

GLENCORE

Respecting First Nations' Rights through Clear Communication.

Fisheries Resource Impact Study



Challenge

In 2013, Glencore Canada Corporation amended their operating permit under the Environmental Management Act to facilitate the discharge of treated water into Babine Lake.

First Nations have relied on the fisheries resources in the region since time immemorial for subsistence, social, ceremonial and economic purposes. As stewards of their environment, First Nations engage in the permitting process to ensure sustainability of this valued resource.

Background

Bell Mine is a decommissioned open pit copper mine located on Newman Peninsula within Babine Lake. The closure plan for the mine requires continued management of waters collected on site through in-pit storage. The permit amendment facilitated the treatment and discharge of excess waters.

As British Columbia's largest natural freshwater lake Babine Lake serves as the most important nursery and rearing habitat for sockeye salmon within the Skeena River system. Protection of this valued resource was paramount from all perspectives—Glencore's, provincial and federal regulators, the local communities, and First Nations.

Project

EcoMetrix specializes in the assessment of water quality and fisheries resource impacts associated with mine activities. We understand the regulatory process and requirements under the Environmental Management Act. More so, we understand the importance of First Nations engagement within the assessment process.

We met with First Nations at the onset of the assessment to ensure our understanding of their unique relationship with the environment. Members of our team joined the local community during the annual salmon harvest to learn from their traditional knowledge. We engaged throughout the assessment to share information and to solicit their input to ensure common understanding and agreement.

We undertook a series of field investigations to characterize baseline conditions and to delineate fisheries resources. We utilized mathematical models to quantify the potential change in water quality under various discharge scenarios, and quantified discharge limits to protect the environment.

Subsequent monitoring confirmed the results of our assessment and demonstrated continued protection of the aquatic resource.

Outcome

A clear understanding of the community's customs and concerns enabled us to achieve a solution that respected First Nation's aboriginal right to the fisheries resources within Babine Lake while also achieving Glencore's obligations to manage the Bell Mine site and protect the environment.

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