FMFN Technical Review – Clarification Discussion

August 24th, 2010
10:00 am to 11:00 am
Shell Centre / Conference Call

Attendees:

Bill Kovach, Shell
Lorne Gould, Gould Environmental (on behalf of Fort McKay First Nation)
Martin Jalkotzy, Golder Associates
Michelle Barrett, Golder Associates
Wayne Speller, Golder Associates

1. DISCUSSION SUMMARY

The objective of this meeting was to allow Fort McKay First Nation (FMFN) to clarify their enquiry pertaining to how Shell defines an "*appropriate level of assessment for an EIA*".

Lorne Gould, representing FMFN, explained that the foundation of this question arose from a Supplemental Information Request (SIR), where Alberta Environment asked Shell about the validity of the moose carrying capacity selected by Shell for population viability analysis (PVA) modelling. Shell stated that the carrying capacity used for the modelling was appropriate for an EIA level of assessment. From this statement, FMFN wanted Shell to provide FMFN with their rationale on what Shell defines an "appropriate level of assessment for an EIA".

- Is it based on previously completed EIAs that have been approved;
- Is it based on a regulation (e.g. CEAA); or
- Some other "level"?

The specific concern by FMFN was that Shell's PVA model predicted stable and increasing moose populations yet Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (ASRD) has collected regional data (Wildlife Management Units [WMU] surveys) indicating that moose populations are declining. FMFN suggested that this may indicate that an appropriate level for an EIA is insufficient to accurately predict the viability of wildlife populations.

In response to the enquiry, Golder suggested that the PVA model is a reasonable way to pinpoint factors or variables that are driving changes in population size. While Golder acknowledged that the PVA model is only as good asthe input data to the model, Golder explained that the best available data and best available literature existing at the time of the assessment was used to inform the modeling. Golder noted that it completed a sensitivity analysis (EIA Appendix 5-4) and results showed that the predicted negative effects of the project on moose populations within the study area were very small, and did not change the overall trend.

Golder further explained that over time and in different locations, population densities in a given area can be affected by competition, historical events, predation, and human harvest. Concluding, Golder noted on-going research associated with wildlife movement monitoring being conducted by the University of Alberta (Corey De La Mare) suggesting it may provide updated production and recruitment numbers for moose in the regional study area.

Shell and FMFN acknowledged that the habitat loss is an issue which needs to be addressed at a regional scale.

FMFN concluded that the current moose population numbers are unknown at this time and ultimately they would urge ASRD to complete moose surveys in the WMUs to determine the moose population. It was agreed that future data coming from Todd Powell (ASRD) and Corey De La Mare's (University of Alberta) research will be valuable to further understand and address impacts on wildlife populations.

2. SUMMARY OF FOLLOW-UP ACTION ITEMS

- No action items resulted in the discussion.