

## **Project Description - Summary**

### **Project 4 - All-Season Road Connecting Berens River to Poplar River First Nation**

**Prepared for:**

**Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency**

**Submitted by:**

**Manitoba Floodway & East Side Road Authority**

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## Figure

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Figure 1. P4-All Season Road from Berens River to Poplar River First Nation

# **1 GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONTACTS**

## **1.1 Nature of the Project and Proposed Location**

Historically, communities such as Poplar River First Nation (PRFN) and Berens River First Nation (BRFN) and Northern Affairs Community (NAC), on the east side of Lake Manitoba, have relied primarily on winter road and air travel to transport people and goods. In 2008, the Government of Manitoba announced a strategic initiative to provide improved, safer and more reliable transportation services to connect the remote communities on the east side of Lake Winnipeg with the rest of Manitoba. The Manitoba Floodway and East Side Road Authority (MFESRA) was established as a provincial Crown Agency to manage the East Side Transportation Initiative with the intent of increasing transportation opportunities for communities on the east side of Lake Winnipeg

The first all-season road initiated in this regional transportation network is under construction, and will connect Provincial Road 304 (near Hollow Water First Nation) to Berens River First Nation and Berens River Northern Affairs Community (NAC).

MFESRA is now proposing to construct an all-season road extending north from that road, beginning at the junction at the English Rapids Road immediately south of Berens River, to Poplar River First Nation (PRFN) (Figure 1). The proposed alignment consists of 94.1 km of all-season road on a new right of way on provincial Crown land. At the PRFN reserve boundary, the all-season road will connect to a 410 m Community Access Road (CAR) that is anticipated to be built on the reserve. The purpose of the proposed project is to connect PRFN to the all season road currently under construction, providing year-round vehicular access for the community to the southern road network.

The all-season road will be a gravel-surface public highway, with a design width of 10 m, and a design speed of 100 km/h, and a posted speed of 90 km/h. It will be east of the current winter road alignment, with four major water crossings (bridges) over the Berens, Etomami, North Etomami, and Leaf Rivers.

## **1.2 Proponent Information**

### **1.2.1 Name of the Project**

The project name is “Project 4 – All-Season Road from Berens River to Poplar River First Nation” (P4 - ASR).

### **1.2.2 Name of the Proponent**

The proponent of the proposed P4-ASR Project is the Manitoba Floodway and East Side Road Authority (MFESRA). The Province of Manitoba will provide funding for the project.

### **1.2.3 Address of the Proponent**

The address of the proponent is:

Manitoba Floodway and East Side Road Authority  
200-155 Carlton Street  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
R3C 3H8

### **1.2.4 Chief Executive Officer**

The Chief Executive Officer for the MFESRA is:

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### **1.2.5 Principal Contact Person**

The principal MFESRA contact person for the project description, and for environmental matters related to the proposed project, is:

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## **1.3 Jurisdictions and Other Parties Consulted**

Poplar River First Nation, Berens River First Nation, and Berens River Northern Affairs Community have been engaged throughout project planning and during preparation of the project description. These communities are in the vicinity of the P4-ASR, and are most likely to be directly affected by the project, and able to provide relevant information. MFESRA has provided a copy of the Project Description to each of these communities.

Discussions on an all weather road network on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, including the road from Berens River to PRFN, have been ongoing since 1999. Those engaged in discussions with MFESRA include other East Side communities, regulatory agencies, Aboriginal leadership organizations industry, and other key stakeholders regarding Participants in these discussions include:

*Other East Side Communities:*

- Bloodvein First Nation
- Hollow Water First Nation
- Pauingassi First Nation
- Little Grand Rapids First Nation
- St. Theresa Point First Nation
- Garden Hill First Nation
- Wasagamack First Nation
- Red Sucker Lake First Nation
- God's Lake Narrows First Nation
- Manto Sipi Cree Nation
- Bunibonibee Cree Nation

*Regulatory Agencies:*

- Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency
- Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada
- Department of Fisheries and Oceans
- Transport Canada
- Environment Canada
- Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship, Winnipeg
- Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship, Northeast Region
- Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs
- Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation

*Other Stakeholders and Organizations*

- Manitoba Metis Federation
- South East Resource Development Council
- Island Lake Tribal Council
- Keewatin Tribal Council
- Manitoba Lodges and Outfitters Association
- Manitoba Trappers Association

## **1.4 Environmental Assessment Requirements**

### **1.4.1 Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012 (Canada)**

The proposed P4 - ASR (94.1 km) is a designated project under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012* (CEAA, 2012), and therefore may require an environmental assessment under the authority of that legislation, subsequent to federal and public review of this Project Description.

### **1.4.2 The Environment Act (Manitoba)**

The proposed P4 - ASR from Berens River to Poplar River First Nation involves 94.1 km of road construction on new right of way on provincial Crown land and requires an Environment Act Licence under The Environment Act of Manitoba as a Class 2 development, under the Classes of Development Regulation pursuant to that legislation.



### **1.4.3 Canada-Manitoba Agreement on Environmental Assessment Cooperation**

The proposed all-season road will be reviewed under the provisions of the Canada/Manitoba Agreement on Environmental Assessment Cooperation (2007). A provincial environmental assessment is required under *The Environment Act* (Manitoba), and an environmental assessment under CEAA, 2012 may also be required, subsequent to the public and regulatory review of this Project Description.

## **1.5 Regulatory Requirements**

In addition to the environmental assessment and licensing requirement under *The Environment Act* (Manitoba) noted above, provincial permits and approvals will be sought as required for road construction, such as vegetation removal, camp development, burning, and quarry development. Provincial legislation includes *The Crown Lands Act*, *The Mines and Minerals Act*, *The Wildfires Act*, *The Dangerous Goods Handling and Transportation Act*, and *The Workplace Safety and Health Act*.

MFESRA will also seek permits and authorizations under other federal legislation, including approvals from Transport Canada under the *Navigation Protection Act*, and authorizations from Fisheries and Oceans Canada under the *Fisheries Act*, for major water crossings. If required, licenses under *The Explosives Act* will be sought from Natural Resources Canada for storage of explosives.

Both provincial and federal regulatory requirements are described in more detail in section 4.3 of this summary.

## **1.6 Regional planning context**

There is no regional environmental study for the area for the proposed P4-ASR, but the area has been subject to a number of regional planning initiatives, that have included environmental considerations.

In 2000, Manitoba launched the East Side Planning Initiative (now known as Wabanong Nakaygum Okimawin, WNO) to bring together local communities, First Nations, industry, and environmental organizations to develop a vision for land and resource use on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. It was expected that the east side process would result in an overall blueprint for the area that would address the boreal forest, protected areas, traditional activities, transportation needs, and economic development.

In 2004, a status report entitled *Promises to Keep* was submitted to government and included recommendations for boreal protection and community development.

In 2007, Manitoba signed an accord with WNO First Nations, reinforcing a foundation for comprehensive traditional area land-use planning, and ultimately, a broad area plan for the east side of Lake Winnipeg. Under the WNO Accord, individual First Nations are developing traditional land use plans. In May, 2011, Poplar River First Nation developed and published Asatiwisipe Aki Management Plan (Poplar River First Nation 2011). The Government of Manitoba subsequently designated the land use planning area identified in the plan through regulation under *The East Side Traditional Lands Planning and Special Protected Areas Act (Manitoba)* in June, 2011 (Regulation 77/2011). The zoning plan contained within the Asatiwisipe Aki Land Use Planning Area specifically allows for an all-season road.

Berens River First Nation has neither identified, nor requested legal designation of a land use planning area and is proceeding with land management planning under the Wabanong Nakaygum Okimawin (WNO) program (Haugh, 2014).

## **2 PROJECT INFORMATION**

### **2.1 Project Overview**

As part of the East Side Transportation Initiative, MFESRA is proposing the construction of Project 4 - an all-season road along the east side of Lake Winnipeg from Berens River to PRFN (P4 – ASR). The proposed P4 - ASR will extend north from the first segment of the Transportation Initiative network – an all-season road from PR 304 to Berens River along the east side of Lake Winnipeg (Project P1), already under construction.

The proposed all-season road will consist of 94.1 km of all-season 2-lane gravel highway on new right of way on provincial Crown land, from the English Rapids Road south of the Berens River to the southern boundary of PRFN (Figure 1), where it will connect with a 410 m CAR anticipated to be built on the reserve. The road will be built as a secondary arterial road, with a design width of 10 m, a design speed of 100 km/h, and a posted speed of 90 km/h. The project will require four bridges over named rivers (Berens River, Etomami River, Northern Etomami River and the Leaf River), as well as culverts for smaller watercourse crossings, and drainage. The alignment crosses undeveloped land in the Boreal Shield Ecozone (Smith 1998), and is located within the Nelson River watershed, draining into Lake Winnipeg via streams and rivers.

The purpose of the P4-ASR is to provide PRFN with year-round vehicular access to the southern road network in Manitoba. The community is currently serviced primarily through winter road access, or by air. Goods may be transported by barge across Lake Winnipeg. Anticipated benefits of the project include: reduction of transportation costs for goods and services; enhanced access to emergency, health and social services; improved linkages between Poplar River and Berens River First Nations; construction employment, training, and enhanced economic opportunities for Poplar River and Berens River First Nations.

### **2.2 Provisions of Regulations Designating Physical Activities**

The proposed all season public road on provincial Crown land is 94.1 km long, and will be located on a new right-of-way. Therefore, s. 25(c) of the *Regulations Designating Physical Activities* (the *Regulations*) pursuant to the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012* (CEAA, 2012), applies:

*s. 25 The construction, operation, decommissioning and abandonment of a new  
(c) all-season public highway that requires a total of 50 km or more of new right of way;*

No other provisions of the *Regulations* apply.

### **2.3 Project Components and Incidental Activities**

The P4-ASR is a new project that will extend north from the all-season road currently under construction from PR 304 near Hollow Water First Nation to Berens River. The completed

segments and the existing winter road network will support the project by providing all season access for some of the construction equipment and materials that will be required for P4-ASR.

The components of the project are:

- All-season road (94.1 km) on new right of way
- Four Bridges at river crossings
- Culverts for stream crossings
- Culverts for drainage equalization
- Temporary Construction bridges and access trails
- Rock Quarries and Granular Borrow Areas (all quarries with production capacity <3 500 000 t/a)
- Temporary Construction Staging Areas and Camps

Activities associated with these components are all integral, and not incidental, to the completion of the designated project.

Through Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs) with MFESRA, Poplar River First Nation and Berens River will conduct clearing, quarry development and rock crushing activities for the proposed P4-ASR (MFESRA, 2014). The conditions of the CBA require MFESRA to retain the ability to direct or influence the carrying out of these activities. Other construction activities will be undertaken under the care and control of MFESRA, either directly through the CBA as pilot projects, or through contractors.

## **2.4 Emissions, Discharges and Wastes**

### **2.4.1 Atmospheric contaminant emissions**

Dust, and combustion and greenhouse gas emissions will result from the operation of vehicles and other equipment and machinery during construction and operation of the ASR. Burning brush piles will generate localized atmospheric emissions. Other localized emissions include blasting residue at quarries or some worksites. Emissions due to air traffic and annual winter road construction are anticipated to decrease once the road access is in place.

### **2.4.2 Liquid Discharges**

There are no processing streams that would result in liquid discharges.

### **2.4.3 Types of Waste and Disposal plans**

Wood from clearing of the right-of-way will first be segregated into usable timber, with the remaining material piled or windrowed for burning on site. Domestic solid waste will be collected in appropriate on-site containment, for later transport to an approved community landfill. Septage waste at construction camps or sites will be stored in approved containers and hauled for disposal and treatment at licensed or approved treatment facilities. Waste petroleum products (e.g., lubricants, oils, greases) derived from construction vehicles and equipment will be collected and stored in designated areas and containers until they can be removed from site for recycling or disposal through a licensed waste disposal/treatment company.

Solid, liquid and hazardous wastes from the road project will be collected, stored, transported, disposed of and/or treated in accordance with *The Environment Act* (Waste Disposal

Regulation), *The Dangerous Goods Handling and Transportation Act* (Dangerous Goods Handling and Transportation Regulation, Environmental Accident Reporting Regulation, and Storage and Handling of Petroleum Products and Allied Products Regulations) and *The Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act*.

## **2.5 Project Phases and Scheduling**

The project will be carried out in four main stages as follows:

1. Planning and Design
2. Pre-construction
3. Construction
4. Operation and Maintenance

The alignment will be divided into segments, and completed sequentially, so that completion of the construction phase at one segment will initiate the pre-construction of the adjacent segment. Construction will commence from both the north and the south ends of the road, and is anticipated to begin in 2016/17, with all-season access in place approximately 10 years after construction begins.

In general, road building construction is not seasonally constrained, but may be scheduled around conditions that provide for better access. Timing constraints are placed on select aspects of the project to protect environmental or infrastructure components. These will be identified as mitigation measures in the environmental assessment and/or stipulated in associated authorizations or approvals.

There are no plans to decommission or abandon the proposed P4-ASR as it will provide all season access for the foreseeable future. After the ASR construction, MFESRA will abandon the existing winter road, by blocking access to the right-of-way. The natural fen and bog conditions of the low-lying terrain along the winter road alignment also inhibit ongoing use or access. MFESRA will provide for re-vegetation where required.

### **2.5.1 Planning and Design**

Planning and design for the proposed P4-ASR involves identifying broad road corridors, possible road alignments within the corridors, selecting the final road alignment and preparing the detailed road design. This includes baseline data collection and analysis for engineering and biophysical environmental factors, and factors related to health and socio-economic conditions, physical and cultural heritage, and the current use of lands and resources by traditional Aboriginal peoples.

### **2.5.2 Pre-Construction**

During the pre-construction stage, detailed design will be completed and environmental protection plans finalized. Equipment, machinery, vehicles, construction materials and supplies will be transported and stockpiled at staging areas in the project location, via the newly constructed road from PR304 to Berens River. Construction supplies and equipment will also be transported to the northern terminus of the all-season road via the winter road or by barge across Lake Winnipeg. Other preconstruction activities in this phase include surveying and flagging, and geotechnical investigations.

### **2.5.3 Construction**

Construction on the road will begin with vegetation clearing along the right of way. Organic materials stripped from the surface will be stockpiled for later use on road shoulders or for site reclamation. Further site preparation will include contouring and levelling, and blasting of rock outcrops. Materials, including rock fill aggregate and composite material, will be loaded, hauled, dumped, spread, graded and compacted, and trimmed and shaped before final gravelling. Other activities will include placement of geotextile fabric, riprap, roadway signs, erosions and sedimentation control and seeding of ditches. Bridges and culverts will be installed at water crossings to allow for water flow and fish passage, and at other locations to maintain natural hydraulic equivalency.

During the construction stage, equipment marshalling and lay down areas, and construction camps will be prepared, and rock quarries and borrow areas will also be cleared and made ready. Activities to establish and operate these components will include vegetation clearing, site contouring and levelling, site security features, waste collection and disposal, and storage of petroleum products. Quarry activities will also include blasting and crushing.

All facilities and work areas including quarry and borrow areas, and temporary facilities not needed for future maintenance activities will be demobilized following construction, using salvaged aggregate material and stockpiled topsoil. Natural re-vegetation will be monitored and supplemented by seeding or planting as required.

### **2.5.4 Operation and Maintenance**

Maintenance activities for the all-season road include routine scheduled grading, topping the road with additional aggregate, snow-clearing, and management of vegetation and culvert cleanouts. Road salt and other ice melting and dust suppression chemicals may be used to control dust and ice on the road surface.

## **3 PROJECT LOCATION**

### **3.1 Location Description**

The proposed all-season road Project is on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, near the Berens River First Nation (approximately 270 km by air north of Winnipeg). The P4-ASR begins approximately 500 m east of the boundary of the BRFN reserve, and extends north approximately 94.1 km from the English Rapids Road on the south side of the Berens River to the PRFN reserve boundary (approximately 400 km by air north of Winnipeg).

#### **3.1.1 Coordinates**

Coordinates for the proposed P4-ASR are:

Southern terminus (from junction with English Rapids Road immediately south of the Berens River):

Latitude: 52° 19' 08.9832" N

Longitude: 96° 54' 23.0081 " W

Northern terminus on provincial Crown land (at Poplar River First Nation boundary):

Latitude: 52° 59' 02.6556" N

Longitude: 97° 14' 56.4259 " W

### **3.1.2 Map**

The proposed route for the P4-ASR, with kilometre stations, is shown in Figure 1. The map indicates larger watercourses and waterbodies, First Nation reserve lands, the existing winter road and power transmission line, airports, the Asatiwisipe Aki Traditional Land Use Planning Area for PRFN (a similar area for BRFN has not been designated), and the Berens River Northern Affairs Community.

Because the area is undeveloped, there are no existing or past commercial development features, industrial facilities, or waterborne structures in the local project area. Former wild rice harvesting areas are currently inactive. Commercial traplines are in place but are not identified. Poplar River FN is in process of developing a quarry site south of the community in the vicinity of the project to provide aggregate for on-reserve and airport needs.

### **3.1.3 Proximities**

There are no known residences or cabins in immediate proximity to the proposed all-season road. The nearest residences are in the communities on the reserves.

The area along the northern portion of the alignment (44 km) is part of the provincially-recognized Asatiwisipe Aki Land Use Planning Area for Poplar River First Nation. This area is currently used for traditional purposes by PRFN members. BRFN does not have a similarly recognized Land Use Planning Area at this time. However, the southern portion of the alignment passes through the Berens River Trapline District, which is land currently used for traditional purposes by community members.

Bloodvein First Nation, Pauingassi First Nation, and Little Grand Rapids First Nation have provincially-recognized Land-Use Planning Areas, which represent the areas of current traditional use for each respective community. These are adjacent to the Asatiwisipe Aki Land Use Planning Area, and the Berens River Trapline District, but are not in the vicinity of the proposed alignment (the closest proximity to the alignment itself is approximately 40 km).

There are no Treaty Lands Entitlement (TLE) areas in the region.

## **3.2 Land and Water Use**

### **3.2.1 Zoning Designations & Land Use Plans**

The northern 44 kilometres of the road will traverse the Asatiwisipe Aki Management Land Use Planning Area. This designation was established in 2011 through provincial regulation (MR 77/2011). The main purpose of the Land Use Planning Area is to protect natural landscapes and ecological processes while allowing traditional and recreational use of the land (Poplar River First Nation, 2011). The Planning Area was developed through a consultative, community-directed process.

There is a zoning plan in the Asatiwisiipe Aki Land Use Planning Area which designates protected areas on islands in Lake Winnipeg and two areas on land. The land-based zones are: 1) Asatiwisiipe Aki Protected Area; and 2) Asatiwisiipe Aki Community Resource Area.

The main purpose of the Asatiwisiipe Aki Protected Area is to protect natural landscapes and ecological processes while allowing traditional use of the land and recreational uses where approved by a local management board (Poplar River First Nation, 2011). Logging, mining, oil and gas development, or hydro development are prohibited in the area. The Asatiwisiipe Aki Community Resource Area has a similar purpose while allowing for future local use of resources, including gravel extraction, airstrip development, community logging and sawmill development. The Community Resource Area also accommodates a Winter Road Access corridor, and a 66 KV sub-transmission line that extends north from BRFN to PRFN, bringing power from the south to the communities. An All Season Road Access Corridor traverses both the Community Resource Area and the Protected Area. The Corridor Area anticipates the establishment of an all-season road, subject to final negotiations with Poplar River on the alignment. Once completed, the all-season road will replace the winter road.

BRFN does not have a similar planning area designated through regulation. The southern portion of the road traverses the Berens River Trapline District and is used for traditional purposes by Aboriginal people from Berens River community.

### **3.2.2 Legal land description**

The township and ranges partially traversed by the P4-ASR alignment are:

- 39-5 E1
- 40-5 E1
- 41-5 E1
- 42-5 E1
- 43-5 E1
- 43-4 E1
- 44-5 E1
- 44-3 E1
- 45-3 E1
- 45-2 E1
- 46-2 E1

The P4-ASR will be constructed on provincial Crown land and will be owned by the Province of Manitoba. The Provincial Crown owns mineral and quarry rights to all provincial land not otherwise withdrawn by Ministerial Order.

The P4-ASR will be operated as part of the provincial all-season road network.

### **3.2.3 Land and Water Use**

There are few significant industrial or commercial uses of the land along the alignment, or in the traditional area in the vicinity of the alignment. There are various mines and mineral exploration licences and occasional casual quarry permits (annually-issued), or leases within the area (Joro, 2014). Most economic activity is centred around the fishing industry which is largely carried out on Lake Winnipeg (Smith et al. 1998). Economic activity also includes trapping, and licensed

hunting for moose (subject to closure by Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship), black bear, and game birds.

Commercial trapping of furbearers is administered by Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship through the Registered Trapline system. There are ten RTLs that intersect the vicinity of the alignment (Joro, 2014).

There are recreational canoe routes within the project area: Little Grand Rapids (connects Poplar River, Berens River, and Little Grand Rapids and continues into Ontario), and Kautiunigan (connects Berens River and Bloodvein and continues into Ontario) (Joro, 2014).

West of the proposed alignment (varying in distance from approximately 1-10 km), there is a corridor for the winter road, extending north from the Berens River Northern Affairs Community to the Poplar River First Nation, providing seasonal access between January and March. A power transmission line is located further west of the winter road corridor. Both are accommodated within the Asatiwisipe Aki Management Plan.

### **3.2.4 Land use for Traditional Purposes**

Aboriginal people from BRFN, PRFN, and Berens River Northern Affairs Community have utilized the project area for traditional activities including travel routes, fishing, hunting, trapping, camping, harvesting plants, timber harvest for firewood, recreation activities, and sacred/ceremonial use.

Both PRFN and BRFN have considered the alignment in planning and decision-making. PRFN has specifically designated an all-season road access corridor in its community developed, and provincially recognized, Asatiwisipe Aki Land Use Planning Area. Both PRFN and BRFN have passed Band Council Resolutions allowing for ongoing investigations along the proposed alignment, in support of that alignment.

The proposed P4-ASR area is not likely to be used by members of other First Nations on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, who practice traditional resource use in their own designated Land Use Planning Areas.

## **4 FEDERAL INVOLVEMENT**

### **4.1 Financial Support**

The total cost for construction and operation of the proposed P4-ASR will be supplied by the Manitoba Government. There is no proposed or anticipated federal financial support for the project at this time.

Funding for construction and operation of the CAR on Poplar River First Nation is anticipated to be supplied by the Government of Canada. The completed road will be an asset of the First Nation. The CAR is not part of the designated project.



## 4.2 Federal Land

No federal land will be used for the purpose of carrying out the designated project. There will be no granting of interest in federal land through easement, right of way, or transfer of ownership. The proposed P4-ASR will extend north from the P1 junction with the English Rapids Road, east of Berens River First Nation, and extend 94.1 km to the boundary of the Poplar River First Nation. No quarries or borrow pits will be located on reserve land.

## 4.3 Regulatory Requirements

In addition to the possible requirement for an environmental assessment for a designated project under *CEAA, 2012*, other federal permits and authorizations may, or will be required, under the following legislation:

- *Explosives Act*. If required, licences for storage of explosives at non-quarry worksites will be sought from Natural Resources Canada (Explosive storage at quarries is licensed provincially).
- *Navigation Protection Act*. MFESRA will request to “opt in” under this legislation for proposed works on non-scheduled watercourses, including the Berens River, the Etomami River, the North Etomami River, and the Leaf River. There are no scheduled watercourses affected by the project.
- *Fisheries Act* (s. 35(2)) Notifications or Authorizations from Fisheries and Oceans Canada may be required where fish or fish habitat may be impacted during construction of stream or river crossings.

Provincial environmental review or permits and authorizations may be required under the following legislation:

- *Crown Lands Act*. Work permits are required for work associated with road construction, including vegetation removal, quarry development and camp development on provincial Crown lands.
- *Mines and Minerals Act*. Casual quarry permits are required under Subsection 133(1) for quarry development on provincial Crown Lands.
- *The Wildfires Act*. Burning Permits under s. 19(1) will be sought as needed on Crown land.
- *The Dangerous Goods Handling and Transportation Act* (Storage and Handling of Petroleum Products and Allied Products Regulation). Permits for petroleum storage tanks over 5000L on Crown land.
- *The Workplace Safety and Health Act*. Licences for storage of explosives at quarry sites will be sought as needed.
- *Other: Manitoba Wildlife Act; Heritage Resources Act; Forest Act*. Any required permits for environmental investigations will be acquired under the *Manitoba Wildlife Act* (certain wildlife investigations) and the *Heritage Resources Act* (archaeological investigations). As required, other permits and approvals will be acquired under the *Forest Act*.

## **5 ENVIRONMENTAL DESCRIPTION**

### **5.1 Biophysical Setting**

The Project is located within the Boreal Shield Ecozone and the Lac Seul Upland (90) Ecoregion (Smith et al., 1998), and the Boreal Forest Region of Canada (Rowe, 2014, Joro, 2014).

#### **5.1.1 Physiography and Surficial Geology**

In general, the land is flat, low-lying, and poorly-drained, especially closer to Lake Winnipeg, where the existing winter road is located. The physiography transitions to more sloping outcrops of bedrock, that may also be covered by clayey and silty glaciolacustrine sediments. The alignment is located in an area east of the significant peat and swampy areas, and on ground that is higher and with better drainage.

#### **5.1.2 Vegetation and Forest Cover**

In poorly drained areas, forest patches of black spruce (*Picea mariana*) are interspersed with tamarack (*Larix laricina*), with intervening swamps, and meadows (Smith et al. 1998, Joro, 2014). Where drainage is better, along low ridges or bordering creeks and rivers, white spruce (*Picea glauca*), tends to dominate, with some trembling aspen (*Populus tremuloides*), and balsam poplar (*Populus balsamifera*), white birch (*Betula papyrifera*) and balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*) (Joro, 2014).

#### **5.1.3 Surface Water**

The surface waters in the project area drain west as part of the Lake Winnipeg Basin, within the Nelson River watershed. Drainage occurs from several rivers and tributary streams.

The proposed P4-ASR alignment will cross four larger rivers in the basin: the Berens River, Etomami River, North Etomami River, and the Leaf River. Smaller streams in the project area are often part of boreal wetlands such as bogs and fens that drain local areas into larger creeks, rivers or lake, and are usually less than one metre in depth.

#### **5.1.4 Climate and Air Quality**

The communities of BRFN and PRFN experience warm summers and cold winters, with daily averages ranging from 18°C in July to -19°C in January. The average annual precipitation is 470 mm, with roughly one quarter falling as snow. The average frost-free period ranges from 90 to 130 days (Government of Canada, 2014).

There are no current industrial activities in the area, and both air quality and water quality are essentially subject only to natural disturbance (Poplar River First Nation, 2011). Air quality may be temporarily degraded due to forest fires.

### **5.1.5 Fish and Fish Habitat**

Fish species present in the local area are representative of species typically found in the boreal shield and include Walleye, Sauger, Northern Pike, Lake Whitefish, Lake Trout and Lake Sturgeon (Davidson-Hunt 2012). A number of the species (particularly Walleye and Lake Whitefish) support commercial fisheries on Lake Winnipeg and subsistence fisheries for Poplar River and Berens River.

Waterbodies in the vicinity of the proposed P4-ASR Project include several small streams, and medium and large rivers. The smaller streams may be used as spawning and nursery areas by larger fish species (e.g., Northern Pike) in spring, while smaller forage species such as minnows and stickleback may utilize the streams through the summer if water volume is adequate. Due to shallow depths and low winter flows, small streams generally provide little or no over-wintering habitat. Moderate sized streams may provide spawning habitat for larger fish such as suckers and Northern Pike.

For the remainder of the year, these streams may be utilized as a nursery for young fish, as well as providing habitat for various species of minnows, darters, sticklebacks and sculpins. Over-wintering of smaller fish in these types of streams will often occur when deeper pools are available.

Large river systems, such as the Berens River, Etomami River, Leaf River, and Poplar River, provide year-round habitat for large numbers of fish species. Due to perennial flows they may support both spring and fall spawning species.

Small boreal wetlands areas also occur within the local area. These habitats are generally not connected to fish bearing waters and typically become anoxic during winter. Most are typically devoid of notable fish populations.

### **5.1.6 Mammals**

Mammals typically found in the area include American Marten (*Martes americana*), American Mink (*Neovison vison*), Beaver (*Castor canadensis*), Black Bear (*Ursus americanus*), Boreal Woodland Caribou (*Rangifer tarandus*), Ermine (*Mustela erminea*), Fisher (*Martes pennanti*), Grey Wolf (*Canis lupus*), Least Chipmunk (*Eutamias minimus*), Lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), Moose (*Alces, alces*), Otter (*Lontra canadensis*), Red Squirrel (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*), Snowshoe Hare (*Lepus americanus*), Southern Red-backed Vole (*Clethrionomys gapperi*), and Wolverine (*Gulo gulo*) (Joro, 2014; Poplar River First Nation, 2011).

Most wildlife species in the area have economic and/or spiritual and cultural importance. Many also provide sustenance, or are an indication of ecological condition. Moose, black bear, and grey wolves may be hunted under big game licences. Commercial trapping of furbearers occurs under the provincial Registered Trapline system.

The Boreal Woodland Caribou is listed as “Threatened” on Schedule 1 of the *Species at Risk Act* (COSEWIC, 2002) and as “Threatened” under Manitoba’s *The Endangered Species and Ecosystems Act*. Boreal Woodland Caribou require large, continuous tracts of undisturbed habitat, especially during critical calving and rearing periods. They generally inhabit mature to old growth boreal coniferous forests with an ample supply of lichen, as well as peatlands. The Atikaki-Berens range of caribou is the only one that occurs within the vicinity of the alignment. (Joro, 2014). The federal recovery strategy lists the Atikaki-Berens range as having a stable

and self sustaining population. (Environment Canada, 2012). Manitoba draft recovery strategy lists the Atkaki-Berens range as having a medium Conservation status assessment (MCWS, 2014).

### **5.1.7 Birds**

The proposed all-season road Project is located within the natural ranges of 216 native bird species including species of waterfowl, upland birds, eagles, hawks, owls and passerine birds. Approximately 170 bird species breed within the region but only about 15% of all bird species present in the area are resident year round (Davidson-Hunt et al. 2012).

Bird species present in the Local Project Study Area include Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), Common Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*), Gray Jay (*Perisoreus canadensis*), Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*), Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*), Northern Hawk Owl (*Surnia ulula*), Olive-sided Flycatcher (*Contopus cooperi*), Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), Raven (*Corvus corax*), Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), Sharp-tailed Grouse (*Tympanuchus phasianellus*), Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*), Spruce Grouse (*Falci pennis Canadensis*), Willow Ptarmigan (*Lagopus lagopus*), among others (Joro, 2014).

Of these, the Olive-sided Flycatcher and the Common Nighthawk are listed as “Threatened” under SARA (Schedule 1). The range of the Olive-sided Flycatcher overlaps with the alignment area. These birds inhabit semi-open mixed and coniferous forests near water, or in burned areas and boggy sites with standing dead conifers. The Common Nighthawk may be found within the alignment area. They inhabit open and semi-open habitat such as forest gaps, meadows, and lakeshores. Other SARA-listed species (Schedule 1) that may be found in the vicinity of the P4-ASR include the Eastern Whip-poor-will (*Caprimulgus vociferous*) and the Canada Warbler (*Cardellina canadensis*) (both listed as ‘Threatened’) and the Rusty Blackbird (*Euphagus carolinus*) and Yellow Rail (*Coturnicops noveboracensis*) (both listed as “Special concern”).

Geese, ducks, and other waterfowl are seasonally hunted. Bald eagles are considered culturally important to the First Nations (Poplar River First Nation, 2011).

### **5.1.8 Amphibians and Reptiles**

Amphibians and reptiles known to occur in the local area include the Red-sided Gartersnake (*Thamnophis sirtalis parietalis*), and a variety of frogs and toads. Species that may occur in the area include: American Toad (*Bufo americanus*), Boreal Chorus Frog (*Pseudacris triseriata maculata*), Northern Spring Peeper (*Hyla crucifer crucifer*), Northern Leopard Frog (*Rana pipiens*), and Wood Frog (*Rana sylvatica*) (Joro, 2014). The ranges of the Western Painted Turtle (*Chrysemys picta bellii*) and Snapping Turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*) may overlap with the local area. (Joro, 2014). Snapping Turtles are a “Species of Special Concern” under SARA (Schedule 1).

## **5.2 Potential Changes in the Environment**

Potential effects of the proposed P4-ASR on the environment will be identified, assessed and mitigated in the environmental impact statement (EIS). The EIS will consider direct and indirect environmental effects, residual environmental effects after the application of mitigation measures, and cumulative environmental effects. MFESRA’s environmental protection

specifications and best management practices will be implemented during construction, and operation and maintenance.

Changes to fish and fish habitat, and migratory birds are described below.

### **5.2.1 Fish and Fish Habitat**

There are four water crossings traversed by the proposed P4-ASR that will require bridges (Berens River, Etomami River, North Etomami River, and Leaf River), and 29 stream crossings determined to date that will require culverts. Of these 33 crossings, 10 have been identified to date as habitat for large bodied and/or forage fish species. Large bodied fish species were found at the four major crossings. All bridge crossing sites are too wide to clear span the waterway. One instream pier will be required at the Berens, North Etomami and Leaf rivers and two instream piers at the Etomami River. Culverts will be installed at the remaining water courses which provide habitat for fish. Other culverts will also be installed for drainage equalization along the all-season road. Critical habitat was not found at any of the water crossings. The EIS will document the assessment and evaluation of the water courses.

Fish may be impacted during construction and operation of the highway during dewatering during bridge or culvert installation. Fish may also be impacted by downstream sedimentation during construction and maintenance, or through accidents or malfunctions that could introduce deleterious substances. The road may marginally increase fishing pressure as a result of increased access to the area.

Fish habitat may be impacted by bridge or culvert installation, by removal of riparian vegetation or installation of riprap, downstream sedimentation, alteration of channel morphology and dynamics where piers may be required, and accidents or malfunctions that could introduce deleterious substances.

These changes will be avoided where possible, and mitigated or offset through implementation of MFESRA's environmental protection specifications and best management practices, or site-specific plans.

### **5.2.2 Migratory Birds**

Migratory birds may be impacted during construction and operation of the highway through vegetation clearance, dust, noise, and vehicle collisions. Destruction of active nests will be avoided as required under the *Migratory Birds Convention Act*. The road may increase hunting pressure on waterfowl as a result of increased access to the area.

Migratory bird habitat may be impacted as a result of vegetation removal along the right of way or at other cleared sites, by equipment and vehicle noise during construction and operation. These effects will be avoided where possible, and mitigated through application of MFESRA's environmental protection specifications and best management practices.

## **5.3 Potential Changes on Federal and Adjacent Lands**

The proposed P4-ASR on provincial Crown Land is not likely to cause an adverse effect to the adjacent PRFN, or to the nearby BRFN. Conversely, the CAR on PRFN is not likely to adversely affect provincial Crown lands. The environmental assessment for the P4-ASR will identify and assess potential environmental effects on adjacent lands, and will also include a consideration of cumulative effects. A direct positive socio-economic effect from the road will

be the provision of year round access to the southern all-season road network for Poplar River First Nation, and year-round access between the communities.

The overall Project is not likely to have an adverse effect on other federal land in Manitoba (First Nations on the east side of Lake Winnipeg), or on provincial Crown lands in Ontario.

## **5.4 Potential Effects of Changes to the Environment on Aboriginal Peoples**

Potential effects to Aboriginal peoples as a result of changes to the environment caused by carrying out the P4-ASR project will be fully considered in the environmental assessment. Potential effects that will be considered could include effects to traditional use of lands and resources for traditional purposes by Aboriginal peoples, such as hunting, fishing, gathering, and forest-harvest, as a result of changes in land use and increased vehicle access to previously isolated areas, by both local people and non-residents. The P4-ASR could also indirectly affect traditional activities as a result of potential changes to the biophysical environment, including effects on fish and fish habitat, vegetation, and wildlife resources, which could affect harvesting patterns and/or harvesting success. Affected harvested resources could include: berries; traditional medicines; game animals (such as moose), game birds (such as geese or grouse).

The environmental assessment for the proposed P4-ASR will identify and assess potential environmental effects on Aboriginal peoples, identify mitigation measures and outline any follow-up actions that will be addressed in an environmental protection plan. In addition, the environmental assessment of the proposed all-season road Project will include an assessment of potential cumulative effects.

## **6 ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION WITH ABORIGINAL GROUPS**

### **6.1 Interested and Potentially Affected Aboriginal Groups**

Aboriginal groups that are anticipated to have an interest in, and are potentially affected by, the project include local First Nations (Berens River and Poplar River First Nations) and other Aboriginal people living in the community of Berens River Northern Affairs Community.

#### **6.1.1 First Nations**

First Nations with an interest in, and who may be affected by, the designated project are:

- Berens River First Nation, Box 131, Berens River, MB R0B 0A0
- Poplar River First Nation, Box 90, Negginan, MB R0B 0Z0

Both groups are signatories to the Treaty 5 adhesion, with established rights to hunt and trap in the area. In particular, the alignment traverses territory identified by Poplar River First Nation as an area to exercise traditional practices, and is recognized in provincial regulation as the Asatiwisiipe Aki Traditional Land Use Planning Area. The alignment also crosses the Berens River Trapline District, where Berens River First Nation members hunt and trap.

Other First Nations that are identified through the Large Area Transportation Study area on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, with an interest in the overall initiative are:

- Hollow Water First Nation
- Bloodvein First nation
- Little Grand Rapids First Nation
- Pauingassi First Nation
- St. Theresa Point First Nation
- Wasagamack First Nation
- Garden Hill First Nation
- Island Lake First Nation
- Red Sucker Lake First Nation
- Manto Sipi First Nation
- God's Lake Narrows First Nation
- Bunibonibee (Oxford House) First Nation
- Cross Lake First Nation
- Norway House First Nation

These First Nations are also signatories to Treaty 5 (1875), or the later adherence to Treaty 5. They have established treaty rights to hunt and fish throughout the Treaty 5 area, though their areas of traditional use do not overlap with the study area for P4-ASR (WNO, 2007).

### **6.1.2 Other Aboriginal**

The Berens River Northern Affairs Community (NAC) is immediately adjacent to the BRFN and includes Aboriginal people who are members of BRFN. Residents may also include non-status or people of Métis heritage. NAC residents may have an interest in, and be affected by, the P4-ASR.

Community of Berens River, P.O. Box 129, Berens River, MB, R0B 0A0

Métis people may have an interest in the P4-ASR. The Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF) has consistently been involved in discussions related to the East Side Planning Initiative (ESPI, 2004), the Large Area Network Study (SNC-Lavalin 2010) and in the P1-All-season Road from PR 304 to Berens River.

- Manitoba Metis Federation, 150 Henry Ave, Winnipeg, MB R3B 0J7

## **6.2 Engagement Activities with Aboriginal Groups**

The Government of Manitoba began to engage stakeholders and Aboriginal groups (First Nations and Métis) on the justification for an all-weather road over a decade ago. In early consultant-led community meetings, both Berens River First Nation and Poplar River First Nation perceived a positive socio-economic benefit from an all-season road. Each community anticipated reduced costs for goods and services, and enhanced travel and social connections. Each community indicated the importance of local control and involvement in decisions related to an all-season road. Each community also highlighted the importance of protecting the environment, and protecting traditional uses of the land (Dillon and Westdal, 2000; East Side Planning Initiative, 2004; UMA, 2005).

The Aboriginal and Public Engagement Program for the overall East Side Large Area Transportation Network commenced in 2009, and is ongoing. The purpose of the Engagement

Program is to provide meaningful opportunities for people to receive information, and to provide comments about the proposed roads. A key focus has been to engage people who are living in the project area, who are most likely to be directly affected by the project, and who can provide information on traditional use and local knowledge.

The Engagement Program was initiated with a first round of community meetings. A second round of meetings focused more specifically on community to community road links, including the P4-ASR linking Berens River and Poplar River First Nations. MFESRA has continued to engage PRFN and BRFN during planning of the P4-ASR, with subsequent community and leadership meetings, traditional knowledge studies, and resource user workshops.

The overall Engagement Program includes meetings with regulators, potentially affected and interested Aboriginal communities and leadership, community resource boards, trappers, outfitters, the Manitoba Metis Federation, other stakeholders, and the general public. Meetings and open houses have been held in communities on the east side, and in the city of Winnipeg. Information is also available through articles and advertising features in the *Grassroots News* (province-wide Aboriginal Newspaper), and the MFESRA newsletter and website. A summary of MFESRA Engagement Program Activities is presented in Table 1.

MFESRA Engagement Program activities with Aboriginal groups are summarized below, in Table 1.

<b>Table 1: Summary of Engagement Program Activities with Aboriginal Groups</b>	
<b>Activity/Date</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Early East Side engagement: 2000-2005</b>	
Community Meeting – Poplar River First Nation, 2000	Consultant-led community meeting to introduce all-weather road concept and identify concerns and priorities. (ESPI, 2004)
Community Meeting – Berens River First Nation, 2000	Consultant-led community meeting to introduce all-weather road concept and identify concerns and priorities. (ESPI, 2004,)
<b>Aboriginal Engagement for East Side Large Area Transportation Initiative</b>	
WNO Chiefs Meeting – April 30, 2009	MFESRA meeting with chiefs from Wabanong Nakaygum Okimawin to introduce proposed Large Area Transportation Initiative
Round One Community Meetings Poplar River First Nation – April 2, 2009, December 2, 2009 Berens River First Nation and Northern Affairs Community – May 5, July 6, 2009	MFESRA meeting with community members and local leadership to inform local community members and receive input about the East Side Large Area Transportation Network Study, including the proposed P4 all-season road project.
Round Two Community Meetings Poplar River First Nation – June 2, 2010	MFESRA meeting with community members and local leadership to present findings of the preferred road alignments based on technical evaluation and to receive input from the first round of meetings
Traditional Ecological Knowledge Studies Spring/Summer 2009 - 2010	Studies were undertaken to gather input from local residents on the environmental, social-economic and cultural implications of the proposed all-season road.
Manitoba Metis Federation Meetings – April 1, 2009; August 18, 2009; December 9, 2009 TLUKS contract: Oct 1, 2010 – Sept 30 2012.	MFESRA meetings with MMF in Winnipeg to introduce all-weather road concept and discuss MMF interest in P1 all season road and other proposed roads. Subsequent establishment of Traditional Land Use and Knowledge Study (TLUKS) contract between MFESRA and MMF to identify Metis traditional harvest practices in the region.



<b>Table 1: Summary of Engagement Program Activities with Aboriginal Groups</b>	
<b>Activity/Date</b>	<b>Description</b>
MMF Workshops to support TLUKS study Winnipeg (4) – Feb 1, 2011 Selkirk (12) – Feb 3, 2011 Manigotagan (20) – Feb 7, 2011	Workshop with Aboriginal resource users to provide project and survey information and hear feedback on traditional use and recommendations for mitigation.
<b>Community Benefits Agreements (CBA)</b>	
CBA signed: Berens River First Nation, August 19, 2009; July 25, 2013	MFESRA and BRFN sign CBA to provide economic and training benefits to BRFN via the community-owned Pigeon River Contractors, in preparation for potential all-season road pre-construction & construction activities (P1 and P4). BRFN CBA renewed in 2013.
CBA signed: Poplar River First Nation, September 13, 2010	MFESRA and PRFN sign CBA to provide economic and training benefits to PRFN via the community-owned Asatiwisi Construction, Inc., in preparation for potential all-season road pre-construction & construction activities (P4)
<b>Alignment Verification and Traditional Use and Values: Discussions and Decisions for P4</b>	
Meeting with Poplar River First Nation Leadership, Winnipeg (March 3, 2011)	Meeting with MFESRA, PRFN leadership, and JD Mollard to discuss preferred proximity of alignment near the Poplar River
Community Meeting with PRFN (50 people) – Feb 9, 2012	Meeting to present proposed alignment and obtain community feedback (Alignment adjusted based on community concerns)
Meeting and Follow-up letter to BRFN Chief and Council May – July , 2012 BRFN	Discussion and agreement between MFESRA and BRFN to collect baseline information and assist in route verification
Workshop with Poplar River elders and resource users (9 people), September 24, 2012	Consultant-led workshop for identification of land use and occupancy within a 3 km buffer zone along the alignment within the Poplar River Land Use Planning Area (northern 55 km), as part of Heritage Resource Impact Assessment. Subsequent archaeological field investigations identified 8 heritage resource sites, and recommended mitigation where required.
Berens River Community Meeting, May 2013	Meeting between MFESRA and BRFN. Project update and alignment discussion.
Band Council Resolution – Berens River First Nation, May 28, 2013	Berens River Chief and Council indicate support of alignment for P4-ASR, for the purposes of gathering information for geotechnical and other investigations.
Band Council Resolution – Poplar River First Nation, December 6, 2013	Poplar River Chief and Council indicate support of alignment for P4-ASR, for the purposes of gathering information for geotechnical and other investigations.
Meetings with Asatiwisi Aki Ma Ma Wichitowin Mutual Land Relationship Board (March 12, November 26, 2012; February 25, 2014)	Meeting with Poplar River First Nation land management board – ongoing communication about the project, to seek information for route selection
<b>Anticipated Future Aboriginal Engagement Activities during the Environmental Assessment</b>	
Round Three Community Meetings	Information on environmental assessment requirements. Identification and verification of valued environmental components (VEC) during environmental assessment process.
Round Four Community Meetings	Presentation of potential environmental effects and recommended mitigation to community members. Incorporate feedback into

<b>Table 1: Summary of Engagement Program Activities with Aboriginal Groups</b>	
<b>Activity/Date</b>	<b>Description</b>
	environmental assessment process.
Round Five Community Meetings	Presentation of preliminary results of the environmental assessment to community members.
Notification of Key Documents	Key documents in environmental assessment process will be made available to other First Nation and Métis groups, with a standing invitation to meet and/or comment.
Open House - Winnipeg	Information on proposed P4-ASR, including environmental assessment requirements, valued environmental components, potential effects and recommended mitigation, and preliminary results will be provided to off-reserve or other non-local Aboriginal people, stakeholders, general public.

The topics discussed at the meetings, workshops and open houses included:

- Introduction to the proposed all-season road Project and ongoing updates
- Presentation and discussion of road alignment options
- Presentation of project activities such as right-of-way clearing and exploratory clearing
- Training opportunities for community members
- Modification and confirmation of route alignment
- Identification of community concerns
- Traditional knowledge information for the proposed all-season road
- Introduction of baseline studies being conducted for the proposed all-season road and community involvement
- Collection of site-specific constraints from community members

Issues and comments identified by community members and the public throughout the Aboriginal and Public Engagement Program are documented and will be described and analyzed in the environmental assessment report.

### **6.3 Key Comments**

An overview of comments expressed by Aboriginal groups to date includes:

- Involve local communities in training and employment on road construction
- Involve local communities in providing and collecting information on the environment and land use
- Protection of the land and the environment is important, including water quality of Lake Winnipeg
- Protection of treaty rights, and for traditional use of resources is important
- The community anticipates social benefits from the road, through easier connections with other communities, and for easier and more frequent travel home for students from the community who attend school in larger centres
- Community members understand that there will be effects from the road but that they also want the road.

- Community members understand that trees, medicinal plants and wild berries will be disturbed by clearing but members also know that clearing will not be of large areas, just along the right-of-way.
- Community members do not want large industries like mining, forestry or hydro to come into their traditional territory.
- Community members identified major activities in the area include hunting, trapping and fishing.
- Community members identified wildlife, fish, waterfowl, songbirds and birds of prey that were important to them for various reasons.
- Community members identified special places of significance to the community (burial grounds, culturally important land features) near the community.

MFESRA has responded in concrete ways to key comments expressed by Poplar River First Nation and Berens River First Nation leadership and community members regarding the overall East Side Transportation Initiative, and the proposed P4-ASR. In particular, MFESRA has entered into Community Benefits Agreements with the two communities to increase the likelihood that the road will result in socio-economic benefits (training and employment) to local residents. As well, MFESRA has incorporated community values and traditional knowledge, as well as other considerations, into planning for the project, through refinements to the proposed all-season road alignment.

Concerns and issues identified by community members and the public throughout the Aboriginal and Public Engagement Program are being documented and will be analysed and described in the environmental assessment report.

#### **6.4 Next steps in engagement and information-gathering**

As part of the ongoing engagement plan, MFESRA proposes to continue working with PRFN and BRFN to plan and hold community meetings at three key stages of the environmental assessment process for the P4-ASR:

- Submission of the Project Description: Information on environmental assessment process; Identification and verification of environmental factors to be considered in the environmental assessment.
- Preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement: Review of potential effects of the proposed road project; identify important effects to the communities, and identify how these effects may be mitigated.
- Results of the Environmental Assessment: Project update, and review and discussion of the environmental assessment results, and next steps.

In each case, MFESRA will provide an opportunity for a meeting with Community Elders in advance of the larger community meeting, if the community wishes. MFESRA will continue to work with local community members to identify effective methods of mitigation and accommodation.

MFESRA will inform the Manitoba Metis Federation directly of the availability of key documents in the environmental assessment process for the P4-ASR, and other projects within the Large Area Transportation Initiative, and invite comments. First Nation communities that are part of the East Side Large Area Network will also have access to updates on the proposed P4-ASR project as the initiative proceeds.

MFESRA also contributes to articles and purchases advertising updates in the *Grassroots News*, an Aboriginal (First Nations and Métis) newspaper in Manitoba. MFESRA also provides updates through community-based radio stations based in the east-side communities, and produces regular newsletters which are sent to each community and circulated to residents

## 7 CONSULTATION WITH THE PUBLIC AND OTHER PARTIES

Consultation with the public and other stakeholders has been ongoing since the beginning of the East Side Transportation Initiative. The MFESRA website provides project updates, news releases, and information about the overall East Side Transportation Initiative, and proposed all-season road Projects being undertaken and proposed. The website has a calendar of events for community meetings and public open houses as they are proposed. also provides opportunities for interested and affected parties to provide input to the projects.

In addition to general internet and newsletter information, a number of meetings and open houses have occurred to engage and inform the public, other jurisdictions, and other stakeholders and parties. These activities are summarized in Table 2.

<b>Table 2: Summary of Engagement Program Activities with the Public and Other Stakeholders</b>	
<b>Activity/Date</b>	<b>Description</b>
WNO Chiefs Meeting – April 30, 2009	MFESRA meeting with chiefs from Wabanong Nakaygum Okimawin to introduce proposed Large Area Transportation Initiative
General Public Open House – Winnipeg, June 25, 2009	MFESRA open house to introduce proposed P1 project and Large Area Transportation Initiative, including proposed P4-ASR segment.
Manitoba Trappers' Association meetings, - Winnipeg, March 10, 2010, Nov 7, 2013	MFESRA and Manitoba Trappers' Association meeting to discuss trapper interests and methods to engage local trappers. Follow-up meeting with MTA executive to update on East Side Transportation Initiative
Integrated Resource Management Team meetings. February 10, 2012, January 21, 2013, February 3, 2014	Community engagement, all-season road route and environmental assessment process discussed with Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship, Eastern Region in Lac du Bonnet. All season road route between Berens River and Poplar River First Nations presented and discussed.
Meeting with Manitoba Lodges and Outfitters Assoc. May 10, 2013; June 10, 2014	Discussed projects in overall East Side Transportation Initiative with Association's representative.
Presentation to Wildlife Branch, MB Conservation and Water Stewardship Jan 6, 2014	Wildlife baseline data collection and analysis for all-season road route between Berens River and Poplar River First Nations discussed and road route presented.
Southeast Resource Development Council. Meeting of representatives of South East Tribal Council January 28, 2014	Presentation at environment workshop, sponsored by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. Overview of the proposed all-season road project, the environmental assessment process and mitigation measures.
Environmental Approvals Branch, MB Conservation and Water Stewardship, Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, Federal & Provincial Expert Technical Advisory Committee	P4- all-season road route between Poplar River First Nation and Berens River presented and discussed. Overview of overall East Side Transportation Initiative.

<b>Table 2: Summary of Engagement Program Activities with the Public and Other Stakeholders</b>	
<b>Activity/Date</b>	<b>Description</b>
members – Winnipeg, August 26, 2014	
<b>Potential Future Engagement during the Environmental Assessment</b>	
Open House	Information on proposed P4-ASR, including environmental assessment requirements, valued environmental components, potential effects and recommended mitigation, and preliminary results will be provided to Off-reserve or other non-local Aboriginal people, stakeholders, and the general public.

## **7.1 Overview of comments and concerns from the public and other parties**

To date, comments and concerns noted through public consultation (other than engagement or consultation with Aboriginal groups) have been largely received as part of the consultation activities conducted under the larger East Side Planning Initiative, or related to the P1-All Season road from PR304 to Berens River, currently under construction. Public comments received under those processes focused on ensuring appropriate assessment methodologies, and protecting specific environmental features (especially Moose and Woodland Caribou) (CEAA, 2011).

## **7.2 Proposed stakeholder consultation activities**

With specific reference to the P4-ASR project, MFESRA intends to host an open house for the general public within the city of Winnipeg or in other communities where warranted. Meetings or open houses such as these will be advertised in local newspapers, and other stakeholders or members or the interested public may attend and provide feedback regarding the project.

## 8 REFERENCES

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Figure

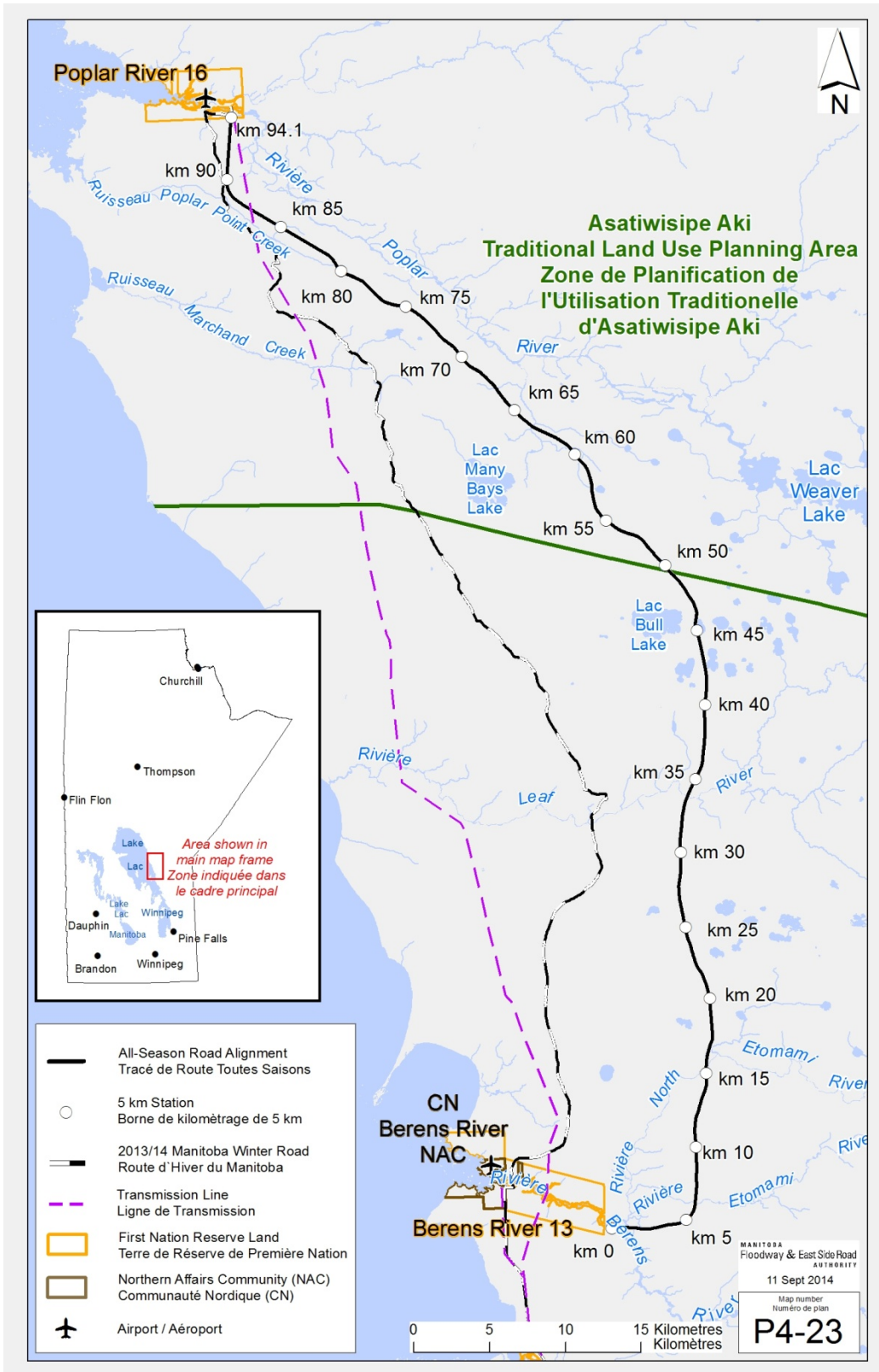


Figure 1: P4-All Season Road from Berens River to Poplar River First Nation

