



Tourism, Culture and Heritage

Policy & Coordination

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Our File # POL - 175 - 08

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Helen MacPhail, Environmental Assessment Officer  
Department of Environment and Labour

**From:** Heather Marsten, Senior Policy Advisor, Corporate Strategy and Operations  
Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage

**Date:** March 6, 2008

**Subject:** Environmental Assessment Document:  
Proposed Miller's Creek Mine Extension, Hants County, NS

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Staff of the Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage have reviewed the Environmental Assessment Registration document for the proposed CGC Inc. Fundy Gypsum Plant Miller's Creek Mine Extension, Hants County, NS and provide the following analysis and comments.

Our understanding of this project is as follows: CGC Inc., owner of the Fundy Gypsum Plant, has applied for permission to expand their Miller's Creek surface mine facility in Avondale, Hants County. The proposed extension would see the development and operation of a surface mine to be located adjacent to the existing surface mine. The project would also include use of off-highway haul roads, creation of overburden and waste rock stockpiles, use of temporary and permanent settling ponds, and temporary power and service building construction.

Work on the project would be restricted to 410 of the total 486 ha currently owned by Fundy Gypsum at the Miller's Creek location. The site holds a non-mineral registration for 1046 ha; the new 410 ha site will be located within this site.

**Tourism:**

The tourism focus of this review is the effect of the extended mine on noise levels, visual esthetics, increased traffic, and the potential of the extended mine to negatively impact tourism in the region and/or Nova Scotia.

Avondale is located along the Fundy Shore EcoTour, a self guided driving tour that takes visitors along the Bay of Fundy and the Minas Basin. The tour extends from Amherst to Windsor and has a total of 39 tourist sites. There is one site directly in the area, the Avon Spirit Shipyard and Heritage Museum. The next closest sites would be in Windsor and Cheverie and it appears unlikely they would be affected by the proposed development. In addition to the Fundy Shore EcoTour, the Glooscap Trail follows the same basic routing along Route 215 through the Minas Basin area.

From that perspective, due to the increased noise levels from equipment and increased vehicle traffic, the quality of the overall visitor experience may be impacted at the Avon Spirit Shipyard and Heritage Museum and for visitors when traveling the Fundy Shore Eco-Tour or the Glooscap Trail in the area.

There may also be potential impact on the area's overall esthetics due to a potential increase in dust levels and equipment noise. This also has a potential impact on the visitors' driving experience and the view plane if the extended site is visible from the roadway, either the Avondale Road or Belmont Road.

The maps in the report have identified what will be visible from various locations in the area, but not specifically the Avon Spirit Shipyard location. According to the site maps, there are several places along both the Fundy Shore EcoTour and the Glooscap Trail for part of the extended site to be viewed.

The report does not indicate any potential effects or proposed mitigation for the tourism assets in the area. The report does indicate that they felt there would be no significant impact on tourism in the area from the proposed extension.

In summary, from a tourism perspective, the department suggests the following be considered should the proposed mine expansion project move forward:

- Proponent consideration of mitigation for the view planes along both the Fundy Shore EcoTour and Glooscap Trail.
- Noise levels associated with the day to day operations should be that they are kept to an acceptable level and monitored to ensure that there is no negative impact on local tourism operators.
- The report does not identify how far from the proposed site the Avon Spirit Shipyard and Heritage Museum is located, but this would be the main tourism operation in the area.
- Consideration of the impact on visitors to the general Avondale area during the peak tourism season.

#### ***Archaeological and Historical Sites and Remains:***

Section 6.15, when considering the refined footprint of the mine, supports the conclusions and recommendations detailed in the archaeological impact assessment report prepared by CRM Group (Appendix H.1) with the exception of two

recommendations #9 and #12.

Number 9 recommends "that, if possible, the Newport Plaster Mining and Manufacturing Company Quarry 4 be set aside for future interpretation ... If the site of Quarry 4 cannot be protected, it should be documented as outlined Recommendation #11." A statement concerning this recommendation should be included in the Environmental Assessment Registration Document.

Number 12 recommends that any significant ground disturbance (road building, geotechnical testing, etc.) in the vicinity of identified archaeological features be preceded by a site specific archaeological assessment or be monitored by an archaeologist. This recommendation should also be included in the Environmental Assessment Registration Document.

**Natural Heritage - Zoology:**

There is no reference to an observation made by a quarry worker of presence of a Lynx at the existing quarry site within the last ten years. Since Lynx are provincially listed, this is a deficiency in the report.

The Eastern Pipistrelle is now called *Perimyotis subflavus*. The document should reflect this contemporary name.

On page 155, reference is made to monitoring for swarming of bats. This should have been repeated in the Fall period, as swarming is not an event that is typically reported in the Spring. Presence of bats in May would indeed suggest that nearby habitats are being utilized for nursery or summer roost activities.

**Botany:**

The consultants are to be commended for a very thorough coverage and documentation of plants.

We do note a shortcoming regarding Wetland 12. The report acknowledges that gypsum will be removed from western and southern portions, as water flow is from the north and east. This wetland contains species-at-risk, and removal of substrate from any part of a wetland favours drainage which in turn can affect the flora dependant on a high moisture regime. We would recommend close monitoring of any habitat containing provincially-listed species with mitigation plans in place, should loss occur. We would further recommend disallowing further disturbance of Wetland 12, should it adversely affect any individuals of a provincially-listed plant species.

The establishment of a conservation area is also commendable and should address any other botanical concerns.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments. Please be in touch with any questions or concerns.