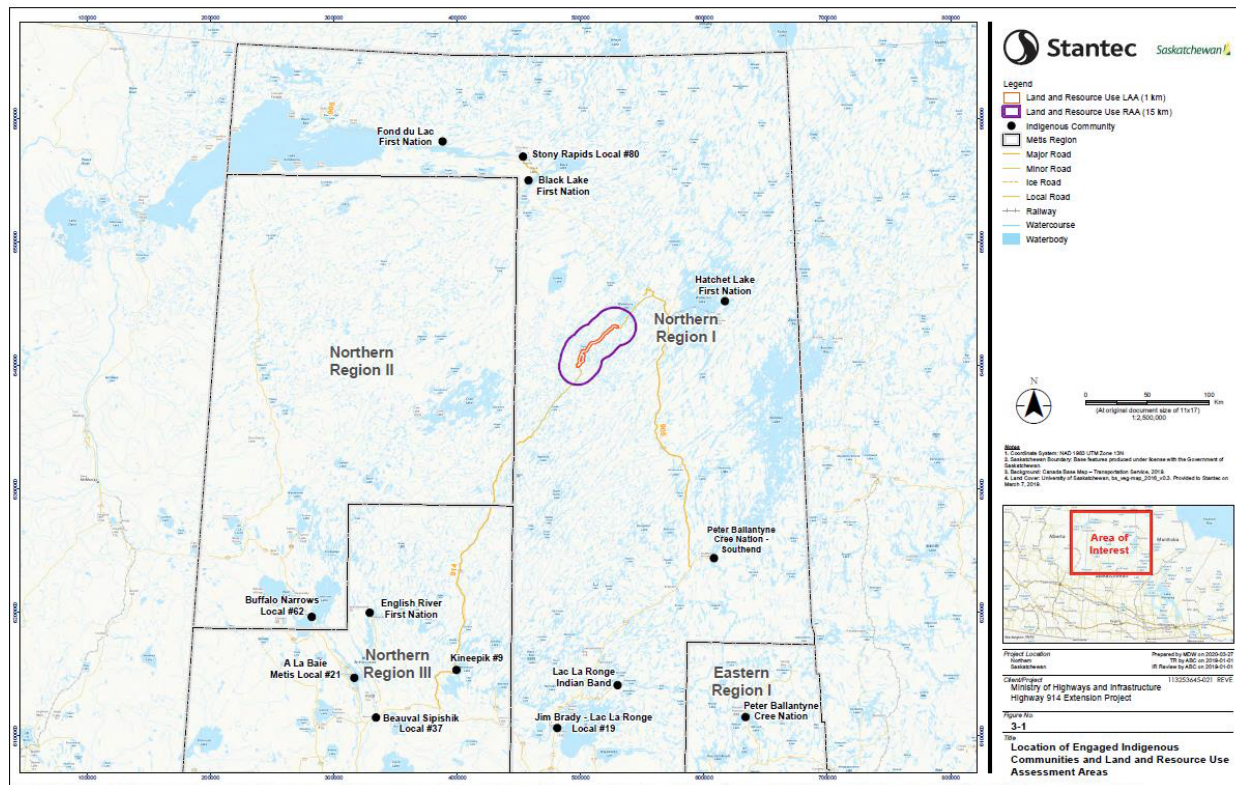


## Summary: Highway 914 Extension Proposal<sup>1</sup>

**Proposed Project:** Approximately 51 to 54 km of public all-weather road in northern Saskatchewan, planned by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Highways. The project consists of an extension of Highway 914 between Cameco’s McArthur River and Cigar Lake uranium mine sites and a by-pass route around Cameco’s McArthur River uranium mine site.



**Background:** The purpose of the project is to create an alternate route for residents in Saskatchewan’s northernmost communities and an efficient travel route for traffic to access mines and exploration sites. Work in support of the project with a preliminary routing was initiated in 2010. Extensive wildfires in 2015 convinced the Ministry of Highways that having two access routes to northern communities would be a good idea for public safety. The Ministry of Highways began moving ahead with project planning and data collection for the environmental assessment, adding an alternative routing option around the existing McArthur River mine. Additional wildlife surveys were conducted in 2015/16. Review of the current project proposal began in 2016 and community engagement began in 2017.

<sup>1</sup> Based on information provided by Saskatchewan Ministry of Highways, January 2021, and updates provided by Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment and Ya' thi Néné Land and Resources, May 2021.



**Current status:** The project is in the preliminary planning stage. Two potential routing options (both about 50km) are being assessed. One route runs through the McArthur River mine property, and the other includes a 14 km by-pass around the property. The final Environmental Impact Statement was submitted to the Ministry of Environment in spring 2020, and their technical review comments were received in fall 2020. The public review period is expected in summer or fall 2021. No construction has occurred and no timeline for detailed design or construction has been established.

**Consultation and Engagement:** During the initial round of consultation and engagement, meetings were held with 22 groups located in 12 communities across northern Saskatchewan, including the Prince Albert Grand Council. The environmental assessment focused on regulatory concerns and considered issues raised by Indigenous peoples, stakeholders and the public. Potential environmental effects were assessed for woodland caribou in the Boreal Shield region, specifically changes in habitat, movement and mortality risk. This included the potential direct effect of habitat loss on caribou and assessment of habitat disturbance. No effects assessment specifically for barren-ground caribou was conducted.

Mitigation measures proposed for woodland caribou and other wildlife species include:

- avoiding construction activity between January 15 and April 30 each year, when possible,
- avoiding blasting during caribou calving period (May 1 – June 30), when possible, and suspending blasting when caribou are within 500m
- temporarily suspending construction if any species at risk or species of management concern, including caribou, are encountered within or near the road right-of-way,
- developing a Wildlife Mitigation and Monitoring Plan, and
- developing a Caribou Offset Plan for the northern section of the preferred route.

Negative residual effects on woodland caribou were predicted to be significant because of habitat destruction. The Ministry of Highways considers the “offset measures plan” sufficient to compensate for this lost habitat and to remove the potential threat to the long-term viability of the woodland caribou population that habitat loss might produce. However, final approvals may require additional effort by the proponent.

In 2020, the Environmental Assessment & Stewardship Branch of the Ministry of Environment requested an additional round of community consultations, which began early in 2021. The Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board (BQCMB) and Ya' thi Néné Land and Resources have separately recommended that potential effects on barren-ground caribou also be assessed.

**Next steps:** Additional community meetings and distribution of information packages were underway in spring 2021. Public review of the Final Environmental Impact Statement is currently expected in fall 2021 where the BQCMB and others will have additional opportunity to provide comments. A decision on the project by the Minister may occur during winter 2021-22.

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