



THE CORPORATION OF DELTA

COUNCIL REPORT

REGULAR MEETING

To: Mayor and Council
From: Office of Climate Action and Environment
Date: July 3, 2008

South Fraser Perimeter Road Environmental Assessment Update

The following report has been reviewed and endorsed by the Chief Administrative Officer.

■ RECOMMENDATION:

THAT this report be received for information.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to present an update on the Environmental Assessment process for South Fraser Perimeter Road.

BACKGROUND:

Pre-application activities for the Environmental Assessment of the South Fraser Perimeter Road began in February 2003 which started the process of conducting studies to obtain the necessary information to make a formal application for Environmental Assessment. The South Fraser Perimeter Road is subject to a coordinated review under the *British Columbia Environmental Assessment Act* as well as the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*. The Environmental Assessment application was formally accepted for review by the Environmental Assessment Office on October 10, 2006.

Staff has been participating on an inter-agency Environmental Assessment Office Working Group during the Environmental Assessment review and has provided regular updates to Council throughout the Environmental Assessment process. Delta has made a number of submissions of comments and letters to both the Environmental Assessment Office and

Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency detailing Delta's concerns and requests relating to the proposed project. Copies of reports to Council have been posted on Delta's website including details of the Environmental Assessment application and Delta's comments on the application. Most recently a report to Council outlining staff comments on the draft Project Assessment Report was received.

DISCUSSION:

PROJECT ASSESSMENT REPORT

The Project Assessment Report is a strategic-level evaluation of the project, which concentrates on the significant issues that need to be addressed as a basis for a political approval-in-principle decision. If the project is approved, an Environmental Assessment Certificate is issued. The Project Assessment Report is a 144 page document plus a number of appendices that identify project related issues and the proposed mitigation and compensation items for each of the potential project related impacts or effects. This report which recommends the approval of the project was submitted to the Minister of Environment and Minister of Community Development for review on June 27, 2008. The Ministers have up to 45 days to approve or not approve the project.

NEW DOCUMENTS POSTED ON EAO WEBSITE

The BC Environmental Assessment Office (www.eao.gov.bc.ca) has recently posted new documents on the South Fraser Perimeter Road project website on the topic of discussions between Gateway, Environment Canada and Transport Canada about potential impacts to Burns Bog and measures to avoid or mitigate impacts. This information was included in the report provided to the Ministers. The five documents are:

1.0 Memorandum from Gateway to BC Environmental Assessment Office dated April 22, 2008: This memo provides an overview of the proposed alignment shift west of Crescent Slough, rationale for the proposed alignment change, the change in the assessed impacts and mitigation and compensation proposals.

It is noted that the change in the alignment is a shift of approximately 60 meters to the west of the previous alignment. The memo contains a map which is included as Attachment A to this report. This proposed change was developed in response to Environment Canada's letter of November 19, 2007. The alignment shift results in an additional loss of 8 ha of farmed agricultural land and the avoidance of impacts to 6.3 ha of Bog forest. There is also aquatic and riparian habitat impacts from South Fraser Perimeter Road on Crescent Slough.

Mitigation and compensation requirements noted include the Agricultural Enhancement Strategy which includes the enhancement of the irrigation system and farm vehicle safety improvements. Fisheries impacts will be compensated for by currently proposed compensation projects.

2.0 Letter from Gateway to Transport Canada and the BC Environmental Assessment Office dated June 4, 2008. This letter is an update on the additional work done by Gateway to address Environment Canada's concerns regarding Burns Bog, wildlife and wildlife habitat and potential cumulative effects. It is explained that the shift of the alignment to west of Crescent Slough was conducted to address the footprint effects to bog hydrological values. Further

commitments to hydrology mitigation measures are also provided. It is noted that Gateway will not commence pre-load activities around Burns Bog until decision making authorities have reviewed and are satisfied with the status of the hydrology mitigation design. Gateway notes that additional air quality studies have shown that no adverse effects of particulate matter deposition on Burns Bog are expected and there are no likely significant residual effects to Burns Bog. It is stated that the proposed shift of the alignment west of Crescent Slough also significantly reduces potential effects to wildlife and vegetation. Residual and cumulative effects to significant ecological values identified by Environment Canada have been reduced to "low to negligible" with the exception being for Sandhill Cranes for which residual effects have been identified as "low to moderate". This has been addressed with a mitigation monitoring plan that addresses potential uncertainties.

The Delta Farmers' Institute has responded to this letter noting their concerns regarding the additional impact to the farm parcels in this area and pointing out the fact that with the exception of the Delta owned parcel, the land between South Fraser Perimeter Road and the Burns Bog Conservancy Area is agricultural land in the Agricultural Land Reserve. It is the Delta Farmers' Institute's position that the act of moving the alignment to meet Environment Canada's objectives of reducing impacts to hydrology and wildlife and vegetation will be futile if this land is actively developed for agriculture.

3.0 Letter from Summit Environmental Consultants to Gateway dated June 12, 2008: This letter report is an assessment of the footprint and severance and isolation effects for the current proposed alignment of South Fraser Perimeter Road west of Crescent Slough. It is noted in this report that with the new proposed alignment, the same amount of agricultural land is impacted as with previous alignments; however the amount of the highest quality farmland impacted (Class 1 improved) is increased by 6.7 hectares with an alignment west of Crescent Slough. In addition there will be an additional impact of the severance of approximately 1.6 hectares of agricultural land between South Fraser Perimeter Road and Crescent Slough due to setbacks of the road from the slough. The South Fraser Perimeter Road also isolates agricultural land that is east of Crescent Slough, however a farm vehicle overpass is proposed. Specific impacts to the two farms directly impacted by the shift are also discussed identifying the fact that there will be additional constraints on manure management and loss of forage production.

4.0 Letter from Gateway to the BC Environmental Assessment Office dated June 16, 2008: This letter describes the consultation activities with the Delta agricultural community during the South Fraser Perimeter Road Environmental Assessment period. It is noted that between January 2nd and June 9th 2008, Gateway has held 19 meetings with farming representatives. This includes meeting with the Delta Farmers' Institute, Agricultural Land Commission and Staff, Corporation of Delta and Agricultural Landowners.

5.0 Revised Cumulative Effects Assessment dated June 18, 2008: This is an update to the originally submitted Cumulative Effects Assessment that was part of the Environmental Assessment Application. Updates were done in response to agency comments including Environment Canada and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency. Fourteen Valued Ecosystem Components were assessed for cumulative effects with historical, current and planned projects. This includes potential cumulative effects from Terminal 2 as requested by Delta and other agencies during the review of the Environmental Assessment application. The final conclusion of the assessment is that for all but one of the potential cumulative impacts (indirect impacts to wildlife habitat – zone of influence) the cumulative impact is considered negligible, low or low-moderate. For the indirect impacts to wildlife habitat the cumulative impact was considered moderate.

NEXT STEPS

As noted previously, the Environmental Assessment Certificate is currently pending a decision by the Ministers which is expected by late July or early August. Staff will report back to Council once a decision is made regarding an environmental certificate with the details of the conditions and commitments attached to the certificate if it is issued.

CONCLUSION:

An update on the South Fraser Perimeter Road Environmental Assessment process is provided for information. The Project Assessment Report has been referred to Ministers for a decision which is expected late July or early August. New documents detailing the proposed shift of the alignment and the impacts of this shift have been posted on the Environmental Assessment Office website and link to these documents has been added to Delta's website.

Mike Brotherston
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ATTACHMENT:

- A. New proposed alignment of South Fraser Perimeter Road along the western edge of Burns Bog