **2.3 Project Components and Activities**

### **2.3.1 Physical Works Associated with the Designated Project**

The proposed Project will be built on provincial Crown land and has eight main components including:

1. All-season road (approximately 138 km) on new ROW.
2. Up to two steel girder or concrete bridges at two major water crossings.
3. Culverts for stream crossings or drainage equalization.
4. Temporary construction bridges.
5. Temporary construction access trails.
6. Rock quarries and granular borrow areas.
7. Temporary construction laydown areas.
8. Temporary construction camps.

The dimensions and capacity for these physical works is not available at this time as detailed design has not begun yet. The existing winter road network will support the Project by providing access for some of the construction equipment and materials that will be required for the proposed Project.

## **2.4 Emissions, Discharges and Wastes**

### **2.4.1 Atmospheric Contaminant Emissions**

Dust, and combustion and greenhouse gas emissions will result from the operation of vehicles and other equipment and machinery during construction and operation of the Project. During the assumed 8 year construction period for the Project an estimated 138,300 tonnes of Carbon Dioxide equivalency (CO<sub>2</sub>e) will be emitted and during 10 years of operation an estimated 23,690 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e will be emitted (Dillon Consulting, 2017). Burning brush piles will generate localized atmospheric emissions. Other localized emissions include blasting residue at quarries or some worksites. Emissions due to air traffic and annual winter road construction are anticipated to decrease once the road access is in place.

### **2.4.2 Liquid Discharges**

There are no processing streams that would result in liquid discharges, however, accidental releases and unplanned discharges of liquids may occur associated with construction and operation activities such as concrete batch plants, camps, laydown areas and operation of machinery and construction equipment.

### **2.4.3 Types of Waste and Disposal Plans**

Wood from clearing of the ROW will first be segregated into usable timber. The remaining material will be piled or windrowed for burning on site. Domestic solid waste will be collected in appropriate on-site containment, for later transport to the closest landfill within Bunibonibee Cree Nation, Manto Sipi Cree Nation and God's Lake First Nation. If at the time of construction these community landfills do not meet regulatory requirements then the solid waste would be transported by winter road to the nearest licenced disposal grounds located in either Thompson or Chisel Lake Mine. Septage waste at construction camps or sites will be stored in approved containers and will be hauled to the nearest community for disposal and treatment at the existing mechanical SBR (Sequence Batch Reactor) wastewater treatment plants within Bunibonibee Cree Nation, Manto Sipi Cree Nation and God's Lake First Nation. Waste petroleum products (e.g., lubricants, oils, greases) derived from construction vehicles and equipment will be collected and stored in designated areas and containers until they can be removed from site for recycling or disposal through a licensed waste disposal/treatment company.

Solid, liquid and hazardous wastes from the proposed road Project will be collected, stored, transported, disposed of and/or treated in accordance with *The Environment Act* (Waste Disposal Regulation), *The Dangerous Goods Handling and Transportation Act* (Dangerous Goods Handling and Transportation Regulation, Environmental Accident Reporting Regulation, and Storage and Handling of Petroleum Products and Allied Products Regulations) and *The Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act*.

## **2.5 Project Phases and Scheduling**

The proposed Project will be carried out in four main stages as follows:

1. Planning and Design.
2. Pre-construction.
3. Construction.
4. Operation and Maintenance.

The alignment will be divided into segments, and completed sequentially so that completion of the construction phase at one segment will initiate the pre-construction of the adjacent segment. Pre-construction (detailed design) is anticipated to begin in 2020 (Year 1) and take approximately 3 years to complete. Scheduling of specific Project activities will be determined upon tendering of individual construction contracts following detailed design, however, construction is anticipated to start in Year 4 beginning from Bunibonibee Cree Nation and working eastward. The Project will provide all-season access between the communities approximately eight years after construction begins (Year 11).

In general, road building construction is not seasonally constrained, but may be scheduled around conditions that provide for better access. Timing constraints are placed on select aspects of the Project to protect environmental or infrastructure components. These will be identified as mitigation measures in the environmental assessment and/or stipulated in associated authorizations or approvals.

There are no plans to decommission or abandon the proposed Project, as it will provide all-season access between Manto Sipi Cree Nation, Bunibonibee Cree Nation and God's Lake First Nation, and with the completion of Projects P2 and P5 in future, it will be connected to the provincial road network, for the foreseeable future.

### **2.5.1 Planning and Design**

Planning and design for the proposed Project (current stage) involves identifying broad road corridors, possible road alignments within the corridors, selecting the final road alignment and preparing the detailed road design. This includes baseline data collection and analysis for engineering and biophysical environmental factors, and factors related to health and socio-economic conditions, physical and cultural heritage, and the current use of lands and resources by traditional Aboriginal peoples.

### **2.5.2 Pre-Construction**

During the pre-construction stage, detailed design will be completed and Environmental Protection Plans (EnvPPs) finalized. Equipment, machinery, vehicles, construction materials and supplies including fuel, generators, trailers and other provisions will be transported into the project location via the existing winter road network and stockpiled at laydown areas pending road construction. Other preconstruction activities in this phase include surveying and flagging, and detailed geotechnical investigations.

### **2.5.3 Construction**

Construction on the road will begin with vegetation clearing along the ROW. Organic materials stripped from the surface will be stockpiled for later use on road shoulders or for site reclamation. Further site preparation will include contouring and levelling, and blasting of rock outcrops. Materials, including rock fill aggregate and composite material, will be loaded, hauled, dumped, spread, graded and compacted, and trimmed and shaped before final gravelling. Other activities will include placement of geotextile fabric, riprap, roadway signs, erosions and sedimentation control and seeding of ditches. Bridges and culverts will be installed at water crossings to allow for water flow and fish passage, and at other locations to maintain natural hydraulic equivalency.

During the construction stage, equipment marshalling and laydown areas, and construction camps will be prepared, and rock quarries and borrow areas will also be cleared and made ready. Activities to establish and operate these components will include vegetation clearing, site contouring and levelling, site security features, waste collection and disposal, and storage of petroleum products. Quarry activities will also include blasting and crushing.

All facilities and work areas including quarry and borrow areas, and temporary facilities not needed for future maintenance activities will be demobilized following construction, using salvaged aggregate material and stockpiled topsoil. Natural re-vegetation will be monitored and supplemented by seeding or planting as required.

### **2.5.4 Operation and Maintenance**

Operation and maintenance activities for the completed all-season road such as routine scheduled grading, topping the road with additional aggregate and management of vegetation and culvert cleanouts will occur over the life of the road. In the winter, snow clearing activities will use ploughs, graders, loaders and dump trucks. Dust suppression chemicals may be used to control dust on the road surface.

### 3 PROJECT LOCATION

#### 3.1 Location Description

The Project will link Manto Sipi Cree Nation, Bunibonibee Cree Nation and God's Lake First Nation. Although the distances vary slightly, the three communities are located approximately 580 km north of the City of Winnipeg by air. The proposed Project alignment consists of a total approximately 138 km of all-season road on a new ROW on provincial Crown land (Map 1). There are three road sections that will begin at the Reserve boundaries, which are federal land, and generally head west and southwest approximately 72 km from Manto Sipi Cree Nation (the exact distance will depend on final alignment selected), southeast 36.5 km from Bunibonibee Cree Nation and northwest 29.9 km from God's Lake First Nation where the three sections intersect. At the Reserve boundaries, the all-season road will connect to existing or future on-Reserve access roads. The Project alignment, at the closest point, is approximately 100 km northwest of the border between Manitoba and Ontario and approximately 575 km north of the border between Canada and the United States.

#### 3.2 Coordinates

Coordinates for the proposed Project are as follows:

- Manto Sipi Cree Nation:

Eastern terminus (from Manto Sipi Cree Nation Reserve boundary):

Latitude: 54° 50' 24.7" N

Longitude: 94° 02' 53.1" W

- Bunibonibee Cree Nation:

Northwest terminus (from Bunibonibee Cree Nation Reserve boundary):

Latitude: 54° 54' 36.6" N

Longitude: 95° 16' 14.6" W

- God's Lake First Nation:

Southern terminus (from God's Lake First Nation Reserve boundary):

Latitude: 54° 33' 03.5" N

Longitude: 94° 31' 38.5" W

- Intersection of P6 alignment sections from Manto Sipi Cree Nation, Bunibonibee Cree Nation and God's Lake First Nation:

Latitude: 54° 40' 56.6" N

Longitude: 94° 54' 30.0" W

#### 3.3 Site Map

The proposed route for the Project is shown on Map 1. The map also indicates larger watercourses and waterbodies, First Nation Reserve lands, Treaty Land Entitlement (TLE) selections, God's Lake Narrows Northern Affairs Community, the transmission line and the existing winter roads. There are no other federal lands in the Regional Assessment Area other than the Reserve lands.

Because the area is largely undeveloped, there are no commercial development sites or industrial facilities in the area. Apart from the communities, there are transmission lines and existing winter road corridors in the Local Assessment Area (up to 10 km corridor centred on the all-season road alignment; Map 2).

### **3.3.1 Proximities**

There are no known residences or cabins in immediate proximity to the proposed P6-ASR. The nearest residences to the alignment are approximately 250 m in Manto Sipi Cree Nation, 1,450 m in Bunibonibee Cree Nation, 1,450 m in God's Lake First Nation and 2,500 m in God's Lake Narrows Northern Affairs Community

The Local Assessment Area is within the Northern Registered Trapline (RTL) District, specifically the Oxford House and God's Lake RTL Sections. Members of the Manto Sipi Cree Nation use part of the God's Lake RTL Section. The all-season road crosses 10 RTLs in the two RTL Sections. The three First Nations all have outstanding TLE, and both Manto Sipi Cree Nation and Bunibonibee Cree Nation have TLE selections within the Local Assessment Area. The closest of these, however, is approximately 660 m from the alignment near the terminus at the Manto Sipi Cree Nation, with the rest all over 1 km from the ASR alignment.

## **3.4 Land and Water Use**

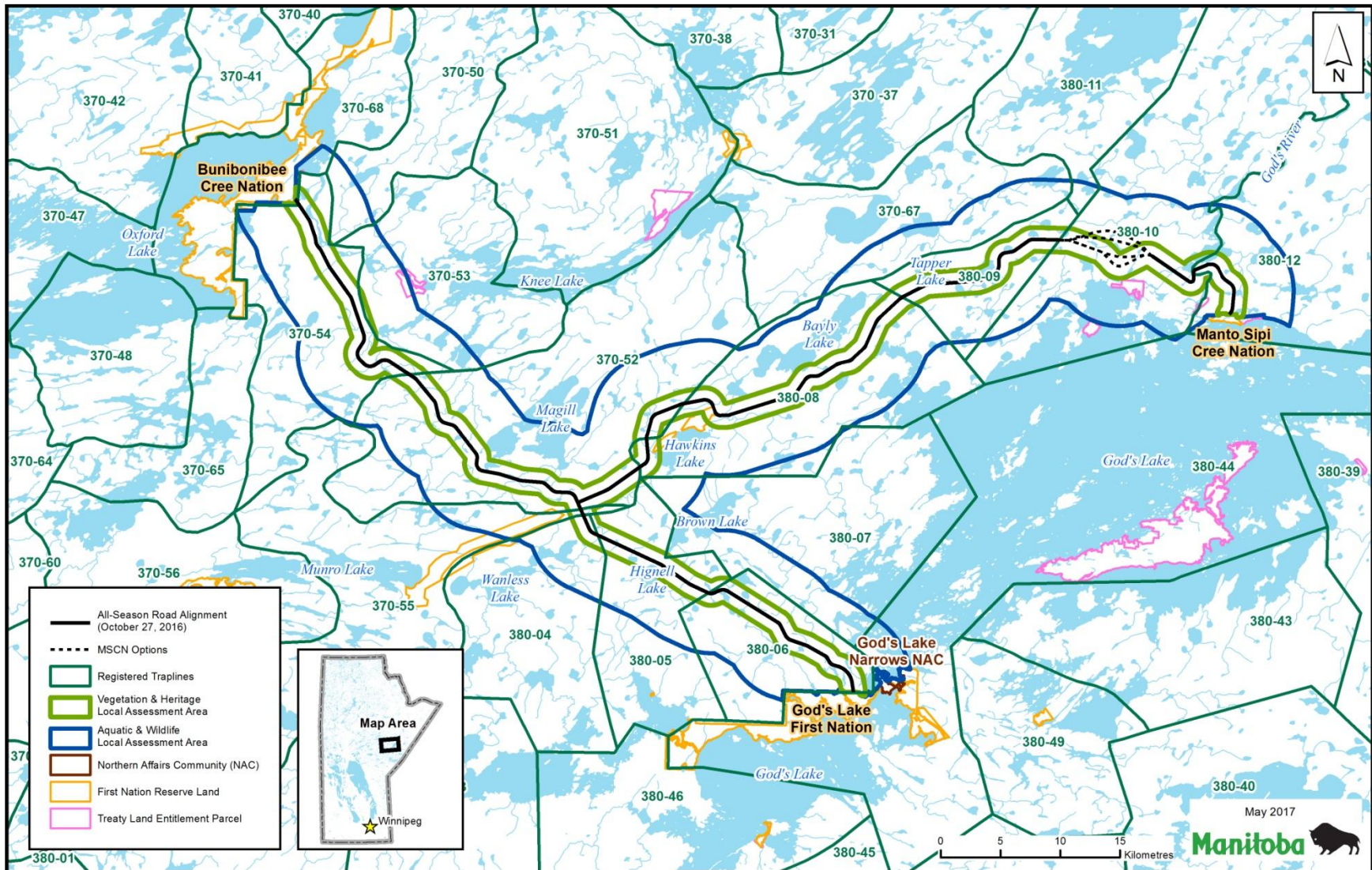
### **3.4.1 Overview**

Land use in the area of the proposed Project consists mainly of traditional activities (i.e., hunting, trapping, fishing, camping, recreation activities, sacred/ceremonial use, and food and medicine gathering) by Aboriginal people from Manto Sipi Cree Nation, Bunibonibee Cree Nation, God's Lake First Nation and God's Lake Narrows Northern Affairs Community.

There are few important industrial or commercial uses of the land along the proposed all-season road alignment or in the traditional land use areas in the vicinity of the alignment. While there are no mineral leases, patent mining claims, potash withdrawals, private quarry permits or quarry and surface leases, there are various mines, mining claims, quarry withdrawals and casual quarry permits (annually-issued) within the Regional Assessment Area. Economic activity includes fishing, trapping, and licensed hunting, the latter including moose, black bear and game birds. Trapping of furbearers is administered by Manitoba Sustainable Development (MSD) through the RTL system. There are two RTL Sections in the Local Assessment Area – Oxford House and Gods Lake and 10 RTLs intersect the proposed all-season road alignment.

The communities are currently serviced by winter roads extending from Provincial Trunk Highway (PTH) 6 and PR 373, the former which provides all-weather access to the cities of Thompson and Winnipeg. The three communities each have regional airports. Power to the communities is provided by transmission lines. Once completed, the proposed Project will replace the existing winter road segment between the communities. Apart from the winter roads and transmission lines, the land is mostly undeveloped.

Other than the Reserve lands for the three First Nations in the general area, there are no federal lands or National Historic Sites in the area. There are no designated protected areas or other lands protected under the Manitoba Protected Areas Initiative (PAI) in the region. The Knee Lake Area of Special Interest (ASI), which is not currently protected under the PAI, is in the Local Assessment Area and surrounding region. The Hayes River, which crosses through the



Map 2: Local Assessment Area for proposed P6 - All-Season Road showing Registered Trapplines

area, was designated as a Heritage River under the Canadian Heritage Rivers System in 2006. The proposed all-season road does not cross the Hayes River.

### **3.4.2 Legal Description**

The township and ranges partially traversed by the proposed all-season road alignment are located east of the first principal meridian and are as follows:

- Manto Sipi Cree Nation all-season road section; 66-17, 66-18, 66-19, 67-18, 67-19, 67-20, 67-23, 68-20, 68-21, 68-22 and 68-23;
- Bunibonibee Cree Nation all-season road section; 66-16, 66-17, 67-15, 67-16 and 68-15; and
- God's Lake First Nation all-season road section; 64-19, 64-20, 65-18, 65-19, 66-17 and 66-18.

The proposed Project will be constructed on provincial Crown land. It will be owned by the Province of Manitoba, and will be operated as part of the provincial all-season road network. The Provincial Crown owns mineral and quarry rights to all provincial land not otherwise withdrawn by Ministerial Order.

### **3.4.3 Land and Resources Used for Traditional Purposes**

Currently, local Aboriginal people from Manto Sipi Cree Nation, Bunibonibee Cree Nation, God's Lake First Nation and God's Lake Narrows Northern Affairs Community use the Local and Regional Assessment Areas for traditional activities including travel routes, fishing, hunting, trapping, camping, harvesting plants and berries, recreation activities, and sacred/ceremonial use.

Although the proposed alignment for the Project passes through lands used for traditional purposes by Manto Sipi Cree Nation, Bunibonibee Cree Nation and God's Lake First Nation, all three communities have considered the alignment in planning and decision-making. Remote Road Operations is in the process of obtaining Band Council Resolutions from these communities allowing for ongoing investigations along the proposed alignment, in support of the proposed alignment and current planning.

Aboriginal residents of the God's Lake Narrows Northern Affairs Community also use part of the Local and Regional Assessment Areas for traditional purposes. The proposed Project area is not anticipated to be used by members of other First Nations in the region.

## **4 GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT**

### **4.1 Financial Support**

The total cost for construction and operation of the proposed Project will be supplied by the Manitoba Government. There is no proposed or anticipated federal financial support for the Project at this time.

### **4.2 Federal Land**

No federal land will be used for the purpose of carrying out the designated Project, including no granting of interest in federal land through easement, ROW, or transfer of ownership. The all-



season road will extend west, southeast and northwest on provincial Crown land from the boundaries of Manto Sipi Cree Nation, Bunibonibee Cree Nation and God's Lake First Nation, respectively.

### 4.3 Regulatory Requirements

In addition to the possible requirement for an environmental assessment for a designated project under CEAA, 2012, other federal permits and authorizations may, or will be required, under the following legislation:

- *Explosives Act*. If required, licences for storage of explosives at non-quarry worksites will be sought from Natural Resources Canada (Explosive storage at quarries is licensed provincially).
- *Navigation Protection Act*. Remote Road Operations may request to "opt in" under this legislation for proposed works on non-scheduled watercourses, including God's River. There are no scheduled watercourses affected by the proposed Project.
- *Fisheries Act* (s. 35(2)) Notifications or authorizations from DFO may be required where fish or fish habitat may be affected during construction of stream or river crossings.
- *Species at Risk Act*. A permit may be required for potential impacts to protected species and/or their habitat.

Provincial environmental review or permits and authorizations may be required under the following legislation:

- *The Crown Lands Act*. Work permits are required for work associated with road construction, including vegetation removal, quarry development and camp development on provincial Crown lands.
- *The Mines and Minerals Act*. Casual quarry permits are required under Subsection 133(1) for quarry development on provincial Crown lands.
- *The Wildfires Act*. Burning Permits under s. 19(1) will be sought as needed on Crown land.
- *The Dangerous Goods Handling and Transportation Act* (Storage and Handling of Petroleum Products and Allied Products Regulation). Permits for petroleum storage tanks over 5000L on Crown land.
- *The Workplace Safety and Health Act*. Licences for storage of explosives at quarry sites will be sought as needed.
- *Other: The Wildlife Act; The Heritage Resources Act; The Forest Act*. Any required permits for environmental investigations will be acquired under *The Wildlife Act* (certain wildlife investigations) and *The Heritage Resources Act* (archaeological investigations). As required, other permits and approvals will be acquired under *The Forest Act*.

## 5 ENVIRONMENTAL DESCRIPTION

### 5.1 Biophysical Setting

#### 5.1.1 Climate and Air Quality

The region experiences warm summers, with daily average temperatures in July of 18°C, and cold winters, with daily average temperatures in January of -22°C. The average annual

precipitation is 555 mm, with 186 mm of that in the form snow. The average frost-free period is 122 days (Government of Canada, 2016).

There are no current industrial activities in the region that would be expected to significantly affect air quality in the region of the proposed Project resulting in good air quality. Air quality in the area may be temporarily degraded due to smoke from forest fires.

### **5.1.2 Physiography and Surficial Geology**

The proposed Project is located almost entirely within the God's Lake Ecodistrict (#365), within the Hayes River Upland Eco-region of the Boreal Shield Ecozone (Smith et al., 1998). A small area at the northern limit of the Local Assessment Area falls within the Knee Lake Ecodistrict (#360).

The God's Lake Ecodistrict has well to imperfectly drained mineral soils comprised of eluviated eutric brunisols and grey luvisols which can be found on upland clayey glaciolacustrine deposits. Peat-filled depressions form poorly drained bogs and fens. Soils within bogs consist of deep slightly decomposed sphagnum and feather moss peat (fibrosols), moderately decomposed moss and forest peat (mesisols), and areas of permafrost (organic crysols). Deeper layers of peat are generally more decomposed than those closer to the surface. Clayey subsoils are found beneath most organic soils (Smith et al., 1998).

### **5.1.3 Vegetation and Forest Cover**

The proposed Project is located within the Northern Coniferous (B22a) Forest Section within the Boreal Forest Region of Canada (Rowe, 1972). The region is dominated by black spruce (*Picea mariana*) both in the poorly drained lowlands and the thin soils of the uplands. The frequent occurrence of forest fires has contributed to the spread of jack pine (*Pinus banksiana*) particularly in the upland areas, and possibly the widespread occurrence of white birch (*Betula papyrifera*). Tamarack (*Larix laricina*) is also associated with black spruce in the lowland areas. Species present in more favourable soil conditions along river valleys and some lakes include white spruce (*Picea glauca*), balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*), trembling aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) and balsam poplar (*Populus balsamifera*) (Rowe, 1972).

### **5.1.4 Surface Water**

Surface waters in the area drain to the north-east as part of the Hayes River Drainage Basin. Oxford Lake (location of Bunibonibee Cree Nation) is situated on the Hayes River system and flows in a generally north-east direction until it discharges into Hudson Bay. God's Lake (location of Manto Sipi Cree Nation and God's Lake First Nation) outlets to God's River which flows north-east until it discharges into the Hayes River and on to Hudson Bay. Water levels in the region are not regulated.

The proposed all-season road alignment will cross the God's River, Magill Creek, and several smaller unnamed creeks and tributaries. Smaller streams in the area are often part of boreal wetlands such as bogs and fens that drain local areas into larger creeks, rivers or lake, and are usually less than 1 m in depth.

### **5.1.5 Fish and Fish Habitat**

Fish species present in the area are representative of species typically found in the boreal shield and include walleye, sauger, northern pike, lake whitefish, brook trout, lake trout and lake sturgeon. A number of the species (particularly walleye and lake whitefish) support commercial fisheries on God's and Oxford Lakes and subsistence fisheries for Manto Sipi Cree Nation,

Bunibonibee Cree Nation and God's Lake First Nation. The Southern Hudson Bay - James Bay population of lake sturgeon (*Acipenser fulvescens*), although not protected under SARA, is designated as Special Concern by COSEWIC (COSEWIC, 2006).

Waterbodies in the vicinity of the proposed Project are primarily comprised of small streams, but include medium and large sized rivers. Medium sized streams may provide spawning habitat for larger fish such as suckers and northern pike. The smaller streams may be used as spawning and nursery areas by larger fish species (e.g., northern pike) in spring, while smaller forage species such as minnows and stickleback may utilize the streams through the summer if water volume is adequate.

Due to shallow depths and low winter flows, small streams generally provide little or no over-wintering habitat. For the remainder of the year, these streams may be utilized as a nursery for young fish, as well as providing habitat for various species of minnows, darters, sticklebacks and sculpins. Over-wintering of smaller fish in these types of streams will often occur when deeper pools are available.

The one large river which the proposed all-season road crosses, God's River, provides year-round habitat for large numbers of fish species. Due to perennial flows it supports both spring and fall spawning species.

Small boreal wetlands areas also occur within the Local Assessment Area. These habitats are generally not connected to fish bearing waters and typically become anoxic during winter. Most are typically devoid of notable fish populations.

#### **5.1.6 Mammals**

Wildlife species typical of this area include marten (*Martes americana*), mink (*Neovison vison*), beaver (*Castor canadensis*), black bear (*Ursus americanus*), boreal woodland caribou (*Rangifer tarandus caribou*), ermine (*Mustela erminea*), fisher (*Mustela pennanti*), gray wolf (*Canis lupus*), least chipmunk (*Eutamias minimus*), lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), moose (*Alces alces*), otter (*Lutra canadensis*), red squirrel (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*), snowshoe hare (*Lepus americanus*), wolverine (*Gulo gulo*), and southern red-backed vole (*Clethrionomys gapperi*) (Joro, 2014).

Most wildlife species in the area have economic and/or spiritual and cultural importance. Many also provide sustenance, or are an indication of ecological condition. Moose, black bear, and grey wolves may be hunted under big game licences. Commercial trapping of furbearers occurs under the provincial RTL system.

The boreal woodland caribou are listed as Threatened on Schedule 1 of the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA; COSEWIC, 2002). Boreal woodland caribou require large, continuous tracts of undisturbed habitat to avoid high densities that may attract predators during critical calving and rearing periods (Environment Canada, 2012). They generally inhabit mature to old growth boreal coniferous forests with an ample supply of lichen in the winter, muskegs, and peatlands (Environment Canada, 2012). Caribou groups inhabit the Local Assessment Area; however, caribou found in the vicinity of the Project are a part of the migratory Penn Island group.

#### **5.1.7 Birds**

Bird species present in the Local Assessment Area include bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), common nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*), gray jay (*Perisoreus canadensis*), great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*), herring gull (*Larus argentatus*), northern hawk owl (*Surnia ulula*),

olive-sided flycatcher (*Contopus cooperi*), osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), raven (*Corvus corax*), red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), sharp-tailed grouse (*Tympanuchus phasianellus*), short-eared owl (*Asio flammeus*), spruce grouse, willow ptarmigan (*Lagopus lagopus*), among others (Bezener and De Smet, 2000; Peterson and Peterson, 2002; Manitoba Avian Research Committee, 2003; Joro, 2014). Geese, ducks, and other waterfowl are also present in the Local Assessment Area and are seasonally hunted (Joro, 2014).

Bald eagles can be found in most of Manitoba and within the Local Assessment Area. They nest in tall shoreline trees along lakes, rivers, and open areas. They primarily feed on waterbirds, small mammals, fish, and often carrion (Bezener and De Smet, 2000). Eagles are currently assessed by COSEWIC as Not at Risk.

The range of the olive-sided flycatcher overlaps with the Local Assessment Area. They inhabit semi-open mixed and coniferous forests near water or in burned areas and boggy sites with standing dead conifers (Bezener and De Smet, 2000). They are currently listed as Threatened under SARA and *The Endangered Species and Ecosystems Act of Manitoba* (MESEA).

The common nighthawk can be found in most of Manitoba except the northern extremity of the province and may be found within the Local Assessment Area. They inhabit open and semi-open habitats such as forest gaps, meadows, and lakeshores. They are listed as Threatened under SARA and MESEA.

### **5.1.8 Amphibians and Reptiles**

The red-sided garter snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis parietalis*) has the northernmost distribution of any species of snake in North America and is the only snake species that may be found in the area (Preston, 1982; Cook, 1984; Conant and Collins, 1991). Frog and toad species within the area include: American toad (*Bufo americanus*), boreal chorus frog (*Pseudacris triseriata maculata*), northern spring peeper (*Hyla crucifer crucifer*), northern leopard frog (*Rana pipiens*), and wood frog (*Rana sylvatica*) (Conant and Collins, 1991).

## **5.2 Potential Changes in the Environment**

Potential effects of the proposed Project on the environment will be identified and assessed in the EIS. In addition, the EIS will identify mitigation measures to minimize potential negative effects. The EIS will consider direct and indirect environmental effects, residual environmental effects after the application of mitigation measures, and cumulative environmental effects. Remote Road Operations's environmental protection specifications and best management practices will be implemented during construction, and operation and maintenance of the proposed Project.

Changes to fish and fish habitat, and migratory birds are described below.

### **5.2.1 Fish and Fish Habitat**

There is one water crossing along the proposed all-season road where an existing bridge will be replaced with a new bridge (God's River) and a second crossing where a bridge may be required (Magill Creek). There are 52 additional stream crossings identified to date that will require culverts. Many of these stream crossings show no defined channel and have no apparent connectivity to downstream waters.

Year-round habitat for large-bodied fish species is found in God's River and likely Magill Creek. Smaller streams may be used as spawning or nursery grounds by larger fish in spring, while forage fish may utilize these streams through summer if sufficient water is present. Due to their low winter flow, small streams generally provide little or no overwintering habitat. At this time it has not been determined if the required bridge(s) will be clear span or will require in-water piers. If in-water piers are required, there is the potential for in water impacts. Culverts will be installed at the remaining water courses which provide habitat for fish. The EIS will document the assessment and evaluation of the water courses.

Fish may be affected during construction and operation of the all-season road associated with dewatering during bridge or culvert installation. Fish may also be affected by downstream sedimentation during construction and maintenance, or through accidents or malfunctions that could introduce deleterious substances. The road may marginally increase fishing pressure as a result of increased access to the area.

Fish habitat may be affected by bridge or culvert installation, by removal of riparian vegetation or installation of riprap, downstream sedimentation, alteration of channel morphology and dynamics where piers may be required, and accidents or malfunctions that could introduce deleterious substances.

These changes will be avoided where possible, and mitigated or offset through implementation of Remote Road Operations's environmental protection specifications and best management practices, or site-specific plans.

### **5.2.2 Migratory Birds**

Migratory birds may be affected during construction and operation of the proposed Project through vegetation clearance, dust, noise from equipment, noise due to blasting at quarries and worksites, and vehicle collisions. Destruction of active nests will be avoided as required under the *Migratory Birds Convention Act*. The proposed Project may increase hunting pressure on certain migratory birds as a result of increased access to the area.

Migratory bird habitat may be affected as a result of vegetation removal along the ROW or at other cleared sites (quarries, camps, and access trails) by equipment and vehicle noise during construction and operation. These effects will be avoided where possible, and mitigated through application of Remote Road Operations's environmental protection specifications and best management practices.

### **5.3 Potential Changes on Federal and Adjacent Lands**

Changes on federal lands may result from project activities if on-Reserve services (waste disposal, water supply, etc.) are used, or if there are changes to air and water quality on Provincial Crown Lands adjacent to federal lands that migrate (i.e. dust blown by wind). However, the proposed Project is on provincial Crown land and is not likely to have any adverse effects to the adjacent Manto Sipi Cree Nation, Bunibonibee Cree Nation, or God's Lake First Nation. An indirect, positive socio-economic effect will be the provision of year round access to the provincial road network, and year-round access between the communities. The existing and future on-Reserve access roads connecting to the all-season road are not likely to have adverse effects on the provincial Crown lands.

The overall proposed Project is not likely to have an adverse effect on other federal land in Manitoba (First Nation on the east side of Lake Winnipeg), or in any province other than Manitoba.

#### **5.4 Potential Effects on Aboriginal Peoples of Changes to the Environment**

Potential effects to Aboriginal peoples as a result of changes to the environment caused by carrying out the Project will be fully considered in the environmental assessment. Potential effects that will be considered could include effects to traditional use of lands and resources for traditional purposes by Aboriginal peoples, such as hunting, fishing, gathering, and forest-harvest, as a result of changes in land use and increased vehicle access to previously isolated areas, by both local people and non-residents. The proposed Project could also indirectly affect traditional activities as a result of potential changes to the biophysical environment, including effects on fish and fish habitat, vegetation, and wildlife resources, which could affect harvesting patterns and/or harvesting success. Affected harvested resources could include: berries and traditional medicines, game animals (such as moose) and game birds (such as geese or grouse).

The environmental assessment for the proposed Project will identify and assess potential environmental effects on Aboriginal peoples, identify mitigation measures and outline any follow-up actions that will be addressed in an EnvPP. In addition, the environmental assessment of the proposed Project will include an assessment of potential cumulative effects.

## **6 ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION WITH ABORIGINAL GROUPS**

### **6.1 Interested and Potentially Affected Aboriginal Communities and Groups**

Aboriginal groups that have an interest in and are potentially directly affected by the proposed Project include local First Nations (Manto Sipi Cree Nation, Bunibonibee Cree Nation and God's Lake First Nation) and Aboriginal people living in the God's Lake Narrows Northern Affairs Community.

#### **6.1.1 First Nations**

First Nations with an interest in and who may be directly affected by the Project are:

- Bunibonibee Cree Nation, General Delivery, Oxford House, MB. R0B 1C0.
- God's Lake First Nation, P.O. Box 258, God's Lake Narrows, MB. R0B 0M0.
- Manto Sipi Cree Nation, P.O. Box 97, God's River, MB. R0B 0N0.

All are Cree communities and were signatories to the Adhesion of Treaty 5 in 1909 which established rights to hunt and trap throughout the surrendered tract. These communities are located adjacent the Local Assessment Area, and exercise their treaty rights in the region.

#### **6.1.2 Other Aboriginal People**

Residents living in God's Lake Narrows Northern Affairs Community have participated in discussions regarding the Large Area Transportation Network on the east side of Lake Winnipeg including the proposed Project. The Northern Affairs Community is immediately adjacent to the God's Lake First Nation and includes Aboriginal people who are members of God's Lake First Nation. Residents may also include non-status or people of Métis heritage.

- Community of God’s Lake Narrows, Post Office, God’s Lake Narrows, MB. R0B 0M0.

## 6.2 Engagement Activities with Aboriginal Communities and Groups

The Province of Manitoba began to engage stakeholders and Aboriginal groups on the justification for an all-season road over a decade ago. In early consultant-led community meetings held as part of a justification and scoping study for an all-season road (Dillon and Westdal, 2000), Bunibonibee Cree Nation, and God’s Lake First Nation and God’s Lake Narrows Northern Affairs Community identified a positive socio-economic benefit from such a road. The communities anticipated reduced costs for goods and services, and enhanced travel and social connections, as well as increased opportunities for economic development. The communities also stated the importance of local involvement in decisions related to an all-season road (Dillon and Westdal, 2000; East Side Planning Initiative, 2004; UMA, 2005).

The Aboriginal and Public Engagement Program (APEP) for the overall East Side Large Area Transportation Network (SNC-Lavalin, 2010) commenced in 2009 with a first round of community meetings, and remains ongoing, with a greater focus on community to community road links. The purpose of the APEP is to provide meaningful opportunities for people to receive information about the all-season road, and to provide comments about the proposed roads. An early focus was the identification of alignment corridors supported by TK studies with the First Nation communities.

The overall Engagement Program includes meetings with potentially affected Aboriginal communities and community leadership, potentially affected and interested Aboriginal groups, community resource boards, trappers, outfitters, other stakeholders, the general public, and Federal and Provincial regulatory authorities. Meetings and Public Open Houses have been held in communities on the east side and in the City of Winnipeg. Information is also available through articles and advertising features in the Grassroots News (a province-wide Aboriginal newspaper), and past Remote Road Operations newsletters and website. A summary of Remote Road Operations Engagement Program activities with Aboriginal communities and groups is presented in Table 1.

Manto Sipi Cree Nation, Bunibonibee Cree Nation and God’s Lake First Nation are the communities who are most likely to be directly affected by the proposed Project because the Local and Regional Assessment Areas include areas of traditional use for each community. God’s Lake Narrows Northern Affairs Community is also affected by the Project because of its location adjacent to God’s Lake First Nation. During the first and second rounds of the Engagement Program, leadership and community meetings were held with the First Nations (Table 1). Early meetings at God’s Lake First Nation included meetings with the God’s Lake Narrows Northern Affairs Community. At these meetings, Aboriginal residents and other local resource users had an opportunity to learn of the proposed East Side Transportation Initiative, and to identify areas of resource use.

<b>Table 1: Summary of Engagement Program Activities with Aboriginal Communities and Groups</b>	
<b>Activity/Date</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Early East Side Engagement</b>	
Community Meetings – 2000	Consultant-led community meeting to introduce all-weather road concept and identify comments and priorities. (ESPI, 2004; Dillon & Westdal, 2000)

<b>Table 1: Summary of Engagement Program Activities with Aboriginal Communities and Groups</b>	
<b>Activity/Date</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Aboriginal Engagement for East Side Large Area Transportation Initiative</b>	
Wabanong Nakaygum Okimawin Chiefs Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• April 30, 2009</li> </ul>	Meeting with chiefs from WNO to introduce proposed Large Area Transportation Initiative
Round One Community Meetings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manto Sipi Cree Nation – April 16, 2009 and September 22, 2009</li> <li>• God’s Lake First Nation and God’s Lake Narrows Northern Affairs Community – April 17, 2009</li> <li>• Bunibonibee Cree Nation– July 13, 2009</li> </ul>	Meeting with community members and local leadership to inform local community members and receive input about the East Side Large Area Transportation Network Study, including the proposed Project.
Round Two Community Meetings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• God’s Lake First Nation and God’s Lake Narrows Northern Affairs Community – June 9, 2010</li> <li>• Manto Sipi Cree Nation – June 10, 2010</li> <li>• Bunibonibee Cree Nation – June 11, 2010</li> </ul>	Meeting with community members and local leadership to present findings of the preferred Project alignments based on technical evaluation and to receive input from the first round of meetings.
TK Studies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manto Sipi Cree Nation: Spring 2009 - Summer 2010</li> <li>• God’s Lake First Nation and God’s Lake Narrows Northern Affairs Community: Spring 2009 – Summer 2010</li> <li>• Bunibonibee Cree Nation: Summer 2009 – Summer 2010</li> </ul>	Studies were undertaken to gather input from local residents on the environmental, social-economic and cultural implications of the proposed Project.
TK Workshops: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manto Sipi Cree Nation – April 16, 2009, September 24, 2015 and April 26, 2016</li> <li>• God’s Lake First Nation</li> </ul>	Workshops were undertaken to gather input from local residents on the environmental, social-economic and cultural implications of the proposed Project.



<b>Table 1: Summary of Engagement Program Activities with Aboriginal Communities and Groups</b>	
<b>Activity/Date</b>	<b>Description</b>
and God's Lake Narrows Northern Affairs Community – April 17, 2009, October 6, 2015 and March 22, 2016 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bunibonibee Cree Nation – July 13, 2009 and February 3, 2016</li> </ul>	
TK Interviews: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• God's Lake First Nation – November 19-26, 2015</li> <li>• Manto Sipi Cree Nation – January 13-20, 2016</li> <li>• Bunibonibee Cree Nation – March 29-April 4, 2016</li> </ul>	Interviews were undertaken to gather input from local residents on the environmental, social-economic and cultural implications of the proposed Project.
Wildlife Workshops: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• God's Lake First Nation – January 6, 2016</li> <li>• Bunibonibee Cree Nation – February 17, 2016</li> <li>• Manto Sipi Cree Nation – March 24, 2016</li> </ul>	Workshops were undertaken to gather input from local residents on the environmental, social-economic and cultural implications of the proposed Project on wildlife.
Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF) Meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• April 18, 2009</li> <li>• August 18, 2009</li> <li>• December 9, 2009</li> </ul>	Meetings with MMF in Winnipeg to introduce all-season road concept and discuss MMF interest.
<b>Agreements with Communities</b>	
Agreement signed: Bunibonibee Cree Nation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• July 16, 2010</li> </ul>	ESRA and Bunibonibee Cree Nation sign an agreement to provide economic benefits to the First Nation for the Project.
Agreement signed: Manto Sipi Cree Nation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May 12, 2011</li> </ul>	ESRA and Manto Sipi Cree Nation sign an agreement to provide economic benefits for the First Nation for the Project.
Agreement signed: God's Lake First Nation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May 13, 2011</li> </ul>	ESRA and God's Lake First Nation sign an agreement to provide economic benefits for the First Nation for the Project.
<b>Alignment Verification and Traditional Use and Values: Discussions and Decisions for P6-ASR</b>	
Meetings with Manto Sipi Cree Nation Chief and Council <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• September 22, 2009</li> <li>• October 6, 2011</li> <li>• September 24, 2013</li> </ul>	Meetings with Manto Sipi Cree Nation. Manto Sipi Cree Nation signed a MOU for community agreements at the September 22 <sup>nd</sup> meeting. The meetings presented and included discussions on the proposed Project alignment, project steps, and regulatory processes. This included a description of final route alignment changes resulting from ground truthing to avoid wet ground and

<b>Table 1: Summary of Engagement Program Activities with Aboriginal Communities and Groups</b>	
<b>Activity/Date</b>	<b>Description</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• January 31, 2013</li> <li>• October 25, 2016</li> </ul>	from environmental baseline studies. An update was provided on the EIA process, outlining timeframes and an overview of the baseline studies.
Meeting with God's Lake First Nation Chief and Council <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May 10, 2010</li> <li>• July 15, 2014</li> <li>• October 25, 2016</li> </ul>	Meetings with God's Lake First Nation. This included a presentation on the Aboriginal engagement strategy and community agreement. A Project update with a review of steps to build the all-season road and what is required for exploratory clearing was also provided. This included a description of final route alignment changes resulting from ground truthing to avoid wet ground and from environmental baseline studies. An update was provided on the EIA process, outlining timeframes and an overview of baseline studies.
Meeting with Bunibonibee Cree Nation Chief and Council <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May 18, 2010</li> <li>• November 1, 2016</li> </ul>	Meetings with Bunibonibee Cree Nation. This included a presentation on Aboriginal engagement strategy and community agreement. A Project update in relation to possible quarry sites, bridge locations and route alignments was also provided. The meetings also included a description of final route alignment changes resulting from ground truthing to avoid wet ground and from environmental baseline studies. An update was provided on the EIA process, outlining timeframes and an overview of baseline studies.
Meeting with Bunibonibee Cree Nation Traditional Area Land Use Planning (TALUP) Board <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• July 13, 2011</li> </ul>	Meeting with Bunibonibee Cree Nation TALUP Board, and Remote Road Operations and JD Mollard to discuss the Project preferred alignment. A description was provided of the clearing work to be done following road design and EIA.
Meetings with the Manto Sipi Cree Nation Community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• July 4, 2011</li> <li>• October 6, 2011</li> <li>• February 17, 2012</li> </ul>	Meetings with Manto Sipi Cree Nation. This included a Project update and alignment discussion including the God's River bridge crossing location resulting in alignment revisions. The Next Steps discussed indicating that design required for the EIA and outline of the required approvals provided.
Meeting with Bunibonibee Cree Nation Community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• September 27, 2012</li> </ul>	Meetings with Bunibonibee Cree Nation. This included a project update and discussions on the road alignment and the Environmental Assessment.
Meetings with God's Lake First Nation Community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• November 4, 2014</li> </ul>	Meeting with God's Lake First Nation. This included a project update and discussions on the road alignment and the Environmental Assessment.
<b>Anticipated APEP Activities during the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)</b>	
APEP Round 4 Community Meetings	Provide information on the EIA and obtain input from communities regarding the identification and verification of Valued Components (VCs).
APEP Round 5 Community Meetings	Presentation and obtain feedback on preliminary EIA findings including potential environmental effects, and recommended mitigation and follow-up concepts to community members. APEP Round 4 will be incorporated into the EIS.

<b>Table 1: Summary of Engagement Program Activities with Aboriginal Communities and Groups</b>	
<b>Activity/Date</b>	<b>Description</b>
APEP Round 6 Community Meetings	Presentation of the EIA results along with a summary of the EIA process to-date and description of the EIA process moving forward to community members.
Notification of Key Documents	Key documents in environmental assessment process will be made available to other Aboriginal groups, with a standing invitation to meet and/or comment.
Public Open Houses – Winnipeg	Information on the proposed Project, including environmental assessment requirements, VCs, potential effects and recommended mitigation and follow-up concepts, and preliminary results of the EIA will be provided to off-Reserve or other non-local Aboriginal people, stakeholders, and the general public.

As noted in Table 1, meetings were held with Chief and Councils from Manto Sipi Cree Nation, God’s Lake First Nation and Bunibonibee Cree Nation to discuss the proposed alignment for the Project. In addition, on July 13, 2011, ESRA and JD Mollard met with Bunibonibee Cree Nation TALUP Board to review proposed routing immediately south of the community in detail. ESRA requested feedback from the Board in terms of confirming ground conditions, identifying any culturally or environmentally sensitive areas, and any conflicts with current or future land uses. No major issues were identified by the Board. Some minor routing issues were raised.

Meetings were also held with the communities to obtain input on the proposed alignment of the Project (Table 1). For example, on October 6, 2011, ESRA met with Manto Sipi Cree Nation community members following the meeting with the leadership. After an update on the Project, resource users and other attendees at the community meeting were invited to discuss potential and preferred routes out from the community as well as those further along the alignment to the intersection connecting Bunibonibee Cree Nation and Gods Lake First Nation. The route alignment options originally chosen by the communities, in combination with engineering considerations, were selected to provide the shortest and straightest segments and allow for less fragmentation and disturbance of the land by paralleling the winter road and transmission lines. Community members provided feedback on these alignment options and provided TK and land use (location of TLE selections, mining and quarries, etc.). Members also reviewed crossing options of the God’s River and indicated that the existing bridge crossing was preferred which is the alignment proposed to cross the river. Subsequent meetings were held with Manto Sipi Cree Nation community members in 2011 and 2012. Meetings with Bunibonibee Cree Nation community members regarding the route alignment were held in September 2012 and with God’s Lake First Nation community members in November 2014. Revisions made to the road alignments, based on this further community input, included avoiding TLE and First Nation Reserve parcels and allowing for a 100 m setback from waterbodies and water courses.

The topics discussed at the meetings, workshops and Public Open Houses included:

- Introduction to the proposed Project and ongoing updates;
- Presentation and discussion of road alignment options;
- Presentation of project activities such as ROW clearing and exploratory clearing;
- Modification and confirmation of route alignment;
- Identification of community comments;

- TK information regarding the proposed Project;
- Introduction of baseline studies being conducted for the proposed Project and community involvement; and
- Collection of site-specific comments and constraints from community members.

The APEP is ongoing and will continue through the construction, and operation and maintenance phases of the proposed Project.

### **6.3 Key Comments**

An overview of comments from the three First Nations and the Northern Affairs Community includes the following:

- Involve local communities in employment on road construction.
- Involve local communities in providing and collecting information on the environment and land use.
- Protection of the land and the environment is important.
- Protection of treaty rights and traditional use of resources is important.
- The community anticipates benefits from the road, through easier connections with other communities, and for easier and more frequent travel home for students from the community who attend school in larger centres.
- Community members indicated that although there will be adverse effects from the road, most want the road.
- Community members understand that trees, medicinal plants and wild berries will be disturbed by clearing but members also understand that clearing will occur just along the ROW.
- Community members do not want large industries like mining, forestry or hydro to come into their traditional territory.
- Community members identified major activities in the area include hunting, trapping and fishing.
- Community members identified wildlife, fish, waterfowl, songbirds and birds of prey that were important to them.
- Community members identified special places of significance to the community (burial grounds, culturally important areas) near the communities.

Comments and questions identified by community members and the public throughout the APEP are being documented and will be described and summarized by community and stakeholder groups in the EIS.

### **6.4 Next Steps in Engagement and Information Gathering**

As part of the ongoing APEP, Remote Road Operations proposes to continue working with Manto Sipi Cree Nation, Bunibonabee Cree Nation, and God's Lake First Nation and God's Lake Narrows Northern Affairs Community to plan and hold community meetings at three key stages of the environmental assessment process for the Project as follows:

- APEP Round 4: Provide information on the EIA and obtain input from communities regarding the identification and verification of VCs.
- APEP Round 5: Presentation and obtain feedback on preliminary EIA finding including potential environmental effects, and recommended mitigation and follow-up concepts to community members.

- APEP Round 6: Presentation the EIA results along with a summary of the EIA process to-date and description of the EIA process moving forward to community members.

In each round for community, Remote Road Operations will provide an opportunity for a meeting with Community Elders and/or Chief and Council in advance of the larger community meeting, if the community wishes. Remote Road Operations will continue to work with local community members to identify effective mitigation measures to minimize potential adverse effects, as well as to enhance positive benefits where possible.

Remote Road Operations will directly inform the MMF of the availability of key documents in the environmental assessment process for the Project, and other projects within the Large Area Transportation Initiative, and invite comments. First Nation communities that are part of the East Side Large Area Network will also have access to updates on the proposed Project as it proceeds.

Remote Road Operations also contributes to articles and purchases advertising updates in the *Grassroots News*, an Aboriginal newspaper in Manitoba. It also provides updates through community-based radio stations based in the east-side communities, and previously produced regular newsletters which were sent to each community and circulated to residents.

## 7 CONSULTATION WITH THE PUBLIC AND OTHER PARTIES

The commitment to the involvement of local residents, community leaders and non-governmental organizations in all-season road projects was previously outlined on ESRA's website. The website provided project updates, news releases and information about the overall ESTI, as well as proposed all-season road projects being undertaken under the Initiative. The website provided links to newsletters produced about the project and a calendar of events for community meetings and Public Open Houses as they were planned and scheduled. The website also provided opportunities for interested and potentially affected parties to provide input to the projects. With the dissolution of ESRA, MI is currently working out how it will continue to provide public updates on active Remote Road Operations projects.

A number of meetings and Public Open Houses have been held to engage and inform the public and other interested stakeholders. These activities are summarized in Table 2.

<b>Table 2: Summary of Engagement Program Activities with the Public and Other Interested Stakeholders</b>	
<b>Activity/Date</b>	<b>Description</b>
WNO Chiefs Meeting • April 30, 2009	Meeting with chiefs from WNO to introduce proposed Large Area Transportation Initiative.
Public Open House (Winnipeg) • June 25, 2009	Public Open House to introduce proposed Project P1 and Large Area Transportation Initiative, including the proposed Project.
Manitoba Trappers' Association (MTA) meetings (Winnipeg) • March 10, 2010 • November 7, 2013	MTA meeting to discuss trapper interests and methods to engage local trappers. Follow-up meeting with MTA executive to update on ESTI
Wildlife Branch, MSD meetings • September 1, 2011	Wildlife and caribou baseline data collection (collaring plans and timing) and analysis for all-season road route discussed and road route presented.

<b>Table 2: Summary of Engagement Program Activities with the Public and Other Interested Stakeholders</b>	
<b>Activity/Date</b>	<b>Description</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• September 14, 2011</li> <li>• June 9, 2014</li> <li>• October 20, 2015</li> </ul>	
Presentation to Integrated Resource Management Team, NE Region, MSD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• October 15, 2012</li> </ul>	Provide an update on the ESTI, and discuss data collection and monitoring.
Workshops - Wildlife Branch, MSD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• December 20, 2012</li> <li>• December 6, 2013</li> <li>• June 24, 2013</li> </ul>	Update the status, methods, findings, and open forum discussion for input on the Wildlife Monitoring Program.
Manitoba Lodges and Outfitters Association meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May 10, 2013</li> <li>• June 10, 2014</li> </ul>	Discussed projects in overall ESTI with Association's representative.
Southeast Resource Development Council - meeting of representatives of South East Tribal Council <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• January 28, 2014</li> </ul>	Presentation at an environment workshop which was sponsored by INAC. Overview of the proposed Project, the environmental assessment process and possible mitigation measures.
Presentation to the MSD Environmental Approvals Branch, CEA Agency, and Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) members (Winnipeg) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• August 26, 2014</li> </ul>	Although the focus of the presentation was the Project P4 route between Poplar River First Nation and Berens River First Nation, an overview of the overall ESTI was provided including the East Side Large Area Transportation Network maps and the Project schedule.
<b>Potential Future Engagement during the EIA</b>	
Public Open Houses	Information on the proposed Project including environmental assessment requirements, VCs, potential effects and recommended mitigation and follow-up concepts, and preliminary results of the EIA will be provided to off-Reserve or other non-local Aboriginal people, interested stakeholders, and the general public.

### **7.1 Overview of Comments from the Public and Other Parties**

To date, comments noted through public consultation (other than the engagement with directly affected Aboriginal communities and groups) have been largely received as part of the engagement activities conducted under the larger East Side Planning Initiative, or related to the Project P1 all-season road from PR304 to Berens River currently under construction, or Project 4 or Project 7a currently undergoing environmental licencing. Public comments received under those processes have noted the importance of ensuring appropriate assessment methodologies and considering specific environmental features (specifically moose and Woodland Caribou) [CEAA, 2011].

## **7.2 Proposed Stakeholder Consultation Activities**

With respect to the Project, Remote Road Operations is planning to hold two Public Open Houses for the general public in the City of Winnipeg. Meetings and Public Open Houses will be advertised in local newspapers, and other interested stakeholders and members of the public may attend and provide feedback regarding the proposed project. Remote Road Operations is committed to open and transparent discussions with communities and interested stakeholders potentially affected by the East Side Transportation Initiative who wish further information or want to provide input into the proposed projects.

Dates and locations of meetings or Public Open Houses will be determined during the EIA process. Feedback and comments will be summarized and considered within that process, and will be described in the EIS.

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