



APPENDIX D

2025 NWT ENVIRONMENTAL AUDIT

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSES

August | 2025

Government of
Northwest Territories

List of Recommendations and Responses in 2025 Audit Report

#	Audit Recommendation	Responses Published in 2025 Audit Report
Part 1: The availability and use of barren-ground caribou trend information in the NWT that is required to make decisions		
1.1 Data Availability		
2025-1-1	GNWT to provide plain language summaries for all GNWT and GNWT/academic studies on caribou in an accessible location and include links to the full studies where available. We would expect that stakeholders and rightsholders will be able to access and understand the full scope of caribou research beyond what is currently provided in NWT CIMP-funded project summaries (NWT Environmental Research Bulletins).	<p>GNWT's Response:</p> <p>The GNWT agrees with this recommendation and commits to fulfilling the recommendation prior to the next Audit.</p> <p>The development of plain language summaries on caribou studies led by GNWT is feasible moving forward.</p> <p>Other academic literature on barren-ground caribou is aggregated and promoted with a simple summarization on the Northern Caribou Canada website (https://www.northerncaribou.ca/). This website is led by the WRRB with support from the GNWT.</p> <p><u>The GNWT commits to:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing plain language summaries and links to GNWT-led research on barren-ground caribou on its website.
2025-1-2	GNWT to work with partners to support and enable caribou monitoring TK, especially for those IGIOs who have been unable to provide it due to lack of capacity or funding. We would expect that additional support will lead to greater capacity and additional	<p>GNWT's Response:</p> <p>The GNWT agrees with the intent of this recommendation and is already fulfilling part of the actions that it is able to address.</p> <p>The GNWT supports the use of TK in caribou monitoring and</p>

	TK caribou studies.	<p>management. The GNWT is already fulfilling part of the recommendation by providing proposal-based funding for TK studies addressing cumulative impacts to caribou through the NWT Cumulative Impact Monitoring Program. The GNWT is also committed to working with Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations to source external funding for the collection of TK related to caribou, as needed for specific projects.</p> <p>The GNWT is not able to commit to providing additional financial support, beyond what is already provided, for TK studies on an ongoing basis due to fiscal limitations, but will continue to aid in identifying external funding sources and/or partnering on funding proposals.</p>
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1.2 Availability of Trend Analyses

2025-1-3	GNWT to provide an overview or links to summaries or academic studies on trends in caribou harvest. We would expect GNWT to provide what is already known or what estimates are being made and used when making decisions on management of various caribou herds.	<p>GNWT's Response:</p> <p>The GNWT agrees with this recommendation and commits to fulfilling the recommendation prior to the next Audit.</p> <p>Caribou harvest is discussed at annual meetings with Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations at the Bathurst Caribou Advisory Committee (BCAC) Meetings, and the Advisory Committee for Cooperation in Wildlife Management (ACCWM) but the GNWT does not collect trends in caribou harvest. The harvest information is reported by co-management partners in annual meeting reports of both the BCAC and the ACCWM. Annual reports for the Cape Bathurst, Bluenose-West and Bluenose-East barren-ground caribou herds are available on the ACCWM website. Annual Action Plans for the Bathurst herd are available from the BCAC member organizations.</p> <p><u>The GNWT commits to:</u></p>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide links on the GNWT ECC website to the publicly available ACCWM and BCAC annual reports where harvest of Cape Bathurst, Bluenose-West, Bluenose-East and Bathurst caribou is reported.
2025-1-4	GNWT to prioritize trend analyses of the following trends of interest related to barren-ground caribou: community food security, wildfires, climate change, environmental contaminants/pollution, habitat conditions, harvest, predation and parasites/disease, with a particular focus on community food security for which there is no trend analysis available.	<p>GNWT's Response:</p> <p>The GNWT agrees with this recommendation and commits to partially fulfilling the recommendation prior to the next Audit.</p> <p>The GNWT does not have the resources required to conduct all the noted trend analyses. Instead, the GNWT commits to prioritizing trend analyses on the key environmental factors that impact barren-ground caribou populations.</p> <p>The GNWT commits to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnering on research related to environmental factors that impact barren-ground caribou populations, summarizing and making available, where possible, trends in the following key environmental factors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate change influences on habitat quality and habitat use Seasonal habitat and range use Parasites/disease in targeted barren-ground caribou herds
1.4 Ability of Available Information to Address Concerns		
2025-1-5	GNWT and co-management boards to work together to provide an overview of how decision-makers collaborate and integrate	<p>GNWT's Response:</p> <p>The GNWT agrees with this recommendation and commits to</p>

	<p>community perspectives to answer questions about caribou. Enhance descriptions of how decision-maker and community concerns drive caribou study design (like what is found in NWT Environmental Research Bulletins). What we expect is that the information about collaborative efforts will extend beyond what is currently included on the GNWT website, which focuses on the work being carried out by GNWT.</p>	<p>fulfilling the GNWT's role in the recommendation prior to the next Audit.</p> <p>The GNWT works with Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations in many decision-making processes with respect to caribou research and management. These include Indigenous governments, Indigenous organizations, renewable resources boards, advisory committees, Guardian programs and other co-management forums. Through these collaborative programs and decision-making processes community perspectives are brought forward to inform research and management decisions.</p> <p><u>The GNWT commits to:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Describing on its website and providing links to existing webpages and information sources that outline collaborative caribou research and management programs, forums and decision-making processes. <p><u>GRRB's Response:</u></p> <p>The GRRB would be happy to provide information on how we work with RRCs, community members, and GNWT to centre our work around the communities' research priorities.</p> <p><u>WRRB's Response:</u></p> <p>The WRRB reviews and responds to all GNWT wildlife research proposal applications individually after seeking initial IGIO and public input through the Board's Management Proposal website page. For proposed wildlife and wildlife management actions, the WRRB requires Parties to the Tł'chǫ Agreement (TG, GNWT, Canada) to provide evidence of community consultation and integration into management proposals submitted to the Board. The Board seeks</p>
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		<p>input from affected IGIOs and the public through its online Public Registry or through direct communication with community members (phone, email, letter) when a Proceeding is initiated. The Board considers both science and TK evidence in its decision making, when available. Community perspectives and input from IGIOs and the public are reflected in the WRRB's decision making as shown in Reasons for Decision reports or written responses, which can be found on the Board's website on the Public Registry or the Management Proposals page.</p>
2025-1-6	<p>GNWT to enhance the Browse function on the NWT Discovery Portal to improve access to topics, like "Caribou: population trends". Provide a clear instructional welcome on the home page to direct users to the Browse function. What we expect is that it will be easier for visitors to access the information of most interest to them.</p>	<p>GNWT's Response:</p> <p>The GNWT agrees with this recommendation and commits to fulfilling the recommendation prior to the next Audit.</p> <p>The NWT Discovery Portal provides multiple search functions but finding relevant materials on topics of interest can be challenging. The GNWT will work in the next several years to update the search and browse function.</p> <p><u>The GNWT commits to:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updating the NWT Discovery Portal's default search option and search instructions on the homepage of the NWT Discovery Portal to aid users in searching for materials of interest.
2025-1-7	<p>GNWT to work with its partners (e.g., other government agencies, such as ECCC or Government of Nunavut, and/or academic partnerships) to develop population models of caribou herds that incorporate a wider list of variables, e.g., habitat alteration through climate change and fires, insects,</p>	<p>GNWT's Response:</p> <p>The GNWT is already fulfilling the actions being proposed by this recommendation.</p> <p>The GNWT and its partners have developed and currently use population models of caribou herds to explore sensitivity of caribou</p>

	<p>disease, etc. We would expect that these models would help determine the sensitivity of caribou to various environmental perturbations to identify likely current and future drivers of change (e.g., climate change, harvest, predation, etc.) and data gaps for the herds.</p>	<p>to environmental changes. These models incorporate a wide list of variables that may impact caribou.</p> <p>The GNWT will continue to work with partners and to improve existing models and develop new tools to understand the drivers of caribou population change, particularly the relative contribution of habitat change, harvest and to the extent possible, effects of predation.</p>
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Part 2: The Effectiveness of cumulative impact monitoring in the NWT

2.1 Effectiveness of Cumulative Impact Monitoring Methods

2025-2-1	<p>LWBs/GNWT-ECC to identify and pilot tool(s) to aid applicants in providing cumulative impact monitoring information that is considered in preliminary screening decisions. We would expect that a more consistent approach is taken to the provision of cumulative impact monitoring information under the water licensing and land permitting system.</p>	<p>GNWT's Response:</p> <p>The GNWT agrees with this recommendation and commits to partially fulfilling the GNWT's role in this recommendation prior to the next Audit.</p> <p>The GNWT agrees that developing tools to support Preliminary Screening for water licenses and land use permits to effectively and consistently address cumulative impacts consistently would be beneficial. This would require the LWBs to identify what cumulative impact information is needed and for the LWBs and the GNWT to jointly identify what information is currently feasible to provide for all projects at the screening stage. If specific tools are identified as feasible, the GNWT and the LWBs will identify pros and cons of implementing such a tool before proceeding to pilot.</p> <p>Where information is lacking, targeted funding calls (e.g., upcoming <i>Road Development Impacts: Understanding and mitigating cumulative impacts from road development</i> led by NWT CIMP) may be able employed to support tool development.</p>
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	<p><u>The GNWT commits to:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work with the LWBs to identify information and tools that would be most helpful to support the LWBs and project proponents to address cumulative impacts in pre-screening decisions. A pilot may be started depending on available information and feasibility. <p>LWBs' Response:</p> <p>The LWBs are committed to collaborating with GNWT-ECC to identify opportunities that will help applicants, affected parties, reviewers, and decision-makers consider cumulative impacts for small-scale projects that do not require an Environmental Assessment (EA), which would otherwise include a cumulative impact evaluation.</p> <p>Funding from NWT CIMP's targeted funding calls could support collaboration and identification of opportunities to more effectively address cumulative impacts. An example of this is their upcoming "Road Development Impacts: Understanding and mitigating cumulative impacts from road development" call, which LWB staff intend to participate in through attendance at workshops and other meetings as necessary. LWB staff could also participate in any future NWT CIMP funding calls that could help create the guidance discussed above.</p> <p>The LWBs invite NWT CIMP to co-develop standard permit conditions to address cumulative impacts and/or on specific project components where gaps in addressing cumulative impacts and associated monitoring and mitigation measures have been identified.</p>
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		<p>The LWBs provide the process for input into permit and licence applications. Staff will continue to follow the LWB Rules of Procedure, distributing applications for land use permits and water licences – including draft management plans – and drafting permit and licence conditions for public input. To better inform preliminary screening decisions, NWT CIMP could provide information and recommended conditions to address cumulative impacts for permit and licence applications.</p>
2025-2-2	<p>GNWT, GoC and RRBs to describe and communicate (e.g., through plain language examples) how resource managers respond to evidence that a particular VEC is demonstrating a concerning negative trend (as described in the Cumulative Impact Monitoring Framework). We would expect that this information would be available for each of the three priority VECs.</p>	<p>GNWT's Response:</p> <p>The GNWT agrees with the recommendation and commits to fulfilling the GNWT's role in the recommendation prior to the next Audit.</p> <p>When considering the three priority VECs (fish, water, and caribou), the GNWT's main role in resource management decision making related to water and fish is to provide information and advice to co-management boards related to water, aquatic life and habitat. The GNWT is a resource management decision maker for caribou in conjunction with renewable resources boards and advisory committees.</p> <p><u>The GNWT commits to:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarizing and providing plain language summaries on its websites or links to co-management partner websites describing co-management decision making processes that guide management actions when caribou are at different phases of their population cycle including the decline phase. <p>CIRNAC's Response:</p> <p>CIRNAC acknowledges the need for an integrated monitoring and</p>

	<p>response framework for cumulative impacts and declining trends among the priority VEC's. CIRNAC will continue to engage officials from other federal departments to ensure they have awareness of this recommendation.</p> <p>GRRB's Response:</p> <p>The GRRB would be happy to provide input on this.</p> <p>WRRB's Response:</p> <p>The WRRB collaborates with the GNWT and TG through the Barren-ground Caribou Technical Working Group to discuss and provide input on caribou research, management, and monitoring.</p> <p>The WRRB, GNWT, and TG have collaboratively developed an Adaptive Co-Management Framework, which provides a way of implementing adaptive management and will benefit herd management planning through the experience of developing indicators, setting benchmarks, applying them to management activities, and monitoring the results. The adaptive management framework is directed at the annual implementation and evaluation of management actions for the Bathurst and Bluenose-East caribou herds. The framework seeks to incorporate an array of indicators to assess whether management actions are modifying caribou trends and recognizes the complexity and interconnectedness of contribution factors affecting caribou demography.</p> <p>The WRRB participates in annual review processes to determine herd status for the Bathurst and Bluenose-East caribou through the Advisory Committee for Cooperation on Wildlife Management and the Bathurst Caribou Advisory Committee.</p> <p>The WRRB is a member of the Conference of Management</p>
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		<p>Authorities, which is responsible for management of species at risk, and participates in consensus agreements for listings, recovery documents, and implementation.</p> <p>SRRB's Response:</p> <p>The SRRB recognizes the importance of clear communication about how resource managers respond to concerning trends in VECs. We support efforts by GNWT, GoC, and the regional boards to provide plain-language explanations and real examples of management actions triggered by monitoring results.</p> <p>In the Sahtú region, the SRRB actively facilitates community-led monitoring programs that gather Indigenous knowledge and scientific data. We communicate results using plain language in workshops, infographics, graphic recordings, and videos- tools designed to make complex information accessible and meaningful to community members. The SRRB also advises resource managers by integrating community concerns and knowledge into decision-making, ensuring that responses to negative trends reflect Sahtú priorities and values.</p> <p>We encourage partners to develop communication materials that are accessible and reflect Indigenous perspectives to enhance transparency and trust.</p>
2025-2-3	<p>GNWT to finalize and share the cumulative impact monitoring roles and responsibilities document and identify the steps it will take annually (over the next five years) to progress collaboration with others on cumulative impact monitoring. We would expect that this information would include all parties with responsibilities and would</p>	<p>GNWT's Response:</p> <p>The GNWT is already fulfilling part of the actions being proposed by this recommendation and agrees with the remainder. The GNWT commits to fulfilling the remainder of the recommendation prior to the next Audit.</p> <p>Identifying the steps the GNWT will take annually to progress</p>

	<p>aid in understanding of and the accountability for monitoring in the territory.</p>	<p>collaboration with others on cumulative impact monitoring will continue to be part of NWT CIMP's annual work planning actions.</p> <p><u>The GNWT commits to:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing and releasing a high level "Cumulative Impact Monitoring Roles and Responsibilities in the NWT" document, outlining the roles and responsibilities of all entities that conduct cumulative impact monitoring.
<p>2020-2-2</p>	<p>The RA develop and/or provide descriptions of the rationale and study design for individual monitoring stations sampled by the federal and territorial government and make this information available at a central electronically-accessible location.</p>	<p>GNWT's Response:</p> <p>The GNWT agrees with this recommendation and commits to fulfilling the recommendation prior to the next Audit.</p> <p>Providing clear, accessible information on the rationale and study design for individual monitoring sites/stations is critical for transparency, collaboration, and network optimization. Water monitoring networks and programs in the NWT are operated by numerous responsible agencies and are intended to address a wide range of objectives.</p> <p>GNWT-ECC is committed to improving transparency around its water quality monitoring efforts. As part of this commitment, the rationale and study design for each monitoring site will be clearly documented and made publicly accessible on Mackenzie DataStream. This enhanced metadata will support public understanding and informed use of water quality data.</p> <p>GNWT-ECC will continue to complete water quality status and trends reports for individual watersheds every five to 10 years. These status and trend reports also provide information about the rationale and study design for specific programs.</p>

		<p>The federal Water Survey of Canada (WSC) operates hydrometric stations across the territory. The WSC's website makes hydrometric data publicly accessible on its website. GNWT-ECC partners with WSC to run the hydrometric network, and the hydrometric network is based on shared needs across multiple agencies.</p> <p>While hydrometric data are available on WSC's website, GNWT-ECC will integrate water quantity and groundwater station metadata into existing platforms (e.g. GNWT-ECC website, GNWT ATLAS).</p> <p><u>The GNWT commits to:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing water quality, water quantity and groundwater station metadata online. <p>LWBs' Response:</p> <p>No LWB response required. However, the LWBs would like to note that much of the water quality monitoring data collected by the GNWT is available through the Mackenzie Data Stream, and the LWBs have committed to working with the DataStream team to facilitate the harvesting of LWB public registry water quality data into the DataStream as well.</p>
2020-3-4	<p>The co-management boards use their ability to impact the design of monitoring programs to ensure the adoption of consistent monitoring requirements for proponents. The outcome we expect is that industry's monitoring efforts will be able to aid the RA in meeting its Section 146 responsibilities.</p>	<p>LWBs' Response:</p> <p>The LWBs updated their response to this recommendation in January 2024. This update highlighted the LWBs' adoption of the GNWT Standards for Reporting Water Quality Information in the NWT (2020), a requirement now referenced in various LWB guidance and policies. Currently, the LWBs are developing a template for Surveillance Network Programs (SNPs) for all undertakings. This template is considering requiring SNP reporting to align with the GNWT's Standards. For example, the SNP template</p>

	<p>could mandate through a required Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) Plan that the Standard's metadata be provided for each dataset and SNP reports incorporate the Standard's outlined reporting criteria.</p> <p>While we are working to standardize SNPs, the LWBs reiterate that monitoring programs required by permits or water licences are not designed to specifically understand cumulative impacts or contribute to environmental trend analysis by ensuring data comparability across sites. Instead, these programs are project specific and are designed to monitor and mitigate land and water use, along with waste deposition, based on evidence from regulatory proceedings. If GNWT-ECC wishes to further standardize monitoring programs, the GNWT should present supporting evidence during a proceeding or through a joint and focused initiative.</p> <p>The LWBs acknowledge that GNWT CIMP recently developed a Cumulative Impact Monitoring Framework (CIMF). The CIMF's Analysis section suggests that data for cumulative impact modeling could come from external sources, including the LWBs. It would be helpful for the LWBs to understand how datasets from monitoring programs such as SNPs and Aquatic Effects Monitoring Programs (which may be more relevant to cumulative impact modeling as AEMPs focus on sampling in the receiving environment) are screened for their usability in GNWT CIMP's modeling. This understanding could help the LWBs better grasp the necessity of standardizing monitoring programs.</p> <p>WRRB's Response:</p> <p>The WRRB reviews and comments on Wildlife Management & Monitoring Programs (WMMPs) that industry submits for projects in Wek'èezhìi. For WMMPs submitted by Parties to the Tłı̨chǫ Agreement (TG, GNWT, Canada), after seeking IGIO and public input</p>
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		<p>through the Board's Management Proposal website page, the Board reviews and approves the WMMP. The WRRB reviews and comments on the annual reporting of all WMMPs.</p> <p>The WRRB also reviews and comments on all wildlife and wildlife habitat protocols, policies, plans, and guidelines developed.</p>
2020-4-3	<p>The RA should design a coherent cumulative impacts monitoring and assessment framework for the NWT that includes clarity on language, the role of different organizations, policy directions for boards and departments, monitoring protocols, and advice for industry to manage and consider cumulative impacts.</p>	<p>GNWT's Response:</p> <p>The GNWT agrees with this recommendation and commits to partially fulfilling the recommendation prior to the next Audit.</p> <p>In 2025, the GNWT released the NWT CIMP Cumulative Impact Monitoring Framework, which provides strategic guidance for NWT CIMP activities to monitor and assess cumulative impacts. It also outlines the roles of NWT CIMP with respect to other ECC programs and those of other departments, governments or organizations that conduct long-term environmental monitoring.</p> <p>The GNWT does not provide policy direction to co-management boards as the boards are under federal authority.</p> <p>The GNWT commits to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developing and releasing a high-level "Cumulative Impact Monitoring Roles and Responsibilities in the NWT" document to accompany the Framework outlining the roles and responsibilities of all entities that conduct cumulative impact monitoring in the NWT (see GNWT's response to recommendation 2025-2-3). <p>MVEIRB's Response:</p> <p>MVEIRB continues to support the purpose and intent of this</p>

		<p>recommendation. It continues to have measures in reports of environmental assessment that specify the need for post-EA follow up monitoring that is intended to look at the impacts of the development both at a project and cumulative level. The Board supports the development of consistent and measurable cumulative impact monitoring frameworks developed by CIMP, GNWT or LWBs for key valued components. MVEIRB believes that future regional studies, such as the proposed Slave Geological Province Regional Study, can assist in the collection of relevant cumulative effects monitoring data, as well as identify trends to monitor further.</p>
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2.2 Sufficiency of Cumulative Impact Monitoring Information

2025-2-4	<p>GNWT to provide narrative descriptions of predictions of impacts and/or expected interactions from development (e.g., linear development; lithium mining) to decision-makers, working with decision-makers to determine the VECs and development-type of most interest. We would expect that the limited resources available to NWT CIMP may be directed to better support decision-making in the NWT.</p>	<p>GNWT's Response:</p> <p>GNWT agrees with this recommendation and commits to fulfilling the recommendation prior to the next Audit.</p> <p>While in many cases it is impossible to develop quantitative predictions of the cumulative impacts from development due to data limitations, scientific and Traditional Knowledge can help provide high-quality qualitative predictions. By developing narrative reports detailing expected direction and relative magnitude of impacts from development and natural processes, the GNWT can support decision-makers to address the most pressing concerns.</p> <p>The <i>Collaborative Barren Ground Caribou Initiative</i> was developed to address many unanswered questions posed by the federal, territorial and Indigenous governments and organizations, co-management partners and communities about what is driving changes in caribou abundance and what the future holds.</p> <p>Current investment and focus in the NWT on roads, including both the development of new roads and transitioning winter roads to all-</p>
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		<p>season roads, has raised public interest regarding potential impacts that road developments may have on caribou herds, and previously inaccessible waterbodies and fish. In response, this topic will be the subject of a second directed funding call and narrative report.</p> <p>As opportunities allow, the GNWT will solicit input for decision-makers and partners to determine additional priorities for collaborative initiatives such as those described above.</p> <p><u>The GNWT commits to:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Releasing a plain language synthesis report about the outcome of the <i>Collaborative Barren Ground Caribou Initiative</i>.• Releasing one or more additional narrative descriptions of the impacts from development and the interactions with other environmental stressors (e.g., cumulative impacts from road development on caribou, water, and fish).
2020-4-6	<p>The NWT CIMP continue to evaluate its monitoring priorities on a five-year cycle in response to findings from monitoring and research, and that it provides specific directions and conclusions to decision-makers in the form of memoranda, NWT CIMP-certified monitoring protocols, policies, and customized project-specific advice.</p>	<p>GNWT's Response:</p> <p>The GNWT agrees with this recommendation and commits to fulfilling the recommendation prior to the next Audit.</p> <p>NWT CIMP last updated its Monitoring Blueprints in 2022. The next 5-year update is scheduled in 2026. The next update will reflect the most up-to-date cumulative impact monitoring and research priorities for caribou, water, and fish. Input from decision-makers and partners will be solicited to ensure that their priorities are reflected in these Blueprints and the outcomes of funded products are usable by decision-makers.</p> <p>NWT CIMP does not provide policy direction to the co-management boards as the boards are under federal authority. NWT CIMP does</p>

	<p>make recommendations on monitoring protocols and project-specific advice as appropriate.</p> <p><u>The GNWT commits to:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updating NWT CIMP Monitoring Blueprints in 2026.
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2.3 Ability of Available Information to Address Concerns

2025-2-5	<p>GNWT work with its partners to identify and establish similar initiative(s) to that of the Barren Ground Caribou Initiative to focus VEC research and to better integrate TK studies and western science studies. We would expect that GNWT would work closely with decision makers to identify specific questions that need addressing and that the collaboration would lead to useful decision-making tools (e.g., risk maps) and plain language summaries.</p>	<p>GNWT's Response:</p> <p>The GNWT agrees with this recommendation and commits to fulfilling the recommendation prior to the next Audit.</p> <p>The 2023-2026 <i>Collaborative Barren Ground Caribou Initiative</i> (CBGCI) has been extremely successful. This directed funding call, a joint initiative with Polar Knowledge Canada and NWT CIMP, provided funding to 7 separate projects to research and monitor multiple different threats to barren ground caribou. Project leads meet regularly to discuss their work, which leads to increased collaboration across projects and better outcomes. The project leads will also be writing a plain language synthesis report for decision makers, which will summarize and interpret the key findings from all projects, but with a focus on understanding how different threats interact across the full-annual lifecycle. This report will be available on the NWT Discovery Portal.</p> <p>Based on the success of the CBGCI and guidance by the NWT CIMP Steering Committee, NWT CIMP is running a 3-year directed funding call entitled <i>Road Development Impacts: Understanding and mitigating cumulative impacts from road development</i>, with funding to start in 2026-27. Like the CBGCI, this directed funding call will bring together multiple projects working on similar topics and result in a synthesis report for decision makers that informs the mitigation</p>
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	<p>of the impacts to caribou, water, and fish from road development. Additionally, given the success of the first CBGCI, the GNWT will include the exploration of additional options and priority topics for future directed funding calls in NWT CIMP's Action Plan for 2026-2030, to be released in 2026.</p> <p><u>The GNWT commits to:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Running a 3-year directed funding call entitled <i>Road Development Impacts: Understanding and mitigating cumulative impacts from road development</i>.• Including the exploration of options and priority topics for additional directed funding calls in future years, as funding allows.
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Part 3: The Effectiveness of Regulatory Regimes in the Mackenzie Valley

3.1 Regulatory Scope

2015-16	<p>LWBs and MVEIRB should work with interested parties to identify approaches to better utilize and integrate TK information into the decision-making processes.</p>	<p>LWBs' Response:</p> <p>The LWBs agree with this recommendation, as this is an organizational goal that we have, and continue, to work towards.</p> <p>The LWBs are updating their engagement guidelines to reflect a more holistic approach. While not solely focused on Traditional Knowledge (TK), the LWBs support early and ongoing engagement through regulatory reviews and into closure, emphasizing that local and traditional knowledge are best applied at the individual project and development level.</p> <p>Improving guidance to proponents and stakeholders on how to carry</p>
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	<p>out more effective early engagement provides an opportunity to work with the parties that provide TK to gain a better understanding of how we can work together to make sure the holders of TK are engaged at times and in ways that allow TK to be woven into project planning and implementation from the beginning and throughout the project life. The goal is that TK is already integrated to some degree into the application and evidence submitted to the Board by the applicant during a regulatory proceeding.</p> <p>In licences and permits, this approach is then maintained through the implementation of the Engagement Plan over the project life, and in licences, through the standard conditions that require the licensee to incorporate both scientific and traditional knowledge, and to identify how TK and associated recommendations have been integrated into every submission; in each submission required by this Licence or by any directive from the Board, the Licensee shall identify all recommendations based on Traditional Knowledge received, describe how the recommendations were incorporated into the submission, and provide justification for any recommendation not adopted. These standard conditions will be incorporated into new authorizations moving forward and existing authorizations as renewals and amendments take place.</p> <p>The volume of scientific information presented typically outweighs that of TK. However, when TK information is available, it is incorporated into the permitting or licensing process. For example, more extensive mitigation measures and reporting requirements may be imposed. While the volume and extent of the TK data vs scientific data is different, the merit and weight of the evidence is equal in the Boards' process.</p> <p>The Boards have also formally adopted the MVEIRB's <i>Guidelines for Incorporating Traditional Knowledge into Environmental Impact Assessment</i> (since the LWBs are primarily responsible for carrying</p>
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	<p>out Preliminary Screenings which are the first level of the environmental impact assessment process).</p>	<p>MVEIRB's Response:</p> <p>The Mackenzie Valley Review Board continues to improve the integration of Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (TK) into its environmental assessment processes. In 2024, the Board hosted a successful Traditional Knowledge Workshop with Indigenous governments, Elders, knowledge holders, and co-management partners. The results of the workshop are being used to inform the update to the Review Board's Guidelines for Incorporating Traditional Knowledge in Environmental Impact Assessment (2005). The updated Guidelines will look at improving the "braiding" of Traditional Knowledge Systems and western science in Environmental Impact Assessment. The guidelines will focus on respectful use, consent, validation of TK, and provide guidance to developers on ethical and effective TK engagement practices. This work is being led by both the Board's Indigenous Engagement, Outreach, and Partnerships Team, a fully staffed unit established in 2023, along with the new Policy and Planning Team. This response is aligned with Strategic Objective 2.2 of the Board's Strategic Plan (2023–2028): 'Enhance the integration of Indigenous Knowledge and worldviews into all aspects of the environmental assessment process.'</p> <p>The MVEIRB will be working with other resource co-management partners to host a Traditional Knowledge Conference in early 2026, intended to support the improved integration of Traditional Knowledge in all aspects of resource management in the Mackenzie Valley.</p>
2020-1-2	<p>The GNWT and CIRNAC establish a process for parties to meet on a regular basis and</p>	<p>GNWT's Response:</p>

	<p>discuss implementation opportunities and challenges with respect to the integrated system of land and water management in the Mackenzie Valley. At times, this process will need to include IGIOs and industry as appropriate. We further recommend CIRNAC ensure a record of findings, actions, and outcomes are published to ensure transparency and to facilitate monitoring and auditing of progress.</p>	<p>The GNWT is already fulfilling the GNWT's role in the actions being proposed by this recommendation.</p> <p>As noted in response to the 2020 Audit, there are several processes currently in place for parties to meet on a regular basis and discuss implementation opportunities and challenges with respect to the integrated system of land and water management in the Mackenzie Valley.</p> <p>The GNWT has been participating in initiatives such as the Mackenzie Valley Operational Dialogue (MVOD) which was established in 2020 to provide an opportunity for parties to meet and discuss issues with the northern regulatory system and identify areas for improvement.</p> <p>The key concerns were that there was a lack of opportunity for partners to explore/discuss regulatory challenges and perspectives outside of project-specific venues, so MVOD was developed as a venue to discuss regulatory challenges (both real and perceived) and to share perspectives, identify common regulatory priorities, and collaboratively advance operational actions.</p> <p>CIRNAC's Response:</p> <p>The Government of Canada considers this recommendation implemented and continues to support its operational elements in the following initiatives.</p> <p>As stated in the 2020 joint response with the GNWT, there are several venues for partners to meet and discuss opportunities and challenges related to the integrated resource management system that are ongoing, including the Mackenzie Valley Operational Dialogue (MVOD) the Mackenzie Valley resource co-management workshop, and the NWT Board Forum. The MVOD, convenes</p>
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	<p>partners regularly to share updates on Mackenzie Valley Operational Dialogue-related actions and external initiatives, provides opportunities at each meeting for partners to share regulatory challenges and co-develop solutions towards these issues, and encourages participants to reach out to others outside of Mackenzie Valley Operational Dialogue whenever challenges arise. MVOD workshop summary reports and presentations are already publicly available on the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board website to ensure transparency on discussions and commitments. CIRNAC continues to dialogue with partners whenever the need or opportunity arises.</p> <p>CANNOR's NPMO also hosts the annual Pan-Territorial Board Forum and this has occurred since 2015. The annual forum brings together representatives of each of the assessment and licencing boards across the Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut with the aim of facilitating discussion on initiatives and matters of common interest.</p> <p>LWBs' Response:</p> <p>No LWB response required. However, the LWBs have dedicated significant resources towards its active participation in the Mackenzie Valley Operational Dialogue initiative and have completed several actions that it took on (e.g., updating the ORS analytics, completing a scan of the Land Use Permitting process to identify any additional opportunities to scale requirements to the proposed activities). The LWBs also serve as the primary hosts, in collaboration with the GNWT and GoC, and contribute significant resources for the bi-annual MVRMA Workshop that is intended to provide education and a forum for discussion of challenges and opportunities within the co-management system.</p> <p>MVEIRB's Response:</p>
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		<p>The Review Board actively contributes to cross-institutional forums such as the MVRMA Practitioners' Workshop, Mackenzie Valley Operational Dialogue (MVOD), and ad hoc co-management meetings. These forums allow shared learning, policy alignment, and coordinated responses to systemic issues. The Board shares outcomes through public-facing summaries and presentations. MVEIRB participates in several other initiatives, such as the NWT Board Forum, Pan-territorial Board Forum and the Environmental Impact Assessment Improvement Initiative to discuss similar issues at the territorial, pan-territorial and national level, respectively. This aligns with MVEIRB's Strategic Plan Objective 1.3: "Promote consistent implementation of the MVRMA through coordination with co-management partners."</p>
2020-1-3	<p>Organizations/departments with a mandate for monitoring and mitigating community well-being work together to make their efforts complementary by developing a common agenda for their goals with a set of shared measures or indicators, and a plan for making results available to decision-makers during the EA and regulatory phases of projects.</p>	<p>GNWT's Response:</p> <p>The GNWT agrees with this recommendation and commits to fulfilling the recommendation prior to the next Audit.</p> <p>The GNWT recognizes the importance of monitoring and mitigating effects to community well-being from projects and supports this through the creation of a list of common indicators that can be applied to projects. There is currently work being done by multiple GNWT departments to identify a set of indicators that better reflect community wellbeing. Improving reporting on community wellbeing has been a focus of EA work within the GNWT. However, there are ongoing privacy concerns regarding reporting sensitive information at the community level and certain indicators are not available at the community level for some communities.</p> <p><u>The GNWT commits to:</u></p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying a list of indicators to be used when monitoring community well-being. • Following the development of a list of community well-being indicators, the GNWT commits to engage with regulatory bodies to determine the most appropriate and practicable manner in which to make this data accessible to decision-makers. <p>MVEIRB's Response:</p> <p>In 2024, MVEIRB published its Guideline for the Optional Pathway for Major Projects to Enter Environmental Assessment, which includes enhanced expectations for proponents to understand social, cultural, and economic well-being early in project planning. MVEIRB support the development of community specific that reflect Indigenous definitions of well-being, such as family stability, cultural continuity, and intergenerational knowledge transfer. The Board supports further collaboration with GNWT and Indigenous governments to align monitoring and impact mitigation to improve assessment of impacts on community well-being and socio-economic conditions in future impact assessment processes.</p>
2020-1-9	<p>The MVEIRB and the LWBs, in cooperation with other relevant regulators and affected Indigenous communities, establish, where necessary, a project TK Advisory Committee or talking circle to advise on the use of TK for the purpose of enhancing decision-making of the project. Such TK committees would advise project proponents and regulators and conduct monitoring, if required, from pre-regulatory through regulatory reviews, construction, operation, and beyond as required. To be most</p>	<p>LWBs' Response:</p> <p>The specific approach of identifying methods suggested in the 2015 Audit is no longer considered the most effective way for TK to be integrated. Instead, when Traditional Knowledge is submitted to the LWBs it is now consistently addressed; how it was considered or why it was not. TK has always been treated equally as evidence within the formal regulatory proceedings and is explicitly considered in the Boards' Reasons for Decision. This demonstrates a more direct integration of TK, recognizing its evidentiary value alongside scientific and technical information.</p>

	<p>effective, a TK Advisory Committee would need to be established as early as possible, but no later than the start of an EA, and live through to the end of the project, advising both regulators as well as the project proponent.</p>	<p>When appropriate, the LWBs have required the establishment of TK Panels with respect to Closure Planning (e.g., development of Closure Objectives and Criteria) and within the requirements for Aquatic Effects Monitoring Programs (AEMPs) (e.g., there are required TK camps to conduct fish sampling and tasting).</p> <p>MVEIRB's Response:</p> <p>MVEIRB continues to support the intent of this recommendation, while looking to expand the focus from a project specific approach, to one that includes guideline and policy development, as well as an approach that informs the environmental assessment process overall. MVEIRB has also utilized independent third-party Traditional Knowledge experts and Knowledge Interpreters to assist the Board during project specific EAs, such as during the Prairie Creek Road and Mackenzie Valley Highway environmental assessments. MVEIRB continues to respect and promote the use of local protocols for knowledge ownership and sharing, interpretation, peer review, and use in environmental impact assessment. MVEIRB will ensure that it uses a respectful and consultative approaches with relevant Indigenous governments and organizations to determine if and when a TK Advisory Committee is the preferred approach during an environmental assessment.</p>
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3.2 Engagement and Consultation

2025-3-1	<p>GoC to work with GNWT on developing clear communication materials that describe consultation responsibilities in the NWT. We would expect that these communication materials would be in plain language and would support improved understanding of consultation and engagement roles and responsibilities.</p>	<p>GNWT's Response:</p> <p>The GNWT is already fulfilling the GNWT's role in the actions being proposed by the recommendation.</p> <p>The GNWT's approach to consultation with Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations is clearly outlined and publicly available online (https://www.eia.gov.nt.ca/en/priorities/meeting-</p>
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	<p><u>gnwts-legal-duty-consult-aboriginal-governments</u>). This approach is consistent with the honor of the Crown, ensuring that consultation is done in good faith, with the goal of continued mutually respectful relationships. The GNWT recognizes that consultation is an evolving field, and commits to meet obligations with its consultation efforts, and adjusting its approach when necessary.</p> <p>The GNWT has developed tools and templates to aid GNWT Departments when corresponding with Indigenous governments regarding consultation.</p> <p>With the support of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Implementation Act, the GNWT recognizes and supports Indigenous peoples right to self-determination and their right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights.</p> <p>CIRNAC's Response:</p> <p>The Government of Canada agrees that clear communication materials outlining consultation and engagement roles and responsibilities in the NWT would be beneficial for all. This is best accomplished in coordination with the GNWT, the co-management Boards and Indigenous Governments. The Government of Canada is committed to continuing its efforts and collaborating with the GNWT and Renewable Resource Boards toward fulfilling this recommendation.</p> <p>Towards meeting this recommendation, CANNOR's Northern Projects Management Office (NPMO) intends to work with GNWT officials to develop an MOU and related terms of reference to support joint consultation efforts with IGIO's during environmental assessments in the Mackenzie Valley. This approach has been taken in the Yukon and provides a framework for developing a similar</p>
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		model with the GNWT to support improved understanding of territorial and federal consultation roles and responsibilities.
2025-3-2	<p>LWBs and MVEIRB to work with other parties of the regime to identify the appropriate level of effort for early engagement to support boards' evidence-based decision-making. We would expect that parties to the regime work together to create shared expectations and guidelines that are consistent with the principle of free, prior, and informed consent.</p>	<p>LWBs' Response:</p> <p>The LWBs and MVEIRB have different roles in helping the crown to satisfy its s. 35 Duty to Consult, so understandably the level of early engagement during permitting and licensing processes are much different than that during an environmental assessment or impact review process.</p> <p>The LWBs agree the level of engagement effort should be commensurate to the proposed or ongoing activities, so have embarked on updating its <i>Engagement Guidelines for Applicants and Holders of Water Licences and Land Use Permits</i>. Amongst other objectives, this update is intended to identify opportunities to clarify engagement requirements for smaller scale projects.</p> <p>On an administrative/editorial note, the LWBs would suggest using a different word than 'regime', in an effort to decolonize the language in the Audit wherever possible.</p> <p>MVEIRB's Response:</p> <p>MVEIRB has outlined expectations for early engagement in its Guideline for the Optional Pathway for Major Projects to Enter Environmental Assessment and also directs developers to reference the LWB's pre-submission engagement guidelines for further detail on early engagement approaches. MVEIRB, additionally directs developers to work with the consultation units of the GNWT and the Federal Government (NPMO and CIRNAC) for further guidance. The level of pre-EA engagement required, due to the complexity, scale and scope of projects that generally go through an environmental assessment, results in the expectations for pre-engagement to vary</p>

		greatly from the majority of regulatory processes that might only require a land use permit. The Board will continue to work with Indigenous Governments, Federal and Territorial Governments and other parties when updating or implementing its guidelines to set engagement expectations that reflect the principles of free, prior and informed consent.
2025-3-3	LWBs to find ways to further reduce engagement burden, such as targeting notifications to stakeholders and rightsholders to be more 'forward facing' and relevant (e.g., use of key words) and improving the searchability of the ORS for regulatory decisions. We would expect that stakeholders/rightsholders would reduce time spent on searching / navigating LWBs communications and materials.	<p>LWBs' Response:</p> <p>The LWBs, MVEIRB, and the GNWT use the Online Review System (ORS) to carry out public reviews of applications submissions required by active Permits and Licences. Further refinement and customization of user notifications and other system improvements would reduce the burden on potentially affected parties; however, additional funding is needed to work towards this goal.</p> <p>Regulatory decisions are available on the LWBs' public registries. The searchability and accessibility of this platform continues to evolve in response to feedback from all participants in the co-management system.</p>
2025-3-4	MVEIRB and LWBs to create opportunities for skills-based capacity building at annual MVRMA resource co-management workshops. For example, building capacity of regulators regarding TK and/or building capacity of IGIOs regarding how to input into the regulatory process (e.g., How to make a compelling presentation at a hearing? How to make a good written submission and presentation in front of a board? How to do questions for an expert witness?). We would expect that practical training sessions would lead to improved	<p>LWBs' Response:</p> <p>As of 2024, the LWBs began participating as a technical host at the Annual GeoScience Forum on the topic of engagement. This included an education-component, an interactive information sharing and gathering activity, followed by a panel answering questions related to challenges and ideas. This is something the LWBs intend to continue in 2025 with a different focus.</p> <p>The LWBs have also begun secondments of staff to IGs to provide additional capacity, are supporting the joint LWB/MVEIRB Outreach Team and its strategy, and are beginning to explore additional topics that participants in the co-management system would like to learn</p>

	<p>skills.</p>	<p>more about (e.g., walking through a Land Use Permit Application process, how to make an effective public hearing presentation, and how to prepare and submit effective recommendations to the Boards).</p> <p>MVEIRB's Response:</p> <p>The MVEIRB supports the use of the MVRMA resource co-management workshops as a venue for informing and instructing participants, including Boards, Governments, IGIOs and the public, on how they can best participate in EIA and Regulatory processes. Skills development is an ongoing focus for the MVEIRB, and our newly established engagement, outreach and partnership team, including region specific community liaisons, will help determine specific knowledge gaps that can help guide skill development initiatives going forward. MVEIRB also supports the development of NWT Board Forum training courses that not only supports capacity of Board members and staff, but are also available to IGIOs, Federal and Territorial government staff and the general public.</p>
<p>2020-1-10</p>	<p>The GNWT and the federal departments with responsibility for engagement and consultation under the MVRMA work with their respective clients to review and improve engagement strategies.</p>	<p>GNWT's Response:</p> <p>The GNWT is already fulfilling the GNWT's role in the actions being proposed by this recommendation.</p> <p>The GNWT is continually reviewing its consultation approach and tools in light of new court guidance regarding consultation. It is always in a state of updating and refinement.</p> <p>While GNWT-EIA does provide consultation training, tools, and advice, consultation is a GNWT responsibility across all departments.</p> <p>The GNWT is in the process of initiating a process to review and renew engagement strategies with Indigenous governments. Where</p>

		<p>items relate to MVRMA processes, the GNWT will work through appropriate channels, including through the Intergovernmental Council Secretariat.</p> <p>CIRNAC's Response:</p> <p>The Government of Canada is committed to refining consultation and engagement strategies and acknowledges this is best done in collaboration with all those who have consultation responsibilities under the <i>Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act</i>. The Government of Canada is committed to continuing its efforts and notes that strategies will need to be adaptable to an evolving consultation landscape.</p> <p>As part of these continuing efforts, CANNOR's NPMO intends to explore opportunities for developing project-specific consultation protocols to support consultation efforts with IGIO's during environmental assessments in the Mackenzie Valley.</p>
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3.3 Land Use Plans

2025-3-5	<p>GNWT and GOC to explore with Indigenous Governments, and fund if interest from Indigenous Governments, the development and implementation of Indigenous-led development policies, plans or strategies. We would expect that this approach would help ensure that Indigenous Governments' self-determined priorities for social, cultural, and economic well-being and development can be considered by others while other formal mechanisms are under development (e.g., Modern Treaties, LUPs, etc.).</p>	<p>GNWT's Response:</p> <p>The GNWT is already fulfilling the actions being proposed by this recommendation.</p> <p>The GNWT currently offers programs that support the development and implementation of Indigenous-led development policies, plans, and strategies.</p> <p>The GNWT provides funding that supports Indigenous-led conservation and stewardship initiatives, such as guardians programs, management plans and work towards Indigenous and Conserved Protected Areas as described in the Healthy Lands.</p>
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	<p>Healthy People workplan. This funding, alongside other non-GNWT funding sources, such as through the Our Land for the Future Agreement support Indigenous Government's self-determined priorities.</p> <p>Indigenous governments can access funding through the Industry, Tourism and Investment (ITI) Support for Entrepreneurs and Economic Development (SEED) Policy under the Community Economic Development Program. This program provides funding to support Indigenous and community governments in developing their economies, advancing regional economic development initiatives, and/or investing in events promoting economic opportunities, including feasibility studies, strategic plans, evaluations and planning costs that investigate economic opportunities and build on existing community resources.</p> <p>Regional Economic Development Plans (REDPs), developed as a mandate item during the 19th Legislative Assembly, were completed in 2023. These plans are designed as evergreen strategic frameworks, REDPs support regional growth across sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, and manufacturing. They also will help inform the development of a broader NWT Economic Vision.</p> <p>In areas where there is no established regional land use planning process the GNWT puts out an annual call for proposals to support pre-planning activities. This provides an opportunity for Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations to access limited funding to support capacity building and other activities that will help them prepare for future regional land use planning. (See GNWT's response to recommendation 2020-1-14.)</p> <p>Community governments are responsible for community planning within their municipal boundary. These plans manage land use and through zoning bylaws manage development more specifically.</p>
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		<p>These plans are to be completed every eight years. MACA supports community governments through the development of request for proposals in acquiring a consultant to complete the community plan. MACA is responsible to complete section 35 consultation on the plans before they are approved by the Minister.</p> <p>The Minister of ITI has a mandate to develop an Economic Vision and Investment Strategy for the NWT. This process will involve engagement with Indigenous governments, residents, sectors, and communities. This work is a mandate commitment of the 20th Legislative Assembly.</p> <p>From 2016 to 2020, the GNWT supported Indigenous Governments and Indigenous Organizations in developing Regional Mineral Development Strategies (RMDS). All regions were engaged, and two RMDS documents were released:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gwich'in Regional Mineral Development Strategy (2020) • Inuvialuit Regional Mineral Development Strategy (2020) <p>CIRNAC's Response:</p> <p>The Government of Canada agrees with the importance of Indigenous-led development policies, plans and strategies, and commits to discussing priorities with the GNWT and Indigenous Governments and identifying avenues to advance this recommendation, recognizing current funding limitations.</p>
2025-3-6	GNWT and GoC to provide regular updates on progress of the review process of LUPs. We would expect that LUPB's would be kept up to date on the status of LUP reviews.	<p>GNWT's Response:</p> <p>The GNWT agrees with this recommendation and commits to fulfilling the GNWT's role in this recommendation prior to the next Audit.</p> <p>The GNWT is committed to maintaining ongoing and open</p>

		<p>communication with planning boards during the review of regional land use plans and land use plan amendments.</p> <p><u>The GNWT commits to:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Providing regular email updates on the status of the review of regional land use plans or land use plan amendments to the respective Land Use Planning Board. <p>CIRNAC's Response:</p> <p>The Government of Canada contributes to the reviews of Land Use Plans led by the Land Use Planning Boards. The Government of Canada has and will continue to fulfill that role and we continue open and regular communication with the Land Use Planning Boards and other planning partners on these tasks.</p>
2020-1-14	The GNWT and the GoC work collaboratively to adequately fund land use pre-planning/planning activities in regions without settled land claims, recognizing the distinction that GNWT funds pre-planning and GoC fund planning activities.	<p>GNWT's Response:</p> <p>The GNWT is already fulfilling the actions being proposed by this recommendation.</p> <p>In areas where there is no established regional land use planning process the GNWT puts out an annual call for proposals to support pre-planning activities. This provides an opportunity for Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations to access limited funding to support capacity building and other activities that will help them prepare for future regional land use planning.</p> <p>CIRNAC's Response:</p> <p>CIRNAC commits to continue working with GNWT to search for funding to support planning activities in areas without concluded land claims and to actively participate in ongoing initiatives,</p>

	<p>including the Dehcho planning process and planning discussions as part of ongoing land claim negotiations in the southeastern NWT. Currently, the Northern Regulatory Initiative (NRI), which aims to increase confidence and efficiencies in northern regulatory regimes by advancing Indigenous participation in resource management processes, includes funding supports for Indigenous participation in land use planning processes.</p>	<p>LWBs' Response:</p> <p>No LWB response required. However, the LWBs have heard from various parties that advancing Land Use Planning discussions in areas without settled Land Claims where IGs would prefer to focus on Land Claims, is actually causing delays in advancing both initiatives due to resource constraints.</p>
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3.4 Comprehensive Land Claims

<p>2025-3-7</p>	<p>GNWT and GoC to coordinate on establishing a consistent online information source (e.g., webpage) that provides annual updates on the status of land claim negotiations, including related expenditures for the year. The status could follow a set categorization, e.g., "Active", "Inactive". We would expect that this reporting would better enable a public evaluation of progress.</p>	<p>GNWT's Response:</p> <p>The GNWT disagrees with this recommendation. The identified barrier in this section is the absence of settled land claims: "<i>The absence of settled land claims has been consistently highlighted as a barrier</i>" (page 119). The GNWT and the GoC already maintain public facing websites about the status of negotiations. There is no content in this report upon which to conclude that updates to either of those websites are connected to or a barrier to the progress or outcomes of negotiations. Generally, negotiations are confidential and without prejudice to the parties. The GNWT cannot determine what GoC publishes, nor can it commit GoC to fulfil this recommendation, which would be required for GNWT to do so. What is publicly available on the GNWT website is information about the</p>
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		<p>stage of negotiations and updated results in so far as when public-facing milestones are reached.</p> <p>CIRNAC's Response:</p> <p>The Government of Canada acknowledges a public, coordinated and consistent information source that provides annual updates could be useful, however information on land claim negotiations is sensitive and confidential. The Government of Canada is willing to work with GNWT to discuss if and how best to meet the intention of this recommendation.</p>
3.5 Adequacy of Resources		
2025-3-8	<p>GoC to fund dedicated and long-term positions (e.g., 10 years) for IGIOs to participate in northern regulatory processes (including by providing TK), until formal, structural mechanisms are in place (i.e., modern treaties and funding implementation agreements). We would expect that this would create greater equity for participation in the NWT regulatory regimes, regardless of treaty status, and will ensure that public funds are directed to long-term sustainable capacity within IGIOs.</p>	<p>CIRNAC's Response:</p> <p>CIRNAC's Northern Participant Funding Program currently supports Indigenous governments and organizations, and other northerners to facilitate their meaningful participation in the impact assessment and regulatory processes established under land claims agreements in Canada's three territories; funding is made available for impact assessments and water licencing of large, complex or controversial resource development or infrastructure projects (i.e., "major" projects). While CIRNAC agrees with the intent of the recommendation, the department notes that this application-based program is for Indigenous governments and organizations with and without settled (modern) treaties and having a settled treaty may not address funding and capacity challenges and are willing to explore alternate funding models in the future (see 2025-3-9).</p> <p>CIRNAC's Northern Regulatory Initiative has provided some initial funding to the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board to support a pilot secondment initiative with Indigenous Governments and Organizations and will gather key lessons learned to feed into</p>

		addressing this recommendation.
2025-3-9	<p>GoC and GNWT to explore models for direct funding in NWT to ensure that IGIOs (without modern treaties) have stable resources for regulatory capacity. We would expect that this approach would move away from the need for funding applications (like IRMA), which results in administrative burden and is a drain on capacity.</p>	<p>GNWT's Response:</p> <p>The GNWT is already fulfilling the GNWT's role in the actions being proposed by this recommendation.</p> <p>The GNWT supports the recommendation's intent to sufficiently resource Indigenous governments and to address capacity shortcomings related to project assessment and reviews.</p> <p>The existing IRMA (Interim Resource Management Application) program has two components:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Base Funding – This funding is allocated once a year on a per capita basis. Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations can elect to apply for multi-year base funding for a term of 3 years. 2. Resource pressures funding – this funding covers additional costs related to major project developments. Eligible organizations may also submit proposals. <p>Application processes ensure that limited funds are allocated fairly, according to resource pressures in different regions, and to maintain the integrity and responsiveness of the IRMA program.</p> <p>The GNWT has and continues to meet with federal counterparts to find ways to improve the amount of funds available and funding processes, as the program is consistently fully subscribed.</p> <p>CIRNAC's Response:</p> <p>The Government of Canada agrees with the intent of the recommendation to provide sustainable funding to Indigenous</p>

		<p>Governments and Organization's for impact assessments and regulatory reviews, and, along with the GNWT, is committed to completing land claim and self-government agreements that will provide stable resources for regulatory capacity. The Government of Canada also echoes the GNWT in its caution of direct funding to result in inconsistent and potentially inadequate funding for organizations with higher regulatory burdens that may vary year to year.</p> <p>The Government of Canada also recognizes the administrative burden posed by application-based funding programs. As noted in the response to recommendation 2025-3-8, project-specific funding through the Northern Participant Funding Program provides equitable funding regardless of modern treaty status. Further, the Northern Participant Funding Program has dedicated general capacity-building funding for participating in environmental assessments and regulatory processes that is separate from project-specific funding.</p> <p>LWBs' Response:</p> <p>No LWB response required. However, the LWBs are currently participating in a secondment initiative funded by the GoC and the LWBs to support regulatory capacity for organizations in areas without settled Land Claims.</p>
2025-3-10	CIRNAC to ensure board members are fairly recognized for their time. We would expect that honoraria would be sufficient to attract and retain board members for the proper functioning of the system.	<p>CIRNAC's Response:</p> <p>CIRNAC commissioned an independent report on Board remuneration (completed in 2024), and based on the report, is currently advancing recommendations on next steps.</p>
2025-3-11	Like the LWB example under Section 3.5.5, all parties should seek input from IGIOs to	<p>GNWT's Response:</p>

	<p>identify process improvements (or step-change improvements) that will reduce the capacity burden on IGIOs. We would expect parties to identify, communicate, and implement these changes.</p>	<p>The GNWT agrees with this recommendation but cannot commit to a timeframe for fulfilling based on the role of other contributors.</p> <p>Funding support through the Our Land for the Future Project Finance for Performance (OLF NPFP) should be considered to address IGIO capacity burdens with respect to land use plans and conservation efforts.</p> <p>CIRNAC's Response:</p> <p>CIRNAC's Northern Participant Funding Program includes both project-specific participation funding for environmental assessments and dedicated capacity-building funding to Indigenous Governments and Organization's. Officials with the Northern Participant Funding Program conducted engagement sessions in with NWT communities in 2019, 2022 (virtual) and 2024 and received valuable feedback. The Program is always willing to consider feedback from recipients, and will continue to receive input through engagement and activity reports.</p> <p>CIRNAC's Northern Regulatory Initiative has provided some initial funding to the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board to support a pilot secondment initiative with Indigenous Governments and Organization's and will gather key lessons learned to feed into addressing this recommendation. This was triggered by discussions through the Mackenzie Valley Operational Dialogue (MVOD), which also convenes Indigenous partners regularly and provides opportunities to share regulatory challenges and co-develop solutions towards these issues.</p> <p>LWBs' Response:</p> <p>See response above for recommendation 2025-3-4. The LWBs have been seeking input on overall improvements to LWB processes as</p>
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		well.
2020-1-16	<p>The LWBs seek to develop a participant funding program, funded by the federal and territorial governments, to support regulatory decisions within its jurisdiction. The funding would provide capacity support to Indigenous parties requiring assistance to participate in the regulatory process, as well as technical support.</p>	<p>GNWT's Response:</p> <p>The GNWT is already fulfilling the GNWT's role in the actions being proposed by this recommendation.</p> <p>The GNWT provides in kind support to Indigenous governments by answering inquiries, providing information and submitting its recommendations to the Land and Water Boards for consideration as part of evidence for projects. The GNWT's submissions are intended to cover the interest of the public and balance development and with environmental protection.</p> <p>Additionally, the GNWT already administers the Interim Resource Management Assistance (IRMA) program, a fund which is intended to strengthen the ability of Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations without land and resource agreements in the NWT to participate in management activities affecting surrounding land use areas.</p> <p>CIRNAC's Response:</p> <p>CIRNAC's Northern Participant Funding Program is sunsetting on March 31, 2028, and the department may consider other funding approaches through policy analysis and program evaluation to capture the needs of Indigenous Governments and Organizations. As noted in CIRNAC's previous responses to this recommendation, CIRNAC's Northern Participant Funding Program was renewed and expanded in 2023 and now includes pilot funding for water licencing processes for large or complex projects across both NWT and Nunavut. While funding for participation in water licencing has been made available for two projects (Norman Wells and Diavik), more proceedings will be eligible in the future. Engagement with NWT</p>

		<p>partners on the program's design and operation was undertaken in March 2019, January 2022 (virtual), and most recently in May 2024.</p> <p>LWBs' Response:</p> <p>The LWBs agree that the Northern Participant Funding Program (NPFP) needs to be expanded to include the gaps remaining in covering regulatory processes that fall under the jurisdiction of the LWBs. The NPFP is key in providing capacity support, and its benefits have already been evident in the recent Diavik renewal water licence proceeding, as it helped increase the participation of parties.</p> <p>However, the LWBs wish to reiterate that a funding program, including its administration, is a responsibility held by the territorial and federal governments. The LWBs are quasi-judicial decision-making bodies and as such, administering a participant funding program could 1) create a perception of bias towards groups who do or do not receive funding, and 2) become an unnecessary burden on the LWBs.</p> <p>The LWBs propose that Recommendation 2020-1-16 is now more appropriately covered by Recommendations 2025-3-8 and 2025-3-9.</p>
2020-1-17	The GNWT introduce a multi-year funding envelope for a portion of the IRMA funds; this is a leading practice for grant and contribution funding programs. We also recommend that the GNWT increase the IRMA funding envelope by an incremental amount commensurate with an appropriate index, such as cost-of-living differential or inflation, in order to continue to support	<p>GNWT's Response:</p> <p>The GNWT is already fulfilling part of the actions being proposed by this recommendation and agrees with the remainder. The GNWT commits to partially fulfilling the remainder of the recommendation prior to the next Audit.</p> <p>Multi-year funding envelope: The GNWT has already fulfilled the multi-funding option for IRMA</p>

	<p>Indigenous organizations at a similar level year-over-year. We further recommend GNWT help facilitate coordination opportunities between applicants where appropriate, since only the GNWT as the fund manager can identify similar project proposals that may benefit from cooperation.</p>	<p>funds. In response to the findings of the 2020 Audit and internal review, a multi-year funding option was added in an update to the IRMA Guidelines in 2022, modeled closely after the multi-year approach used by the Cumulative Impact and Monitoring Program. This reduces the administrative burden and increases spending flexibility for communities who currently struggle with capacity issues year-to-year.</p> <p>Increase funding envelope: As noted, relative to Recommendation 2020-1-16, the IRMA program is oversubscribed and the GNWT has been unsuccessful in receiving additional funding from the federal government. The federal government has announced its own funding programs that are intended to be provided directly to Indigenous governments and not to the GNWT, and we encourage Canada to implement these additional supports over the long term.</p> <p>As noted, the federal government has developed the Northern Regulatory Initiative, which provides support for Indigenous participation in Northern resource management. The GNWT has and will continue to collaborate with CIRNAC to facilitate the distribution of additional funding to IRMA recipients, for example through funding for Critical Minerals potential, where possible.</p> <p>Coordinated Opportunities: The IRMA Guidelines were updated as a result of a previous audit and include the option to coordinate spending when eligible recipients have similar projects or spending requirements. At this time, the IRMA program allows joint submissions between eligible recipients for a specific development. However, this option has not been used by applicants. A shortcoming of this option is that for this type of application to be considered fairly and adequately, it would require additional information from Indigenous governments. Requiring additional details and information from IRMA applicants</p>
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		<p>undermines Recommendation 2025-3-9.</p> <p><u>The GNWT commits to:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consult with IRMA recipients to verify whether there is interest and/or benefit in having program staff help to facilitate coordination opportunities between applicants where appropriate, and how this could be achieved.
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3.6 Outcome of Regulatory Decisions

2025-3-12	<p>LWBs, GNWT, and CIRNAC collaborate to create a communication material that explains the securities process in an accessible way. We expect that increased public understanding of the securities process will enhance public trust in NWT securities.</p>	<p>GNWT's Response:</p> <p>The GNWT agrees with this recommendation and commits to fulfilling the GNWT's role in this recommendation prior to the next Audit.</p> <p>The GNWT recognizes the importance of clear and collaborative communication in building public trust in the resource management system. This commitment complements existing GNWT legislative commitments to report on security holdings and the GNWT's commitments under the Open Government Policy.</p> <p>The GNWT has discussed this recommendation with LWB and CIRNAC counterparts and understands that both organizations intend to accept the recommendation and work with GNWT to implement it.</p> <p><u>The GNWT commits to:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work with the LWBs and CIRNAC to establish a small working group with membership from each organization to implement the recommendation
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Subject to the agreement of all three organizations, this working group will:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ establish a workplan,◦ define the materials,◦ develop draft materials for review within the three organizations,◦ update the draft materials based on comments received, and◦ submit the final draft materials for approvals within the three organizations.• GNWT will incorporate the products into GNWT communications, as applicable.• GNWT will seek to work with the LWBs and CIRNAC to review and update the products at regular intervals. <p>CIRNAC's Response:</p> <p>CIRNAC agrees with this recommendation and commits to working with the GNWT and LWB's to develop accessible communication material(s) that clarify the securities process and builds public trust in the resource co-management system in a way that aligns with CIRNAC's limited role regarding securities in the NWT. CIRNAC has discussed this recommendation with the Land and Water Boards and GNWT and understands that both organizations intend to accept the recommendation and work with CIRNAC to implement it; The Government of Canada further supports the GNWT and Land and Water Boards commitment to establish a working group and develop these communication materials in a timely manner.</p> <p>LWBs' Response:</p> <p>The LWBs, GNWT, and CIRNAC are in the process of updating the Land Use Permit Closure Cost Estimator (Estimator) and associated Support Manual (Manual) to replace the Land Use Permit</p>
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	<p>Application Security Template. A public review of the draft Estimator and Manual took place in 2023, and this project is ongoing.</p> <p>The LWBs, GNWT, and CIRNAC jointly developed the Guidelines for Closure and Reclamation Cost Estimates for Mines in 2017, and those guidelines were updated in 2022.</p> <p>The LWBs have offered to display more security information on each public registry project page if the GNWT is able to share that information with the LWBs. Initial discussions with the GNWT appear that this approach is reasonable and should be feasible to implement in the near future.</p> <p>As this is the platform where participants in the co-management system go to search for documents and decisions, this information being displayed with each project should increase the awareness and trust in the securities process. The LWBs, the GNWT, and CIRNAC will commit to developing a standard message regarding: what security is and how it is held, so that this message can also accompany the display of this information and be used in other communications (e.g., LWB/GNWT websites, future ppt presentations, etc.)</p>
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3.7 Compliance and Enforcement

2025-3-13	<p>GNWT and LWBs to explore what would be involved in a transition of inspection and enforcement responsibilities from GNWT to LWBs. We would expect that this exploration would identify the benefits and tradeoffs of a transition as well as the change management approach(es) that would be needed.</p>	<p>GNWT's Response:</p> <p>The GNWT disagrees with this recommendation.</p> <p>The final Devolution Agreement between Canada and the GNWT clearly transferred authorities for the administration and control of certain lands to the GNWT, of which inspections and enforcement is one of many functions. It is also important to note that GNWT</p>
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		<p>inspections staff are cross appointed under a series of legislation beyond that which is administered, in part, by LWBs, which provides both operational and financial benefits.</p> <p>LWBs' Response:</p> <p>The LWBs will commit to both internal exploration of such a transition and informing and requesting the GNWT conduct its own similar internal exercise, with the goal for the GNWT and the LWBs to bring their respective internal findings together in early 2026 to consider this further.</p>
2020-1-18	<p>The LWBs and the inspection units of GNWT and the GoC establish a process to meet and discuss challenges and solutions with respect to the inspection regime in the Mackenzie Valley, specifically as it relates to clarifying roles and responsibilities, ensuring adequate inspector capacity, as well as timely and transparent inspections, reporting and follow-up. We further recommend boards ensure a record of findings, actions, and outcomes are published to ensure transparency and facilitate future auditing of progress.</p>	<p>GNWT's Response:</p> <p>The GNWT is already fulfilling most of the actions being proposed by this recommendation and disagrees with the remaining action being proposed.</p> <p>The aspects of the recommendation that are already being fulfilled include the clarification of roles and responsibilities; ensuring adequate inspector capacity; ensuring that inspections, reporting and follow-up are timely and transparent; and publishing all records of findings, actions, and outcomes. The roles and responsibilities for all parties with respect to enforcement and compliance are clearly outlined by federal and territorial legislation. There is a close working relationship between LWB staff and GNWT inspectors who collaborate on the ground to improve compliance while respecting each party's individual roles.</p> <p>To determine the appropriate frequency for conducting inspections, the GNWT follows Inspection Reporting and Risk Assessment (IRRA) protocols which dictate minimum frequencies for inspections to be completed. Beyond the minimum number of required inspections, the inspector has discretion to decide if additional inspections are</p>

	<p>warranted. This flexibility allows inspectors to adapt the number of inspections to the conditions observed at the site. All reporting, and follow-up is made available via the LWBs public registry, thereby making reporting on all inspections and outcomes timely and transparent.</p> <p>Given the close working relationship between LWBs and GNWT Inspectors, the GNWT disagrees that a specific process needs to be established to meet and discuss challenges and solutions with respect to the inspection regime in the Mackenzie Valley, as it is an ongoing conversation as we work to implement our close responsibilities.</p> <p>CIRNAC's Response:</p> <p>CIRNAC continues to support information sharing, coordination, and collaboration with respect to enforcement and compliance. CIRNAC participates in spills working group meetings and has been involved in recent meetings with territorial and federal partners to discuss environmental assessment measures. Roles and responsibilities for enforcement and compliance are clearly outlined in federal and territorial legislation. Inspection reports and any required follow-up from inspector's directions are made available on the LWB's public registry, providing openness and transparency. CIRNAC continues to use a risk-based framework to determine inspection frequencies, and CIRNAC inspectors work collaboratively with GNWT inspectors, particularly on split-interest projects, coordinate inspections when feasible, and communicate directly as needed. CIRNAC has an established working relationship with the LWBs, regularly participating in project-specific discussions regarding compliance, and commits to annual meetings with the GNWT and Land and Water Boards to discuss inspection activities. CIRNAC suggests that a specific process for meeting and information sharing is not necessary at this time when considering the existing working</p>
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		<p>relationships and communication between CIRNAC, the Land and Water Boards, and the GNWT.</p> <p>LWBs' Response:</p> <p>The LWBs will be reaching out to both the federal and territorial departments responsible for inspections as outlined in response to recommendation 2025-3-13.</p> <p>Those departments responsible for inspections submit Inspection Reports for permits and licences issued by the LWBs. These reports indicate instances of non-compliance to the Boards, which are then subsequently posted and available on the public registry.</p>
2020-1-19	<p>The GNWT develop and publish an overall project inspection scheme to assist regulators, the public, and permit holders in tracking of 'unacceptable' items from previous inspections all the way to their satisfactory conclusion and inspector sign-off. Furthermore, improvements could be made in the consistency of information collected to ensure future inspectors, the proponent, and regulators appreciate the context of an inspection. We encourage the GNWT to work with their federal counterparts on this initiative, including CIRNAC and the Canada Energy Regulator.</p>	<p>GNWT's Response:</p> <p>The GNWT disagrees with this recommendation.</p> <p>Rather than publishing an overall project inspection scheme, GNWT inspectors follow Inspection Reporting and Risk Assessment (IRRA) risk assessment protocols to identify the minimum number of required inspections for a permit or license, then it is up to the inspector's discretion from there. This flexibility is important as it allows inspectors to make decisions regarding inspection needs for compliance promotion on each permit or license. This approach is in line with the objective of reaching compliance through education first, before using enforcement. IRRA itself is not publicly accessible, but Inspection reports generated in IRRA are available on the Public Registry.</p> <p>With respect to tracking of 'unacceptable' items from previous inspections, the GNWT tried to include features to track unacceptable items during enhancements of IRRA, but this enhancement to the program was not successful. The GNWT is</p>

		looking at options to replace IRRA with the proposed enhancements.
2020 Audit Part 2: Responses to Audit Recommendations: Evaluation of Environmental Trends in Water Quality and Quantity		
2020-2-3	<p>The RA perform a periodic review (e.g., every five years) of the overall monitoring network in the NWT to ensure that the network is sufficient to detect and explain trends in water quality and quantity. Monitoring locations should be added or dropped with the key consideration being their maintenance over the long-term. Short-term monitoring programs are of limited use unless they are intended to answer a specific question over the short-term.</p>	<p>GNWT's Response:</p> <p>The GNWT agrees with this recommendation and commits to fulfilling the recommendation prior to the next Audit.</p> <p>GNWT-ECC recognizes the importance of prioritizing long-term monitoring stations that provide representative data for key watersheds and support the detection of trends in water quality and quantity. It is also acknowledged that short-term water quality monitoring efforts should be carefully scoped and used strategically to address specific, time-bound questions.</p> <p>GNWT-ECC evaluates its water quality monitoring through network evaluations, status and trend reporting, and frequent engagement with water partners. GNWT-ECC commits to integrate periodic reviews into the monitoring program planning cycle and consider criteria for adding or removing monitoring locations based on their long-term value and scientific relevance.</p> <p>To support this work, GNWT-ECC is currently conducting a comprehensive review of its water quality monitoring network. This includes assessing site coverage, sampling frequency, and alignment with both water stewardship priorities and hydrometric (water quantity) data. The review will help ensure that monitoring efforts are scientifically robust, regionally relevant, and integrated with broader ecosystem and hydrological assessments.</p> <p>GNWT-ECC will continue to participate in discussions with provincial and federal partners regarding hydrometric network</p>

		<p>station optimization and client needs.</p> <p><u>The GNWT commits to:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completing the water quality network review. • Completing a station-by-station analysis of existing hydrometric gauges to assess their role in the larger hydrometric network.
2020-2-4	<p>The RA develop a lake-specific monitoring program. While there are hundreds of thousands of lakes in the NWT, reliable tracking of environmental trends could be conducted on a small subset of lakes stratified by size, watershed area and ecoregion. Ontario's Broad Scale Monitoring Program is referenced as an example of a program addressing large numbers of lakes in a systematic manner to document a) trends over time and b) the state of the resource.</p>	<p>GNWT's Response:</p> <p>The GNWT disagrees with this recommendation.</p> <p>GNWT-ECC does some lake monitoring on a case-by-case basis; however, a full lake monitoring program is not feasible given available resources, the large number of lakes and vast size of the NWT and the remote location of so many of the lakes.</p> <p>GNWT-ECC will continue to carry out long-term water quality lake monitoring in the Coppermine and Lockhart basins and numerous lakes in the North Slave region, including Great Slave Lake.</p> <p>Partnerships with academia will continue with research work in smaller lakes in the Yellowknife region (e.g., Jackfish Lake, Upper Baker basin).</p> <p>GNWT-ECC may explore the feasibility of implementing a stratified, lake-specific monitoring program, considering logistics, resource availability, and partnerships with Indigenous governments, academia and other stakeholders. GNWT-ECC's goal is to ensure that robust, long-term data are available to support comprehensive assessments of aquatic health across both lake and river systems in the NWT.</p>

2020-2-5	<p>The various large mining operations are compiling long-term (20+ years) records of water quality and biology in lakes as part of their AEMPs. These include reference lakes which document regional and climate-related changes. These records may be lost or discontinued after mines close. We recommend the GNWT consider assuming monitoring programs (or at least key stations within those programs) initiated by industry as an efficient way to build a database for lakes and rivers. The outcome we expect is that the RA curtail the loss of millions of dollars in monitoring investments made by industry and increase their ability to detect changes over the long-term.</p>	<p>GNWT's Response:</p> <p>The GNWT disagrees with this recommendation.</p> <p>The GNWT acknowledges the concern about potential data loss following mine closure.</p> <p>The GNWT does not have the resources to adopt additional monitoring sites.</p> <p>It is important to note that monitoring records generated through AEMPs are submitted to and housed with the Mackenzie Valley, Wek'èezhì, Sahtu, and Gwich'in Land and Water Boards, where they remain publicly accessible. This provides a level of continuity and transparency, even after mines cease operations.</p> <p>The GNWT will continue to monitor the regulatory requirements for current mining operations, including reference lakes, and will provide input to final closure requirements when required, including long-term monitoring requirements by industry.</p> <p>Industry-led monitoring will be required for several years during and following closure as a part of the closure process and post-closure monitoring and maintenance requirements. GNWT-ECC's Regulatory and Assessment Division is actively participating in closure planning for all mine sites.</p>
2020-2-8	<p>The GNWT provide a framework for future trend reports to follow for the evaluation of data such as a requirement that the authors interpret the significance and potential causes of any observed environmental trends, and that they address the potential for cumulative impacts. The outcome we</p>	<p>GNWT's Response:</p> <p>The GNWT is already fulfilling the actions being proposed by this recommendation.</p> <p>A clearly defined reporting framework enhances the ability of contractors to deliver scientifically robust and defensible analyses,</p>

	<p>expect is that watershed trend reports by contractors for the GNWT follow a consistent framework of interpretation and provide a discussion of significance of any trends in order to inform the GNWT such that they can respond in an appropriate way.</p>	<p>while ensuring that the resulting information is actionable for decision-makers. This also helps ensure that trend analyses meaningfully inform GNWT's water management responses and long-term planning efforts.</p> <p>The GNWT currently employs a general framework for evaluating water quality and quantity with standardized levels of significance and appropriate statistical testing, consistent with current scientific literature and best practices. GNWT reports show the data, explain what the trends mean, what might be causing them, and how they might be connected to other environmental changes. Examples of these reports are the NWT-wide Community-based Monitoring program 5, 10 (2019, 2024) year report, Hay, (2020) Slave and Coppermine River trend reports (2025).</p> <p>Cumulative effects assessment and an interpretation of observed environmental changes are common expectations of watershed quality trend analysis reporting. These assessments and interpretations help identify pressures on ecosystems, evaluate potential risks, and guide adaptive management strategies.</p> <p>GNWT-ECC is working with technical experts from Yukon, British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan (jurisdictions of the Mackenzie River Basin) to develop consensus-based methods to assess regional water quality (status and trends and trigger/objective development). Reaching consensus allows for meaningful water quality assessments which in turn will better inform decision making.</p> <p>Trends in flows and water levels across the Mackenzie River basin are presented in the State of the Aquatic Ecosystem Report that is published every five years, as well as in reporting on specific transboundary rivers for the NWT's bilateral water management agreements. GNWT-ECC also communicates the results of trend</p>
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		<p>analyses and other statistical analyses related to water quantity through technical reports, peer-reviewed journal publications, and monthly water bulletins.</p> <p>GNWT-ECC currently employs a peer-reviewed framework for trend analyses and statistical analyses that is both parameter and context-dependent.</p>
2020-2-9	<p>The RA work with other appropriate GNWT divisions and parties in the NWT to evaluate how best to improve their water monitoring efforts with the goal of ensuring that any data collected reflect the information needs of residents and could be used for trend analysis and cumulative impact monitoring of water. With respect to trend analyses, the evaluation should focus on how best to optimize the availability of long-term data sets to provide good coverage of the NWT and address the gaps identified in Section 2.1.2.</p>	<p>GNWT's Response:</p> <p>The GNWT agrees with this recommendation and commits to fulfilling the recommendation prior to the next Audit.</p> <p>GNWT-ECC currently works with other appropriate GNWT divisions and parties in the NWT to understand and address the information needs of residents. Water monitoring, data management and communication are pillars of the NWT Water Stewardship Strategy, which is co-developed, implemented and reviewed annually by GNWT-ECC, other GNWT departments and water partners. Continued implementation of the NWT Water Strategy facilitates improved coordination of water monitoring efforts, such as through network partnerships, to ensure information needs are met and to address monitoring gaps in the NWT. Partnerships, including those for community-based water quality monitoring programs, also allow for direct input by NWT communities and stakeholders.</p> <p>GNWT-ECC collaborates with water partners - communities, municipalities, other government departments, academia, Indigenous governments and organizations, neighboring jurisdictions as well as the federal government to ensure that water monitoring efforts are coordinated, and spatial coverage is addressed.</p> <p>GNWT-ECC's Water Monitoring and Stewardship Division works</p>

	<p>closely with MACA, Infrastructure and Forestry to evaluate the needs for hydrologic information for emergency preparedness (flooding, wildfire and maritime transport).</p> <p>GNWT-ECC is currently conducting a water quality network review and will use this assessment to clarify study design and identify gaps for trend analysis. This includes assessing opportunities to improve geographic and temporal coverage, fill the data gaps identified in Section 2.1.2, and enhance the utility of datasets for long-term water quality trend detection and cumulative effects assessments.</p> <p>Given the large spatial scale of the NWT, the GNWT prioritizes cumulative impact monitoring resources towards understanding the causes of concerning trends, so that we can better predict future water status and trends. NWT CIMP funds cumulative impact projects that address the NWT CIMP Monitoring Blueprints. The water Blueprint will be updated in 2026 based on input from decision-makers and water partners to reflect monitoring gaps and information needs of residents with respect to cumulative impact monitoring of water.</p> <p><u>The GNWT commits to:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Completing the water quality network review.• Updating NWT CIMP Monitoring Blueprints for Water in 2026 to reflect the information needs of residents.
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