

Rook I Project

Environmental Impact Statement

Section 24 Conclusions

Submitted to:

Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission
Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment

Submitted by:

NexGen Energy Ltd.
3150-1021 W Hastings St
Vancouver, BC
V6E 0C3

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Abbreviations and Units of Measure

Abbreviation	Definition
CNSC	Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
ENV	Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment
GHG	greenhouse gas
HHRA	human health risk assessment
IMS	Integrated Management System
LPA	local priority area
LSA	local study area
MDMER	Metal and Diamond Mining Effluent Regulations
NexGen	NexGen Energy Ltd.
PAG	potentially acid generating
Project	Rook I Project
RFD	reasonably foreseeable development
RSA	regional study area
SK2 West	SK2 West Administration Unit
U ₃ O ₈	triuranium octoxide
UGTMF	underground tailings management facility
VC	valued component
WRSA	waste rock storage area

Unit	Definition
%	percent
\$	Canadian dollars unless otherwise stated
Bq/m ³	becquerels per cubic metre
mSv/yr	millisieverts per year
µm	micron
ha	hectare
km	kilometre
m	metre

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24 CONCLUSIONS

24.1 Introduction

NexGen Energy Ltd. (NexGen) has developed this Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to meet the regulatory requirements under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012* and *The Environmental Assessment Act* (Saskatchewan) for the proposed development of a new uranium mining and milling operation in northwestern Saskatchewan, called the Rook I Project (Project). The EIS described the Project and the existing environmental conditions and assessed the potential effects of the Project on the biophysical and human environments, considering the mitigation that would be in place. The EIS also included an assessment of potential cumulative effects of the Project in combination with other previous, existing, or reasonably foreseeable developments (RFDs).

The main sections, associated appendices, and technical support documents in this EIS were completed to meet the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC) *Generic Guidelines for the Preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement – Pursuant to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012* (CNSC 2021), the Terms of Reference for the Project submitted to the Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment (ENV), and the expectations and feedback expressed to NexGen by Indigenous communities.

Section 24, Conclusions, provides a summary of the conclusions of the EIS, with a focus on findings related to valued components (VCs). The section is organized to provide brief summaries of the following information:

- NexGen (Section 24.1.1, Summary of NexGen) and the Project (Section 24.1.2, Rook I Project Summary);
- NexGen's approach to engagement and Indigenous and Local Knowledge (Section 24.2);
- the scope and approach of the Environmental Assessment (EA; Section 24.3);
- the main conclusions of the EA under the categories of atmosphere, water, land, and people (Section 24.4);
- next steps for the proposed Project following the submission of this EIS (Section 24.5, Next Steps), including CNSC licensing and provincial permitting processes (Section 24.5.1), establishment of Environmental Committees and independent Indigenous monitoring (Section 24.5.2), and ongoing engagement (Section 24.5.3); and
- a closing statement (Section 24.6).

24.1.1 Summary of NexGen

NexGen is a Canadian corporation focused on the acquisition, exploration, and development of Canadian uranium projects. Founded on the belief that natural resource development can be successfully attained in a sustainable and responsible manner resulting in prosperity and opportunity for multiple generations, NexGen is positioned to deliver a technically and environmentally elite Project and prospective portfolio in northern Saskatchewan's Athabasca Basin and long-term economic, social, and environmental benefits for Saskatchewan, Canada, and the world.

NexGen's vision is to become a world leader in delivering clean energy solutions for current and future generations. Since inception, NexGen's values of honesty, respect, resilience, and accountability have served as the company's roadmap to optimizing outcomes and creating as much positivity for as many people as possible.

NexGen takes a highly driven, disciplined, and objective approach across all aspects of the organization. The company sets and maintains a standard of excellence in planning and execution, combining innovation with low technical risk, and continually evaluates and optimizes across all areas of the business. NexGen's approach is focused on sustainable development and founded on transparent environmental and social governance and ethics, with a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

24.1.2 Rook I Project Summary

The proposed Project represents a substantial source of uranium for meeting the expected growing global demand for electricity. The Project could meaningfully contribute to the Government of Canada's ability to meet its environmental obligations and commitments with respect to climate change by displacing high-greenhouse gas (GHG) intensity fossil fuel (e.g., coal, natural gas) electricity generation in favour of low-GHG emitting, green energy. Providing a source of uranium would also support Saskatchewan's objective of developing lower carbon emission electricity generation over the next decade (Government of Saskatchewan 2019). While uranium is not the only option to support these local and global endeavours, the demand for uranium is increasing, and this energy source can be an important part of the solution as the world moves towards more sustainable measures to mitigate climate change.

In addition to supporting national environmental objectives and commitments, the proposed Project would generate socio-economic benefits and opportunities for local Indigenous Groups (i.e., First Nations and Métis groups), communities, the Province of Saskatchewan, and Canada, including increased direct local and national employment, tax and royalty revenue, and associated indirect economic benefits and employment at local to national scales. The proposed Project possesses favourable economics, would be fully self-funded, and would not require any financial support from governments. Additional benefits of the Project are described in Section 24.4.2.2, Project Benefits.

The Project would be located approximately 40 km east of the Saskatchewan-Alberta border, 130 km north of the Northern Village of La Loche, and 640 km northwest of the city of Saskatoon. The Project would reside within Treaty 8 territory and the Métis Homeland. At a regional scale, the Project would be situated within the southern Athabasca Basin adjacent to Patterson Lake, along the upper Clearwater River system. Patterson Lake is at the interface of the Boreal Shield and Boreal Plain ecozones. Access to the Project would be from an existing road off Highway 955, with on-site worker accommodation serviced by fly-in/fly-out access.

The Project would include underground mining to access the uranium ore from the Arrow deposit, a land-based, basement-hosted, high-grade uranium deposit. The Project is 100% owned by NexGen. The process plant is planned to process an average of 1,300 tonnes of ore per day with an annual production capacity of up to 30 million pounds per year of uranium concentrate. The Project would span a 43-year period from the beginning of Construction, through Operations, to the end of Decommissioning and Reclamation (i.e., Closure).

The Project would include the following key facilities to support the extraction and processing of uranium from the Arrow deposit for transportation off site:

- underground mine development;
- process plant buildings, including uranium concentrate packaging facilities;
- paste tailings distribution system;
- underground tailings management facility (UGTMF);
- potentially acid generating (PAG) waste rock storage area (WRSA);

- non-potentially acid generating (NPAG) WRSA;
- special waste rock¹ and ore storage stockpiles;
- surface and underground water management infrastructure, including water management ponds, effluent treatment plant, and sewage treatment plant;
- conventional waste management facilities and fuel storage facilities;
- ancillary infrastructure, including maintenance shop, warehouse, administration building, and camp;
- airstrip and associated infrastructure; and
- access road to Project and site roads.

An alternatives assessment compared a range of feasible alternatives to select those that best meet environmental, technical, economic, and social considerations. The overall proposed Project design and the way that key components and infrastructure would fit together to achieve key objectives reflects evaluations made within the alternatives assessment. NexGen would continue to review alternative means throughout the Project lifespan; optimization of alternatives would be pursued through Project design, planning, and into Operations, with the intent that any potential design iterations and mitigations would be improvements on, and within the current considerations of, the assumptions carried within the EA (i.e., within the scope of the Project as defined for assessment).

The Project has been designed to be safe for the public and workers and to meet or exceed applicable regulatory requirements and industry best management practices. The Project would operate in well-regulated provincial and federal jurisdictions. NexGen's objectives for risk management are to reduce all health, safety, and environmental risks to acceptable levels and to keep radiological exposures to workers and the environment as low as reasonably achievable. The primary mitigation tools used to prevent or reduce the severity of potential accidents and malfunctions, as well as potential adverse effects on the Project that may be caused by natural hazards, are sound engineering design and Project planning, backed by a comprehensive Integrated Management System (IMS) with a structured and systematic risk management process.

24.2 Engagement and Indigenous and Local Knowledge

Transparent discussion and meaningful collaboration are at the core of NexGen's approach to Indigenous, regulatory, and public engagement. Encouraging progressive, broader thinking, balanced with technical competence and a deep and abiding respect for local Indigenous Peoples' and communities' understanding of the local area, site specifics, and industry best practice, is key to this approach.

Engagement with local Indigenous Groups, local communities, businesses, organizations, land users, and regulatory authorities is foundational to the responsible development of the Project. NexGen values and respects the culture, interests, and aspirations of the communities where it operates. With a focus on Saskatchewan's north, aspects of the Project are constantly evaluated with the goal to advance economic benefits and opportunities for local communities, drive economic capacity building, and support entrepreneurs across the province.

¹ Special waste rock is mine rock that is mineralized with insufficient grade to be considered ore (i.e., greater than 0.03% of triuranium octoxide [U_3O_8] and less than 0.26% U_3O_8). All special waste would be temporarily stored in the special waste rock stockpile.

NexGen has worked closely with the communities local to the Project since 2013 to help develop impactful community programs that focus on youth, with an emphasis on education, health and wellness, and building economic capacity. NexGen's engagement activities have continually evolved to understand and incorporate Indigenous and Local Knowledge² and feedback from regulatory agencies and the public in a manner that provides the opportunity for effective information exchange and dialogue specific to each stage of the Project. This holistic approach to engagement has been consistent since NexGen's was formed and will remain a priority for the company throughout all phases of the Project.

Indigenous Group and stakeholder identification represented a primary step in the development of engagement approaches. A key focus of the Indigenous Group and stakeholder identification process was to understand the individuals and groups that would most likely be affected by the proposed Project. Identification of potentially affected or interested Indigenous Groups and local communities was informed through direct correspondence and discussion with Indigenous leaders, community members, and other organizations in the region; review of publicly available information; and information included within letters provided to Indigenous Groups by the CNSC and ENV. The primary Indigenous Groups identified for full engagement are the Clearwater River Dene Nation, Métis Nation – Saskatchewan Northern Region 2, Birch Narrows Dene Nation, and Buffalo River Dene Nation. Other Indigenous Groups identified for information sharing are English River First Nation, Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, and Ya'thi Néné Lands and Resources – representing Fond du Lac Denesų́liné First Nation and Black Lake Denesų́liné First Nation. A local priority area (LPA)³ was also established, which includes the key communities engaged on the Project.

Indigenous Groups and members of communities within the LPA have shared Indigenous and Local Knowledge and feedback with NexGen through a variety of engagement activities and sources of information. In general, sources of Indigenous Knowledge were identified through methods associated with the signed individual Study Agreements (e.g., Joint Working Groups, Indigenous Knowledge and Traditional Land Use Studies) with each primary Indigenous Group and through the Study Funding Agreement with Ya'thi Néné Lands and Resources. The majority of Local Knowledge was shared through EA baseline activities or other formal or informal individual and community events, including the community information sessions held in 2019. Indigenous and Local Knowledge was also shared by the Indigenous Groups in forms such as individual presentations describing important historical information, cultural practices, and knowledge.

24.3 Scope and Approach of the Environmental Assessment

This EA has been used as a planning tool to ensure that the Project was considered in a careful and precautionary manner to avoid or mitigate possible environmental effects. Section 6, Environmental Assessment Approach and Methods outlines the general approach and methods applied for the Project EA that were designed to meet both the CNSC *Generic Guidelines for the Preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement – Pursuant to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012* (CNSC 2021) and Terms of Reference for the Project.

² Indigenous Knowledge can generally be understood as the unique and collective knowledge of a group of Indigenous People that is built up through generations of living in close contact with the land and natural environment. Local Knowledge is a more general term and, for the purposes of the EA, represents information from a citizen or community representative, but without Indigenous Group/Elder sanction. Further details on the definition and use of these terms are provided in Section 3.4, Defining Indigenous and Local Knowledge.

³ The LPA consists of the local communities closest to the Project that would experience most of the Project effects and for which NexGen would prioritize local training, employment, and business opportunities for the Project. These communities are located along, or accessed via, Highways 155 and 955 north of the intersection of Highways 155 and 925.

The EA approach was applied to individual disciplines in the following sections of the EIS:

- air quality, noise, and climate change (Section 7);
- hydrogeology (Section 8);
- hydrology (Section 9);
- surface water quality and sediment quality (Section 10);
- fish and fish habitat (Section 11);
- terrain and soils (Section 12);
- vegetation (Section 13);
- wildlife and wildlife habitat (Section 14);
- human health (Section 15);
- cultural and heritage resources and Indigenous land and resource use (Section 16);
- other land and resource use (Section 17);
- economy (Section 18); and
- community well-being (Section 19).

Valued components or intermediate components were selected for each of the above disciplines. Valued components are identified to be of concern by the proponent, scientists, government agencies, Indigenous Peoples, or the public (CEA Agency 2018). The selection of appropriate VCs allows an EA to be focused on those aspects of the biophysical and socio-economic environments that are of greatest importance to both society and species conservation. Valued components were selected using the results from baseline studies and Indigenous Knowledge and Traditional Land Use Studies and feedback from engagement with Indigenous Groups, regulators, and the public. Intermediate components of the biophysical environment were also assessed to support VC assessments.

The individual discipline sections predicted Project-specific residual effects for each VC or intermediate component as well as residual cumulative effects from the Project, other previous and existing projects and activities, and RFDs, where applicable. The assessment considered the Project design elements and mitigation measures that would be implemented such that the Project can be constructed, operated, and decommissioned and reclaimed (i.e., closed) in a manner that would avoid or minimize adverse effects on the biophysical and socio-economic environments, while maximizing the benefits to local Indigenous communities, Saskatchewan, and Canada.

NexGen took an inclusive approach to the EA by considering multiple types of knowledge to produce a comprehensive understanding of the potential effects of the Project and to identify ways to mitigate potential adverse effects and enhance positive effects. Indigenous and Local Knowledge was incorporated into the EIS by integrating the results from Indigenous Knowledge and Traditional Land Use Studies and from engagement with Indigenous Groups and community members.

The residual effects were classified and tabulated, and significance determinations were completed for VCs. Key uncertainties were identified, and monitoring and follow-up activities were proposed to address key sources of uncertainty, verify the predicted residual effects, and evaluate the effectiveness of planned mitigation designs, policies, and practices.

24.4 Summary of Environmental Assessment Conclusions

The EIS has been summarized below according to the following elements of the assessment:

- Summary of Technical Discipline Assessments (Section 24.4.1).
- Summary of Significant Residual Effects and Benefits (Section 24.4.2).
- Assessment Confidence (Section 24.4.3).
- Overview of Management Programs and Plans (Section 24.4.4).
- Overview of Monitoring, Follow-Up, and Adaptive Management (Section 24.4.5).

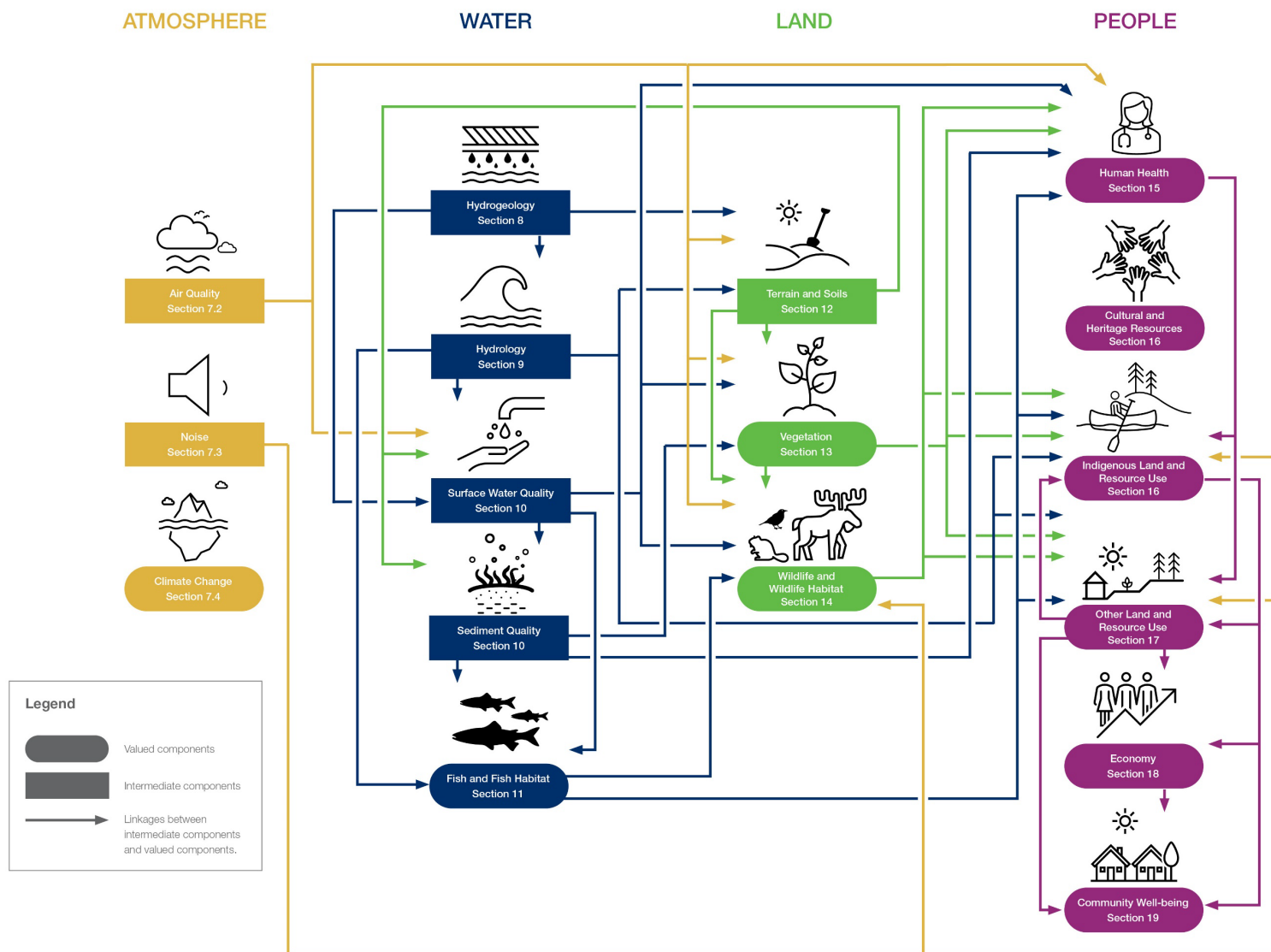
24.4.1 Summary of Technical Discipline Assessments

This subsection summarizes the key findings from each of the individual disciplines included in the EIS. The assessment of intermediate components and VCs is summarized within the following four categories:

- **atmosphere:** air quality, noise, climate;
- **water:** hydrogeology, hydrology, surface water quality and sediment quality, fish and fish habitat;
- **land:** terrain and soils, vegetation, wildlife and wildlife habitat; and
- **people:** human health, cultural and heritage resources, Indigenous land and resource use, other land and resource use, economy, community well-being.

A linkage diagram, Figure 24.4-1, illustrates how these components of the EA are interconnected. Following the summary of key findings by discipline, overall Project summaries for significance of residual effects, benefits, assessment confidence, and monitoring and follow-up plans are provided.

Figure 24.4-1: Environmental Assessment Technical Discipline Linkage Diagram



24.4.1.1 Atmosphere

Components of the atmospheric environment included in the overall assessment were air quality, noise, and climate change. Key findings and conclusions from each component are presented in Section 24.4.1.1.1 to Section 24.4.1.1.3.

24.4.1.1.1 Air Quality

Air quality was selected as an **intermediate component** based on the connection to soil and water and the health of vegetation, wildlife, and people.

The residual effects analysis used a dispersion modelling approach to predict concentrations of criteria air contaminants for the Application Case and RFD Case and then compared the predictions to baseline conditions and relevant air quality criteria. Project activities that would have the potential to affect air quality during the Project lifespan include combustion of fossil fuels in stationary, mobile, and heavy equipment; handling and stockpiling of waste rock, special waste rock, and ore; underground drilling and blasting; and waste incineration. Mitigation measures, such as optimizing haul route distances and limiting idling of vehicles and equipment, were identified to reduce the potential for effects on air quality.

After mitigation measures were considered, most of the criteria air contaminants were predicted to remain compliant with the Saskatchewan Ambient Air Quality Standards throughout all phases of the Project within the regional study area (RSA). Short-term concentrations of 24-hour particulate matter with a diameter of 10 micron (μm) or less and 24-hour total suspended particulates were predicted to be above the Saskatchewan Ambient Air Quality Standards for both the Application Case and RFD Case, but the exceedance frequencies remain low, and the exceedance areas would be localized to the Project.

The current baseline monitoring program that monitors meteorological parameters would be continued through all phases of the Project, likely with some modification through the federal licensing and provincial permitting processes. The Environmental Protection Program, Effluent and Emissions Plan, and Environmental Monitoring Plan would be used to verify effects predictions and compliance with the Saskatchewan Ambient Air Quality Standards.

24.4.1.1.2 Noise

Noise was selected as an **intermediate component** due to influence on Indigenous land and resource use and other land and resource use and sensitivity of some wildlife to noise.

Computer models were developed for the Application Case and RFD Case and applied to predict noise levels at receptor locations near the Project. Noise emissions from equipment and mining-related activities such as land clearing, site preparation, construction of facilities and infrastructure, underground mine development, power plant operation, airstrip traffic, milling and underground operations, and decommissioning and reclamation activities were assessed at these locations. The assessment considered Project environmental design features and mitigation to limit noise effects including designs to attenuate noise from certain structures and equipment, proper maintenance of Project roads, and the implementation of the Health and Safety Program.

Considering these noise sources and mitigations, noise from the Application Case and the RFD Case is predicted to result in detectable changes from existing conditions. However, cumulative noise levels are predicted to be of low magnitude and would remain below the thresholds set by Environment and Climate Change Canada, Health Canada, and Alberta Energy Regulator at all receptors considered in the assessment.

To identify and mitigate the potential noise-related effects of the proposed Project, NexGen would implement a discipline-specific program. Follow-up noise monitoring would be conducted at receptors in the area of the Project to obtain representative daytime and nighttime noise values for each receptor, which would then be compared to model predictions from the EIS and regulatory thresholds to understand whether additional noise mitigation is necessary.

24.4.1.1.3 Climate Change

Climate change is a dynamic process that can affect how projects interact with the environment over the long term. Climate change can modify the potential environmental effects of a project by altering thermal and hydrologic regimes. Projects can affect the climate by emitting GHGs, and in turn, the climate can affect the resiliency of projects by changing the frequency and magnitude of extreme weather events. Therefore, climate change has been incorporated throughout the EIS in the following three ways:

- identifying potential effects of the Project on climate change through the assessment of the climate change VC;
- identifying potential effects of climate change on the Project; and
- consideration of climate change on the biophysical and socio-economic environments by discipline.

Climate Change Valued Component Assessment

Climate change was selected as a **VC** based on the socio-economic and cultural importance of climate change, federal and provincial commitments to decrease GHG emissions, and the potential for Project GHG emissions to contribute to climate change.

To assess climate change as a VC, Project components and activities that could contribute to climate change were quantified. A specific assessment of the RFD Case was not completed as the Application Case provides all required information for the federal government to consider the Project relative to the cumulative effects of historical, existing, and future projects.

The main Project-related sources of GHG emissions would include electricity generation, on-site mobile equipment, heating, land use changes, stationary combustion, waste incineration, industrial processes, and explosive emissions. Operations is anticipated to have the largest annual GHG emissions due to the number and size of sources present. Proposed mitigation measures to avoid or minimize the generation of GHGs included the use of liquid natural gas for primary power generation, heat recovery systems for heating certain site processes and buildings, and the efficient management of energy and equipment for the Project.

Based on the planned Project activities and mitigations, the maximum annual Project GHG emissions were estimated and compared to the most recent available estimates for provincial, national sector, and federal levels. From this comparison, Project GHG emissions were predicted to have an adverse effect on climate change due to the global and permanent nature of GHG emissions; however, total Project emissions would be less than 0.3% of total annual provincial emissions and less than 0.02% of total annual federal emissions. The assessment determined that the Project GHG emissions would not meaningfully affect Canada's and Saskatchewan's ability to reach climate change commitments within the current regulatory framework. Therefore, **residual adverse effects on the climate change VC as a result of the Project are predicted to be not significant**. Moreover, due to the low GHG emissions associated with nuclear power generation compared to coal and natural gas power generation, the downstream effects of the Project are anticipated to increase Canada's ability to meet the

national emission reduction targets. Additionally, the Project may support Canada's transition to a low carbon economy by providing the country with the fuel needed from cleaner energy sources.

A Net-Zero Framework is provided with the EIS. Considering the early stage of Project development, the Net-Zero Framework provides a preliminary assessment of potential alternative technologies and practices that could be used to reduce Project GHG emissions during the Project lifespan. Considerations for future decision making on the implementation of alternative technologies and practices have been identified, and it is expected that the framework would evolve as the Project design advances.

Effects of Climate Change on the Project

Climate change has the potential to alter the occurrence and severity of natural hazards from changes in future precipitation and temperature regimes, which would modify how weather-related hazards could affect the Project. Therefore, potential effects of climate change on the Project were assessed along with other effects of the environment on the Project. Characterizing the current climate and predicting future climate trends in the regional setting was undertaken to support the evaluation of Project design parameters. To align with NexGen's vision and values and to support the continual improvement process for climate change adaptation, the Climate Adaptation Framework was prepared to monitor and manage risks as an ongoing process.

Effects of Climate Change on the Biophysical and Social Environments by Discipline

Climate change projections developed for the Project were applied to the individual discipline sections (Section 7 to Section 19), where applicable, to identify the effects of climate change on the VC or intermediate component. The approach for incorporation of climate change differed within the individual discipline sections based on the potential for climate change to influence the VC or intermediate component.

24.4.1.2 Water

Components of the water environment that were included in the overall assessment include hydrogeology, hydrology, surface water quality, sediment quality, and fish and fish habitat. Key findings and conclusions from each component are presented in Section 24.4.1.2.1 to Section 24.4.1.2.4.

24.4.1.2.1 Hydrogeology

Hydrogeology was selected as an **intermediate component** based on the connection with hydrology and surface water quality and the associated influence on the health of aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems and people.

The hydrogeology assessment relied upon a three-dimensional numerical groundwater flow model to interpret the conceptual hydrogeological conditions and to predict potential effects for the Application Case and RFD Case. Project activities that have a potential to influence hydrogeological conditions in the area of the Project include underground shaft/mine development and operations; handling and storage of waste rock, special waste rock, and ore; and storage of cemented paste tailings in the UGTMF and cemented paste backfill in the mine stopes. Key environmental design features and mitigation measures to reduce the potential for effects include isolation of mine workings from groundwater inflows that could occur through high permeability strata with a hydrostatic liner in shafts; segregation and separate storage of PAG material and NPAG material; inclusion of engineered source control layering the PAG WRSA; use of engineered cemented paste tailings and backfill to control source concentrations; and the design, maintenance, and monitoring of the mine dewatering system to control the flow of groundwater discharge.

During Operations, seepage to the mine would result in a reduction in groundwater elevation (i.e., groundwater drawdown). The groundwater drawdown would be confined to the basement rock and would not affect Patterson Lake water levels. In addition, the groundwater seepage collected from the underground mine during Operations would be treated, monitored, and discharged to Patterson Lake, after meeting discharge criteria. Therefore, there would be no change to the overall water balance of the surface water system as a result of groundwater interactions.

After Closure, seepage from beneath the WRSAs was predicted to infiltrate vertically into the groundwater table, then flow laterally towards Patterson Lake. Groundwater originating at the UGTMF and production stope backfill source areas would migrate vertically upward primarily through the fault and shear zones, then laterally through the sandstone, before discharging within Patterson Lake.

Potential effects to hydrogeology would be managed through the implementation of the Environmental Protection Program, Mine Waste Management Plan, and Environmental Monitoring Plan. Seepage from the WRSAs after Closure would be managed through the development of an Adaptive Management Plan that would be implemented in the near term to reduce uncertainty and refine Project design during Operations, if necessary, to mitigate Closure conditions.

24.4.1.2.2 Hydrology

Hydrology was selected as an **intermediate component** based on the connection to human use, fish and fish habitat, and healthy and functioning aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems.

A regional hydrological model and a fluvial sediment transport model were developed to evaluate potential effects of the Project such as land clearing, site preparation, construction of facilities and infrastructure, handling and storage of ore and waste rock, discharge of treated effluent and treated sewage, underground operations, and the final removal of infrastructure. Proposed mitigation measures to reduce these potential effects included the use of erosion control, ground contouring of disturbed and restored areas, and the implementation of progressive reclamation and revegetation of disturbed areas.

Considering potential effects and planned mitigations, Project activities are predicted to result in a small net increase in discharge of water to Patterson Lake from Construction to the Active Closure Stage, which is predicted to result in undetectable increases in water surface elevations and watercourse flow rates in the receiving environment. The magnitude of changes to water surface elevations and flows along the Clearwater River is predicted to be within the range of natural seasonal and annual variability and is not expected to affect navigation. These changes would diminish downstream of Patterson Lake as the watershed area and ambient flows increase.

The RFD Case indicated that increases are expected in water surface elevations and in watercourse flow rates on the Clearwater River downstream of Patterson Lake. However, Clearwater River water surface elevations and flow rates are predicted to remain within the range of natural seasonal and annual variability, and are not expected to impede the ability of people to navigate the waters. Changes in the RFD Case would also likely be undetectable.

Climate change is predicted to have larger effects on water surface elevations and flow rates than the combined effects of the Project and RFDs. Flow in the Clearwater River below Patterson Lake is predicted to increase by 5.6% as a result of climate change, which is mainly expressed in the channel as an increase in channel wetted width of about 0.2 m and an increase in average water depth of 0.02 m, both of which are within the range of natural variability.

Predicted increases in daily flows for the Clearwater River reach between Patterson Lake and Forrest Lake resulted in corresponding increases in erosion and sedimentation; however, these changes would not be detectable.

Hydrometric monitoring and data collection initiated for baseline studies would continue. Selected hydrometric stations would also be monitored during the Project phases using remotely operated telemetry stations, which could be used to verify the receiving environment predictions of minimal changes in flows and water levels. These potential effects would be managed through the implementation of the Environmental Protection Program and Environmental Monitoring Plan.

24.4.1.2.3 Surface Water Quality and Sediment Quality

Surface water quality and sediment quality were selected as **intermediate components** based on how changes in surface water quality and sediment quality could influence the health of fish, plants, wildlife, and the people that use natural resources.

Water quality models were developed and applied to predict potential effects of the Project and RFDs and to assess potential effects on surface water quality, drinking water quality, and productivity status. The assessment considered how Project activities such as handling and storage of waste rock, special waste rock, and ore; runoff and seepage from the WRSAs; groundwater flow from the UGTMF; deposition of fugitive dust emissions; and treated effluent and treated sewage discharges could affect surface water quality and sediment quality. Project environmental design features such as the UGTMF and the engineered cemented paste tailings were designed to minimize the Project's potential effects on surface water quality and sediment quality. In addition, the Project would include the design, construction, and operation of infrastructure such as an effluent treatment plant, sewage treatment plant, and respective diffuser and outfall to reduce the discharge of constituents of potential concern to the aquatic environment and promote rapid dispersion in the receiving environment. Proposed mitigations such as recycling and reuse of process water, robust site water management processes, and the implementation of Project-specific management plans would also reduce effects on surface water quality and sediment quality.

Model-predicted constituent concentrations were compared to their respective Project thresholds. The analysis indicated that water quality constituent concentrations are predicted to be below Project thresholds in the receiving environment downstream of the Project during Construction and Operations in the Application Case and the RFD Case. Of the 21 modelled ions, metals, and radionuclides, all were predicted to remain below Project thresholds except cobalt and copper after Closure, primarily as a result of groundwater seepage from the PAG WRSA. These results were also applied to a sensitivity analysis that included possible effects of climate change. All results were carried forward to a more detailed assessment on fish health.

Site contact water monitoring would be described in documentation for the Environmental Protection Program, along with the controls and monitoring of the on-site water management infrastructure. This monitoring would also generate information regarding water quality from each of the sources that contribute to site water to be managed on site and the effectiveness of mitigation to manage the water quality of site contact water. The Effluent and Emissions Plan would include the sampling and analysis of treated effluent in ponds and confirmation that these waters meet release targets prior to release to the environment. The monitoring in the Effluent and Emissions Plan would also include monitoring components to meet Metal and Diamond Mining Effluent Regulations (MDMER) requirements at the final point of discharge, as well as other release criteria that are derived through licensing. Water quality monitoring would be required prior to release of non-mineralized

contact water, treated contact water, and treated sewage to the environment. This monitoring would include the collection ponds on site, as well as the treated water ponds.

In the receiving environment, the surface water quality monitoring established for baseline data collection in Patterson Lake and the downstream waterbodies and watercourses in the local study area (LSA) would form the basis for monitoring throughout the Project lifespan. In addition to this monitoring, the Environmental Monitoring Plan would establish surface water quality monitoring at the edge of the regulatory mixing zone.

24.4.1.2.4 Fish and Fish Habitat

Fish and fish habitat included multiple species as **VCs** based on the importance of fish in the healthy functioning of aquatic and terrestrial food webs, and the value of fish as a resource culturally, economically, and traditionally to local Indigenous communities. Effects on fish and fish habitat were assessed for four VCs: lake trout (*Salvelinus namaycush*), lake whitefish (*Coregonus clupeaformis*), walleye (*Sander vitreus*), and northern pike (*Esox lucius*).

The fish and fish habitat assessment considered Project activities that were assessed for the air quality, hydrogeology, hydrology, and surface water and sediment quality intermediate components. In addition, it considered sediment release during in-water construction and direct physical habitat loss and disturbance associated with the fresh water intake, treated effluent diffuser, and treated sewage outfall in Patterson Lake. Effects on fish VCs would be minimized by diverting water generated from undisturbed catchments (i.e., non-contact water) around the site, and by collecting water that may have been altered by Project activities and treating, as required, those waters at the effluent treatment plant and sewage treatment plant prior to release to the environment. Proposed mitigations such as limiting the area of disturbance associated with Project footprint components, the implementation of erosion and sediment control best management practices, and reclaiming and revegetating disturbed areas, are expected to reduce effects on fish and fish habitat. Additionally, Project components such as the fresh water intake, treated effluent diffuser, and treated sewage outfall would be designed to minimize the physical footprint and associated habitat loss or disturbance in Patterson Lake resulting from construction and operation of this infrastructure. As required by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), any residual fish habitat lost or altered because of the developments would be offset with habitat created, restored, or enhanced as defined in a plan that would be developed through discussions with DFO and engagement with Indigenous Groups. Water management infrastructure would also be located to avoid sensitive or unique habitats in Patterson Lake, to the extent feasible.

Based on these Project activities and mitigations, residual effects on fish VCs were assessed for habitat availability, habitat distribution, and survival and reproduction. Although changes to fish VC habitat availability, habitat distribution, and survival and reproduction are possible, the predicted effects would be within the resilience and adaptability limits for the four fish VCs. Therefore, the assessment concluded that **residual adverse effects on fish and fish habitat VCs are predicted to be not significant**.

The Environmental Protection Program and the supporting Environmental Monitoring Plan would be implemented to monitor for effects on fish and fish habitat during the Project lifespan and apply adaptive management, where necessary. The key components of the aquatic ecology elements of the Environmental Monitoring Plan are expected to include monitoring of benthic invertebrates and fish. Monitoring during the Project lifespan is proposed to be undertaken every three years, but would be carried out in accordance with the MDMER and Environmental Effects Monitoring requirements, and with conditions identified through the licensing processes. The monitoring program for benthic invertebrates and fish would be designed to integrate the requirements of an Environmental Effects Monitoring biological monitoring study, as required under the MDMER.

The results of the surface water quality and sediment quality surveys described in Section 24.4.1.2.3 would provide supporting information for benthic invertebrate and fish monitoring programs.

24.4.1.3 Land

Components of the land environment that were included in the assessment include terrain and soils, vegetation, and wildlife and wildlife habitat. Key findings and conclusions from each component are presented in Section 24.4.1.3.1 to Section 24.4.1.3.3.

24.4.1.3.1 Terrain and Soils

Terrain and soils were selected as **intermediate components** based on the potential for terrain and soils to influence the establishment of plant species and vegetation communities and associated wildlife habitat and species over time.

A residual effects analysis considered the quantity and distribution of terrain units, the quantity and distribution of soil map units, and soil quality, which focused on soil suitability for reclamation. Project activities such as land clearing, site preparation, construction of facilities and infrastructure, handling of ore and waste rock, changes to air and water quality, and other typical mining construction, operation, and decommissioning and reclamation activities would have the potential to affect terrain and soils. As these activities do not have the potential to overlap with the Fission Patterson Lake South Property, only the potential effects of the Project were considered in the assessment.

Project environmental design features such as the UGTMF and site road alignment were designed, in part, to avoid removal of vegetation and wetland organic soils. In addition, the proposed Project footprint has been optimized and would be limited to the extent practicable to minimize disturbance to terrain and soils. Proposed mitigation measures, such as the stripping and stockpiling of topsoil, would provide materials for future use in reclamation, and erosion-control techniques would minimize soil loss. Additionally, progressive reclamation would be employed throughout Operations; disturbed areas would be reclaimed to support similar functions as natural ecosystems.

Given the potential Project activities and mitigations, the assessment concluded that there was negligible potential for cumulative effects on terrain and soils from the Project. Although there would be a permanent change to natural terrain units and soil map units disturbed by the Project that are covered by permanent features (e.g., WRSAs), progressive reclamation during Operations and reclamation during Closure are predicted to reverse effects and provide productive soils to support the establishment and succession of vegetation communities with similar function to natural ecosystems not influenced by the Project.

The Environmental Protection Program and Environmental Monitoring Plan would be implemented to manage effects on terrain and soils. Monitoring requirements for reclamation would be outlined in the Decommissioning and Reclamation Plan and would include details to achieve successful long-term reclamation of terrain and soils to support the establishment of vegetation communities and to provide functional wildlife habitat.

24.4.1.3.2 Vegetation

Vegetation, including three ecosystems (i.e., upland ecosystems, wetland ecosystems, and riparian ecosystems) and traditional use plants, represents a collection of **VCs** based on the importance of vegetation to ecological services (e.g., wildlife habitat), socio-economic/cultural importance, and the importance that vegetation represents as both traditional and other food sources for people and wildlife.

A residual effects analysis was conducted to determine the potential effects on upland, wetland, and riparian vegetation ecosystems and traditional use plants under the Application Case and RFD Case. Land clearing, site preparation, construction of facilities and infrastructure, handling of ore and waste rock, and changes to water and air quality would have the potential to affect upland, wetland, and riparian ecosystems and traditional use plants. Project environmental design features such as the UGTMF and site road alignment were designed, in part, to minimize Project effects on vegetation ecosystems and traditional use plants. In addition, the proposed Project footprint was optimized and would be limited to the extent practicable to minimize disturbance to vegetation. Proposed mitigation measures, such as progressive reclamation and revegetation of disturbed areas and areas where non-permanent Project components have been removed, would reduce effects on vegetation ecosystems and traditional use plants.

For all upland, wetland, and riparian ecosystems and traditional use plants, the Project is predicted to contribute to a loss of ecosystems, which would be confined to the Project's maximum disturbance area. The distribution of ecosystems would mostly remain abundant and well connected across the RSA. Effects to wetlands would be considered permanent, though these effects would be small. Cumulative fragmentation of ecosystems from the Project and Fission Patterson Lake South Property would be limited and localized to the area around Patterson Lake and a portion of the RSA already influenced by existing disturbances.

Based on several lines of evidence, **residual adverse effects, including potential adverse effects from climate change, are predicted to be not significant on upland ecosystem, wetland ecosystem, riparian ecosystem, or traditional use plant species VCs.**

Annual monitoring would be completed to identify and manage new occurrences of species designated by Saskatchewan's *The Weed Control Act* as prohibited, noxious, and nuisance weeds within the Project footprint. Monitoring and follow-up during Construction would be undertaken to delineate potential activity restriction guideline setbacks to mitigate direct disturbance to provincially tracked vascular plants. The Environmental Protection Program and Environmental Monitoring Plan would be implemented to monitor effects on vegetation. Monitoring requirements for reclamation would be outlined in the Decommissioning and Reclamation Plan and would include details on reclamation treatments to be used during revegetation, schedules for the frequency of monitoring, and action levels where adaptive management may be required. Monitoring and follow-up would be implemented to verify that reclamation was trending towards the successful regeneration and succession of vegetation ecosystems that are functionally similar to natural plant communities in the region.

24.4.1.3.3 Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat

Wildlife and wildlife habitat represents a collection of **VCs** based on the importance of wildlife and wildlife habitat to ecological services, socio-economic/cultural importance, and the importance that wildlife represents both as a traditional and other food source for people and other wildlife. Criteria for selecting VCs included: indicator, umbrella, or keystone species; conservation status; ecosystem and species life history; and Indigenous considerations. Final wildlife VCs selected included: woodland caribou (*Rangifer tarandus caribou*), moose (*Alces americanus*), grey wolf (*Canis lupus*), black bear (*Ursus americanus*), beaver (*Castor canadensis*), little brown myotis (*Myotis lucifugus*), olive-sided flycatcher (*Contopus cooperi*), rusty blackbird (*Euphagus carolinus*), common goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*), mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), and Canadian toad (*Anaxyrus hemiophrys*).

An analysis was completed to evaluate Project and RFD components and activities that could potentially affect wildlife and wildlife habitat. For woodland caribou, the RFD evaluation also included a qualitative analysis of anticipated effects from forestry in the southern unit of the SK2 West Administration Unit (SK2 West). For both

the Project and RFDs, activities that would have the potential to affect wildlife and wildlife habitat include land clearing, site preparation, construction of facilities and infrastructure, handling of ore and waste rock, changes to water and air quality, and other supporting mining construction, operation, and decommissioning and reclamation activities. The main mitigations for habitat loss are minimizing the Project footprint, re-aligning the site road within the Project footprint west of the airstrip to avoid a wetland, minimizing sensory disturbance, and progressive and final reclamation. During Operations and Closure, habitats would be restored to the extent possible through progressive and final reclamation.

Development of the Project site was predicted to result in habitat loss, habitat alteration, and sensory disturbance for all VCs during all Project phases. Some residual effects would be irreversible, such as potential changes to wetlands and permanent alteration of the landscape from the WRSAs. Residual effects associated with all other reclaimed habitat would be reversible, with the duration of effects being VC-specific and dependent on the time required to establish functional habitat. The magnitude of loss of wildlife habitat from the proposed Project would be less than 1.5% of suitable habitats in the RSA for all VCs. Cumulative habitat loss in the RFD Case would be less than 3.5% of suitable habitat in the RSA for all VCs.

Habitat distribution for all VCs except woodland caribou in the Application Case and the RFD Case would remain well connected throughout the RSA. For woodland caribou, habitat distribution is anticipated to remain unchanged; however, habitat is not well connected under existing conditions. Proposed mitigations designed to preserve habitat distribution include wildlife encounter protocols, limiting snowbank heights along the access road, enforced speed limits, and erecting signage to minimize potential disruption of connectivity and movement around and across Project infrastructure. Further mitigations such as scheduling work to avoid sensitive areas/periods, enclosing equipment, using noise suppression equipment, and enacting wildlife protection policies would minimize sensory disturbance to wildlife. These measures, combined with minimizing habitat loss, would limit effects on survival and reproduction of wildlife.

Given these mitigations, **all VC populations would be expected to remain self-sustaining and ecologically effective except woodland caribou, which is not self-sustaining under existing conditions. For all wildlife VCs except woodland caribou, the residual adverse effects from habitat disturbance, habitat alteration, and sensory disturbance from the physical footprint and associated Project activities in both the Application Case and RFD Case are considered not significant.** Woodland caribou are discussed further in Section 24.4.2.1, Significance of Residual Effects.

Surveillance completed as part of the Environmental Protection Program would be used to determine the efficacy of mitigation measures and to guide any future measures that should be implemented in subsequent Project phases. Potential risk areas at the Project would be identified as part of surveillance, which could lead to the implementation of targeted mitigation measures in these areas to limit human-wildlife conflicts. Preliminary surveillance would include a wildlife incident log, breeding bird follow-up studies, and remote camera follow-up studies. A Caribou Mitigation and Offsetting Plan would be developed and implemented for the Project, whereby offsets would be used to reduce the residual effects to woodland caribou and provide a net increase in functional woodland caribou habitat. Ongoing monitoring would be defined in the plan through engagement with regulatory agencies and local Indigenous communities.

24.4.1.4 *People*

Components that were included in the overall assessment of people include human health, cultural and heritage resources, Indigenous land and resource use, other land and resource use, economy, and community well-being. Key findings and conclusions from each component are presented in Section 24.4.1.4.1 to Section 24.4.1.4.6.

24.4.1.4.1 **Human Health**

Human health was included as a **VC** based, in part, on NexGen's core value of protection of human health and on the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents in the LSA and the natural environment, particularly relating to the consumption of Traditional Foods. Human health represents a key interest identified by communities and regulators as it reflects the importance of hunting, trapping, fishing, and gathering to subsistence, survival, and livelihood, and as a key aspect of traditional and other food source security.

Potential adverse effects on human health during all Project phases and the far-future projection were evaluated through completion of a human health risk assessment (HHRA) for four potential receptors (i.e., camp workers, subsistence harvesters, seasonal residents, and future permanent residents). The HHRA evaluated both the Application Case and RFD Case. Human health could be affected by exposure to contaminants of potential concern that may be directly inhaled or ingested from Project emissions or indirectly ingested through the food chain. The mitigation measures put in place to limit effects on emissions and discharges as discussed for the atmospheric, water, and land intermediate components and VCs listed above would also minimize risks to human health.

The key findings of the residual effects analysis are as follows:

- For the assessment of non-carcinogens, no significant adverse effect on any human receptors as a result of releases from the Project would be likely during the Project lifespan for the Application Case or RFD Case.
- For assessment of risk for carcinogens (i.e., arsenic) for the Project, the incremental lifetime cancer risk was estimated and compared against the negligible cancer risk level of 1 in 100,000 recommended by Health Canada (2021). The incremental lifetime cancer risk of 4 in 100,000 was predicted to exceed the negligible cancer risk level of 1 in 100,000 for the subsistence harvester at Patterson Lake South Arm just outside the Project footprint but is not expected to exceed the negligible cancer risk within the RSA farther from the Project. This risk level is based on the conservative assumption of high consumption of Traditional Foods, including fish and terrestrial animals in the LSA. The predicted incremental risks for both the Application Case and RFD Case are in the negligible to very low category.
- The incremental radiation doses from all radionuclides in the U-238 decay chain including radon to all human receptors at all times were predicted to be below the regulatory public dose limit of 1 millisievert per year (mSv/yr). Overall, since the radiation dose estimates are below the public dose limit, no discernable health effects are anticipated due to exposure of these receptors to radioactive releases from the Project.

Overall, the HHRA results indicate that **residual adverse effects on the human health VC are predicted to be not significant.**

The Environmental Risk Assessment would be refined based on the Environmental Monitoring Plan and Effluent and Emissions Plan, which would include monitoring of air quality, surface water quality, sediment, soil, fish tissue, benthic invertebrate tissue, and Traditional Foods. Monitoring would focus on collecting data to verify environmental risk assessment model predictions as well as providing data to improve model predictions as the Project proceeds. Monitoring would support NexGen's adaptive management framework with the objective of reducing uncertainty over time. NexGen would work with local Indigenous Groups to complete a targeted Traditional Foods study to validate or modify the dietary assumptions made in the HHRA.

24.4.1.4.2 Cultural and Heritage Resources

Cultural and Heritage Resources was included as a **VC** based on its importance to Indigenous Groups and because archaeological sites are protected under Saskatchewan's *The Heritage Property Act*.

No heritage resources were found in field studies, and no further studies are required by the Heritage Conservation Branch. A chance find procedure would be implemented to manage any unanticipated archaeological materials or features discovered during any land clearing activities. Therefore, **residual adverse effects on the cultural and heritage resources VC are predicted to be not significant.**

24.4.1.4.3 Indigenous Land and Resource Use

Indigenous Land and Resource Use was included as a **VC** based on the importance of the area of the Project for traditional land and resource use, and to fulfil the requirement under Section 5(1) of *CEAA 2012*. Traditional activities associated with Indigenous land and resource include fishing, gathering, hunting, trapping, and other cultural activities. Occupancy and habitation are important aspects of Indigenous land and resource use, as are access and travel routes.

Indigenous land and resource use was assessed based on changes to access and area available for Indigenous land and resource use; availability of fish, plants, and wildlife for harvesting; and quality of the Indigenous land use experience. Project activities that could affect these intermediate components and VCs are listed in the atmosphere (Section 24.4.1.1), water (Section 24.4.1.2), and land (Section 24.4.1.3) subsections. Project environmental design features such as limiting the Project footprint to the extent practical and using the underground workings to store tailings were designed to minimize Project effects on Indigenous land and resource use. The mitigation measures put in place to limit emissions and discharges, as discussed for the intermediate components and VCs included above, would protect the fish, plants, and wildlife for harvest. Sensory disturbances including noise and light would be mitigated with design features that minimize emissions. The Ground Transportation Emergency Response Plan and Security Program would be in place to protect land users around the Project and along the access road. There would be limited measures to address resource user traffic safety on Highway 955 due to this roadway being under provincial purview; however, road upgrade and maintenance cost-sharing agreements would include provisions for safe and ploughed pullouts. The Decommissioning and Reclamation Plan would be developed and implemented to meet Indigenous land use objectives after Closure.

Perceptions about mining in the region have been formed based on experience with the Cluff Lake Mine and mineral exploration activity. Perceptions about potential contaminants from mining and changes to the cultural landscape would be mitigated through the implementation of an independent Indigenous monitoring program, communication through the Indigenous and Public Engagement Program, development of regional strategies to address effects on Indigenous land and resource use, and Benefit Agreements with primary Indigenous Groups. Benefit Agreements have been signed between NexGen and all four primary Indigenous Groups: the Clearwater River Dene Nation, Métis Nation – Saskatchewan, Birch Narrows Dene Nation, and Buffalo River Dene Nation.

Given these mitigations, there is expected to be continued ability to participate in Indigenous land and resource use activities. **The residual adverse effects on the Indigenous land and resource use VC are predicted to be not significant.**

Monitoring programs would be established to confirm the mitigation effectiveness for the land and resources that Indigenous Peoples rely upon and for aspects of the Project that may affect the experience of being out on the land. These monitoring programs would be developed through the Environmental Protection Program and associated follow-up studies. The success of regional mitigation strategies would be monitored, and perception surveys would be used to understand LPA residents' thoughts and understanding of uranium mining to guide future engagement and monitoring programs.

The establishment of the Environmental Committees and hiring of a independent Indigenous monitors with each primary Indigenous Group would be key for Indigenous Groups to stay actively involved in monitoring the environmental performance of the Project and to verify the parties are implementing the regulatory and environmental commitments made in respect of the Project.

The results of the monitoring conducted by the independent Indigenous monitors and NexGen would be evaluated and modifications to monitoring plans would be made, as required, to support adaptive management and foster continual improvement.

NexGen would continue to engage with, and have ongoing communication with, potentially affected Indigenous land users, both independently and as part of the Indigenous and Public Engagement Program. NexGen would also continue to share Project information, address issues and concerns as they arise, and share environmental monitoring results with local Indigenous Groups and communities.

NexGen has committed in the Benefit Agreements with each primary Indigenous Group to establish an Implementation Committee. The Implementation Committee is tasked with the responsibility of facilitating an effective ongoing working relationship between NexGen and the Indigenous Groups to verify that all commitments made within the Benefit Agreements are realized.

24.4.1.4.4 Other Land and Resource Use

Other Land and Resource Use was included as a **VC** based on the commercial and recreational land and resource uses that represent key economic activities and central features of the social setting in northern Saskatchewan. Commercial resource use includes activities in which people from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities may participate: commercial fishing and trapping; lodges, outfitting, and ecotourism; forestry; and mining. Recreational uses include use of parks and protected areas by Indigenous or non-Indigenous peoples, as well as fishing and hunting activities that are conducted by non-Indigenous people under provincial licences.

Other land and resource use was assessed based on changes to access and area available for land and resource use and quality of the resource use experience. The land users mainly consist of trappers and lodge

and outfitting owners and clientele. Other groups such as recreational hunters and recreational and commercial fish harvesters are either not active or only nominally active in the other land and resource use LSA.

Mitigations that are intended to protect the biophysical environment would also mitigate the effects of Project activities on other land and resource use. Project environmental design features such as limiting the Project footprint to the extent practical and using the underground workings to store tailings were designed to minimize Project effects on other land and resource use. In addition, the Project would be reclaimed after Closure. Sensory disturbances including noise and light would be mitigated with design features that minimize emissions. In addition to the programs intended to monitor and manage biophysical effects, other measures to further reduce effects on other land and resource use are the Ground Transportation Emergency Response Plan and Security Program to provide safe and coordinated access via the access road, and an Indigenous and Public Engagement Program that includes engaging trappers, outfitters, and other land users to share Project information and address issues, and sharing environmental monitoring results with local communities.

There is expected to be continued opportunities for other land and resource use due to the negligible to small magnitude of local and reversible effects and the limited number of resource users that have the potential to be affected. Therefore, **residual adverse effects on the other land and resource use VC are predicted to be not significant.**

Environmental Committees composed of NexGen and Indigenous Group representatives would be established to act in an oversight manner to monitor the environmental performance of the Project and verify the parties are implementing the regulatory and environmental commitments made in respect of the Project. A Project feedback and grievance mechanism would also be implemented to record and action issues identified by other land and resource users.

24.4.1.4.5 Economy

Economy was included as a **VC** as the Project is predicted to create employment, contracting, and training opportunities for the local community workforce and businesses, and generate taxes, royalties, and other payments that may increase the revenues of provincial and federal governments. In addition, Indigenous Groups emphasized the importance of the traditional or subsistence economies, which were considered in the economic assessment.

Project characteristics that have the potential to affect the economy include the following:

- estimated capital expenditures of \$1.3 billion over the four years of Construction;
- a peak Construction workforce of approximately 350 workers, with actual on-site labour requirements varying throughout the construction period;
- typical annual operating spending of \$167 million;
- an Operations workforce, including a forecasted 486 direct jobs during the operating peak and approximately 425 direct jobs during a typical operating year;
- spending during Closure; and
- targets established by NexGen for hiring workers and procurement of goods and services from LSA communities.

Proposed mitigation and enhancement measures, such as the delivery of certified and accredited training and recruitment programs, the development of culturally sensitive employment policies, increasing involvement of local businesses within the LSA, and the implementation of items agreed to in Benefit Agreements would reduce adverse effects and enhance beneficial effects on the economy.

The analysis determined that all potential adverse economic pathways from the Project could be mitigated. Overall, the Project is expected to result in substantial net positive economic outcomes, which would have flow-on effects on a range of socio-economic variables including community well-being. Therefore, the **residual adverse effects on the economy VC are predicted to be not significant.**

It is anticipated the Project's Mineral Surface Lease Agreement would include a Human Resources Development Agreement and a rolling Annual Human Resources Development Plan that would require reporting on efforts to meet socio-economic commitments. In addition to this reporting, NexGen has committed to establishing an Implementation Committee in the Benefit Agreements with each primary Indigenous Group. The Implementation Committee would facilitate an effective working relationship between NexGen and the Indigenous Groups to verify that all commitments made within the Benefit Agreements are realized.

24.4.1.4.6 Community Well-Being

Community well-being was included as a **VC** based, in part, on the importance of well-being to local community members. Community members shared those aspects of their home communities that made life good, including freedom to access the land, the bonds between family members and community members at large, and a clean environment that can supply everything they need to live well. Detracting from community well-being were the lack of community facilities and services, mental health challenges and addictions, and the encroachment of industry and government policies on their freedoms and the land.

The community well-being assessment used the social determinants of health as a framework for describing the existing conditions and evaluating the potential effects of the Project on the community well-being VC. The assessment focussed on effects from access restrictions and avoidance of areas near the Project to cultural continuity, effects of the worker rotation system on social adaptability, and the subsequent changes to demand for community infrastructure and services.

For both the Application Case and the RFD Case, there is expected to be a potential local loss of cultural continuity for some individuals, including transmission of knowledge tied to areas around Patterson Lake that would no longer be accessible. This effect, along with additional strain placed on family dynamics from participation in the worker rotation system, are expected to increase demand for community infrastructure and services within LSA communities. These changes may expand to the RSA communities as some RSA residents would likely be employed to meet the combined Project and Fission Patterson Lake South Property labour source requirements. However, these changes would not likely be measurable due to the number of communities in the RSA and the much larger labour force pool.

Participation in the worker rotation system is also expected to adversely affect social adaptability for some individuals or their families by placing increased stress on family dynamics. The extent to which these effects are experienced would vary by Indigenous community and by individual community member. Mitigation would occur on site through inclusive human resources policies, provision of a dedicated space for Elders to be available to support employees, an Employee and Family Assistance Program, and a grievance mechanism through the Indigenous and Public Engagement Program. Mitigation is also anticipated in LSA communities through the Benefit Agreements.

The Project is anticipated to cause incremental and cumulative effects on community well-being. However, changes to cultural continuity from access restrictions, social adaptability from the inclusion of the worker rotation system, and subsequent changes in demand for community infrastructure and services are not expected to adversely affect those values considered important by community members to a degree where community well-being can no longer be maintained.

The Project, through employment and procurement opportunities and Benefit Agreements, would have the opportunity to support and enhance well-being for residents of northern Saskatchewan communities. Project benefits are further described in Section 24.4.2.2, Project Benefits. When all the well-being elements are considered together, the Project is anticipated to result in a positive outcome for the LSA, particularly if mitigation and enhancements are implemented effectively.

For both the Application Case and the RFD Case, **the residual adverse effects on the community well-being VC are predicted to be not significant.**

NexGen recognizes that Project effects can result in positive and negative outcomes for individuals and communities and is committed to working with local Indigenous Groups and communities to aim for overall improvement to community well-being. Effective monitoring of community well-being measurement indicators would be important to properly identify the positive and negative attributes of Project-induced changes, and to develop additional mitigation, management approaches, or sustainable enhancements, as applicable. NexGen would work with local Indigenous Groups and communities to develop effective monitoring to address the well-being indicators including societal and cultural, health, neighbourhood and physical environment, educational, and economic well-being. NexGen would also work with local authorities on issues related to potential stress on infrastructure and services.

NexGen has committed in the Benefit Agreements with each primary Indigenous Group to establish an Implementation Committee. The Implementation Committee would facilitate an effective working relationship between NexGen and the Indigenous Groups to verify that all commitments made within the Benefit Agreements are realized.

24.4.2 Summary of Significant Residual Effects and Benefits

24.4.2.1 Significance of Residual Effects

As indicated in Section 24.4.1, Summary of Technical Discipline Assessments, no significant residual adverse effects on biophysical and socio-economic VCs were predicted for the Project or for the Project in combination with RFDs, with the exception of the woodland caribou VC.

The wildlife and wildlife habitat assessment concluded that **effects on woodland caribou in the Base Case are already significant, as the amount of disturbance in the SK2 West is greater than the 35% threshold value as described in the federal woodland caribou recovery strategy (ECCC 2020). Therefore, any amount of incremental habitat loss from any development**, including potential residual losses of habitat associated with the proposed Project, **is considered significant for woodland caribou.** However, the Project is predicted to contribute little to the existing cumulative effects on woodland caribou.

In the Application Case, the Project is expected to result in a loss of 32.4 ha of suitable woodland caribou habitat, representing less than 0.1% of available habitat in SK2 West and 0.6% of available habitat in the caribou home range study area. Habitat loss from the Project may displace a few individual woodland caribou but is unlikely to have a demographic effect at the population level. Effects from habitat loss are predicted to be reversible

40 years after the Active Closure Stage when reclaimed areas have reached defined critical habitat for woodland caribou. In the RFD Case, the Project and the Fission Patterson Lake South Property would combine to reduce the amount of suitable woodland caribou habitat in SK2 West by less than 0.1%. Additional disturbance of habitat in the SK2 West south sub-unit would result from forest industry activities. Overall, the combined amount of suitable habitat loss due to the Project and the Fission Patterson Lake South Property is predicted to have a negligible effect on the woodland caribou population as it accounts for less than one woodland caribou home range.

NexGen is committed to reclaiming habitat disturbed by the Project footprint and offsetting the incremental loss of woodland caribou habitat to help achieve self-sustaining and ecologically effective woodland caribou populations. Importantly, **NexGen's commitment to implementing a Caribou Mitigation and Offsetting Plan is expected to provide a net increase in functional woodland caribou habitat.** It is also anticipated that other future developments would implement similar mitigation actions to support woodland caribou conservation. Therefore, with the implementation of the Caribou Mitigation and Offsetting Plan that would achieve net increases in functional caribou habitat, the contribution of Project-specific residual adverse effects to woodland caribou would be **not significant**.

24.4.2.2 *Project Benefits*

As indicated in Section 24.1.2, the proposed Project represents a substantial and consistent source for meeting the growing global demand for electricity and need for expansion of low-GHG emitting energy options in a manner that is well regulated and respects all of Canada's security and nuclear safeguard commitments. Due to the low GHG emissions associated with nuclear power generation compared to coal and natural gas power generation, the downstream effects of the Project were predicted to increase Canada's ability to meet the national emission reduction targets. Additionally, the Project would support Canada's transition to a low carbon economy by providing the country with the fuel needed for nuclear power.

As described in Section 24.4.1.4.5, Economy, the Project would provide increased employment opportunities for local communities and other Canadians. The Project would benefit local communities and broader Saskatchewan and Canadian society in the following ways:

- **Employment:** Specific benefits include increased employment opportunities for local residents. During Construction, the peak workforce is expected to be approximately 350 workers, and the Project could result in between 8,200 and 10,500 direct, indirect, and induced full-time equivalent positions across Canada over a four-year period. During Operations, the peak employment is expected to total approximately 490 positions on payroll, with a long-term aspirational target of 75% of hiring from the LPA. Direct, indirect, and induced employment is estimated to range between 950 and 1,200 full-time equivalent positions across Canada during a typical operating year. Employment would continue during Closure but at a decreased level compared to Operations.
- **Income:** The Project would provide a substantial positive benefit through increased income opportunities for local residents. Construction labour costs are estimated to make up approximately \$384 million or 30% of the total capital cost of \$1.3 billion. The total direct, indirect, and induced labour income across Canada for Construction could range between \$730 million and \$885 million. Operations direct labour spending is estimated to be approximately \$55 million during a typical operating year. The total direct, indirect, and induced labour income for a typical operating year could range between \$94 million and \$112 million. Income opportunities would continue during Closure but at a decreased level compared to Operations.
- **Education and Training:** The Project would provide a positive benefit for educational attainment in the LPA through increased education and training opportunities for local residents. NexGen would provide

training opportunities, which would result in a higher-skilled local workforce, allow employees to advance to more senior and higher-income employment within the organization, and improve local residents' ability to obtain other employment in the future.

- **Broader economic benefits:** Overall, the Project is estimated to have a direct, indirect, and induced impact on national gross domestic product of up to \$1.3 billion over the course of Construction and up to \$1.1 billion in a typical year of Operations. The Project would also generate benefits through the payment of royalties to the governments of Saskatchewan and Canada. These government revenue sources include uranium royalties, resource surcharges, mineral surface lease payments, corporate income tax, and individual income tax. The total estimated direct payments to government for a typical operating year were estimated at \$288.5 million for Saskatchewan and \$103.9 million for Canada.
- **Specific enhancement measures:** Commitments made in Benefit Agreements with primary Indigenous Groups and programs developed and implemented jointly between NexGen and local communities, with involvement from other interested stakeholders, could help enhance income opportunities for local residents. Enhancement and monitoring measures are proposed to sustainably maximize economic opportunities related to the Project. Specific measures would include:
 - Working with local communities to develop culturally sensitive employment policies including addressing potential barriers to employment.
 - Providing a dedicated space for Elders to be available to support employees.
 - Operating training and recruitment programs for construction and mining-related skills targeted at employment opportunities for local residents and continuing to provide scholarship and summer student opportunities.
 - Prioritizing advancement opportunities for qualified local residents into increasingly senior positions.
 - Working with local communities to establish and maintain a business registry for local businesses.

NexGen has signed Benefit Agreements with the Clearwater River Dene Nation, Métis Nation – Saskatchewan, Birch Narrows Dene Nation, and Buffalo River Dene Nation. These agreements are premised on principles described in NexGen's IMS Policy, including proactively engaging with local communities, supporting the educational and economic participation of affected communities, and seeking to provide opportunities resulting in sustainable, lasting benefits to local communities beyond the Project lifespan.

To enhance personal income and community revenue opportunities for community members in the LPA, NexGen is committed to a long-term aspirational target of 30% of the Project's external spending being awarded to local businesses (i.e., within the Northern Saskatchewan Administration District). Further to this aim, the Benefit Agreements include a pillar for economic participation, which includes commitments about employment, training, and contracting opportunities.

24.4.3 Assessment Confidence

In the EIS, future conditions of the biophysical and socio-economic environments were predicted as a result of the Project, previous and existing developments, and RFDs. Given that biophysical and socio-economic environments change naturally and continuously through time and across space, assessments of effects and predictions about future conditions embody some degree of uncertainty (CEA Agency 2018). Each discipline section of the EIS (i.e., Section 7 to Section 19) identified the key sources of uncertainty within their assessment

and described how uncertainty was addressed to increase the level of confidence that effects would not be larger than predicted.

While uncertainty is an inherent aspect of any predictive exercise, there were no knowledge gaps that would affect the overall conclusions of the EIS. Considering the precautionary approach and using conservative assumptions where necessary, there is a moderate to high level of confidence that the effects on intermediate components and VCs have not been underestimated. Monitoring has been proposed in the EIS in part to address uncertainties associated with the effects predictions, as described in Section 24.4.5, Overview of Monitoring, Follow-Up, and Adaptive Management.

24.4.4 Overview of Management Programs and Plans

Management programs and plans are required to effectively implement the mitigation measures identified through the biophysical and socio-economic effects assessment process. NexGen is responsible for and committed to providing for the health and safety of its workers and the public and the protection of the environment. NexGen would develop an IMS for the Project, which would form a common framework for the management of all Project activities and would be developed with reference to the applicable provincial, CNSC, and Canadian Standards Association Group requirements, as well as appropriate guidance documents. This unified framework would include processes for fostering a culture in which protecting the health and safety of workers and preserving the environment are principal considerations guiding decisions and actions, as well as processes for implementing compliance measures and enabling continual improvement.

NexGen would be responsible for implementing the various monitoring and follow-up programs, which would be developed to include monitoring requirements documented within this EIS, and to comply with any Project approval conditions, permits, or authorizations. Monitoring and follow-up programs and management plans would be further developed as the Project, if approved, progresses through the permitting and licensing processes. Further Project refinements may influence the nature, frequency, and locations of monitoring required. In addition, input from Indigenous Groups, regulatory agencies, and the public would be considered. These programs and plans would then become “living” documents throughout the Project lifespan and would be altered, as required, as the Project progresses through Operations and Closure.

NexGen is committed to continued engagement with local Indigenous Groups and communities on appropriate and effective socio-economic management initiatives, and to evolving such initiatives over the Project lifespan to reflect areas of importance to Indigenous Groups and communities for each phase of the Project. NexGen’s approach allows for collaboration with each Indigenous Group and community to develop effective socio-economic management while more broadly recognizing the specific interests and areas of importance to each Indigenous Group and local community.

24.4.5 Overview of Monitoring, Follow-Up, and Adaptive Management

Monitoring and follow-up programs would be implemented to verify predicted effects, evaluate the effectiveness of mitigation, and measure compliance with future permit and licence conditions and statutory requirements. Monitoring would also be used to address uncertainties associated with effects predictions, identify any unanticipated effects, and provide input into corrective actions or adaptive management to limit those effects. Collectively, these actions would improve the overall environmental performance of the Project.

Adaptive management has been identified as a key element of the Project’s approach to risk management. Adaptive management is a planned and systematic approach to improving knowledge over time through an

iterative process that provides the information required to increase confidence to make decisions that reduce uncertainty and improve risk management outcomes. Adaptive management provides a structured approach to decision making that emphasizes accountability and explicitness, but also allows for flexibility to identify and implement new mitigation measures or to modify existing measures during the lifespan of a project.

NexGen's adaptive management process for the Project would be described in the IMS Manual and would be used as a guide to developing and applying adaptive management plans. For example, if environmental monitoring detects environmental changes that are different from predicted changes, the adaptive management framework in the relevant management plan would be implemented to determine if and what actions are needed to meet the underlying objectives of minimizing adverse effects and reducing uncertainty.

Adaptive management is supplemental and complementary to the continual improvement processes outlined in the IMS Manual. NexGen is committed to achieving continual improvement in environmental performance through the management systems that would be implemented for the Project. NexGen proposes to manage Project-environment interactions through the Environmental Protection Program.

24.5 Next Steps

24.5.1 Licensing and Permitting

The proposed Project is subject to both a federal and provincial EA process, and would also require federal and provincial licences, approvals, and permits. Activities related to the site preparation, construction, operation, decommissioning and reclamation, and release from licensing of uranium mines and mills in Canada must be licensed under the *Nuclear Safety and Control Act* and applicable regulations. NexGen is implementing an integrated approach to the EA and licensing processes for the Project whereby information to support the licence application is submitted to the CNSC in a staged manner to ensure alignment between the EA and licensing documentation. Under the integrated approach, CNSC staff conduct technical reviews of information contained in the EIS and the licence application at the same time; however, the licensing decision cannot be made until after the EA decision has been rendered. Once a licence is issued, the CNSC maintains ongoing oversight of the licensed activities to confirm compliance through focused inspections and audits, reporting requirements, and annual updates to the Commission.

In addition to the CNSC licensing approvals, the Project would require permits and approvals issued by provincial agencies. Ministerial Approval for the Project EA was received on 8 November 2023, with other relevant approvals required prior to the commencement of Project-related activities. To protect the environment and human health, mining activities are regulated under The Mineral Industry Environmental Protection Regulations, 1996, which dictate the primary permitting requirements that would be required for the Project. Under these regulations, the Project would require an approval to construct, install, alter, or extend a pollutant control facility; an approval to operate a pollutant control facility; and eventually, an approval to permanently decommission a pollutant control facility. These regulations also specify requirements for the maintenance of decommissioning and reclamation plans and financial assurance instruments during Operations.

24.5.2 Establishment of Environmental Committees and Independent Indigenous Monitoring

As part of the evaluation of Project performance, monitoring and adaptive management are expected to represent key aspects of Project development and would provide further opportunities for inclusion of Indigenous and Local Knowledge. NexGen has formed an Environmental Committee with each of the four primary Indigenous Groups (i.e., Clearwater River Dene Nation, Métis Nation – Saskatchewan, Birch Narrows Dene Nation, and Buffalo River Dene Nation). Each Environmental Committee is composed of representatives from the Indigenous Group and representatives from NexGen and would act as an oversight committee to monitor the environmental performance of the Project and to verify the parties (i.e., NexGen and the Indigenous Group) are implementing the regulatory and environmental commitments made in respect of the Project. The Environmental Committee would be fully funded by NexGen for the lifespan of the Project. In addition to the Environmental Committee, NexGen has proposed funding full-time, independent Indigenous Monitors chosen by each of the primary Indigenous Groups. The intent of these positions is to provide unrestricted environmental monitoring opportunities (subject to the Indigenous Monitor complying with appropriate health and safety and other reasonable site-specific policies), including independent environmental sampling, for the lifespan of the Project. The Indigenous Monitors would also participate in annual community meetings to report openly and without restriction on the environmental performance of the Project to community members.

24.5.3 Ongoing Engagement

NexGen views ongoing engagement and knowledge sharing as a critical success factor for the Project; this practice would continue throughout the EIS review and into all future Project phases. As NexGen proceeds through the regulatory process and advances development of the Project, engagement activities would evolve as necessary to include Indigenous Groups and local communities in a manner that provides the opportunity for effective information exchange and dialogue specific to each stage of the Project. NexGen would take an adaptive approach to engagement to allow for adequate opportunity to respond to the needs of local communities as new information becomes available, while also respecting specific government policy and/or legislation. NexGen is committed to ongoing engagement throughout the Project lifespan with Indigenous Groups, regulators, and the public to safely and responsibly manage the Project resource in a way that benefits society.

24.6 Closing Statement

NexGen's vision is to become a world leader in delivering clean energy solutions for current and future generations in a manner that provides lasting benefits to local communities. With this in mind, the company has approached the proposed Project with consideration of current and future generations. NexGen is focused on the responsible and optimal development of the Project, incorporating environmental stewardship, social advancement, and sustainable long-term economic benefits for local Indigenous Groups and stakeholders.

NexGen has worked closely with the communities local to the Project since 2013, and engagement activities have continually evolved to promote the inclusion of Indigenous and Local Knowledge and feedback from regulatory agencies and the public. The proposed Project has been designed to meet applicable regulatory requirements and industry best management practices, and to be safe for the public and workers. The Project would also operate in well-regulated provincial and federal jurisdictions.

No significant adverse effects on biophysical and socio-economic VCs were predicted for the Project or for the Project in combination with RFDs, with the exception of woodland caribou. Effects on woodland caribou are already significant under existing conditions, and NexGen's commitment to implementing a Caribou Mitigation and Offsetting Plan is expected to provide a net increase in functional woodland caribou habitat. Therefore, the contribution of Project-specific residual adverse effects to woodland caribou would be not significant.

The proposed Project possesses favourable economics, would be fully self-funded, and would not require any financial support from governments. The Project would generate benefits through royalty and tax payments to the governments of Saskatchewan and Canada; the total estimated direct payments to government for a typical operating year are estimated at \$288.5 million for Saskatchewan and \$103.9 million for Canada.

The proposed Project represents a substantial and consistent potential source of uranium for meeting the growing global demand for electricity and could meaningfully contribute to the Government of Canada's ability to meet its environmental obligations and commitments with respect to climate change. In addition to supporting national environmental objectives and commitments, the proposed Project would generate socio-economic benefits and opportunities for local Indigenous Groups and communities, the Province of Saskatchewan, and Canada, including increased direct local and national employment, tax and royalty revenue, and associated indirect economic benefits and employment at local to national scales. NexGen would continue to prioritize training, employment, and business opportunities for the local communities closest to the Project.

24.7 References

Acts and Regulations

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