



ENVIRONMENTAL DYNAMICS INC.
Natural Resource Consultants

**Project Assistant
Mentoring/Capacity Building**

CRE 25N-06

Prepared for:

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and

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

For many years, fisheries related research and other projects have been undertaken in the Porcupine River watershed based from the community of Old Crow. Most of these projects have been funded through the Yukon River Restoration and Enhancement (R&E) Fund, with one of the consistent goals being to develop community capacity in Old Crow to ensure the long-term continuity of fisheries related work. Most R&E projects undertaken in Old Crow have involved a project Assistant Coordinator who works with project managers and biologists to carry out fieldwork. It would be desirable from a number of perspectives to have an individual (VGFN member) with the capacity to organize and conduct various aspects of R&E projects that do not require the presence of a manager or biologist at all times. This project was undertaken as a step in this direction, and was intended to provide the 2006 Old Crow R&E project Assistant Coordinator with a variety of mentorship and training exercises to prepare them for independently coordinating appropriate components of present and future R&E work.

Objectives of this project included:

- Inspire and build community capacity and stewardship for the conservation, restoration, and enhancement of salmon stocks in the Porcupine River sub-basin;
- Increase community capacity for coordinating R&E and related work; Decrease in the long term, and possibly short-term, the amount of time required from biologists/managers to conduct R&E projects in Old Crow;
- Provide more consistent employment for the VGFN R&E Assistant Coordinator during the active fisheries season.

2.0 METHODS

In mid-May, 2006, the VGFN project Assistant Coordinator was hired, and a variety of activities were planned according to their level of experience and technical ability. These included:

- 1 on 1 Computer Training
- Participating in fieldwork with Fisheries and Oceans Canada personnel.
- Participating in fieldwork with Environmental Dynamics personnel.
- Participating in work with other agencies.

3.0 RESULTS

The Assistant Coordinator began the position by helping to organize and prepare logistics for R&E project CRE-23N-06, Porcupine River Juvenile Outmigration/Small Stream Assessment. Fieldwork for the first phase of this project involved extensive beach seining in the Porcupine River mainstem. This work began on May 20th and finished on June 9th. The Assistant Coordinator also helped to pilot two VGFN R&E project boats from Eagle Plains down the Eagle, Bell, and Porcupine rivers into Old Crow. Further, they gave a presentation on June 3rd at the Old Crow Salmon Gathering regarding their work with R&E projects and mentoring.

On June 14th, the Assistant Coordinator began mentoring activities at the EDI office in Whitehorse. Their first activity was one-on-one computer instruction, including the use of Microsoft Word, Excel, and Powerpoint programs, as well as the development of proper typing skills. The Assistant Coordinator then accompanied EDI personnel to Mayo where they participated in the monitoring of a chinook salmon rearing

habitat restoration project (Panel project CRE-19-06). This involved minnow trapping and measuring of stream flow and water quality characteristics to determine the usage of restored habitats by juvenile chinook salmon. Following the monitoring, they connected with Al von Finster of Fisheries and Oceans Canada to participate in a larval fish study in the Stewart River, however high water conditions caused this activity to be cancelled. Upon return to Whitehorse, the Assistant Coordinator then participated in some juvenile chinook sampling/monitoring activities on Croucher Creek with Jody Mackenzie-Grieve of Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Next, they accompanied EDI staff with Al von Finster and Jody Mackenzie-Grieve on an initial reconnaissance survey of lower Fox Creek as part of Panel project CRE-54N-06. The Assistant Coordinator also attended an educational tour of the Whitehorse Rapids Fish Hatchery, and participated in the coded-wire tagging of juvenile chinook salmon at the McIntyre Creek salmon incubation facility. In addition, they worked in the EDI office to begin some initial development of this report, creation of a Powerpoint presentation regarding their work as project Assistant Coordinator, and, improve their typing skills.

On July 6th, the Assistant Coordinator returned to Old Crow where they prepared field equipment, boats, and other gear for the second phase of fieldwork associated with CRE-23N-06, Porcupine River Juvenile Outmigration/Small Stream Assessment, which involved sampling (minnow trapping) for the presence/absence of juvenile chinook salmon in smaller tributaries to the Porcupine River in the Old Crow area. This sampling began on July 11th, and continued until July 19th.

On July 24th, the Assistant Coordinator continued mentoring activities with EDI staff on the Yukon River near Dawson where they participated in fieldwork for a project assessing the stranding impacts on juvenile fish of the Yukon Queen II catamaran vessel. This work involved beach seining, assessing wave dynamics, and conducting surveys for stranded fish. On July 31st, the Assistant Coordinator accompanied EDI staff and participated in fish salvage operations associated with construction of fish passage mitigation associated with the Alaska Highway crossing of Marshall Creek near Haines Junction. The Assistant Coordinator was to participate in these operations again on August 1st, however, failed to attend that day without notice of any kind. They subsequently did not contact EDI staff until 5-6 days later, and presented no valid reason for their absence. Due to this absence, the remainder of the mentoring project was cancelled at that time as per the terms of the project workplan. August 1st was the Assistant Coordinator's last planned day of field mentoring, after which they were to complete a final report for this mentoring project.

4.0 DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS

The project was generally quite successful until near its end when the remainder was cancelled due to the unexplained absence. The Assistant Coordinator participated meaningfully in all activities and demonstrated a willingness and ability to learn quickly. The experience and training gained through this project provided a solid foundation that would have allowed them to take more responsibility for the coordination of future R&E work. The individual hired was young (21), and has considerable personal potential and is generally pleasant to work with.

Building the capacity of Old Crow personnel to conduct R&E work on the Porcupine River has occurred over the years since 2001 when such projects began, as a pool of experienced individuals does now exist. However, individuals with the required coordination, leadership, and technical skills required to independently coordinate fieldwork are still not readily available. It was hoped that a reliable and skilled Assistant Coordinator would in the future be able to coordinate and oversee certain fieldwork with limited

supervision and/or direction. The fact that the Assistant Coordinator hired in 2006 did not successfully complete this mentoring project is an immediate setback in this regard. Should any individual be interested in future work as project Assistant Coordinator, they should be required to demonstrate a higher maturity level in terms of dependability and reliability. Other individuals with some experience and leadership potential do exist in the community, and EDI continues to be available to assist in mentoring should opportunities arise. The reduction in the roles of outside biologists and technicians will continue to be pursued in R&E project fieldwork where possible. The future selection of a project Assistant Coordinator should be conducted in consideration of an individual with the necessary skills in this regard. Further, near the end of CRE-27-06 (2006 chum mark-recapture program), the field crew was left for one week under the direction of a replacement Assistant Coordinator hired when the initial individual left the project early. This “experiment” was successful, and with this ongoing project it is EDI’s intention to continue to decrease staff involvement in fieldwork.

5.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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