Yamoga Building, Old Airport Road
PO Box 1, Fort Good Hope NT X0E 0H0

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January 23, 2026 File: S25X-006

Mark Cliffe-Phillips
Mackenzie Valley Review Board
200 Scotia Centre
Box 938, 5102-50th Avenue
Yellowknife NT X1A 2N7

Sent by email

Dear Mark Cliffe-Phillips,

Re: Government of the Northwest Territories – Department of Industry, Tourism, and Investment – Notice of Preliminary Screening Determination – Application for Land Use Permit – Miscellaneous – Canol Heritage Trail Mulching Mile 1-25 near Norman Wells, NT.

The Sahtu Land and Water Board (Board) met on January 22, 2026, and considered the Application Package from Government of the Northwest Territories – Department of Industry, Tourism, and Investment (GNWT-ITI) for Land Use Permit (Permit) S25X-006 for the Canol Heritage Trail Mulching Mile 1 – 25, in accordance with the *Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act* (MVRMA).

The Board conducted a preliminary screening based on the public record for the proceeding. Based on the evidence provided, the Board is satisfied the screening has been completed according to section 125 of the MVRMA and has decided **not to refer** the Project to environmental assessment. The Board's Preliminary Screening Determination and Reasons for Decision, as required by section 121 of the MVRMA, is attached.

If the Board does not receive notice of referral to environmental assessment, it can proceed with issuance of Permit S25X-006 on February 2, 2026.

The Board and staff look forward to continued communications throughout the pause period. Please contact Paul Dixon via email or at (867) 598 2413 ext. 225 with any questions or concerns regarding this letter.

Yours sincerely,



Valerie Gordon
Chair, Sahtu Land and Water Board

BCC'd to: Tulit'a Distribution List
Kacee Hunter, Manager – GNWT-ITI

Attached: Preliminary Screening Determination and Reasons for Decision

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Preliminary Screening Determination and Reasons for Decision

Land Use Permit Application	
File Number	S25X-006
Company	Government of the Northwest Territories – Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment
Project	Canol Heritage Trail Mulching
Location	Canol Trail – Near Norman Wells, NT
Activity	Miscellaneous
Date of Decision	January 22, 2026

1.0 Decision

In accordance with subsection 124(1) of the *Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act* (MVRMA), the Sahtu Land and Water Board (SLWB or Board) met on January 22, 2026, to make a preliminary screening determination on the Application from Government of the Northwest Territories – Department of Industry, Tourism, and Investment (Applicant) for Land Use Permit S25X-006 (Permit)[1] for the Canol Heritage Trail Mulching (Project).[2]

[1]See SLWB Online Registry www.slwb.com for S25X-006 – Application Package – Dec10_25.

[2] The Project is the Canol Heritage Trail Mulching , which is the proposed development, where "development" is defined in Part 5 of the MVRMA as:

"any undertaking, or any part or extension of an undertaking, that is carried out on land or water and includes an acquisition of lands pursuant to the *Historic Sites and Monuments Act* and measures carried out by a department or agency of government leading to the establishment of a park subject to the *Canada National Parks Act* or the establishment of a park under a territorial law."

The Board has decided not to refer the proposed Project to the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board (the Review Board) for Environmental Assessment because, based on the evidence, it is the Board's opinion that the proposed Project will not have a significant adverse impact on the environment or be a cause of public concern

The Board's determination, including reasons for its decision, are detailed in sections 3.0 and 4.0.

2.0 List of Defined Terms and Acronyms

Applicant	Government of the Northwest Territories – Department of Industry, Tourism, and Investment
Application	The complete application package submitted by the Applicant Land Use Permit (S25X-006)
Board	Sahtu Land and Water Board
CHT	Canol Heritage Trail
CRP	Closure and Reclamation Plan
EA	Environmental Assessment
GNWT	Government of the Northwest Territories
GNWT-ECC	Government of the Northwest Territories – Environment and Climate Change
IR	Information Request
Inspector	An Inspector designated under subsection 84(1) of the *Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act*
LWBs	Land and Water Boards of the Mackenzie Valley
MVRMA	*Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act*
Minister	Minister of Northern and Arctic Affairs, OR Minister of the Government of the Northwest Territories – Environment and Climate Change, as the case may be
OHWM	Ordinary High-Water Mark
ORS	Online Review System (www.new.onlinereviewsystem.ca)
Party	As per the LWB *Rules of Procedure*, an applicant, a person, or an organization participating in the regulatory proceeding for the Application.
PCI	Proposed Conservation Initiative
Permit	Land Use Permit S25X-006
Project	Canol Heritage Trail Mulching, which is the proposed development (as defined in Part 5 of the MVRMA).[3]
GNWT-ECE-PWNHC	Government of the Northwest Territories – Education, Culture, and Employment – Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Center
Review Board	Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board
SCP	Spill Contingency Plan

[3] "development" is defined in Part 5 of the MVRMA as:
"any undertaking, or any part or extension of an undertaking, that is carried out on land or water and includes an acquisition of lands pursuant to the *Historic Sites and Monuments Act* and measures carried out by a department or agency of government leading to the establishment of a park subject to the *Canada National Parks Act* or the establishment of a park under a territorial law."

SLWB or Board	Sahtu Land and Water Board
Standard Permit Conditions	LWB *Standard Land Use Permit Conditions Template*
TK	Traditional Knowledge
WMP	Waste Management Plan

3.0 Background and Scope of Screening

The Applicant submitted their Application on December 1, 2025. The Application was deemed complete on December 11, 2025, and sent out the same day for public review. The purpose of this Application is to mulch mile 1-25 of the Canol Heritage Trail (CHT) near the Town of Norman Wells, NT. The Applicant has requested a permit term of five years to complete the land-use activity. The Applicant anticipates that the activity will start in March 2026 and take two weeks to complete.

The Applicant has conducted engagement with Indigenous organizations that fall within the Tulit'a District of the Sahtu that include the following organizations:

- Norman Wells Land Corporation/TGG Government
- Fort Norman Metis Land Corporation
- Tulit'a Land Corporation
- Tulit'a Renewable Resource Council (TK Study)

In accordance with paragraph 125(1)(a) of the MVRMA, the Board must conduct a preliminary screening of the proposed Project to determine and report to the Review Board whether, in its opinion, the proposed Project might have a significant adverse impact on the environment, or might be a cause of public concern. The details of the Board's analysis are set out in section 4.0 below.

3.1 Scope of Screening:

The Canol Heritage Trail Mulching Program aims to address the dense overgrowth that has made traveling the trail difficult for hunters, and other users of the PCI area by mulching mile 1-25 using mechanized machines to re-establish the original trail and enable the future hand crews to maintain the selected portion of the trail. The project will be accessed through the creation of a spur ice road crossing over the Mackenzie River utilizing already established ice roads to reach the crossing location.

3.2 Public Record and Regulatory Proceeding

To assist the Board in its preliminary screening determination for the Project, the Board distributed the Application and a draft Permit for public review on December 11, 2025, inviting reviewers to provide comments and recommendations on the Applications and the preliminary screening (e.g., on impacts and mitigation measures) using the Online Review System (ORS). Comments were due December 24, 2025, with responses from the Applicant due January 8, 2026. The Board received comments and recommendations from Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC), Government of Canada – Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), and Government of the Northwest Territories – Education, Culture, and Employment – Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre (GWNT-ECE-PWNHC).

Since there were no requests to extend the reviewer comment deadline, the Board is satisfied that a reasonable period of notice was given to affected communities and First Nations, as required by subsection 63(2) of the MVRMA.

The Board is also satisfied that notice of the Application was provided to the Délı̨nę Got'ine Government (DGG) and that a reasonable period of time was provided for the DGG to make representations to the Board in accordance with section 63 of the MVRMA.

4.0 Potential Impacts and Proposed Mitigations

All Parties have had an opportunity to provide recommendations to the Board regarding draft conditions. In finalizing the conditions, the Board will consider these recommendations and all of the evidence provided through the regulatory proceeding.

Table 1 below summarizes:

- the potential impacts of the proposed Project;
- the concerns that were identified during the regulatory proceeding and how the Applicant addressed those concerns;
- the proposed and potential mitigations for the potential impacts; and
- the Board's analysis of the potential impacts and proposed mitigations.

Table 1: Potential Impacts and Proposed Mitigations for the Proposed Project

Potential Impact	Activity	Proposed Mitigations *Description of measures to reduce potential impacts, including consideration of cumulative impacts and climate change.*	Board Analysis and Determination
Disturbance to Ground, Permafrost, Vegetation, Archaeological Sites, Private Property	• Use of Heavy Equipment • Refueling of Equipment • Equipment Maintenance Activities • Transfer, Storage, and Use of Petroleum Products and/or Chemicals • Waste Disposal • Clearing of Land	The Applicant proposed the following mitigations in the Application: • Clearing of timber, brush and vegetation will occur in the winter when the ground is frozen. This will minimize soil compaction and will prevent excessive erosion or sediment runoff. Clearing will be limited to a 12' wide corridor along the existing trail. In order to reduce impact on additional vegetation the contractor will stay within the boundary of the CHT existing corridor. Selective clearing and forestry mulching will be employed to ensure minimal disturbance to the land. Vegetation will remain intact in sensitive areas near water courses, creeks, gullies and riparian areas. • The project is taking place in the winter and will have minimal disturbance to the land as the ground and permafrost will be frozen. The project will take place on a former pipeline service road and will not occur on undisturbed land. • The project is occurring in winter on an existing trail corridor that was formerly a pipeline service road, permafrost may have been disturbed during the initial construction of the road in 1941, however given this is mulching encroaching vegetation on an existing trail no to minimal disturbance to permafrost will occur. The Board has standard permit conditions that are typically used to mitigate the identified potential impacts. These standard conditions include: • LOCATION OF ACTIVITIES	Based on the described mitigations, it is the Board's opinion that the proposed activities will not have a significant adverse impact on the environment or be a cause of public concern. • The areas impacted are anticipated to be discrete and small. • Impacts are temporary. • The Applicant's commitments and conditions of the Permit are sufficient to mitigate potential impacts.

Potential Impact	Activity	Proposed Mitigations *Description of measures to reduce potential impacts, including consideration of cumulative impacts and climate change.*	Board Analysis and Determination
		• PARALLEL WATERCOURSE SETBACK • PARALLEL ROADS • WIDTH RIGHT-OF-WAY • INSPECT LOCATIONS • SEASONAL SHUT DOWN • USE APPROVED EQUIPMENT • DOGLEG APPROACHES • MEANDER LINES • DETOURS AND CROSSINGS • REMOVE WIRE • WINTER ROADS • TREE SCREEN • CLEAN WORK AREA • NATURAL DRAINAGE • PROGRESSIVE EROSION CONTROL • REPAIR EROSION • OFF-ROAD VEHICLE TRAVEL • PREVENTION OF RUTTING • SUSPEND OVERLAND TRAVEL • VEHICLE MOVEMENT FREEZE-UP • STREAM BANKS • MINIMIZE APPROACH • EQUIPMENT: WATERCOURSE BUFFER • EXCAVATION SETBACK • ARCHAEOLOGICAL BUFFER • SITE DISTURBANCE • SITE DISCOVERY AND NOTIFICATION • MINIMIZE AREA CLEARED	

Potential Impact	Activity	**Proposed Mitigations** *Description of measures to reduce potential impacts, including consideration of cumulative impacts and climate change.*	Board Analysis and Determination
		• CLOSURE AND RECLAMATION PLAN • PRE-CONSTRUCTION PROFILES • PROGRESSIVE RECLAMATION • TRAILS RESTORATION • FINAL CLEANUP AND RESTORATION • PRIVATE PROPERTY SETBACK • INITIAL NOTIFICATION - CONTACT INSPECTOR • SEASONAL NOTIFICATION – CONTACT INSPECTOR • IDENTIFY AGENT • REPORTS BEFORE SEASONAL REMOVAL • REPORTS BEFORE FINAL REMOVAL • RESPONSIBILITY FOR REMEDIATION COSTS • DISPLAY PERMIT • COPY OF PERMIT • RESUBMIT PLAN • ENGAGEMENT PLAN • SUMMARY OF CHANGES	
Contamination of Soil, Groundwater and Waterbodies		The Applicant proposed the following mitigations in the Application: • The area where mulching will take place will commence on land past and above the highwater mark of 30m from the Mackenzie River. • All equipment used for the project will undergo thorough maintenance to ensure optimal functionality. Equipment will only be running when necessary, equipment that needs to be 'warmed up' will be done so on a scheduled basis. • As equipment will have undergone thorough maintenance it will operate efficiently during the project. While transporting equipment,	Based on the described mitigations, it is the Board's opinion that the proposed activities will not have a significant adverse impact on the environment or be a cause of public concern. • The areas impacted are anticipated to be discrete and small. • Impacts are temporary. • The Applicant's commitments and conditions of the Permit are

Potential Impact	Activity	Proposed Mitigations *Description of measures to reduce potential impacts, including consideration of cumulative impacts and climate change.*	Board Analysis and Determination
		idle times will be reduced by ensuring equipment is clear to proceed rather than having it sit and wait (i.e. Ice crossing will be constructed prior to mulcher being brought to location to 'walk across' to CHT.) • Any transfer of fuels will be done so on level ground and will have spill kits present. In the unlikely event of a spill, any contaminated snow will be removed from site and disposed at the Norman Wells Landfill. Road traffic will only be limited to the 3 pieces of equipment (snowcat, dozer, and mulcher) needed to complete the project. • The project will occur during the winter therefore shallow groundwater will be frozen, including permafrost. There will be no impact to the water table, changes in water quality, or temperature changes. Any clearing near sensitive water features will employ the use of a riparian buffer. • Prior to project commencement a pre-project meeting will be held with contractor to discuss boundaries and avoidance of riparian and sensitive areas. The only water feature that is close to the proposed mulching area is Heart Lake at Mile 8, and equipment will not do any mulching around the lake where the buffer is less than 100m. • Refuelling on site will take place, therefore portable catch trays will be employed during refuelling. Spill kits will be readily available in the unlikely event a spill occurs, in addition contractor is to follow spill contingency plan and protocols while refuelling. Refueling will take place on stable ground and will use the smallest necessary area to refuel, avoiding refueling in areas that have water features. In the unlikely event of a spill, the area will be covered in snow so any	sufficient to mitigate potential impacts.

Potential Impact	Activity	Proposed Mitigations *Description of measures to reduce potential impacts, including consideration of cumulative impacts and climate change.*	Board Analysis and Determination
		contaminated snow will be removed from site and disposed of at the Norman Wells Landfill. The Board has standard permit conditions that are typically used to mitigate the identified potential impacts. These standard conditions include: • STORAGE ON ICE • CONSTRUCT ICE BRIDGES / SNOWFILLS • CHEMICALS • WASTE CHEMICAL DISPOSAL • WASTE PETROLEUM DISPOSAL • NOTIFICATION OF SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL • WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN • GARBAGE CONTAINER • REPAIR LEAKS • SECONDARY CONTAINMENT – REFUELING • FUEL CONTAINMENT • MAXIMUM FUEL ON SITE • SEAL OUTLET • SPILL CONTINGENCY PLAN • SPILL RESPONSE • DRIP TRAYS • CLEAN UP SPILLS • REPORT SPILLS	
Water drawdown Fish/Fish Habitat Disturbance	• Water Use for Ice Crossing	The Applicant proposed the following mitigations in the Application: • The Applicant estimated that daily water use would be below the 99m^3 threshold for a Type B Water Licence. Drawdowns could occur but are expected to be temporary and negligible.	Based on the described mitigations, it is the Board's opinion that the proposed activities will not have a significant adverse impact on the environment or be a cause of public concern.

Potential Impact	Activity	Proposed Mitigations *Description of measures to reduce potential impacts, including consideration of cumulative impacts and climate change.*	Board Analysis and Determination
Wildlife/Wildlife Habitat		• Applicant will follow LWB Method for Determining Winter Water Source Capacity for Small-Scale Developments and Framework for Assessing the Ecological Flow Requirements to Support Fisheries in Canada (i.e. The proposed activities will utilize no more than 0.0006 m3 /s of instantaneous river water flow at any given time.) • A combination of existing ice crossing and the construction of an ice crossing will be employed to safely transport equipment from Norman Wells to CHT. Contractor will drill for ice thickness to ensure ice over crossings will be adequate for safe transport. Equipment will 'walk' across crossings to ensure safe transportation and minimal disturbance to ice. Equipment will only be transported if ice is thick enough to do so. • Water pulled from the river uses screens with 5/16 sized holes installed over intake hoses to prevent the suction of fish and disturbance to fish habitat. In the unlikely event of fish loss or habitat disturbance, DFO will be contacted. • Some minor disruption will occur as the mulching project progresses through the corridor, however this disruption will only be limited to 2 weeks of disruption at a time when not all wildlife will be present/using the corridor. The Board has standard permit conditions that are typically used to mitigate the identified potential impacts. These standard conditions	• The areas impacted are anticipated to be discrete and small. • Impacts are temporary. • The Applicant's commitments and conditions of the Permit are sufficient to mitigate potential impacts.

Potential Impact	Activity	**Proposed Mitigations** *Description of measures to reduce potential impacts, including consideration of cumulative impacts and climate change.*	Board Analysis and Determination
		include: • REMOVE ICE BRIDGES/SNOWFILLS • HABITAT DAMAGE • MIGRATORY BIRD NEST DISTURBANCE	

4.1 Consideration of Potential Impacts

Based on the potential impacts and proposed mitigations identified above in Table 1, the Board considered whether the Project might have a significant adverse impact on the environment. In general, impacts of the Project on the environment can be mitigated through the use of standard permit conditions and/or project-specific conditions established by the Board as per the LWB *Standard Process for Creating New Conditions*. These conditions may include requirements for management and monitoring plans that provide detailed information regarding the implementation of mitigation measures and the evaluation of their effectiveness.

the use of permit conditions of two general types:

1. conditions in the existing Permit, including requirements for management and monitoring plans, with revisions where necessary; and
2. new or unique conditions that may be needed to mitigate potential impacts of the changes to the Project that may not be addressed by the conditions in the existing Permit, and which may be from the Board's standard conditions list or established by the Board as per the LWB *Standard Process for Creating New Conditions*.

These conditions may include requirements for management and monitoring plans that provide detailed information regarding the implementation of mitigation measures and the evaluation of their effectiveness.

A draft Permit was circulated for review during the regulatory proceeding, and all Parties were given the opportunity to provide comments and recommendations on the draft conditions. In finalizing the conditions, the Board will consider all of the evidence provided through the regulatory proceeding.

4.2 Consideration of Public Concern

In addition to considering the potential impacts of the Project, the Board considered whether the Project might be a cause of public concern.

Based on the evidence provided during the regulatory proceeding, the Board did not identify any comments or issues that indicate that the Project is a cause of public concern.

5.0 Conclusion

The Board has reviewed all the evidence received during the regulatory process with respect to the Preliminary Screening of the proposed Project. Based on the evidence, it is the Board's opinion that the proposed Project will not have a significant adverse impact on the environment or be a cause of public concern, as set out in paragraph 125(1)(a) of the MVRMA. The Board has therefore decided not to refer the proposed Project to Environmental Assessment



January 23, 2026

Valerie Gordon, Chair
Sahtu Land and Water Board

Date