

**Comments on Marten Falls Community Access Road Project (Project) revised Vegetation Study Plan – September 8, 2021**

It is essential that the Impact Statement for the Marten Falls Community Access Road Project (the Project) address all requirements outlined in the Tailored Impact Statement Guidelines (the Guidelines), and that the study plans outline a clear approach to achieving these requirements. The Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (the Agency) has highlighted sections of the Guidelines where requirements for the Impact Statement may not be met, based on content of the draft study plan submitted to the Agency. Note that this table does not provide an exhaustive list of the requirements described in the Guidelines. The Guidelines should be reviewed in their entirety, including the sections identified below.

<b>General Comments from the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada on the Marten Falls Community Access Road Draft Study Plans – July 2, 2020</b>					
<b>#</b>	<b>Tailored Impact Statement Guidelines Section<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Required Action for Proponent</b>	<b>Proponent Response</b>	<b>Final Study Plan Section Reference</b>	<b>Agency comments on the June 11, 2021 - Vegetation Study Plan</b>
<b>GC-01</b>	<b>Section 5 - Public Participation and views (including 5.1, 5.2)</b>	<p>Provide a clear description in the study plans of how public engagement opportunities have been and/or will be integrated into the impact statement phase. This must include detail on how the public will have opportunities to provide input to contribute to the development of the Impact Statement, as required in Section 5 of the Guidelines.</p> <p>Describe what engagement with the members of the public listed in the Public Participation Plan has been done in the development of the study plans, and/or any planned engagement with members of the public on the proposed study plans.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Section 4: describes how the Proponent will provide Project notices and opportunities with members of the public listed in the Public Partnership Plan. This will also include the opportunity to provide input on the existing environment, VCs, effects assessment methods, effects assessment results, and mitigation and follow-up program measures as applicable. A variety of activities will be offered so that members of the public are informed of the IS / EA Report as it progresses and are aware of the opportunities and means to provide their input.</li> <li>- The study plans have recognized public and agency input received on the Project to date.</li> </ul>	<b>Section 4.1</b> “A variety of activities will be offered so that members of the public are informed of the IS / EA Report as it progresses and are aware of the opportunities and means to provide their input.”	<p>Section 4.1 of the study plan mentions that “a variety of activities will be offered”, however, no details on the likely engagement activities are provided.</p> <p>As required by Section 5 of the Guidelines, the Impact Statement must provide a record of engagement that describes all efforts taken to seek the views of local communities and other stakeholders with respect to the Project, including on the study plans. This record of engagement is to include all engagement activities undertaken prior to the submission of the Impact Statement, including prior to and during the planning phase, and in the preparation of the Impact Statement.</p> <p>Provide details on the timeline for public engagement relative to the project workplan, including engagement relative to the schedule for baseline work, and in consideration of the project team’s timeline for the development of the Impact Statement.</p> <p>Demonstrate in the Impact Statement that comments provided by members of the public related to vegetation are taken into consideration. Comments provided to the Agency are available on the Canadian Impact Assessment Registry Internet site at: <a href="https://iaac-aeic.gc.ca/050/evaluations/proj/80184/contributions">https://iaac-aeic.gc.ca/050/evaluations/proj/80184/contributions</a></p>
<b>GC-02</b>	<b>Section 6 - Description of Engagement with Indigenous Groups (including 6.1, 6.2, 6.3)</b>	<p>Provide a clear description in the study plans of how all Indigenous groups listed in the Indigenous Engagement and Partnership Plan will have opportunities to provide Indigenous knowledge, including the validation of how information they provided was applied. The study plan should include a description of the proposed methods for data collection, management of confidentiality, and information storage. This should also include a methodology for tracking information that has been approved by the group, to demonstrate that the guidance outlined in Section 6.2 of the Guidelines has been incorporated into the study plans.</p> <p>Describe what engagement with all the Indigenous groups listed in the Indigenous Engagement and Partnership Plan has been done in the development of the study plans, and/or any planned engagement with Indigenous groups on the proposed study plans, particularly in relation to collection of Indigenous knowledge (i.e. develop the work plan in</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In Section 4.2 it is noted that the Proponent will provide Project notices and opportunities for consultation and engagement with Indigenous communities identified in the Indigenous Partnership and Engagement Plan. A variety of activities will be offered so that Indigenous communities are informed of the IS / EA Report as it progresses and are aware of the opportunities, means and timelines to provide their input.</li> <li>- Section 2.1.1 outlines the approach to handling confidential information, by means of permission from Indigenous communities to include Indigenous Knowledge in the IS / EA Report, regardless of the source of the Indigenous Knowledge.</li> <li>- The study plans have recognized Indigenous community input received on the Project to date.</li> </ul>	<b>Section 4.2</b> “...A variety of activities will be offered so that Indigenous communities are informed of the IS / EA Report as it progresses and are aware of the opportunities, means and timelines to provide their input...”  “...Indigenous communities will have the opportunity to comment on components of the study plans throughout the IS / EA Report consultation	<p>Section 4.2 of the Vegetation study plan states that “a variety of activities will be offered”, however, no details on the planned engagement activities are provided.</p> <p>Section 4.2 of the Vegetation study plan also states that “Indigenous communities will have the opportunity to comment on components of the study plans throughout the IS / EA Report consultation and engagement process”, however, it is unclear on which components of the study plans the project team plans to engage. It is also unclear whether Indigenous groups will be provided with a meaningful opportunity to provide input on a preliminary approach/method for baseline data collection, as required in Section 6 of the Guidelines, or if engagement will take place after the baseline data collection is complete. Provide details on the timeline for Indigenous engagement on the fish and fish habitat study plan, including engagement relative to the schedule for baseline work, and spatial and</p>

<sup>1</sup> Refer to complete sections of the Guidelines for more context.

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		collaboration with those Indigenous groups that would need to provide knowledge).		and engagement process...”	temporal boundaries determinations, and particularly in relation to collection of Indigenous knowledge, and in consideration of the project team’s timeline for the development of the Impact Statement.  Demonstrate in the Impact Statement that comments provided by Indigenous groups related to vegetation are taken into consideration. Comments provided to the Agency are available on the Canadian Impact Assessment Registry Internet site at: <a href="https://iaac-aeic.gc.ca/050/evaluations/proj/80184/contributions">https://iaac-aeic.gc.ca/050/evaluations/proj/80184/contributions</a>
GC-03	<b>Section 6.2 - Analysis and response to questions, comments, and issues raised</b>	Revise the study plans to include an approach to handling confidential information that demonstrates adherence to the guidance provided in Section 6.2 of the Guidelines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Section 2.1.1: Section has been updated to include information regarding both confidentiality and permission information on all collected Indigenous Knowledge, regardless of the source.</li> <li>- This section also includes how information regarding the Indigenous Knowledge Sharing Agreements will be established by the Proponent and Indigenous community participating in the Program.</li> </ul>	<b>Section 2.1.1</b> “...Sensitive and / or confidential information collected through Indigenous Knowledge Sharing Agreements will be protected from public or third-party disclosure and will be established between the Proponent and Indigenous communities participating in the Indigenous Knowledge Program prior to the sharing and use of any sensitive information. Instances where Indigenous Knowledge sharing has taken place during consultation activities (e.g., meetings) will be recorded in the Record of Consultation and Engagement, including where Indigenous Knowledge was incorporated into Project decisions and into the IS / EA Report (i.e., specifics will not be included in the Record of Consultation and Engagement given the potential sensitivity and / or confidentiality of the information shared)...”	As required in Section 6 of the Guidelines, incorporate in the Impact Statement content that describes the confidential information provided by each Indigenous group. Present the content in sufficient detail to support understanding of the potential effects and impacts on rights, while also protecting confidential/sensitive specifics and respecting stipulations in the confidentiality agreements (e.g., use buffer areas instead of specific locations, etc.).  Provide to the Agency, in the form of a letter from the Indigenous group that shared confidential information, a letter confirming that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the Indigenous group that provided confidential information is satisfied with the way the Impact Statement was informed;</li> <li>• the Indigenous group that provided confidential information is satisfied with the way the issue was solved or addressed.</li> </ul>
GC-04	<b>Study plans spatial boundaries</b>	Describe the approach to be implemented to demonstrate how the definitions of the proposed study area boundaries: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• encompass the anticipated boundaries of the Project’s effects, including all potentially impacted local</li> </ul>	- Section 6.2: General information on study areas for the Project, including a detailed list of what was considered to develop the discipline-specific local and region study areas, is included in each study plan. Each study area has been	<b>Section 6.2.1</b> “The preliminary LSA currently being considered within the scope of the ongoing	As required in Section 7 of the Guidelines, provide details to demonstrate that the Regional Study Area encompasses the anticipated boundaries of the Project’s effects, including all potentially impacted local

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		<p>communities, municipalities and all Indigenous groups listed in the Indigenous Engagement and Partnership Plan; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>take into account community knowledge and Indigenous knowledge; current or traditional land and resource use by Indigenous groups; exercise of Aboriginal and Treaty rights of Indigenous peoples, including cultural and spiritual practices; physical, ecological, technical, social, health, economic and cultural considerations; and the size, nature and location of past, present and foreseeable future projects and activities.</li> </ul>	<p>proposed taking into consideration community knowledge and Indigenous Knowledge, current or traditional land and resource use by Indigenous communities, and the exercise of Aboriginal and Treaty Rights of Indigenous peoples, including cultural and spiritual practices, physical, ecological, technical, social, health, economic and cultural considerations available at this time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The proposed discipline-specific study areas are preliminary. The proposed study areas will be consulted and engaged on early in the IA / EA process. In addition, the Indigenous Knowledge Program provides additional opportunities for community knowledge and Indigenous Knowledge, current or traditional land and resource use by Indigenous communities, and the exercise of Aboriginal and Treaty Rights of Indigenous peoples to be shared in greater detail.</li> </ul>	<p>provincial regulatory review process generally includes the area within 2.5 km of the centreline of Alternative 1 and Alternative 4”</p> <p><b>Section 6.2.2</b> “Based on this analysis, the LSA boundary was estimated to extend to 2.8 km from the limits of the PDA. The LSA has been conservatively rounded to 3 km either side of centreline (6 km total).”</p>	<p>communities, municipalities and all Indigenous groups listed in the Indigenous Engagement and Partnership Plan. Note that the Regional Study Area must encompass the spatial boundary of cumulative effects.</p> <p>As required in Section 7.4.1 of the Guidelines, provide information regarding how the following were/will be taken into account in defining the spatial boundaries: community knowledge and Indigenous knowledge; current and traditional land and resource use by Indigenous groups; exercise of Aboriginal and Treaty rights, including cultural and spiritual practices; physical, ecological, technical, social, health, economic and cultural considerations; and the size, nature and location of past, present and reasonably foreseeable future projects and activities.</p> <p>Provide the above information in a way that allows those who provided the knowledge to the proponent and the Agency to see their input reflected in the Impact Statement. It is not sufficient to state that “input from participants will be/was taken into account”.</p>
GC-05	<b>Section 7 - Baseline Methodologies (Including 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4)</b>	<p>Provide clear descriptions in the study plans of the proposed study areas and the criteria used to define the study areas for each valued component.</p> <p>Provide clear descriptions of the timing of previously collected data (days/month/year) and future approximate (month/year or season/year) timing for every field work planned and the criteria used to tailor the temporal boundaries to the valued components under consideration.</p> <p>Describe how all Indigenous groups listed in the Indigenous Engagement and Partnership Plan will be, or have been, engaged to provide input on spatial and temporal boundaries.</p> <p>Explain how the Agency will be provided opportunities to validate spatial and temporal boundaries.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Study Area (LSA) and Regional Study Area (RSA) for each valued component are described in Table 6-1, including rationale used to define the area.</li> <li>Study plans have been designed considering historical information, where applicable and available. Study plans will be updated with appended Work Plans, to be submitted at a future date, which will detail upcoming planned field activities.</li> <li>As detailed in both Section 4.2 and Section 6.2 the Proponent will continue to provide opportunities for neighbouring Indigenous communities and interested persons to provide input and inform the effects assessment, including the LSAs and RSAs.</li> <li>Government agencies and interested persons will have the opportunity to comment on component of the study plans throughout the IS / EA Report consultation and engagement process</li> </ul>	<b>Sections 4 and 6</b>	<p>To ensure that baseline data collection will meet the requirements of the Guidelines, the Agency advises the project team to share a map or detailed information on the locations of data sampling, as well as the timing of data collection for previously and newly collected data and future data collection activities (month/year or season/year). If it is not possible to provide this information in the Vegetation study plan or workplan, the Agency requires an opportunity to review the collected vegetation baseline data prior to the preparation of the Impact Statement documentation.</p>
GC-06		<p>Provide further details in the study plans on how GBA+ has been integrated into all aspects of data collection methodology, as per Section 7.1 of the Guidelines, and into the assessment of effects and impacts, as mentioned in Sections 13, 20, 21, and others, related to effects assessments of the Guidelines</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Section 4.3 has been updated to include the consideration of Identity and Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) including both Indigenous communities and their relevant subpopulations and non-Indigenous communities and their subpopulations. During consultation and engagement activities these groups (and any others defined during consultation) will be engaged with on targeted input.</li> </ul>	<b>Section 4.3</b>	<p>Describe how GBA+ has been or will be applied to the consideration of engagement activities. Identify specific methods targeted to specific subgroups.</p> <p>Provide detail on how GBA+ has been integrated into all aspects of data collection methodology, as per Section 7.1 of the Guidelines, and into the assessment of effects and impacts, as mentioned in Sections 13, 20, 21, and others, related to effects assessments of the Guidelines.</p> <p>It is not sufficient to mention that Gender-Based Analysis Plus will be applied to the assessment. Clear descriptions of how GBA+ was integrated (including to</p>



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					which variables, method, and how it influenced results' interpretation) are needed in the Impact Statement.
GC-07	<b>Section 13 - Effects Assessment (including 13.1, 13.2)</b>	Provide details to demonstrate how the Project's potential effects will be considered, as per the requirements in Sections 13 to 19 of the Guidelines. Ensure that the effects assessment considers the effects of each of the project components and physical activities, in all phases, and that it is based on a comparison to the proposed baseline work.  Provide detail on how engagement with all Indigenous groups listed in the Indigenous Engagement and Partnership Plan and the public will inform the effects assessment and the selection of mitigation measures and follow-up program measures.	- Project environmental interaction are separated into Project phases, and Project activities for each environmental discipline in their VC-specific study plan listed as Table 9-1. - Information collected through the various activities (e.g., field studies and programs, effects assessments) of each discipline area (e.g., wildlife, vegetation, cultural heritage) will be shared with the Indigenous Knowledge Program leads. This will support the establishment of the existing environment and the effects assessment for the Aboriginal and Treaty Rights and Interests environmental discipline, as well as the identification of potential mitigation measures and monitoring programs.	<b>Throughout the study plan, Section 9</b>	As required in Sections 7 and 13 of the Guidelines, ensure that the effects assessment considers the effects of each of the project components (including but not limited to all alternative routes brought forward in the Impact Statement, all aggregates sources, access roads, etc.) and physical activities, in all phases, and that the assessment is based on a comparison to the data and information gathered during the proposed baseline work.  Clarify the level of information that will be shared with, and explained to, the Indigenous Knowledge Program leads and whether study plans will be made available to all Indigenous groups listed in the Indigenous Engagement and Partnership Plan.
GC-08	<b>Section 13.1</b>	Provide clear descriptions of the rationale behind the assumptions, including but not limited to the assumed average daily traffic and vehicles composition during the construction and operation phases that will be considered for the effects assessment and the cumulative effects assessment.	- Section 10: Current assumptions to be used in the effects assessment have been identified. Any additional assumptions will be identified and rationale will be provided in the IS / EA Report.	<b>Section 10</b>	Before conducting the effects assessment analysis, the Agency advises the proponent to seek the Federal Review Team's confirmation of the assumptions that will be used in the analysis or, at a minimum, to discuss the type of assumptions that will be considered.  As required by Section 13.1 of the Guidelines, ensure that the Impact Statement clearly outlines the assumptions used for the assessment of effects, including cumulative effects, on each valued component.
GC-09	<b>Section 19.2 - Impacts on the Exercise of Aboriginal and Treaty Rights</b>	Describe an approach for identifying the potentially impacted rights of Indigenous peoples of Canada that are recognized and affirmed by section 35 of the <i>Constitution Act, 1982</i> , and for integrating the potential impacts on those rights into the collection of baseline information and the effects assessment.	- All study plans reference how potential effects on Indigenous rights will be assessed in the Aboriginal and Treaty Rights and Interests Study Plan. - Impacts on Rights considerations are explained in the rationale for defining a Local Study Area and Regional Study Area for Aboriginal and Treaty Rights and Interests VCs. Further information for this is listed in Section 6.2.2 in the Aboriginal and Treaty Rights and Interests Study Plan.	<b>Section 5, and Section 6.2.2 in the Aboriginal and Treaty Rights and Interests Study Plan</b>	Feedback will be provided in the Federal Review Team's comments package on the Aboriginal and Treaty Rights and Interests Study Plan.
GC-10	<b>Section 20 - Mitigation and enhancement measures</b>	Provide detail on the approach to meeting the requirements of Section 20 of the Guidelines regarding the identification of mitigation and enhancement measures.	- Section 9: Approach to mitigation and enhancement measures, specifically noting that once potential effects have been identified, the effects assessment will explore technically and economically feasible mitigation measures to avoid or minimize the identified negative effects and enhancement measures to increase positive effects.	<b>Section 9.5.1</b> (lists relevant requirements) "Potential effects and specific mitigation measures will be established as part of the effects assessment and selection of the preferred alternative."  <b>Concordance table</b> "Section 20 of the TISG describes the requirements around mitigation and enhancement measures"	Section 9.5.1 of the Vegetation study plan is listing the requirements outlined in Section 20 of the Guidelines.  Ensure that the Impact Statement provides a description of the method or approach followed to meet the requirements of Section 20 of the Guidelines.

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				that must be considered in the IS”	
GC-11	<b>Section 25 – Description of the Project’s contribution to sustainability</b>	Provide detail on the approach to meeting the requirements of Section 25 of the Guidelines regarding the description of the Project’s contribution to sustainability.	- Section 9: the sustainability assessment for the Project will be undertaken on the preferred alternative and will characterize the Project’s contribution to sustainability incorporating the requirements set out in Section 25 of the TISG.	<b>Section 9.7</b>	Section 9.7 of the study plan is listing the requirements outlined in Section 25 of the Guidelines.  Ensure that the Impact Statement provides a description of the method or approach followed to meet the requirements of Section 25 of the Guidelines.

Federal Review Team comments on the Marten Falls Community Access Road Draft Vegetation Study Plan - July 10, 2020						
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VE-01	<b>Section 3 Spatial Boundaries: Study Areas</b>  <b>Table 3-1: Vegetation Study Areas</b> “Project Study Area 100 m from centerline”  <b>Figure 3-1: Vegetation Local and Regional Study Areas</b>	<b>Section 7.4</b> “...The spatial and temporal boundaries to be used in the impact assessment are outlined and discussed through the tailoring process, and include comments and input from federal and provincial government departments and agencies...”	Clarify the size of the Project Study Area.	The description provided in <b>Section 6.2</b> has been updated to “100 m wide”.	Section 6.2	This comment was addressed.
VE-02	<b>Section 4.1 2019 Vegetation Community Surveys</b>  <b>Section 4.3.2 Field Survey Site Selection</b> “Based on the anticipated size of the PSA (greater than 4000 hectares (ha), the intent of the field program is to complete field verification on 15 to 25% of the vegetation communities within the PSA. Ground Inspections and Visual Checks will be conducted in accordance with the survey intensity levels (Ecosystems Working Group 1998) at a ratio of 25:75 respectively. Although every effort will be made to adhere to this sampling intensity, the Project is located in a remote part of Canada with limited access. Access to vast portions of the proposed CAR will only be available by air, therefore survey locations will be limited to	<b>Section 7.2</b> “Baseline data must be collected in a manner that enables reliable analysis, extrapolations and predictions. Resulting data should be suitable for analyses to estimate pre-project baseline conditions, derive predictions of impacts, and evaluate and compare post-project conditions and at scales of within and across the Project, Local and Regional Assessment areas. Modelling methods, error estimates and assumptions should be reported (as per section 7.1). Modelling and simulations should be used early in the planning phase to estimate the necessary sampling intensity and to quantitatively evaluate the effectiveness of design options.”  <b>Section 7.2</b> “With regard to field studies, survey work must be planned to include multiple sampling locations and	Provide information on the 2019 surveys, including survey locations, season/dates and number of visits.  Provide detail to demonstrate that survey/ sampling designs meet the requirements in Section 7.2 of the Guidelines.  Provide a schedule to demonstrate when all future surveys are planned to be conducted.  Provide detail to demonstrate that two years of collected baseline data will be provided to inform the Impact Statement, as per the requirements in Section 7.2 and Section 7.4.2 of the Guidelines.	The study plan provides more details regarding the 2019 vegetation studies and proposed survey / sample design. Future surveys will be representative of the temporal perspective of multi-years of study by using baseline data from previous years / seasons and desktop studies to supplement proposed field studies. A detailed schedule for future field sampling will be outlined in an upcoming and separate Work Plan.	Section 7	The comment was partially addressed.  Although the revised Vegetation study plan contains slightly more detail, all the requested information has not been fully provided.  More detail is needed in the workplan about the 2019 vegetation surveys, including survey locations, season/dates and number of visits at each location.  Provide details in the workplan to demonstrate that survey/ sampling designs meet the requirements of Sections 7.2 and 7.4.2 of the Guidelines, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the schedule for all future surveys to be conducted.</li> <li>details to demonstrate that two years of collected baseline data will be provided to inform the Impact Statement.</li> </ul>

Federal Review Team comments on the Marten Falls Community Access Road Draft Vegetation Study Plan - July 10, 2020						
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	where a helicopter is capable of landing (i.e. cut helicopter landing pads, grassy riparian areas). Based on the anticipated size of the PSA (approximately 160,000 ha), the intent of the field program is to complete field verification on 2-4% of the vegetation communities within the PSA. Considering the level of existing information on vegetation communities within the RSA (Far North Land Cover and FRI mapping), field investigations for vegetation will not be conducted within the broader RSA. Effects on vegetation within the RSA are not expected to be wide ranging and therefore effects can adequately be assessed using the existing and desktop derived information."	multiple visits to each location to support all required assessment analyses. Existing data should be considered as a limited augmentation of this new data"  <b>Section 7.4.2</b> "Baseline data collection for all biophysical valued components is to be provided for a minimum of two years, unless specified otherwise. Temporal boundaries spanning more than one year will enable accounting for variation due to irregular events (e.g., masting events, storms on migration, late snowfalls)."				
VE-04	<b>Section 4.3.5 Traditional use plants and SAR plant populations</b> "Local indigenous communities will be engaged to develop an understanding of Traditional Use Plants and plants of importance to the various communities."	<b>Section 6</b> "The proponent must engage with all Indigenous groups that may be impacted by the Project. The Indigenous Engagement and Partnership Plan (IEPP), issued by the Agency, is available to assist the proponent in further developing or refining their engagement strategy and supporting ongoing trust and relationship-building. In addition to the requirements set out in section 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3, the proponent must provide Indigenous groups with an opportunity to: provide Indigenous knowledge during baseline data collection; comment on the list of valued components and indicators; inform the effects assessment and review its conclusions; and inform the development of mitigation measures and follow-up programs."	Provide details to demonstrate that all of the Indigenous groups listed in the IEPP will be engaged with, including to develop an understanding of Traditional Use Plants and plants of importance. Provide details to demonstrate how Indigenous knowledge and input will be incorporated in data and information gathering, as well as the effects assessment and identifying mitigation measures and follow-up programs.	As identified in <b>Section 4.2</b> of the Study Plan, the Proponent will provide opportunities for consultation and engagement with Indigenous communities identified in <b>Table 4-1</b> , which is inclusive of all Indigenous communities identified in the <i>Indigenous Partnership and Engagement Plan for the Marten Falls Community Access Road Project Impact Assessment</i> (The Agency 2020a). Further information on how Indigenous Knowledge will be considered in the IS / EA Report has been included in <b>Section 5</b> of the Study Plan. Section 5 of the Study Plan provides further details on the two concurrent and complementary avenues for Indigenous communities and groups to be engaged with and provide input on the Project: the Indigenous Knowledge Program; and the Consultation and Engagement Program.	Sections 4.2 and 5	This comment has been partially addressed.  See comments GC-02, GC-03 and GC-05.
VE-05	<b>Section 4.3.5 Traditional use plants and SAR plant populations</b> "Using the information collected on the baseline condition of any observed non-native species, invasive species, and/or introduced species of concern, possible vegetation control approaches for the construction and operations	<b>Section 8.7</b> "describe any considered vegetation control alternative (including manual vegetation control methods)."	Provide detail to demonstrate how baseline information will be collected to meet all of the requirements of Section 8.7 of the Guidelines, including any vegetation control alternative. Provide details to demonstrate how Indigenous knowledge and input will be	Detailed baseline botanical inventories will be completed at each ground investigation location including a thorough invasive species inventory. Vegetation control alternatives will be explored during future consultation with indigenous communities and will be incorporated	Section 7.5	This comment has only been partially addressed.  The revised Vegetation study plan provides no additional details about what types of vegetation control alternatives will be considered or assessed, only that it will be done in consultation with Indigenous groups.

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	stage of the Project will be described. Such controls may include manual vegetation control"		incorporated in the assessment of vegetation control alternatives.	into the effects assessment phase of the Project		Provide, in the Impact Statement, a complete overview of the vegetation control alternatives considered and assessed, in order to meet the requirements of Section 8.7 of the Guidelines.
VE-06	<b>Concordance table</b> "Impacts associated with .....will be described"	<b>Section 14.3.</b>	Provide detail to demonstrate the proposed approach and methods used to integrate the requirements from Section 14.3 of the Guidelines in the study plan.	Effects assessment describes the methodologies for addressing Section 14.3 of the TISG (the Agency 2020b) and considers the effects of each Project component and physical activities and will be compared to the proposed baseline investigations.	Section 9	The comment has been partially addressed.  The Vegetation study plan provides some additional detail, but there is still not enough information to determine whether the requirements of Section 14.3 of the Guidelines will be met. There is not a clear connection between the baseline data being collected, the indicators proposed to assess effects and the information provided in Section 9.4 Methods for Predicting Future Conditions of the study plan.  Update the Vegetation study plan to provide detail to demonstrate the proposed approach and methods used to integrate the requirements from Section 14.3 of the Guidelines into the effects assessment. Demonstrate clear linkages between the baseline data collection, proposed indicators and the information provided in Section 9.4 Methods for predicting future conditions of the study plan.  See also comment: <b>VE-09</b>
VE-07	<b>Section 6.1 Indicators and Expression of Change</b> <b>Table 6-1: Vegetation Indicators</b> "Wetland and Riparian Ecosystems Upland Ecosystems Designated Areas Traditional Use Plants & SAR Plant Populations"	<b>Section 8.11</b> "...key habitat associated with species at risk should be considered valued components, including eskers and similar geologic features, wetlands and peatlands; ..."	Provide details to demonstrate how the studies that will be conducted to estimate baseline conditions and the conduct of effects assessment for eskers.	Eskers are discussed in greater depth in the Wildlife Study Plan as they relate directly to SAR and wildlife habitat. Baseline information collection regarding eskers have been added to this Study Plan. Vegetation as it relates to eskers will be explored as part of the upland ecosystems. The LSA has been designed to allow for adequate field investigation of these rarer habitats on the landscape.	Section 7.3	The comment was not addressed.  The revised Vegetation study plan is clearer in terms of mentioning eskers, but does not demonstrate how the studies will adequately estimate baseline conditions for eskers, nor how effects will be assessed.  Eskers are not included as an indicator for upland habitat and it is unclear how effects to eskers would be differentiated from other upland habitat. Given the potential for disproportionate project effects to eskers, eskers should be included as an indicator.  Update the study plan to demonstrate how the studies to be conducted will estimate baseline conditions and how effects assessments for eskers will be conducted.



New comments from the Federal Review Team on the revised Vegetation Study Plan submitted in June 2021.				
#	Study Plan Section	Tailored Impact Statement Guidelines Section (the Guidelines)	Context	Required Action for the Proponent
VE-08	<p><b>Section 7.3.1 Field Survey Site Selection</b>            “The minimum sample size will be representative of the entire LSA but will also support adequate spatial coverage (as assessed through distributions of latitude and longitude between sub-sample and all polygons across the LSA).”</p>	<p><b>Section 7.2</b>            “... Baseline data must be collected in a manner that enables reliable analysis, extrapolations and predictions. Resulting data should be suitable for analyses to estimate pre-project baseline conditions, derive predictions of impacts, and evaluate and compare post-project conditions and at scales of within and across the Project, Local and Regional Assessment areas. Modelling methods, error estimates and assumptions should be reported (as per section 7.1). Modelling and simulations should be used early in the planning phase to estimate the necessary sampling intensity and to quantitatively evaluate the effectiveness of design options...”</p>	<p>The Vegetation study plan does not provide enough information on the proposed study design to assess whether the minimum sample size will be representative of the LSA. Section 7.2 of the Guidelines requires that baseline data be collected in a manner that enable reliable analysis, extrapolations and predictions.</p> <p>Additional details about the proposed study design are required to support the statement in Section 7.3.1 of the study plan.</p>	<p>Update the Vegetation study plan to provide more details about the proposed study design, including the minimum sample size, to justify the statement made in the study plan and ensure that the requirements of Section 7.2 of the Guidelines are met.</p>
VE-09	<p><b>Section 9.4 Methods for Predicting Future Conditions</b>            “Assessments of biodiversity metrics, relative abundance and distribution of vegetation communities of ecological, economic or social importance will be included in the prediction of future conditions. Percentage of land cover types and changes to land cover can provide critical information on broad-scale ecosystem changes. In addition, the extent of wetland cover and amount of wetland loss are also strong indicators of change in biodiversity (Ontario Biodiversity Council 2020). To predict future conditions for the Vegetation VCs, an assessment of the level of pre-existing disturbance versus new disturbance will be assessed.</p> <p>Therefore, an assessment of fragmentation prior to Project development and predicted effects post-development will be included within the IS / EA Report. This will include an effective mesh size assessment similar to that completed by Jaeger 2000...</p> <p>Ecological process will be evaluated for potential susceptibility which will include consideration for: patterns and connectivity of habitat patches; continuation of key natural disturbance regimes; structural complexity; hydrogeological patterns; nutrient cycling; abiotic -biotic and biotic interactions; population dynamics, genetic diversity, Indigenous knowledge relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of relevant species populations, communities and associated habitats including geological features.”</p>	<p><b>Section 13.1</b>            “... The assessment of the effects of each of the project components and physical activities, in all phases, must be based upon a comparison of baseline environmental, health, social and economic conditions and the predicted future conditions with the Project and the predicted future conditions without the Project. Predictions must be made on clearly stated assumptions and the Impact Statement must clearly describe how it has tested each assumption...”</p>	<p>Section 9 of the study plan does not clearly indicate whether the predicted future conditions with and without the Project for each indicator presented in Table 9-2 will be compared to the baseline conditions, as described by the data outlined in Sections 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3 for those indicators.</p> <p>Sections 9.3 and 9.4 of the study plan mention several potential changes that are not clearly linked to the indicators in Table 9-2.</p>	<p>Update the Vegetation study plan to clarify that predicted future conditions with and without the Project for each indicator in Table 9-2 will be compared to their baseline conditions, in order to meet the requirements of Section 13.1 of the Guidelines.</p> <p>Update the Vegetation study plan to clarify the rationale and the pathway of effects relevant to each chosen indicator described in Table 9-2.</p>
VE-10	<p><b>Section 9.3 Potential Effects</b></p>	<p><b>Section 14.3</b>            “The Impact Statement must:            ...</p>	<p>Section 9.3 of the Vegetation study plan indicates that Table 9-3 provides a preliminary identification of <i>how</i></p>	<p>Ensure that potential interactions that may result in indirect effects to vegetation and the pathways of effects are described in the Impact Statement.</p>



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	“Table 9-3 provides a preliminary identification of how changes to Vegetation may result in indirect effects to other environmental disciplines.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>describe direct, incidental and cumulative predicted positive and/or adverse effects to riparian, wetland (including separate description relevant to peatlands) and terrestrial biodiversity metrics, effects of fragmentation, changes to regional biodiversity that could be caused by all project activities, including but not limited to effects to wetland ecological functions, including effects that may alter the wetland’s capacity to perform hydrological, biogeochemical cycling, habitat, and climate functions. ...”</li> </ul>	<p>changes to vegetation may cause indirect effects to other environmental disciplines.</p> <p>However, it appears that Table 9.3 does not indicate how changes to vegetation may result in indirect effects to other environmental disciplines, but rather <i>whether</i> those interactions may occur.</p>	Clarify that Table 9-3 indicates whether indirect effects to other environmental disciplines may occur. Ensure that the Impact Statement provides information regarding how indirect effects to other environmental disciplines may occur as a result to changes in vegetation.
VE-11	<b>Section 9.6 Residual Effects</b> <b>Table 9-4 Vegetation Magnitude Definition</b> Definitions of ‘negligible’, ‘low’, ‘medium’, and ‘high’	<b>Section 13.1 Methodology</b> “... The effects to each valued component outlined in sub-sections 14.3, 15.2, 15.3, 15.4 must be described using the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scope, defined spatially as the proportion of the valued component’s occurrence or population within the study areas (project study area, local study area and regional study area) that can reasonably be expected to be affected by the predicted effect within 10 years. Characterize the scope of each predicted adverse effect on each valued component as follows:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>pervasive: the effect is likely to be pervasive in its scope, affecting the valued component across all or most (71-100%) of its occurrence or population within the study areas;</li> <li>large: the effect is likely to be widespread in its scope, affecting the valued component across much (31-70%) of its occurrence or population within the study areas;</li> <li>restricted: the effect is likely to be restricted in its scope, affecting the valued component across some (11-30%) of its occurrence or population within the study areas; and</li> <li>small: the effect is likely to be very narrow in its scope, affecting the valued component across a small proportion (1-10%) of its occurrence or population within the study areas.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Severity, defined as, within the scope, the level of damage to the valued component from the effect that can reasonably be expected; typically measured as the degree of destruction or degradation within the scope or the degree of reduction of the population within the scope. Characterize the severity of each predicted adverse effect on each valued component as follows:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>extreme: within the scope, the effect is likely to destroy or eliminate the valued component or reduce its population by 71-100% within ten years or three generations;</li> <li>serious: within the scope, the effect is likely to seriously degrade/reduce the valued component or reduce its population by 31-70% within ten years or three generations;</li> <li>moderate: within the scope, the effect is likely to moderately degrade/reduce the valued component or reduce its population by 11-30% within ten years or three generations; and</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>While the proposed criteria used in the Vegetation study plan are similar to those found in the Guidelines, the definitions do not accommodate the entirety of possible combinations of scope and severity. For example, how would small scope and extreme severity be classified?</p> <p>Criteria provided and defined in Section 13.1 of the Guidelines (page 81) must be used to describe effects to valued components outlined in Section 14.3, including vegetation.</p>	Ensure that the criteria defined in Section 13.1 of the Guidelines (page 81) are used to describe project effects to valued components outlined in Section 14.3, including vegetation.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ slight: within the scope, the effect is likely to only slightly degrade/reduce the valued component or reduce its population by 1-10% within ten years or three generations.</li> <li>● Irreversibility, or permanence, is defined as the degree to which the effect can be reversed and the valued component restored, if the effect no longer existed. Characterize the irreversibility of each predicted adverse effect on each valued component as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ very high: the effects cannot be reversed and it is very unlikely the valued component can be restored, and/or it would take more than 100 years to achieve this (e.g., wetlands converted to a shopping center);</li> <li>○ high: the effects can technically be reversed and the valued component restored, but it is not practically affordable and/or it would take 21-100 years to achieve this (e.g., wetland converted to agriculture);</li> <li>○ medium: the effects can be reversed and the valued component restored with a reasonable commitment of resources and/or within 6-20 years (e.g., ditching and draining of wetland); and</li> <li>○ low: the effects are easily reversible and the valued component can be easily restored at a relatively low cost and/or within 0-5 years (e.g., off-road vehicles trespassing in wetland). ...”</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		
VE-12	<p><b>Section 11 Concordance with Federal and Provincial Guidance</b>  <b>Table 11-1: Study Plan Federal Concordance – Conformance with Requirements</b></p> <p><b>ID# 1</b></p> <p>“The Guidelines correspond to factors to be considered in the IA. These factors are listed in subsection 22(1) of The Agency and prescribe that the IA of a designated project must take into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● any change to the designated project that may be caused by the environment;”</li> </ul>	<p><b>Section 1.1</b></p> <p>“The Guidelines correspond to factors to be considered in the impact assessment. These factors are listed in subsection 22(1) of IAA and prescribe that the impact assessment of a designated project must take into account:</p> <p>...</p> <p>j) any change to the designated project that may be caused by the environment;”</p>	<p>In response to this requirement the Vegetation study plan states:</p> <p>“The potential effects of the Project on vegetation and the potential effects of the environment on the Project will be assessed in accordance with applicable standards and guidance.”</p> <p>Section 9 of the study plan outlines how project components may impact vegetation. How the environment may impact or change the Project is not covered.</p>	<p>Include in the Impact Statement considerations of any change to the Project that may be caused by the changing environment in order to meet the requirements of Section 1.1 of the Guidelines.</p>
VE-13	<p><b>Editorial - Footnote 8, Section 9.2</b></p> <p>“In February 2020 a regional assessment of the Ring of Fire region commenced; however, it is not sufficiently advanced at this time to inform the Project VCs. The VCs will be consulted and engaged on early in the I/VEA process and finalized taking into consideration the input received. Therefore, only information relevant to the Project that arises from the regional assessment of the Ring of Fire within an appropriate timeline will inform the VCs for the Project.”</p>		<p>The statement in footnote 11 in Section 9.2 “<i>In February 2020 a regional assessment of the Ring of Fire region commenced; however, it is not sufficiently advanced at this time to inform the Project VCs.</i>” is inaccurate. At this time the Regional Assessment in the Ring of Fire area has not yet begun.</p>	<p>Replace the text in footnote 11 with “<i>In February 2020, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change determined that a regional assessment will be conducted in an area centred on the Ring of Fire mineral deposits in northern Ontario. Relevant information available in relation to the Regional Assessment in the Ring of Fire area would be considered in the impact assessment of the Project.</i>”</p>

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VE-14	Table 11-3: Study Plan Federal and Provincial Concordance – Requirement Deviations		<p>Proposed amendments and/or deviations from the Guidelines will not be reviewed or approved during the study plans review process.</p> <p>The Agency will provide guidance on the process to propose amendments and/or deviations to the Guidelines to the project team.</p>	