



Staff Report

Date: January 19, 2023
To: D. Fish, Chief Administrative Officer
From: C. Wentland, Planning/Economic Development Officer
Subject: Referral: Lands File 6409449 – Gitga’at First Nation – Investigative License for Power Project

THAT the Staff Report entitled “Referral: Lands File 6409449 – Gitga’at First Nation – Investigative License for Power Project” be received for information,

AND THAT the Board of the North Coast Regional District provide a referral response.

PURPOSE:

To present to and seek a referral response from the Board of the North Coast Regional District (NCRD) on Lands File 6409449 (Referral) – a referral in regards to an investigative license of occupation of Crown lands for small storage hydroelectric project on the Gabion River.

DISCUSSION:

Gitga’at First Nation (GFN) is proposing the development of a small storage hydroelectric project on the Gabion River, northwest of Hartley Bay in Electoral Area C. Currently, the community of Hartley Bay has been relying upon fossil fuel for electricity, but the proposed project may replace up to 95% of that power demand with hydroelectricity, and reduce GHG emissions in that community up to 2,000 tonnes per year. The project is to be completed in phases, with the first phase to include geotechnical assessment at the intake, penstock, powerhouse, switchyard and transmission line corridor. The term of the investigative License is for 5 years.

Intended Use

GFN has engaged a consultant to assist in the investigative work required to proceed with the planning and development of the Gitga'at Power Project. An overview of the proposed work has been included with this report as Attachment C. At this time, the following investigative work has been completed:

- Archaeological Impact Assessment of Gitga'at Power Project Footprint
- Archaeological Impact Assessment coverage of Gitga'at Power Project Investigative Trail Locations
- GFN's Archaeological Blanket Permit.
- Investigative Plan Trail Reconnaissance completed by Onsite Engineering for the Gitga'at Power Project
- Terrain Stability Assessment for the Penstock Investigative Trail Construction.
- Terrain Stability Assessment for the Gitga'at Power Project Infrastructure
- Fisheries Report for the Penstock Investigative Trail

In addition to the completed work, GFN is seeking a License of Occupation in order to complete the following tasks as part of the first phase of the project:

- An 18.3-meter temporary bridge will be installed across the Gabion River at the outlet of Upper Lake to facilitate machine access for investigative trail construction and investigative work activities at an alternate intake location. (Outlet of Upper Lake)
- An 18.3-meter temporary bridge will be installed across the Gabion River at the intake location to facilitate machine access for investigative trail construction and investigative work activities along the hydro project infrastructure. (intake location)
- An 18.3-meter temporary bridge will be installed across the Gabion River at the powerhouse location to facilitate machine access for investigative trail construction and investigative work activities along the hydro project infrastructure. (powerhouse location)

- Clearing of a 20-meter Right-of-Way (ROW) and grubbing and stripping for investigative trail construction. The proposed investigative trails will be required to facilitate the investigative work activities.
- Test pits will be excavated on both banks of the Gabion River at the Intake Site. The estimated number of test pits will be a total of 4 to 8 Test Pits. Test Pits will be excavated 1-3 meters deep. A total of 3 to 5, 40 m-long seismic refraction lines will also be completed at the intake site.
- Test pits will be excavated along the proposed penstock alignment at 50-meter intervals. The estimated number of test pits will be a total of 15 to 20 Test Pits. Test Pits will be excavated 1-3 meters deep. A total of 3 to 5, 40 m-long seismic refraction lines will also be completed along the penstock alignment.
- Four test pits will be excavated on each corner of the proposed powerhouse and its switchyard location. One test pit will be excavated in the middle of the proposed powerhouse location. Test Pits will be excavated 1-3 meters deep. A total of 3 to 5, 40 m-long seismic refraction lines will also be completed at the powerhouse site.
- Test pits will be excavated along the proposed transmission alignment at 50-meter intervals. The estimated number of test pits will be a total of 15 to 20 Test Pits. Test Pits will be excavated 1-5 meters deep. A total of 3 to 5, 40 m-long seismic refraction lines will also be completed along the transmission alignment.

Location

The proposed location is located approximately 80 km southwest of Kitimat, at the mouth of the Douglas Channel north-northwest of Hartley Bay, and comprises lands known as the unsurveyed Crown land in the vicinity of the Gabion River, Range 4, Coast District; containing 51.85 hectares more or less. A general location map has been provided with this staff report as Attachment A, with a permit overview map as Attachment B. The Area of Interest is outside of the NCRD's planned area, and all required permits and assessments will be obtained through provincial and federal governments as needed. The nearest community to the site is Hartley Bay.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Housing	Board Governance	Shared Services
Economy	North Coast Community	

This referral is not directly related to the objectives and actions listed in the NCRD’s 2023-2026 Strategic Plan.

Attachments

- Attachment A: General Location Map
- Attachment B: Permit Area Map
- Attachment C: Proposal Overview

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff is recommending that Board consider the referral and provide a response of Interests Unaffected. Alternatively the Board may wish to consider one of the following responses:

- Approval of application is supported;
- No objection to approval of the project;
- No objection to approval of the project subject to conditions outlined by the Board;
- Recommend refusal of the project due to reasons outlined by the Board;
- No response.