

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background**

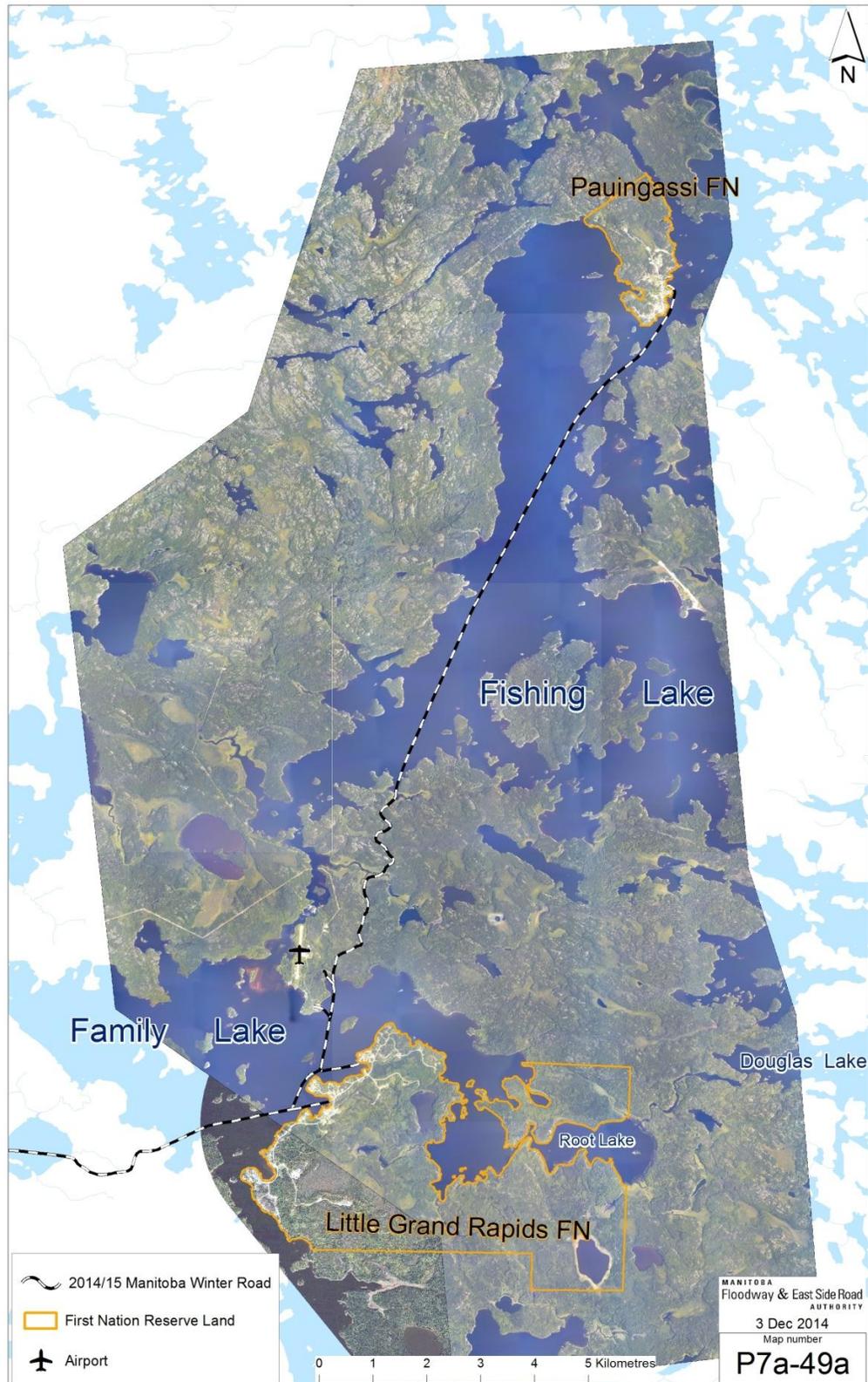
In the November, 2008 Throne Speech, the Government of Manitoba announced that the Manitoba Floodway Authority would be given the mandate for the construction of an all-season road on the East Side of Lake Winnipeg. Subsequently, in April, 2009, the Government of Manitoba introduced Bill 31, *The Manitoba Floodway Authority Amendment Act*, to officially expand the mandate of the Manitoba Floodway Authority to assume responsibility for the construction and maintenance of an all-season road on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. In December, 2009, Bill 31 was officially proclaimed, establishing the Manitoba Floodway and East Side Road Authority. On June 30, 2015 in an act of legislator the responsibility of the floodway project was returned to the province of Manitoba. Manitoba East Side Road Authority (ESRA) remains responsible for carrying out the Large Area Network Transportation Initiative.

### **1.2 East Side Lake Transportation Initiative**

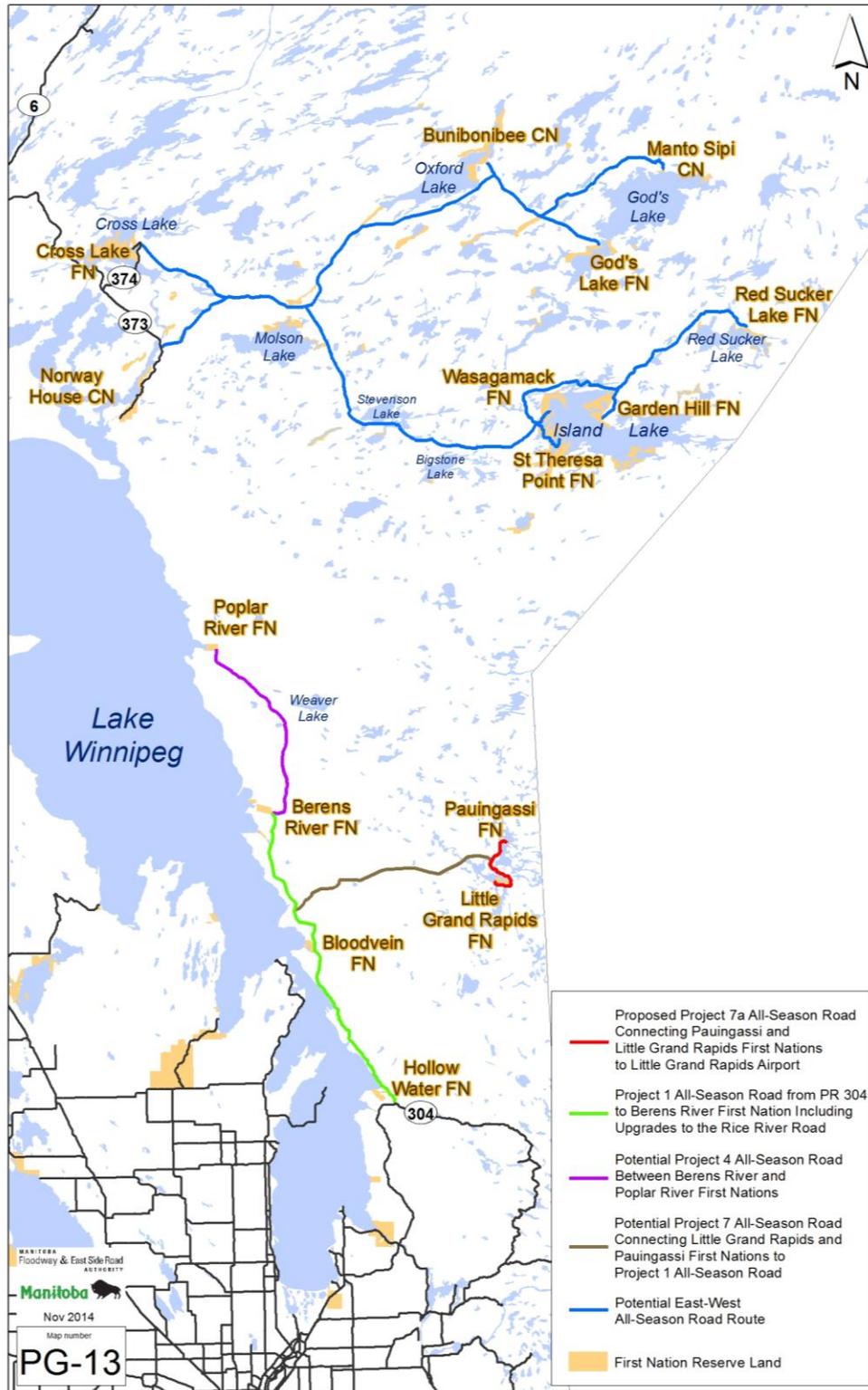
ESRA is undertaking the East Side Transportation Initiative to provide improved, safe and more reliable transportation service for the remote and isolated communities on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. The Initiative consists of three main objectives: 1) Construction of an all-season road from Provincial Road (PR) 304 to Berens River First Nation; 2) East Side Large Area Transportation Network Study; and 3) community economic development. A key focus of this initiative is to ensure that local residents participate in, and benefit from, the construction of the all-season road network through jobs, training and economic development opportunities. Currently, transportation within the region is severely limited with First Nation communities such as Pauingassi and Little Grand Rapids (Figure 1-1) depending on air or winter road service. These forms of transportation tend to have higher operational costs or are severely limited and costly, thereby resulting in increased costs for goods and services and limited travel opportunities for residents.

### **1.3 Large Area Transportation Network**

The East Side Large Area Transportation Network Study was completed in 2011 and identified potential transportation infrastructure improvements that will provide year-round access to the communities on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. The study report recommended an all-season road network for the region that is estimated to be 1,028 km in length at a cost of approximately \$3 billion (2011\$). The all-season road network consists of: 1) a 156 km all-season road from PR 304, near Hollow Water First Nation, to Berens River First Nation and a 95 km extension to Poplar River First Nation; 2) a 131 km all-season road linking Little Grand Rapids and Pauingassi First Nations to the new PR 304 to Berens River; and 3) a 648 km east-west route linking the Island Lake and northern Cree communities to PR 373 (Figure 1-2).



**Figure 1 - 1 Pauingassi and Little Grand Rapids First Nations Showing Existing Winter Roads**



**Figure 1 - 2 East Side of Lake Winnipeg Showing the Proposed All-Season Road Network**

The all-season road from PR 304 to Berens River (Project P1) will provide reliable year-round access to Hollow Water, Bloodvein and Berens River First Nations and the communities of Seymourville, Aghaming, Loon Straits, and Berens River. Provincial and federal environmental assessment reports on the all-season road proposal were completed in 2010 and 2011, respectively. Subsequently, ESRA received environmental approvals and authorizations from provincial and federal regulators to begin construction of the PR 304 to Berens River All-Season Road which is now under construction.

#### **1.4 Pauingassi to Little Grand Rapids All-Season Road**

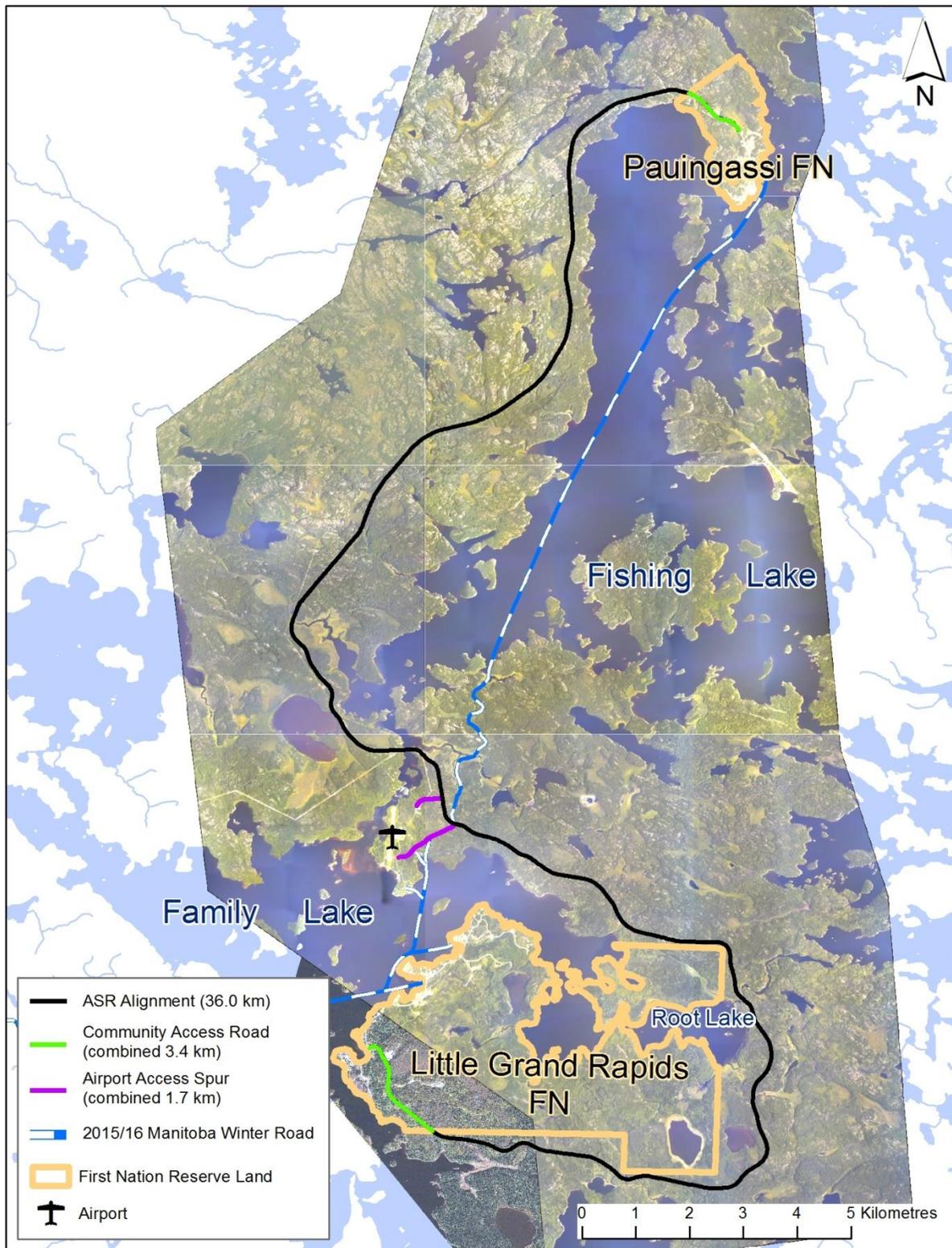
As part of the Large Area Transportation Network, the ESRA is proposing to design and construct Project P7a which consists of an all-season road to connect Pauingassi First Nation and Little Grand Rapids First Nation to the Little Grand Rapids Airport (Figure 1-3). The proposed P7a All-Season Road Project located on provincial Crown Land will consist of approximately 36.4 km of all-season road between the two First Nations with an additional 1.7 km of all-season road for the two access spurs into the Little Grand Rapids Airport area for a total of 38.1 km. The project will require two bridge crossings, 6 culvert crossings, and a number of equalization culverts and will require the establishment of rock quarries and borrow areas, temporary construction bridges, temporary staging area and construction camps, and temporary access roads and trails. Separate Community Access Roads (approximately 3.4 km) located on First Nation Reserve lands will connect the P7a All-Season Road to the two communities.

#### **1.5 Supporting Baseline Studies**

Building on the established information base for the east side of Lake Winnipeg, from previous planning initiatives including the Large Area Network Study, regional studies, monitoring programs and environmental assessments, ESRA contracted baseline studies specifically for the proposed P7a All-Season Road Project. Traditional knowledge studies were conducted as part of the East Side Road Initiative and included Pauingassi and Little Grand Rapids First Nations; the MMF also provided traditional land use and knowledge information. Based on this information, baseline studies were conducted including: 1) aquatic resources (North/South Consultants 2014); 2) vegetation resources (Scatliff+Miller+Murray 2014 a, b); 3) wildlife resources (Joro Consultants 2014 a, b); 4) heritage resources (Northern Lights Heritage Services 2014 a, b) 5) geophysical surveys (Golder Associates 2014) and 6) quarry assessments (W. L. Gibbons & Associates, 2014). In addition to providing baseline information in report and memo form, these studies considered environmental assessment information.

#### **1.6 Environmental Assessment**

The proposed P7a All-Season Road Project is a Class 2 development under *The Environment Act*, Classes of Development Regulation, and requires an Environment Act Licence for a two lane road at a new location and including associated facilities and borrow pits. The Community Access Roads on Pauingassi and Little Grand Rapids Reserve lands required environmental assessments under section 67 of the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012*. ESRA



**Figure 1 - 3 Proposed Route for All Season Road between Pauingassi and Little Grand Rapids First Nations and to Little Grand Rapids Airport**

worked with Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada on these assessments which have been concluded.

## **1.7 Purpose of Environmental Assessment Report**

The purpose of this environmental assessment report is to obtain a Class 2 Licence under *The Environment Act* for the proposed P7a All-Season Road Project. In order to satisfy this requirement, the assessment report identifies the scope of the project and the assessment, describes the proposed project and the environmental setting (biophysical, socio-economic and Aboriginal components), identifies, assesses and mitigates potential adverse environmental effects and evaluates the significance of residual environmental effects. The report outlines a program of Aboriginal and public engagement and provides an analysis of the issues, concerns and comments received. Effects of accidents and malfunctions, effects of the environment on the project, cumulative environmental effects, sustainability and greenhouse gases are also considered in the environmental assessment.

The organization of the environmental assessment report is outlined in the following section.

## **1.8 Report Organization**

The environmental assessment report for the proposed P7a All-Season Road Project linking Pauingassi First Nation and Little Grand Rapids First Nation to Little Grand Rapids Airport is organized into eight chapters and appendices as follows:

### **1.8.1 Introduction**

Chapter 1 describes background information on the proposed P7a All-Season Road Project including previous information, environmental assessment and baseline study reports is described, the purpose of the assessment report is provided and the organization of the report is outlined.

### **1.8.2 Scope**

Chapter 2 describes the scope of the proposed P7a All-Season Road Project and the environmental assessment are described in relation to applicable legislation, guidance and best practices. Regional environmental issues and valued environmental components are identified. Temporal and spatial boundaries for the environmental assessment are also provided.

### **1.8.3 Project Description**

Chapter 3 of the report describes the proposed P7a All-Season Road Project in general and specific terms. Project alternatives are identified and discussed, and the preferred alternative is described in detail. Information is provided on raw materials, construction equipment, fuels, waste products, workforce, scheduling and funding. The proposed development is broken down into project stages, and components and activities for the purpose of the environmental assessment.

#### **1.8.4 Environment Description**

The existing environmental setting of the proposed P7a All-Season Road Project is described in chapter 4. Background information for the east side of Lake Winnipeg is reviewed. The regulatory and ecological context of project is described. The environment is broken down into biophysical, socio-economic and Aboriginal components for the purpose of the environmental assessment.

#### **1.8.5 Aboriginal and Public Engagement**

The Aboriginal and public engagement program undertaken for the proposed P7a All-Season Road Project is described in chapter 5. The program included community meetings, design workshops, public open houses, as well as meetings with regulators, Aboriginal organizations, stakeholders and others interests. Engagement results are presented, analyzed and discussed. Environmental issues and concerns identified from public and Aboriginal engagement are discussed in relation to the environmental assessment.

#### **1.8.6 Environmental Effects Assessment**

In chapter 6, the literature on the effects of roads on the environment is reviewed and discussed. The environmental assessment approach including methods, baseline studies, site visits, engagement program and traditional environment knowledge is presented. Regional issues and valued environmental components are described. The potential effects of the proposed P7a All-Season Road Project are identified, assessed and mitigated, and the significance of any residual environmental effects is evaluated. Cumulative effects, effects of accidents and malfunctions, effects of the environment on the proposed Project as well as sustainability and greenhouse gases are also considered.

#### **1.8.7 Environment Protection**

Chapter 7 of the environmental assessment report summarizes mitigation measures and follow-up actions including monitoring and inspection to be implemented during construction and operation and maintenance of the proposed P7a All-Season Road Project. Other environmental protection measures including ESRA corporate policies and practices, applicable best practices and environmental guidelines for road construction are outlined. The preparation of an environmental management plan and inclusion of environmental protection requirements in contract specifications is described.

#### **1.8.8 Summary and Conclusion**

In chapter 8, environmental assessment information including environmental effects, mitigation measures and follow-up actions are summarized, and the conclusion on the significance of residual environmental effects of the proposed P7a All-Season Road Project is presented.

### **1.8.9 References**

Literature cited and contacts made as part of the environmental assessment are listed.

### **1.8.10 Appendices**

Reports and memos from the environmental baseline studies (Appendix A), engineering drawings for the proposed P7a All-Season Road Project (Appendix B), ESRA's Environmental Policies and Environmental Protection Specifications used in construction contracts (Appendix C), Aboriginal and Public Engagement materials (Appendix D), and information on effects and evaluation of effects (Appendix E) is provided.

## **1.9 Next Chapter**

The next chapter of the environmental assessment report describes the scope of the project and the environmental assessment for the proposed All-Season Road Project (P7a). Regional environmental issues and valued environmental components are identified. Project phases and P7a All-Season Road Project and assessment are also provided.