



CANADA NICKEL
COMPANY



Stantec

Crawford Nickel Project Impact Statement

Chapter 32 Assessment of Potential Effects on Canada's
Ability to Meet Environmental Obligations and
Climate Change Commitments



Prepared for:
Canada Nickel Company

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Prepared by:
Stantec Consulting Ltd.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ECCC	Environment and Climate Change Canada
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
IAA	<i>Impact Assessment Act, 2019</i>
LSA	Local Study Area
PA	Project Area
SACC	Strategic Assessment of Climate Change
SAR	Species at Risk
SARA	<i>Species at Risk Act, 2002</i>

32 Assessment of Potential Effects on Canada's Ability to Meet Environmental Obligations and Climate Change Commitments

In accordance with Section 15 of the Tailored Impact Statement Guidelines (TIS Guidelines; Appendix A.1 of the Impact Statement) and paragraph 22(1)(i) under the *Impact Assessment Act, 2019*, (IAA), the Impact Statement of a designated project must describe the effects of the project in the context of environmental obligations, with a focus on Government of Canada obligations and commitments relevant to decision-making.

'Environmental obligations' refers to obligations applicable to the Government of Canada in domestic and international law in relation to the protection of the natural environment. Canada has a number of regulations related to the environment.

'Commitments in respect of climate change' refers to commitments set up in legally binding and non-binding domestic and international instruments, including various legislation, regulations, policies, targets, plans and frameworks to which Canada is a party.

This Chapter describes:

- the extent to which the potential effects of the Crawford Nickel Project ('the Project') could hinder or contribute to Canada's ability to meet its environmental obligations
- where the Project may enable Canada to meet its environmental obligations (including the proposed plans and commitments to positive contributions)
- where the Project may adversely affect Canada's ability to meet its environmental obligations (including the mitigation measures and follow-up programs related to the potential effects)

32.1 Federal Environmental Obligations

The TIS Guidelines for the Project identified specific federal environmental obligations that require consideration, and include:

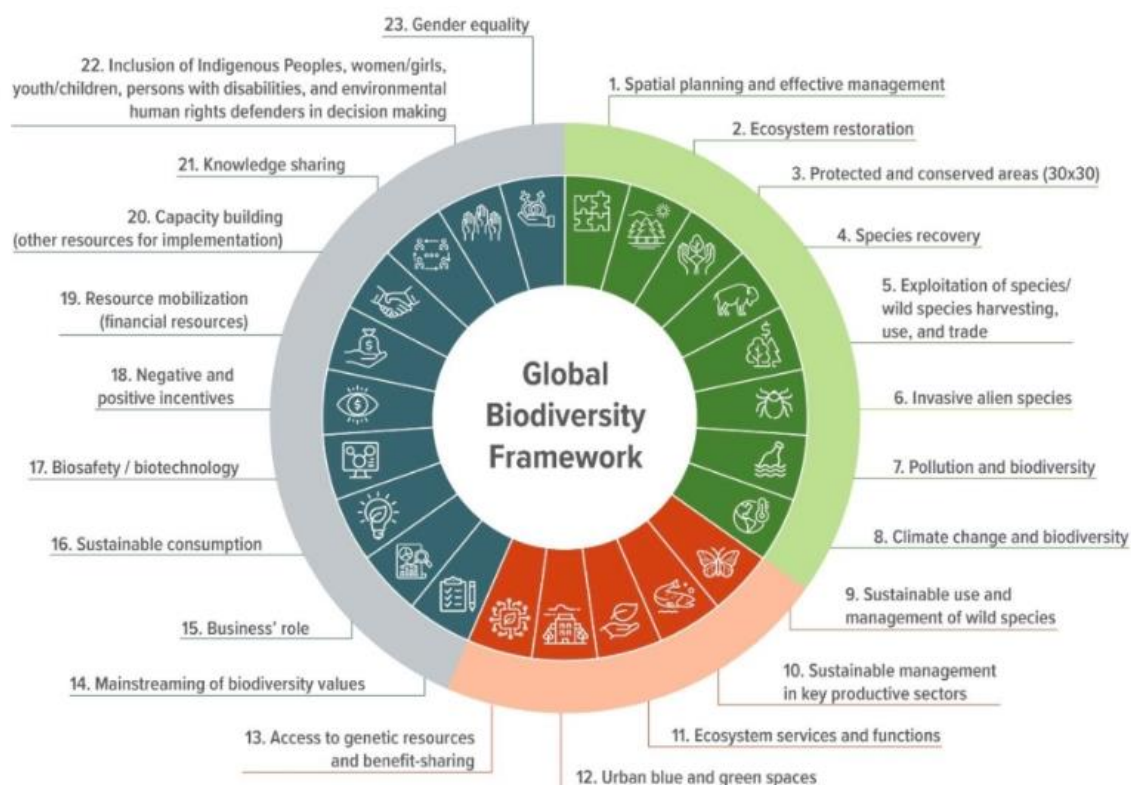
- The Convention on Biological Diversity, including the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (United Nations 2023), and Canada's supporting national framework (e.g., the Canadian Biodiversity Strategy [Government of Canada 1995], Canada's Biodiversity Outcomes Framework [ECCC 2016] and the current biodiversity goals and objectives in Canada), and legislation that supports the implementation of Canada's biodiversity commitments, including the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) and the *Canada Wildlife Act, 1985*, as well as supporting policies and guidance documents.

- Recovery strategies and action plans developed under SARA for species at risk (SAR) potentially affected by the Project. In particular, effects on boreal caribou habitat and population at the range-level, as set out in the Amended Recovery Strategy for the Woodland Caribou, Boreal Population (Government of Canada 2020) and reaffirmed in the Agreement for the Conservation of Caribou, Boreal Population in Ontario (ECCC and MECP 2022).
- The Convention for the Protection of Migratory Birds in the United States and Canada (Government of Canada 1999), as implemented in part under the *Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994*, and supporting guidance documents on conservation objectives and strategies specific to Bird Conservation Regions.

32.1.1 Biodiversity

In 2004, the Government of Canada enacted the Nature Accountability Bill and released *Canada’s 2030 Nature Strategy: Halting and Reversing Biodiversity Loss in Canada* (Nature Strategy; ECCC 2024) to guide decision making and initiatives with a biodiversity lens. The Nature Strategy outlines a series of biodiversity targets, which were largely based on the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (Figure 32.1). There are several biodiversity targets to which the Project can contribute to Canada’s ability to achieve these biodiversity targets.

Figure 32.1 Overview of the 23 targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework



Source: ECCC 2024

The Impact Assessment process, as established by IAA introduces multiple elements that contribute to achieving the targets set out in the Nature Strategy. The process itself contributes to Target 1 (spatial planning and effective management) by being an integrated planning process. The focus on knowledge sharing and the incorporation of different views, knowledge, and world views into a decision-making process contributes to Target 21 (knowledge sharing). The assessment of certain conditions through the lens of Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus), as discussed in Chapter 21 (Assessment of Potential Effects on Health), Chapter 22 (Assessment of Potential Effects on Social Conditions) and Chapters 25 - 28 (Assessment of Potential Effects on Indigenous Interests) of the Impact Statement, considers potential effects on sub-populations and sub-groups (Targets 22 and 23). The IAA also requires the Project to be assessed from a sustainability lens (Target 9), which considers the interconnectedness and interdependence of the human-ecological systems, the well-being of present and future generations, and the application of the precautionary principle and adaptive management, as discussed in Chapter 33 of the Impact Statement (Extent to Which the Project Contributes to Sustainability).

The change in vegetation, wetlands, fish, wildlife, birds, and their habitats that may arise as a result of the Project is being considered, as discussed in Chapter 16 (Assessment of Potential Effects on Vegetation, Riparian and Wetland Environment), Chapter 17 (Assessment of Potential Effects on Fish and Fish Habitat), Chapter 18 (Assessment of Potential Effects on Birds and Bird Habitats), and Chapter 19 (Assessment of Potential Effects on Wildlife and Wildlife Habitats) of the Impact Statement. The Impact Statement also assesses potential effects from Project emissions (Target 7) to water (see Chapter 14 [Assessment of Potential Effects on Groundwater] and Chapter 15 [Assessment of Potential Effects on Surface Water]), and air (see Chapter 12 [Assessment of Potential Effects on Atmospheric Environment]), and the potential effects that emissions may have on human and ecological health (see Chapter 21 [Assessment of Potential Effects on Health] and Appendix C.7 [Human Health and Ecological Risk Assessment of the Impact Statement]). These effects assessments evaluate potential Project related effects, recommend mitigation measures, and suggest follow-up and monitoring measures that are related to several biodiversity targets, such as but not limited to:

- identifying and where possible protecting and conserving environmentally important areas (Target 3)
- identifying potential emissions, their potential effects and mitigation measures (Target 7)
- promoting mitigation measures that contribute to species recovery (Target 4), specifically those following recovery strategies for SAR
- promoting offsetting and reclamation activities that consider ecosystems services and functions (Target 11)
- implementing invasives species management measures (Target 6)

The Project presents several opportunities for ecosystem restoration through the implementation of offsetting measures, specifically fisheries offsetting (see Appendix M of the Impact Statement [Conceptual Fish Habitat Offsetting Plan]) and through the closure and reclamation process (see Appendix F of the Impact Statement [Conceptual Closure Plan]). While the offsetting measures are still in the conceptual design phase, Canada Nickel is committed to working with Indigenous nations to develop offsetting and reclamation measures for fish and fish habitat as part of the closure planning process that promote

biodiversity. Canada Nickel will also be obtaining an Overall Benefit Permit under the *Endangered Species Act* (refer to Chapter 19 of the Impact Statement [Assessment of Potential Effects on Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat]).

Through the IAA process, including the preparation of the Impact Statement, the Project will contribute to Nature Strategy targets and subsequently to Canada's biodiversity goals and objectives.

32.1.2 Recovery Strategies

The Impact Statement considers species management plans and recovery strategies within the effects assessments and in the development and selection of mitigation measures. The following recovery strategies were consulted when preparing the Impact Statement:

- Amended Recovery Strategy for the Woodland Caribou (*Rangifer tarandus caribou*), Boreal Population, in Canada 2020 (ECCC 2019)
- Recovery Strategy for the Little Brown Myotis (*Myotis lucifugus*), the Northern Myotis (*Myotis septentrionalis*), and the Tri-colored Bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*) in Canada (ECCC 2018a)
- Recovery Strategy for the Blanding's Turtle (*Emydoidea blandingii*), Great Lakes / St. Lawrence population, in Canada (ECCC 2018b)
- Recovery Strategy for the Eastern Whip-poor-will (*Antrostomus vociferus*) in Canada (ECCC 2018c)
- Recovery Strategy for the Canada Warbler (*Cardellina canadensis*) in Canada (EC 2016)

It is noted that there have been no records of boreal caribou in the southern portion of the Kesagami Caribou Range since the early 2000s (MNR 2014), which includes the Project Area (PA) and Local Study Area (LSA) for the Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat VC (Chapter 19 of the Impact Statement [Assessment of Potential Effects on Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat]). Historically, the southern limits of the Kesagami Caribou Range (which overlaps with a portion of the Local Study Area) have always had low occupancy with relatively few records south of Highway 11 (MNR 2014). During engagement, Flying Post First Nation reported that boreal caribou have not been observed around the PA or Wildlife LSA (Chapters 19 and 27 of the Impact Statement [Assessment of Potential Effects on Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat and Assessment of Potential Effects on Flying Post First Nation, Matachewan First Nation and Mattagami First Nation Interests, respectively]).

Other species, such as Bat SAR, have been recorded within the PA and Wildlife LSA, and there are historical records of Blanding's turtle in the Wildlife LSA with regulated habitat extending into the PA; however, there have been no confirmed observations/recordings during baseline field work.

Mitigation measures are proposed in Chapter 16 (Assessment of Potential Effects on Vegetation, Riparian and Wetland Environments), Chapter 17 (Assessment of Potential Effects on Fish and Fish Habitat), Chapter 18 (Assessment of Potential Effects on Birds and Bird Habitats) and Chapter 19 (Assessment of Potential Effects on Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat) of the Impact Statement, which support species management and recovery strategies, including measures meant to achieve the following:

- Project design focused on reducing the Project footprint to the extent practical and implementing ecosystem-based conservation, management, and sustainable practices to reduce effects to habitat and abundance and distribution of plants and wildlife
- Reducing the likelihood and extent of effects to species of conservation concern, SAR, and species of Indigenous importance
- Managing human-wildlife conflicts and shifts in predator-prey dynamics effectively and sustainably
- Controlling and managing invasive species
- Preserving and restoring connectivity of natural ecosystems and habitat diversity
- Mitigating adverse effects of pollution on biodiversity

32.1.3 Convention for the Protection of Migratory Birds in the United States and Canada

The Impact Statement, specifically Chapter 18 (Assessment of Potential Effects on Birds and Bird Habitats), discusses the effects that the Project may have as it relates to Migratory Birds protected under the *Migratory Birds Convention Act*, 1994.

Residual effects are not expected to threaten the long-term persistence or viability of migratory birds within the RSA, nor are they expected to diminish conservation efforts for the survival, management, and recovery of SAR. While the Project will result in the loss of migratory bird habitat, progressive rehabilitation is proposed to restore habitat for some groups of migratory birds, with habitat for migratory birds that rely on aquatic habitats (e.g., waterbirds, waterfowl) expected to increase due to the establishment of lakes and ponds in the PA following closure of the mine.

Some key mitigation measures for the protection of migratory birds include:

- implementing of appropriate setbacks and timing windows from confirmed nesting birds
- completing vegetation clearing and site preparation activities outside the core breeding period for migratory birds
- schedule vegetation clearing activities outside the migratory breeding bird period to reduce the likelihood of disturbing or harming nests of migratory birds, to the extent practical. If small scale, localized vegetation clearing is required during the migratory bird breeding season and the area can be effectively searched for presence of nests, Canada Nickel will have an experienced biologist/scientist survey for signs of nesting before vegetation removal.
- deploying bird deterrents (e.g., noise makers, wire barricades) as necessary to discourage birds from entering onsite ponds

As such, with the mitigation measures described in Chapter 18 (Assessment of Potential Effects on Birds and Bird Habitats), Project residual effects to migratory bird habitat are predicted to be of moderate extent of significance.

32.2 Commitments in Respect of Climate Change

The management of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in Canada is subject to several statutes, policies, and frameworks. Table 32.1 provides a description of the key legislation, policy, and regulatory guidance documents applicable to the assessment of climate change and which inform Canada’s climate change commitments.

Table 32.1 Summary of Key Legislation, Policy, and Regulatory Guidance Documents for Climate Change

Regulation or Policy	Description
Greenhouse Gas Reporting Program	Section 46 of the <i>Canadian Environmental Protection Act</i> requires GHG emissions to be reported under the Greenhouse Gas Reporting Program (GHGRP) if facility emissions exceed 10,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO ₂ e) per year.
Strategic Assessment of Climate Change (ECCC 2020)	Provides a framework to establish whether a designated project will hinder or contribute to Canada’s ability to meet its international GHG reduction commitments, and to help to achieve a net-zero economy by 2050. The Strategic Assessment of Climate Change (SACC) requires: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estimation of GHG emissions for the Project • Estimation of GHGs from upstream activities (if applicable) • Review of best available technologies and best available practices • Assessment of climate change resilience • Credible plan to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050
Canada’s 2030 Emissions Reduction Plan (ECCC 2022)	A roadmap to reducing Canada wide GHG emissions 40% below 2005 levels by 2030 and reaching net-zero emissions by 2050.
<i>Canadian Net Zero Emissions Accountability Act</i>	Establishes a requirement to develop five-year national emissions-reduction targets for 2030, 2035, 2040, and 2045. The plans created to meet each target will explain how Canada will achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.
<i>Update to the Pan-Canadian Approach to Carbon Pollution Pricing 2023-2030 (ECCC 2021)</i>	Canada’s minimum national price on carbon pollution for explicit price-based systems (i.e., systems that directly set a price on emissions) was \$65 per tonne of GHG emissions calculated in carbon dioxide equivalent (CO ₂ e) as of April 1, 2023, and will increase by \$15 per year to \$170 per tonne CO ₂ e by 2030.

32.3 Assessment of Impacts to Canada’s Climate Change Commitments

The following sections are a supplementary analysis of the Project’s GHG emissions in the context of Canada’s climate change commitments. The Project’s GHG emissions are assessed in Appendix C.6 of the Impact Statement (Greenhouse Gases Following the Strategic Assessment of Climate Change) following the guidance provided in the Strategic Assessment of Climate Change (ECCC 2020) and forms the basis of this supplementary analysis.

32.3.1 Project GHG Emissions in the Context of Canada's GHGRP

Canada's GHGRP collects information on GHG emissions from facilities across Canada. It is a mandatory program for facilities that emit 10,000 tonnes or more of specified GHGs in CO₂e units per year, requiring these facilities to report their emissions. Based on estimates of GHG emissions for the Project's operations phase in Appendix C.6 of the Impact Statement (Greenhouse Gases Following the Strategic Assessment of Climate Change), it is predicted that the Project will be required to participate in GHGRP at the onset of the Project's operations and will be required to annually disclose emissions. The information collected through the GHGRP helps Canada assess the country's overall environmental performance and inform national policies and strategies related to climate change, industrial activities, and energy use.

32.3.2 Project GHG Emissions in the Context of SACC

The SACC (ECCC 2020) provides the framework for which climate change information related to the Project is disclosed. The SACC requires that the following information be provided in alignment with SACC Section 5 – Climate Change Information in The Impact Statement Phase (ECCC 2020). As required, the information below has been provided in Appendix C.6 of the Impact Statement (Greenhouse Gases Following the Strategic Assessment of Climate Change):

- Net GHG emissions including sources, intensity and methods used (Appendix C.6 of the Impact Statement [Greenhouse Gases Following the Strategic Assessment of Climate Change], Section 4)
- Impact of the Project on carbon sinks (Appendix C.6 of the Impact Statement [Greenhouse Gases Following the Strategic Assessment of Climate Change], Section 4 and Section 5)
- Impact of the Project on federal emissions reduction efforts and on global GHG emissions (Appendix C.6 of the Impact Statement [Greenhouse Gases Following the Strategic Assessment of Climate Change], Section 10)
- GHG mitigation measures including (Appendix C.6 of the Impact Statement [Greenhouse Gases Following the Strategic Assessment of Climate Change], Section 6 and Section 9):
 - Best Available Technology/Best Environmental Practice (BAT/BEP) determination to identify ways to limit the project's GHG emissions (Appendix C.6 of the Impact Statement [Greenhouse Gases Following the Strategic Assessment of Climate Change], Section 6)
- Credible net-zero plan and estimated net GHG emissions for each Project phase indicating achievement of net-zero GHG emissions by 2050 (Appendix C.6 of the Impact Statement [Greenhouse Gases Following the Strategic Assessment of Climate Change], Section 9)
- Climate Change Resilience Assessment (Appendix J of the Impact Statement [Site-Wide Water Management Plan])

A climate change resilience assessment, Climate Change Resilience Assessment of the Project, was also completed in accordance with the requirements of the SACC (Chapter 30 [Assessment of Potential Effects of the Environment on the Project]).

32.3.3 Project GHG Emissions in the Context of Canada's Targets and Forecasts

As part of Canada's 2030 emissions reduction plan, Canada has set a 2030 emissions reduction target of 40% below 2005 levels (ECCC 2022). This target represents approximately 443 megatonnes CO_{2e} emissions Canada-wide in the year 2030. In the year 2030, with the implementation of the Project's net-zero plan, it is estimated that net annual GHG emissions from the Project would amount to 154 kilotonnes CO_{2e}, approximately 0.03% of Canada's 2030 emissions reduction target.

Canada's ultimate GHG target is to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 (ECCC 2022). With the implementation of the Project's net-zero plan, it is estimated that in 2050, the Project's GHG emissions will amount to approximately 24 kilotonnes CO_{2e}. As part of the net-zero plan, carbon offsets will be purchased to offset residual emissions post 2050, such that the Project is net-zero, in alignment with Canada's target.

In addition to the proposed net-zero plan for the Project, Canada Nickel acknowledges the benefits of passive sequestration and intends to implement active sequestration of carbon dioxide gas (CO₂) during Project operations. Passive carbonation is a process by which atmospheric CO₂ is passively captured by mined ore, which is expected to occur passively during mining and milling as well as at the tailings management facility during tailings discharge. Canada Nickel also plans to implement a novel active carbon sequestration process known as the In Process Tailings (IPT) Carbonation process. The IPT Carbonation process aims to accelerate the natural mineral carbonation process through treatment of mine tailings with a concentrated CO₂ source.

With the proposed net-zero plan and the IPT Carbonation process proceeding, given an estimated average life of mine sequestration capacity of 1.3 Megatonnes CO₂ per annum (Canada Nickel 2024), the Project would be expected to provide a CO₂ sequestration capacity of approximately 54 Megatonnes CO₂ over the life of the Project. With the IPT Carbonation process implementation, the added CO₂ storage capacity within Canada as a direct result of the Project proceeding may provide an opportunity for the Project to promote emissions reductions from other regulated emitters and have an overall positive impact on Canada-wide GHG emissions reduction targets.

32.4 Summary

In accordance with Section 15 of the TIS Guidelines (Appendix A.1 of the Impact Statement) and paragraph 22(1)(i) under the IAA, this Chapter has discussed the following ways in which the Project may affect Canada's ability to meet environmental obligations and climate change commitments:

- The Impact Assessment process involves elements that contribute to achieving the targets set out in *Canada's 2030 Nature Strategy: Halting and Reversing Biodiversity Loss in Canada* (Nature Strategy; ECCC 2024), including the integrated planning process, focus on knowledge sharing, the consideration of potential effects on sub-populations through the lens of GBA Plus (see Chapter 21 [Assessment of Potential Effects on Health], 22 and Chapters 25-28 [Assessment of Potential Effects on Indigenous Interests]), the consideration of the Project's contributions to sustainability (see Chapter 33 [Extent to Which the Project Contributes to

Sustainability)) of the Impact Statement, and effects assessments that evaluate potential Project-related effects, recommend mitigation measures, and suggest follow-up and monitoring measures that are related to several biodiversity targets.

- The Project presents several opportunities for ecosystem restoration through the implementation of offsetting measures, specifically fisheries offsetting (see Appendix M of the Impact Statement [Conceptual Fish Habitat Offsetting Plan]) and through the closure and reclamation process (see Appendix F of the Impact Statement [Conceptual Closure Plan]).
- The within the effects assessments in the Impact Statement considers species management plans and recovery strategies in the development and selection of mitigation measures.
- With the implementation of the Project's net-zero plan, it is estimated that in 2050, the Project's GHG emissions will amount to approximately 24 kilotonnes CO₂e. As part of the net-zero plan, carbon offsets will be purchased to offset residual emissions post 2050, such that the Project is net-zero, in alignment with Canada's target.
- With the implementation of the IPT Carbonation process, the potential for added CO₂ sequestration capacity of approximately 54 Megatonnes CO₂ over the life of the Project as a direct result of the Project proceeding may provide an opportunity for emissions reductions from other regulated emitters and have an overall positive impact on Canada-wide GHG emissions reduction targets.

32.5 References

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- ECCC (Environment and Climate Change Canada). 2016. Canada's Biodiversity Outcomes Framework.
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