

COMMUNITY NOTICE

Soil Remediation Project

April 16, 2024 - Community members may recall that work commenced in 2019 on the remediation of the former Nova Beaucage mine site in Yellek and the Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) lands next to the Anishinabek Nation head office on Highway 17. The pandemic postponed that work and further delayed the contract award process. The Nipissing Miller Partnership was finally awarded the contract on July 24, 2023.

Since then, the contract administrator, Spector Group, has been leading monthly project meetings with representatives from Nipissing First Nation, Nipissing Miller Partnership, Indigenous Services Canada, and the Ontario Ministries of Transportation, Mines, and Environment, Conservation and Parks in preparation for the work to begin this year. These meetings focus on addressing all environmental considerations and site-specific health and safety plans before any work to remove contaminated soil on NFN commences. Site preparation work is underway, and these operations are described in the Current Status section of this notice.

Background

A niobium ore processing mill operated for seven months in 1956 on Nova Beaucage Road in the community of Yellek. The land was returned to Nipissing First Nation after the lease expired in the early 1970s. The buildings were demolished in the 1980s, and only the concrete foundation remains.

Ore tailings from the processing mill were deposited at the mill site, and the former gravel borrow pit north of Highway 17 (next to the Anishinabek Nation head office), now owned by the MTO. Subsequently, material was removed from the sites to construct roadbeds, spread locally via grading activities around the site, and used as fill at private residences. All these residences were identified during the initial investigations and are part of the remediation plan.

The niobium tailings are considered a Naturally Occurring Radioactive Material (NORM). NORM is material found in the environment that contains radioactive elements of natural origin, such as uranium and potassium. The material will be removed to rehabilitate the sites for future use, including placing topsoil and seeding to restore them to a natural state.

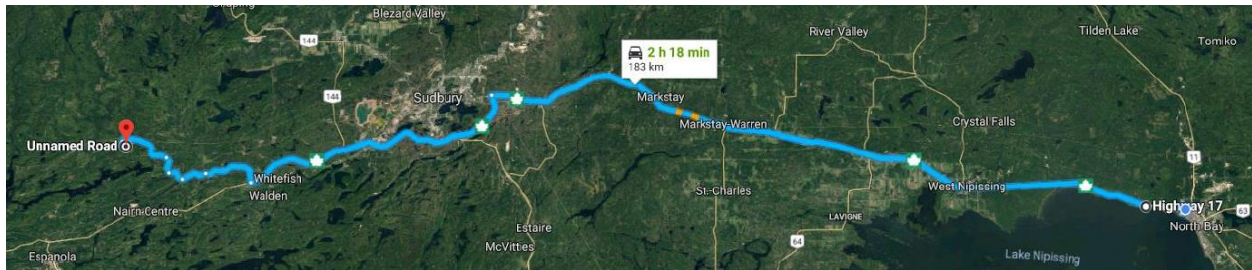
When NFN's Land Code was being developed, the Land Office included the contamination sites in the Individual Agreement between NFN and Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), which listed all outstanding legacy issues to be resolved, to ensure funding for the clean-up from ISC. Ontario was brought to the table through the advocacy of Brent Trach, a former Environmental Officer with the Ontario Ministry of the Environment (MOE) who brought the contaminated land owned by the MTO to their attention. NFN, ISC and the MTO worked together over the years to get the project to this point and will continue to do so until it is completed.

Location of Disposal Site & NFN Work Sites

The contaminated soil that will be removed from three work sites and the four identified private residences on NFN will be hauled to the Agnew Lake Tailings Management Area, located approximately 180km from Yellek, west of Sudbury.

Disposal Site: Agnew Lake Tailings Management Area

This federally regulated area is designed to receive radioactive material. The niobium material coming from NFN is less radioactive than the material currently stored at the Agnew Lake site and will be used as a "clean cap" for uranium tailings currently on site. An additional 12-15 cm of clean material and topsoil will be placed on top of the NORM and then revegetated.



Work Sites: Nipissing First Nation

Site #1: Former Nova Beaucage Mine Site – 15,539 tonnes of contaminated material to be removed, along with concrete pad foundation.

Site #2: Section of Nova Beaucage Road at the corner of Ernest Avenue (18 tonnes) and the old Nova Beaucage Road allowance (7,080 tonnes). This road allowance was not part of the original project scope, but we are committed to cleaning up this area.



Site #3: MTO Lands east of Anishinabek Nation head office (11,409 tonnes)

These lands will be part of a future Additions to Reserve process and will become part of Nipissing First Nation lands.



Private Residences: 224 tonnes in total to be removed from four properties identified during initial investigations and included in the remediation plan. There are two residences in Garden Village, one in Yellek, and one in Duchesnay.

Current Status

The working days for the contract began on October 10, 2023. However, Nipissing Miller is awaiting the Ministry's approval of the health and safety plan before commencing the excavation of contaminated material at any site.

Preliminary work completed by Nipissing Miller in the fall of 2023 included site clearing operations, preparation of staging areas, and a new parking area for the Anishinabek Nation office to provide a clear haul route. The project team also met with the residents of the four homes on NFN who have

contaminated soil on their properties due to this material being used as fill in the 1980s, mainly for decks and firepits.

The anticipated operations for April 2024 consist of completing the layout of the contaminated earth excavation limits, site preparation, and installing silt and security fencing at the former mine site (Site #1) and the MTO lands next to the Anishinabek Nation office (Site #3). Grubbing of non-contaminated materials at Site #1 and Site #3 is underway. The material from Site #1 is being hauled to a dumpsite located on Nova Beaucage Road where NFN's dozer is located. The grubbing work is for areas outside the contaminated earth excavation limits. This work must be completed before fence installation and is also required to develop areas for site facilities.

Excavation of the contaminated material on NFN is not expected to begin until July 2024, with the majority of the work being completed from August to November 2024. The completion date for the entire project is July 2025. However, Nipissing Miller will revise the schedule in late spring as more project details are finalized.

What to Expect

While this work is being completed on NFN during the summer and fall of 2024, community members can expect to see workers wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), most likely including coveralls and masks. The Health and Safety Plan will be strictly followed to ensure worker safety when handling the contaminated material.

To ensure the safety of community members, we ask all residents to avoid work areas and respect fenced areas and posted signage. We appreciate your cooperation and are pleased that members will be able to enjoy these lands for many years to come once they are returned to a natural state.

A 5-meter clear zone from Lake Nipissing will be maintained to avoid environmental issues, and silt fencing will be used on all work sites. An Environmental Qualified Person (QP) hired by the Ministry will be on site to conduct tests to ensure that all contaminated material is removed.

Trucking will be used to transport the NORM material from the NFN excavation sites to the disposal area. Trucks will be securely tarped during transport. To ensure the trucks are clean prior to leaving the excavation area, all trucks will be scanned, cleaned via washing stations, and cleared to transport before leaving the site.

The washing or decontamination stations will be located on the excavation sites and will have a containment system in place to control and then dispose of all contaminated materials, including water. Water used within the decontamination process will be contained, tested, then treated for safe release with any contaminated materials being trucked away to a safe disposal site.

Once rehabilitated, the land will not be developed for residential or commercial purposes. The land use will be determined by the Chief and Council in consultation with the community in the future.

Community Open House / Information Session

A community open house/information session will be coordinated in mid to late May to provide historical information on the sites. Subject matter experts from NFN, Nipissing Miller, Indigenous Services Canada, and the Ontario Ministry of Transportation will be available to answer questions from the community.

More details will be communicated once the open house date has been confirmed.

Contacts

This remediation project is a tripartite partnership between Nipissing First Nation, Indigenous Services Canada, and the Ontario Ministry of Transportation, with funding for the remediation being provided by ISC and the MTO.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please email projectinfo@nfn.ca so that your inquiry can be directed to the appropriate contact or call:

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For more resources and fact sheets about Naturally Occurring Radioactive Material (NORM), please visit the [Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission's website](#).

“Irresponsible, historic actions have left Nipissing with scars of contamination. In the 1950s, the Nova Beaucage Mill was built east of Yellek to process ore containing niobium and uranium. After only seven months of operation, the mill closed. Everything was left on site, and the radioactive, contaminated land was given back to us without any remediation. Radioactive materials from the mill were also stored at the Ontario Ministry of Transportation’s (MTO) abandoned sand pit on the north side of Highway 17. Unfortunately, ore stored at these sites was used for construction, landscaping, and roads in and around the community.” - from NFN Environmental Management Plan, Contaminated Sites Technical Tearaway