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ENGLISH AND WABIGOON RIVERS REMEDIATION PANEL

2022-2023 Annual Report

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Message from the Panel Chair

I am pleased to present the 2022-2023 Annual Report of the English and Wabigoon Rivers Remediation Panel, which documents the Panel's activities from April 1, 2022, to March 31, 2023. The report fulfills the requirements of the *English and Wabigoon Rivers Remediation Funding Act, 2017* to report annually to the Minister and leadership of each participating Indigenous government.

Each represented government shares a commitment to advance remediation of mercury in the English and Wabigoon Rivers in a timely manner. The Panel is currently making positive strides towards remediation.

During this reporting period, the Panel continued to approve funding focused on filling in data gaps to enhance the understanding of mercury levels and transport in the English and Wabigoon Rivers system. This information is required to develop appropriate options to remediate the river system.

The Panel also approved funding for member and participant First Nations to participate in the Panel, share traditional knowledge, engage communities' members to increase their understanding about remediation, and provide opportunities for community member training and employment. Despite the continuation of the global pandemic and significant flooding events, member and participant communities were able to engage in field work and further our understanding of the mercury in the river system.

It is a privilege to work with individuals and communities who are strongly committed to this important project. I look forward to our ongoing collaboration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Julie Schroeder', is written over a horizontal line.

Julie Schroeder
Panel Chair

Background

English and Wabigoon Rivers Remediation Funding Act, 2017

The English and Wabigoon Rivers Remediation Funding Act, 2017 (“the Act”) came into effect December 14, 2017.

The purpose of the Act is to provide for:

- The funding of the remediation of contaminants in the English and Wabigoon Rivers;
- The co-operative management of that funding by Ontario, and the two First Nations that have been most directly and significantly affected by historic mercury contamination in the English and Wabigoon Rivers; and
- An opportunity for other Indigenous communities that have a historic relationship with the English and Wabigoon Rivers to be involved in discussions in respect of that funding.

The Act established the English and Wabigoon Rivers Remediation Trust (“Trust”) with \$85 million in dedicated funding to support the purposes of the Act. The Act also established the English and Wabigoon Rivers Remediation Panel (“Panel”), a decision-making structure that includes members representing Grassy Narrows First Nation, Wabaseemoong Independent Nations, and Ontario. As Indigenous communities who have a historic relationship with the rivers and who have expressed interest in this project, Eagle Lake First Nation, Wabauskang First Nation and Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation also actively participate in supporting the work of the Panel.

The Panel is responsible for providing advice to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks on a series of items, including: the terms and conditions of the Trust, the Panel’s Practices and Procedures, criteria for making payments from the Trust, and remediation objectives and goals, among others. The Panel is also responsible for directing the expenditure of the Trust funds towards the remediation of mercury in the English and Wabigoon Rivers.

BMO Trust Company was appointed by the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks as the Trustee. BMO Global Asset Management was retained by the Trustee to manage the Trust assets.

The Panel Annual Report

Section 11(1) of the Act includes the requirement for the Panel to prepare an annual report by June 1 of each year. This requires the Panel to report in respect of:

- The activities funded by the Trust for the annual period ending on March 31 in the year in which the Report is due;
- The balance of funds remaining in the Trust as of March 31 in the year in which the Report is due;
- A forecast of the expenditures from the Trust for the five-year period beginning April 1 in the year in which the Report is due;

- A recommendation of whether additional funds will be required to fund the Trust and in what amount; and
- A description of how the activities funded by the Trust have contributed to the remediation of the English and Wabigoon Rivers.

The Chair of the Panel is required to submit the Panel's Annual Report to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, and to the leadership of the Indigenous communities that participated in the work of the Panel. The Minister is required to table the report in the Legislature.

The Trustee is also required to submit an annual report by June 1 of each year reporting on the financial affairs of the Trust and disbursement of trust assets. The Trustee is to provide this report to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, the leadership of each Indigenous community that participated in the work of the Panel, and the Chair of the Panel. The Minister is also required to table this report in the Legislature.

The English and Wabigoon Rivers Remediation Panel

Panel members are appointed by their represented governments. The Panel Chair and Vice-Chair are selected by the members from amongst themselves.

Panel participants are nominated by the leadership of their Indigenous community and authorized by the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

The operation of the Panel is governed by the Act, the Panel's Practices and Procedures, and criteria for making payments from the Trust.

Panel Members

Grassy Narrows First Nation

- Chief Randy Fobister (until November 9, 2022)
- Chief Rudy Turtle (from November 9, 2022)
- David Sone

Wabaseemoong Independent Nations

- Chief Waylon Scott
- Councillor Rocky Bunting – Panel Vice-Chair

Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks

- Mark Dunn, Director, Compliance Planning and Spills Action Centre, Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (until April 28, 2022)

- Indra Prashad, Director, Indigenous Drinking Water Projects Office, Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks – Panel Chair (until April 28, 2022)
- Dave Manol, Assistant Director, Northern Region, Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (from April 27, 2022)
- Julie Schroeder, Director, Technical Assessment and Standards Development Branch, Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (from April 27, 2022) – Panel Chair (from June 16, 2022)

Panel Participants

Eagle Lake First Nation

- Jordan Gardner, Lands and Resources Manager

Wabauskang First Nation

- Councillor Della Van Wynen

Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation

- Robert Parenteau, Lands and Resources Director

The Responsible Party Working Group

In this context, “responsible party” refers to a person or entity who is entrusted with coordinating efforts to plan and remediate the English and Wabigoon Rivers. The Responsible Party Working Group was established in September 2018 to:

- Support represented governments in understanding the role of the responsible party in the development and execution of the remediation plan; and
- Provide input to the Panel on advice to the Minister on the form that the responsible party should take including their governments’ potential role with respect to the responsible party in the development and execution a remediation plan for the English and Wabigoon Rivers.

Responsible Party Working Group Representatives

Grassy Narrows First Nation

- David Sone, Panel Member
- Nelson Walter, Technical Advisor
- Adrienne Telford, Advisor

Wabaseemoong Independent Nations

- George Land, Traditional Knowledge Holder

- Marvin McDonald, Traditional Knowledge Holder
- Ariel Lupu, Technical Advisor
- Regina Scott, Youth Coordinator
- Nick Hobbs, Advisor

Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks

- Dave Manol, Panel Member (from April 27, 2022)
- Neil Gervais, Advisor

Eagle Lake First Nation

- Alison Fraser, Advisor

Wabauskang First Nation

- Della Van Wynen, Panel Participant

Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation

- Annie Dietrich, Advisor

The Technical Subcommittee

The Technical Subcommittee was established in February 2018. It meets on an as needed basis as determined by the Panel. The purpose of the Technical Subcommittee is to:

- Support the Panel in making informed decisions about proposals for the funding of remediation activities;
- Strive for a common understanding on research, science and data interpretation and provide a venue for information sharing; and
- Support the Panel by providing advice on remediation objectives and goals.

The Technical Subcommittee is comprised of traditional knowledge holders from each First Nation and technical advisors from each represented government.

Technical Subcommittee Representatives

Grassy Narrows First Nation

- William Fobister Sr., Traditional Knowledge Holder
- Nelson Walter, Technical Advisor
- Reed Harris, Technical Advisor

Wabaseemoong Independent Nations

- George Land, Traditional Knowledge Holder
- Marvin McDonald, Traditional Knowledge Holder
- Ariel Lupu, Technical Advisor
- John Donetz, Technical Advisor (until July 16, 2022)
- Regina Scott, Youth Coordinator

Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks

- Michelle Palmer, Technical Advisor (until October 20, 2022)
- Saloni Clerk, Technical Advisor
- Paula Spencer, Technical Advisor (from August 11, 2022)

Eagle Lake First Nation

- Bob Kavanaugh, Traditional Knowledge Holder
- Levi Snook, Technical Advisor
- Alison Fraser, Technical Advisor – Panel Liaison
- Miles Pitchenese, Technical Advisor

Wabauskang First Nation

- Betty Riffel, Traditional Knowledge Holder
- Alissa Van Wynen, Youth Advisor
- Ryan Haines, Technical Advisor

Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation

- Annie Dietrich, Technical Advisor
- Jason Mann, Technical Advisor
- Dan Leitch, Technical Advisor
- Wade Wetelainen, Remediation Panel Coordinator (from August 29, 2022)

The Panel Secretariat

The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks provides Secretariat support to the Panel and the Technical Subcommittee. As directed by the Panel, the Secretariat is responsible for coordinating meetings, preparing Panel documents, drafting operational policy, maintaining records and reviewing funding proposals, among other tasks.

Achievements

Panel

During this reporting period, the Panel held five teleconferences and three in-person meetings. Building on past years work, the Panel continued to assess and fund projects aimed at characterizing mercury in the English and Wabigoon Rivers. Due to the global pandemic, in-person meetings were initially limited at the beginning of the reporting period, however, the return to the in-person meetings occurred in the fall of 2022, which allowed for increased discussion and positive relationship building. During the 2022-2023 reporting year, Panel accomplishments included, but were not limited to:

- Prioritized work to complete the characterization stage and began discussions on the development of remediation objectives and goals recommendations to the Minister.
- Collaborative work being led by First Nations governments.
- Complex projects which build off of previously Panel funded projects.
- Provided capacity funding to Panel Member and Participant First Nations to support their involvement in the work of the Panel and Technical Subcommittee and engage their communities and youth.

The Panel has heard and understands concerns that remediation has yet to begin and there remains no remediation plan or timeline. Given the injustice and suffering of the people and the environment caused by the contamination of the English and Wabigoon Rivers from the mill, the Panel is committed to advancing remediation of the rivers as quickly and safely as possible.

Responsible Party Working Group

The Responsible Party Working Group held three teleconference meetings, facilitated by the ministry, during this reporting period. Throughout 2022-2023, the working group operated under guidance and direction of the Panel to complete their assessment of suggestions for improvement from the Ontario Internal Audit Division's January 2021 report. The working group:

- Reached consensus on completion of the pre-remediation assessment phase as soon as possible (1-2 years).
- Expressed strong support for the establishment of a responsible party as soon as possible.
- Acknowledged that communities have differing opinions about how to coordinate the remaining pre-remediation assessment work and future phases of the project.
- Completed improvements to remediation and capacity funding templates to further increase financial accountability.

Furthermore, in December 2022 and February 2023, the working group held discussions on options for a responsible party to coordinate the remediation of the English and Wabigoon Rivers. This was a continuation of discussions that began in 2018 that were paused during the pandemic. At a high-level, discussions centered around:

- Consensus that a responsible party take the form of an entity to coordinate remediation of the rivers, including but not limited to regulatory approval processes, guide procedural aspects of consultation.
- Input on what a responsible party should be responsible for, along with the benefits and considerations associated with establishing a responsible party.

The Responsible Party Working Group will continue discussions throughout 2023-2024 with the goal of providing consensus recommendations to the Panel on the establishment of a responsible party. The Panel may submit recommendations to the Minister.

Technical Subcommittee

The Technical Subcommittee reviewed and discussed pre-remediation proposals as directed by the Panel. It also reviewed and interpreted scientific and technical information, worked to develop consistent methodologies for field work, and assessed data gaps and priorities for studies to be undertaken in 2022-2023. The group shared Indigenous knowledge and scientific information, and discussed study results. Updates to the Panel on the Technical Subcommittee discussions were provided by the Panel Liaison at Panel meetings.

In the 2022-2023 reporting year, Technical Subcommittee's key accomplishments included:

- Development of an updated priorities table that provided the following benefits:
 - A list of areas of work for consideration in 2023 to understand and identify potential data gaps;
 - Evaluation of priorities to inform remediation; and
 - Extensive discussion and exchange of ideas regarding future studies.
- Peer review of numerous technical reports led by Member and Participant First Nations.
- Technical knowledge sharing through several high-level presentations to better understand system-wide issues related to remediation.
- Traditional knowledge sharing from elders.
- Technical review of, and input to, pre-remediation proposals.
- Collaborative field program adjustments through Technical Subcommittee discussion.
- Discussion to help ensure methodologies and collected data were aligned across studies being undertaken.

During this reporting period, the Technical Subcommittee held fourteen teleconferences and two in-person meetings. Due to the global pandemic, in-person meetings were limited.

Trust Update

Activities funded by the Trust between April 1, 2022, and March 31, 2023

1. Pre-Remediation Activities

At this stage of the project, funds are being directed to pre-remediation activities, which are intended to characterize mercury contamination in the English and Wabigoon River systems. Where possible, these projects provided opportunities for participation, knowledge transfer, training, and employment for First Nation community members. Traditional knowledge holders are actively engaged and play a critical role in the Panel process by informing pre-remediation activities and supporting training and community engagement programs by sharing past accounts and experiences.

Many of the activities described below span more than one reporting period and may have disbursements from previous years. Generally, for pre-remediation activities approved by the Panel, funds are disbursed in multiple installments following the approval of required project milestones and reporting. The final disbursement of funds is released after the project's completion following receipt of any deliverables and approval of a final report and reconciled budget.

Activities included in the following section were either started, completed or ongoing during the 2022-2023 reporting period. For activities that have received funding in prior years, the total amount disbursed to date has also been included.

A summary table of all pre-remediation funds disbursed during the 2022-2023 reporting period is provided on page 19. A summary table of cumulative disbursements for all pre-remediation activities funded to March 31, 2023, is provided on page 22. These financial summaries were developed by the Panel to provide information regarding the activities funded by the Trust for this reporting period. Audited financial statements for the Trust can be found in the Annual Report of the Trustee for the corresponding reporting period.

Panel Members

Grassy Narrows First Nation – 2018 Field Sampling Program

The purpose of this project was to further characterize mercury levels in sediment and fish in under-sampled areas of the Grassy Narrows traditional territory. It also improved current understanding of mercury transport, storage, bioavailability and remobilization. Samples were taken in the 90-kilometre section of the English and Wabigoon Rivers between the Clay Lake outfall and Lount Lake.

Approved: May 2018

Total approved budget: \$1,811,736.00

Funds returned in 2022/2023: \$6,575.01

Total funds disbursed to March 31, 2022: \$1,630,397.70

Status: Completed*

*Project was completed in 2021/2022, but returned funds were in transit at the end of the previous fiscal and were deposited on April 14, 2022.

Grassy Narrows First Nation – Nearshore Riverbank Sediment and Porewater Sampling Near the Dryden Mill Project

The purpose of this project was to contribute to the evaluation of whether mercury is continuing to be released from the Dryden Mill Site into the Wabigoon River. This was accomplished by sampling riverbank sediment, Wabigoon River water, and porewater adjacent to and downstream from the Dryden Mill Site.

Approved: February 2019

Total approved budget: \$444,545.00

Funds returned in 2022/2023: \$85,682.17

Total funds disbursed to March 31, 2022: \$400,089.50

Status: Completed*

*Project was completed in 2021/2022, but returned funds were in transit at the end of the previous fiscal and were deposited on April 14, 2022.

Grassy Narrows First Nation – Dated Core Analyses Project

The purpose of this project is to contribute to the evaluation as to whether there are ongoing sources of mercury, how much mercury is stored in different parts of the river system, the role of riparian wetlands in mercury storage and recovery, and how long it will take the river to recover naturally after any ongoing mercury sources have been controlled. This was accomplished by analyzing sediment cores collected from the Wabigoon River between Dryden and Clay Lake.

Approved: May 2019

Total approved budget: \$1,206,338.83

Funds disbursed in 2022/2023: \$0

Total funds disbursed to March 31, 2023: \$1,124,038.16

Status: Ongoing

Grassy Narrows First Nation – 2019-21 Sediment, Water and Biota Sampling Program

The purpose of this project is to contribute to the evaluation of where mercury is located, how it moves through the river system, where it is being deposited and how it gets into fish and edible plants. The project is focused on areas of known elevated mercury, and areas which are currently under-characterized. This work includes sediment, water and biota sampling.

Approved: August 2019 (Initial Scoped Proposal)/ September 2020 (Revised Proposal)

Total approved budget: \$5,230,237.79

Funds disbursed in 2022/2023: \$0

Total funds disbursed to March 31, 2023: \$4,358,214.45

Status: Ongoing

Grassy Narrows First Nation – Mercury Modelling Proposal for the English-Wabigoon River System

The purpose of this project is to develop and apply a numerical model framework to better understand mercury in the existing system and help design and predict the response of the English and Wabigoon Rivers to potential remediation actions to reduce mercury contamination in the rivers. The project will provide the Panel with scientifically sound and defensible information to support the identification of data gaps and needs, evaluate proposed remediation options, employ adaptive management in implementation of remediation plans, and design pre and post remediation monitoring programs.

Approved: November 2020

Total approved budget: \$1,321,098.64

Funds disbursed in 2022/2023: \$0

Total funds disbursed to March 31, 2023: \$792,659.19

Status: Ongoing

Wabaseemoong Independent Nations – 2020 Field Program

This project is a continuation of previous work undertaken by Wabaseemoong within the Wabaseemoong Independent Nations traditional land use area (TLUA). The 2019 program marked the end of work to establish initial baseline conditions and the beginning of monitoring for the Wabaseemoong TLUA. The 2020 project aims to further our understanding of the effects and distribution of mercury in the aquatic environment of that area. It includes water quality, sediment, fish, aquatic vegetation, and benthic invertebrates sampling, as well as completing the final year of the multi-year fish movement study.

Approved: August 2020

Total approved budget: \$916,358.76

Funds disbursed in 2022/2023: \$44,047.95

Total funds disbursed to March 31, 2023: \$868,770.83

Status: Completed

Wabaseemoong Independent Nations – 2021 Phytoplankton and Zooplankton Study

The purpose of this project is to sample phytoplankton and zooplankton within the English and Wabigoon River system to further understand current and legacy effects and distribution of mercury within the aquatic environment.

Approved: May 2021

Total approved budget: \$1,270,193.33

Funds disbursed in 2022/2023: \$0

Total funds disbursed to March 31, 2023: \$1,076,079.28

Status: Ongoing

Wabaseemoong Independent Nations – 2022-23 Monitoring Program

This project is a continuation of previous work undertaken by Wabaseemoong within the Wabaseemoong Independent Nations TLUA. The 2022-23 project involves collecting key mercury data to further the understanding of the ecosystem, and to obtain measurements to determine changes to mercury and methylmercury in the system.

Approved: April 2022

Total approved budget: \$787,288.42

Funds disbursed in 2022/2023: \$708,559.58

Total funds disbursed to March 31, 2023: \$708,559.58

Status: Ongoing

Panel Participants

Eagle Lake First Nation – 2020 Surface Water Sampling Program

The purpose of this project is to build on the results of previous surface water sampling studies completed by the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks in 2018, and Grassy Narrows First Nation and Eagle Lake First Nation in 2019. The proposed field program aims to further our understanding of the spatial extent and fate of mercury in surface water along the Wabigoon River.

Approved: May 2020

Total approved budget: \$444,441.03

Funds disbursed in 2022/2023: \$399.21

Total funds disbursed to March 31, 2023: \$334,411.05

Status: Completed

Eagle Lake First Nation – 2021 Water Level Program and Clay Lake Surface Water Sampling

The purpose of this project is to monitor water levels and flows in the Wabigoon River system to support the model being developed by Grassy Narrows First Nation, and sample surface water in Clay Lake to capture the extent of methylation near the lake bottom and the significance of lake turnover events in the transport of mercury in the system.

Approved: April 2021

Total approved budget: \$349,461.49

Funds disbursed in 2022/2023: \$0

Total funds disbursed to March 31, 2023: \$251,811.57

Status: Ongoing

Eagle Lake First Nation – 2022 Sampling Program

The purpose of this project is to conduct a baseline assessment of mercury in Wildrice Lake, assess mercury concentrations in biota of five wetlands along the Wabigoon River, and to assess water level, flow and chemistry in four tributaries of the Wabigoon River.

Approved: April 2022

Total approved budget: \$495,538.34

Funds disbursed in 2022/2023: \$394,153.90

Total funds disbursed to March 31, 2023: \$394,153.90

Status: Ongoing

Wabauskang First Nation – Project Management and Support for Database Development

The purpose of this project is to develop a proposal to manage and support the preparation, distribution and review of the Request for Proposals process to develop a database for the Panel.

Approved: August 2020

Total approved budget: \$43,837.50

Funds disbursed in 2022/2023: \$4,383.75

Total funds disbursed to March 31, 2023: \$43,837.50

Status: Completed

Wabauskang First Nation – Scientific Database Development

The purpose of this project is to provide the professional and technical support required for the issuance and management of a contract for the development of a database of results of member and participant monitoring activities in the English and Wabigoon Rivers system.

Approved: February 2021 (Initial Proposal)/December 2021 (Revised Proposal)

Total approved budget: \$155,332.50

Funds disbursed in 2022/2023: \$29,541.62

Total funds disbursed to March 31, 2023: \$151,221.67

Status: Completed

Wabauskang First Nation – Long-Term Database Management

The purpose of this project is to provide the professional and technical support required to oversee a contract for management and maintenance of the scientific database between April 1, 2022, and March 31, 2024.

Approved: March 2022

Total approved budget: \$215,920.25

Funds disbursed in 2022/2023: \$71,112.87

Total funds disbursed to March 31, 2023: \$71,112.87

Status: Ongoing

Wabauskang First Nation – Wabigoon River and English River Bathymetry and LiDAR Mapping Project

The purpose of this project is to provide detailed mapping of the rivers and surrounding lands to support the development of remedial options.

Approved: April 2020

Total approved budget: \$730,907.73

Funds disbursed in 2022/2023: \$0

Total funds disbursed to March 31, 2023: \$654,213.24

Status: Ongoing

Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation – 2020 Field Program

The purpose of this project is to further our understanding of current environmental conditions in Wabigoon Lake and its tributaries located within the Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation traditional territory. The project will also assess aquatic biota in the Wabigoon River from Dryden to Clay Lake to fill an identified data gap. The project includes sampling and analysis of sediment and large-bodied (sport) fish to characterize mercury concentrations in the area, and fish diet analysis to further understand study area specific food web dynamics.

Approved: July 2020

Total approved budget: \$528,209.00

Funds disbursed in 2022/2023: \$8,287.38

Total funds disbursed to March 31, 2023: \$411,336.47

Status: Completed

Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation – Reference Sites Sampling Program

The purpose of this project is to identify suitable reference lakes to provide a better estimate of background mercury levels, not subject to Dryden Mill Site effluent impacts, and set appropriate expectations for future remediation targets of the English-Wabigoon River system. The project was organized in two phases: Phase I Knowledge Gathering and Desktop Assessment, and Phase II Reference Sites Field Program. Based on the results of Phase I of the study, the Phase II field program was not undertaken.

Approved: December 2021

Total approved budget: \$222,670.67

Funds disbursed in 2022/2023: \$3,715.25

Total funds disbursed to March 31, 2023: \$76,904.85

Status: Completed

Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation – Erosion Pilot Study

The purpose of this project is to understand erosion rates of riverbanks and riverbeds along the Wabigoon River, and to better understand how erosion contributes to total suspended solids by collecting instream turbidity data. The project will also assess the suitability of the pilot study for expansion in other areas of the Wabigoon River or in future years.

Approved: June 2022

Total approved budget: \$389,139.30

Funds disbursed in 2022/2023: \$194,569.65

Total funds disbursed to March 31, 2023: \$194,569.65

Status: Ongoing

2. Capacity Funding

The Panel provided funds to the Member and Participant First Nations to participate in the work of the Panel in an informed way. These funds were used for purposes including governance, community and youth engagement, advisory and support services, remuneration of members and participants who were otherwise not already remunerated for their participation on the Panel, and travel expenses to attend meetings.

Capacity funding is based on a calendar year. Funds are typically released in three installments following the approval of required documentation: at the beginning of the year following approval of the proposed budget, mid-year following approval of an interim report, following approval of a final report and reconciled budget. Budgets included in the following section span more than one reporting period and were either started, completed or ongoing during the 2022-2023 reporting period. For budgets that have received funding in prior years, the total amount disbursed to date has also been included.

A summary table of all capacity funding disbursed during the 2022-2023 reporting period is provided on page 20. A summary table of cumulative disbursements for all capacity funding disbursed to March 31, 2023, is provided on page 23. These financial summaries were developed by the Panel to provide information regarding the activities funded by the Trust for this reporting period. Audited financial statements for the Trust can be found in the Annual Report of the Trustee for the corresponding reporting period.

Panel Members

Grassy Narrows First Nation – 2021 Capacity Funding

Approved: December 2020

Total approved budget: \$819,147.00

Funds disbursed in 2022/2023: \$0.00

Total funds disbursed to March 31, 2023: \$573,403.00

Status: Ongoing*

*Approval of final report pending.

Grassy Narrows First Nation – 2022 Capacity Funding

Approved: December 2021

Total approved budget: \$793,863.00

Funds disbursed in 2022/2023: \$0

Total funds disbursed to March 31, 2023: \$555,704.00

Status: Ongoing*

*Approval of final report pending.

Grassy Narrows First Nation – 2023 Capacity Funding

Approved: November 2022

Total approved budget: \$855,738.00

Funds disbursed in 2022/2023: \$599,017.00

Total funds disbursed to March 31, 2023: \$599,017.00

Status: Ongoing

Wabaseemoong Independent Nations – 2021 Capacity Funding

Approved: December 2020

Total approved budget: \$793,455.85

Funds Returned in 2022/2023: \$18,797.33*

Total funds disbursed to March 31, 2022: \$663,531.54

Status: Completed*

*Returned funds were in transit at the end of the previous fiscal and were deposited on May 4, 2022.

Wabaseemoong Independent Nations – 2022 Capacity Funding

Approved: November 2021

Total approved budget: \$772,047.10

Funds disbursed in 2022/2023: \$129,997.56

Total funds disbursed to March 31, 2023: \$670,430.53

Status: Ongoing*

*The disbursement of the final payment is pending.

Wabaseemoong Independent Nations – 2023 Capacity Funding

Approved: November 2022

Total approved budget: \$826,537.80

Funds disbursed in 2022/2023: \$578,576.46

Total funds disbursed to March 31, 2023: \$578,576.46

Status: Ongoing

Wabaseemoong Independent Nations – 2022 Youth Camp

Approved: June 2022

Total approved budget: \$70,906.63

Funds disbursed in 2022/2023: \$53,179.97

Total funds disbursed to March 31, 2023: \$53,179.97

Status: Ongoing

Panel Participants

Eagle Lake First Nation – 2021 Capacity Funding

Approved: December 2020

Total approved budget: \$297,505.42

Funds disbursed in 2022/2023: \$28,010.12

Total funds disbursed to March 31, 2022: \$250,382.41

Status: Completed

Eagle Lake First Nation – 2022 Capacity Funding

Approved: November 2021

Total approved budget: \$280,742.48

Funds disbursed in 2022/2023: \$12,194.48

Total funds disbursed to March 31, 2023: \$208,714.21

Status: Ongoing*

*The return of unspent funds is pending.

Eagle Lake First Nation – 2023 Capacity Funding

Approved: November 2022

Total approved budget: \$276,565.26

Funds disbursed in 2022/2023: \$193,595.68

Total funds disbursed to March 31, 2023: \$193,595.68

Status: Ongoing

Wabauskang First Nation – 2021 Capacity Funding

Approved: December 2020

Total approved budget: \$181,060.00

Funds returned in 2022/2023: \$29,692.30*

Total funds disbursed to March 31, 2022: \$133,261.70

Status: Completed

*Returned funds were in transit at the end of the previous fiscal and were deposited on November 14, 2022.

Wabauskang First Nation – 2022 Capacity Funding

Approved: November 2021

Total approved budget: \$177,252.06

Funds disbursed in 2022/2023: \$20,919.15

Total funds disbursed to March 31, 2023: \$144,995.59

Status: Ongoing*

*The return of unspent funds is pending.

Wabauskang First Nation – 2023 Capacity Funding

Approved: November 2022

Total approved budget: \$171,769.66

Funds disbursed in 2022/2023: \$120,238.76

Total funds disbursed to March 31, 2023: \$120,238.76

Status: Ongoing

Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation – 2021 Capacity Funding

Approved: December 2020

Total approved budget: \$328,992.40

Funds returned in 2022/2023: \$5,333.02*

Total funds disbursed to March 31, 2022: \$283,612.34

Status: Completed*

*Returned funds were in transit at the end of the previous fiscal and were deposited on September 19, 2022.

Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation – 2022 Capacity Funding

Approved: November 2021

Total approved budget: \$316,149.76

Funds disbursed in 2022/2023: \$30,723.06

Total funds disbursed to March 31, 2023: \$252,027.89

Status: Ongoing*

*The return of unspent funds is pending.

Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation – 2023 Capacity Funding

Approved: December 2022

Total approved budget: \$298,357.99

Funds disbursed in 2022/2023: \$208,850.60

Total funds disbursed to March 31, 2023: \$208,850.60

Status: Ongoing

3. Summary of 2022-2023 EWRRP Disbursements - April 1, 2022, to March 31, 2023

Pre-remediation Activities - Members

Members	Project Name	Approved Budget	Funds Disbursed	Status
Grassy Narrows First Nation	2018 Field Sampling	\$1,811,736.00	(\$6,575.01)	Completed
Grassy Narrows First Nation	2019 Nearshore Riverbank Sediment and Porewater	\$444,545.00	(\$85,682.17)	Completed
Grassy Narrows First Nation	2019 Dated Core Analyses	\$1,206,338.83	\$0.00	Ongoing
Grassy Narrows First Nation	2019-21 Sediment, Water and Biota Sampling	\$5,230,237.79	\$0.00	Ongoing
Grassy Narrows First Nation	Mercury Modelling for English-Wabigoon River System	\$1,321,098.64	\$0.00	Ongoing
Wabaseemoong Independent Nations	2020 Field Program	\$916,358.76	\$44,047.95	Completed
Wabaseemoong Independent Nations	2021 Phytoplankton and Zooplankton Study	\$1,270,193.33	\$0.00	Ongoing
Wabaseemoong Independent Nations	2022-23 Monitoring Program	\$787,288.42	\$708,559.58	Ongoing
		Members Total Funding	\$660,350.35	

Pre-remediation Activities - Participants

Participants	Project Name	Approved Budget	Funds Disbursed	Status
Eagle Lake First Nation	2020 Surface Water Sampling Program	\$444,441.03	\$399.21	Completed
Eagle Lake First Nation	2021 Water Level Program and Clay Lake Surface Water Sampling	\$349,461.49	\$0.00	Ongoing
Eagle Lake First Nation	2022 Sampling Program	\$495,538.34	\$394,153.90	Ongoing
Wabauskang First Nation	Project Management and Support for Database Development	\$43,837.50	\$4,383.75	Completed
Wabauskang First Nation	Scientific Database Development	\$155,332.50	\$29,541.62	Completed
Wabauskang First Nation	Long-Term Database Management	\$215,920.25	\$71,112.87	Ongoing
Wabauskang First Nation	Wabigoon River and English River Bathymetry and LiDAR Mapping	\$730,907.73	\$0.00	Ongoing
Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation	2020 Field Program	\$528,209.00	\$8,287.38	Completed
Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation	Reference Sites Sampling Program	\$222,670.67	\$3,715.25	Completed
Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation	Erosion Pilot Study	\$389,139.30	\$194,569.65	Ongoing

Participants	Project Name	Approved Budget	Funds Disbursed	Status
		Participants Total Funding	\$706,163.63	

Capacity Funding - Members

Members	Project Name	Approved Budget	Funds Disbursed	Status
Grassy Narrows First Nation	2021	\$819,147.00	\$0.00	Ongoing
Grassy Narrows First Nation	2022	\$793,863.00	\$0.00	Ongoing
Grassy Narrows First Nation	2023	\$855,738.00	\$599,017.00	Ongoing
Wabaseemoong Independent Nations	2021	\$793,455.85	(\$18,797.33)	Completed
Wabaseemoong Independent Nations	2022	\$772,047.10	\$129,997.56	Ongoing
Wabaseemoong Independent Nations	2023	\$826,537.80	\$578,576.46	Ongoing
Wabaseemoong Independent Nations	2022 – Youth Camp	\$70,906.63	\$53,179.97	Ongoing
		Members Total Funding	\$1,341,973.66	

Capacity Funding - Participants

Participants	Project Name	Approved Budget	Funds Disbursed	Status
Eagle Lake First Nation	2021	\$297,505.42	\$28,010.12	Completed
Eagle Lake First Nation	2022	\$280,742.48	\$12,194.48	Ongoing
Eagle Lake First Nation	2023	\$276,565.26	\$193,595.68	Ongoing
Wabauskang First Nation	2021	\$181,060.00	(\$29,692.30)	Completed
Wabauskang First Nation	2022	\$177,252.06	\$20,919.15	Ongoing
Wabauskang First Nation	2023	\$171,769.66	\$120,238.76	Ongoing
Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation	2021	\$328,992.40	(\$5,333.02)	Completed
Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation	2022	\$316,149.76	\$30,723.06	Ongoing
Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation	2023	\$298,357.99	\$208,850.60	Ongoing
		Participants Total Funding	\$579,506.53	

Other Administrative Fees

Category	Funds Disbursed
Audit/Consulting Fees	\$12,666.17
Asset Management Fees	\$128,487.40
Total Other Administrative Fees	\$141,153.57

Administrative Expenses

Category	Funds Disbursed
Trustee Fees	\$43,211.51
HST	\$5,617.50
Total Administrative Expenses	\$48,829.01

Total Funding

Category	Funds Disbursed
Total Pre-remediation Funding	\$1,366,513.98
Total Capacity Funding	\$1,921,480.19
Total Other Administrative Fees	\$141,153.57
Total Administrative Expenses	\$48,829.01
Total Funding	\$3,477,976.75

4. Summary of EWRRP Cumulative Disbursements to March 31, 2023

Pre-remediation Activities - Members

Members	Project Name	Funds Disbursed 2018-2019	Funds Disbursed 2019-2020	Funds Disbursed 2020-2021	Funds Disbursed 2021-2022	Funds Disbursed 2022-2023	Funds Disbursed to March 31, 2023
Grassy Narrows First Nation	2018 Field Sampling	\$1,630,397.70	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	(\$6,575.01)	\$1,623,822.69
Grassy Narrows First Nation	2019 Nearshore Riverbank Sediment and Porewater	\$311,181.50	\$44,454.00	\$44,454.00	\$ -	(\$85,682.17)	\$314,407.33
Grassy Narrows First Nation	2019 Dated Core Analyses	\$ -	\$877,135.82	\$164,601.56	\$82,300.78	\$-	\$1,124,038.16
Grassy Narrows First Nation	2019-21 Sediment, Water and Biota Sampling	\$ -	\$850,000.00	\$688,364.43	\$2,819,850.02	\$-	\$4,358,214.45
Grassy Narrows First Nation	Mercury Modelling for English-Wabigoon River System	\$ -	\$ -	\$528,439.46	\$264,219.73	\$-	\$792,659.19
Wabaseemoong Independent Nations	2019 Field Program	\$ -	\$1,109,861.86	\$435,707.14	\$ -	\$-	\$1,545,569.00
Wabaseemoong Independent Nations	2020 Field Program	\$ -	\$ -	\$824,722.88	\$ -	\$44,047.95	\$868,770.83
Wabaseemoong Independent Nations	2021 Phytoplankton and Zooplankton Study	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$1,076,079.28	\$-	\$1,076,079.28
Wabaseemoong Independent Nations	2022-23 Monitoring Program	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$708,559.58	\$708,559.58
Members Total Funding		\$1,941,579.20	\$2,881,451.68	\$2,686,289.47	\$4,242,449.81	\$660,350.35	\$12,412,120.50

Pre-remediation Activities - Participants

Participants	Project Name	Funds Disbursed 2018-2019	Funds Disbursed 2019-2020	Funds Disbursed 2020-2021	Funds Disbursed 2021-2022	Funds Disbursed 2022-2023	Funds Disbursed to March 31, 2023
Eagle Lake First Nation	Wetland Mercury Characterization	\$243,186.83	\$230,890.84	\$69,151.80	\$(14,363.23)	\$ -	\$528,866.24
Eagle Lake First Nation	2020 Surface Water Sampling Program	\$ -	\$ -	\$334,011.84	\$ -	\$399.21	\$334,411.05
Eagle Lake First Nation	2021 Water Level Program and Clay Lake Surface Water Sampling	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$251,811.57	\$ -	\$251,811.57
Eagle Lake First Nation	2022 Sampling Program	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$394,153.90	\$394,153.90
Wabauskang First Nation	2018 GIS, Database Management and Research Capacity Building	\$371,983.55	\$(84,499.39)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$287,484.16
Wabauskang First Nation	2019 GIS, Database Management and Research Capacity Building	\$274,774.63	\$219,819.72	\$(121,593.32)	\$ -	\$ -	\$373,001.03
Wabauskang First Nation	2019 Data Management Strategy Assessment	\$ -	\$18,077.09	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$18,077.09
Wabauskang First Nation	2019 Data Management Strategy Assessment – Addendum	\$ -	\$6,750.00	\$6,750.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$13,500
Wabauskang First Nation	Project Management and Support for Database Development	\$ -	\$ -	\$21,918.75	\$17,535.00	\$4,383.75	\$43,837.50
Wabauskang First Nation	Scientific Database Development	\$ -	\$ -	\$58,985.25	\$62,694.80	\$29,541.62	\$151,221.67
Wabauskang First Nation	Long-Term Database Management	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$71,112.87	\$71,112.87
Wabauskang First Nation	Wabigoon River and English River Bathymetry and LiDAR Mapping	\$ -	\$ -	\$511,635.41	\$142,577.83	\$ -	\$654,213.24
Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation	2019 Wabigoon Lake Background Environmental and Water Regime Study	\$ -	\$163,688.92	\$18,183.68	\$ -	\$ -	\$181,872.60
Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation	2020 Field Program	\$ -	\$ -	\$403,049.09	\$ -	\$8,287.38	\$411,336.47
Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation	Reference Sites Sampling Program	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$73,189.60	\$3,715.25	\$76,904.85
Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation	Erosion Pilot Study	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$194,569.65	\$194,569.65
Participants Total Funding		\$889,945.01	\$554,727.18	\$1,302,092.50	\$533,445.57	\$706,163.63	\$3,986,373.89

Capacity Funding - Members

Members	Project Name	Funds Disbursed 2018-2019	Funds Disbursed 2019-2020	Funds Disbursed 2020-2021	Funds Disbursed 2021-2022	Funds Disbursed 2022-2023	Funds Disbursed to March 31, 2023
Grassy Narrows First Nation	2018	\$612,040.37	\$38,924.40	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$650,964.77
Grassy Narrows First Nation	2019	\$617,395.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$249,153.87	\$ -	\$866,548.87
Grassy Narrows First Nation	2020	\$ -	\$678,049.44	\$ -	\$71,660.68	\$ -	\$749,710.12
Grassy Narrows First Nation	2021	\$ -	\$ -	\$573,403.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$573,403.00
Grassy Narrows First Nation	2022	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$555,704.00	\$ -	\$555,704.00
Grassy Narrows First Nation	2023	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$599,017.00	\$599,017.00
Wabaseemoong Independent Nations	2018	\$504,185.90	\$53,764.86	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$557,950.76
Wabaseemoong Independent Nations	2018 Youth Summer Camp	\$107,322.75	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$107,322.75
Wabaseemoong Independent Nations	2019	\$659,999.00	\$188,586.00	\$93,008.53	\$ -	\$ -	\$941,593.53
Wabaseemoong Independent Nations	2019 Youth Summer Camp	\$ -	\$116,011.98	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$116,011.98
Wabaseemoong Independent Nations	2020	\$ -	\$683,526.30	\$64,692.44	\$47,883.44	\$ -	\$796,102.18
Wabaseemoong Independent Nations	2020 Youth Summer Camp	\$ -	\$ -	\$88,506.45	\$ -	\$ -	\$88,506.45
Wabaseemoong Independent Nations	2021	\$ -	\$ -	\$555,419.10	\$126,909.77	(\$18,797.33)	\$663,531.54
Wabaseemoong Independent Nations	2021 Youth Summer Camp	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$84,475.70	\$ -	\$84,475.70
Wabaseemoong Independent Nations	2022	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$540,432.97	\$129,997.56	\$670,430.53
Wabaseemoong Independent Nations	2022 Youth Summer Camp	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$53,179.97	\$53,179.97
Wabaseemoong Independent Nations	2023	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$578,576.46	\$578,576.46
Members Total Funding		\$2,500,943.02	\$1,758,862.98	\$1,375,029.52	\$1,676,220.43	1,341,973.66	\$8,653,029.61

Capacity Funding - Participants

Participants	Project Name	Funds Disbursed 2018-2019	Funds Disbursed 2019-2020	Funds Disbursed 2020-2021	Funds Disbursed 2021-2022	Funds Disbursed 2022-2023	Funds Disbursed to March 31, 2023
Eagle Lake First Nation	2018	\$265,835.17	\$20,766.77	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$286,601.94
Eagle Lake First Nation	2019	\$417,962.28	\$119,417.79	\$(58,999.19)	\$ -	\$ -	\$478,380.88
Eagle Lake First Nation	2020	\$ -	\$310,776.46	\$ -	\$(71,140.88)	\$ -	\$239,635.58
Eagle Lake First Nation	2021	\$ -	\$ -	\$208,253.79	\$14,118.50	\$28,010.12	\$250,382.41
Eagle Lake First Nation	2022	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$196,519.73	\$12,194.48	\$208,714.21
Eagle Lake First Nation	2023	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$193,595.68	\$193,595.68
Wabauskang First Nation	2018	\$223,939.95	\$18,633.58	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$242,573.53
Wabauskang First Nation	2018 Addendum	\$13,800.00	\$3,450.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$17,250.00
Wabauskang First Nation	2019	\$266,888.30	\$76,253.80	\$24,307.80	\$ -	\$ -	\$367,449.90
Wabauskang First Nation	2020	\$ -	\$198,803.10	\$ -	\$(74,213.71)	\$ -	\$124,589.39
Wabauskang First Nation	2021	\$ -	\$ -	\$126,742.00	\$36,212.00	(\$29,692.30)	\$133,261.70
Wabauskang First Nation	2022	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$124,076.44	\$20,919.15	\$144,995.59
Wabauskang First Nation	2023	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$120,238.76	\$120,238.76
Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation	2019	\$ -	\$338,307.51	\$(63,156.09)	\$ -	\$ -	\$275,151.42
Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation	2020	\$ -	\$325,920.21	\$ -	\$11,886.46	\$ -	\$337,806.67
Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation	2021	\$ -	\$ -	\$230,294.68	\$58,650.68	(\$5,333.02)	\$283,612.34
Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation	2022	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$221,304.83	\$30,723.06	\$252,027.89
Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation	2023	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$208,850.60	\$208,850.60
Participants Total Funding		\$1,188,425.70	\$1,412,329.22	\$467,442.99	\$517,414.05	\$579,506.53	\$4,165,118.49

Other Administrative Fees

Category	Funds Disbursed 2018-2019	Funds Disbursed 2019-2020	Funds Disbursed 2020-2021	Funds Disbursed 2021-2022	Funds Disbursed 2022-2023	Funds Disbursed to March 31, 2023
Audit/Consulting Fees	\$6,299.75	\$21,334.13	\$12,562.50	\$19,884.64	\$12,666.17	\$72,747.19
Asset Management Fees	\$96,162.29	\$137,996.65	\$144,712.12	\$135,682.41	\$128,487.40	\$643,040.87
Total Other Administrative Fees	\$102,462.04	\$159,330.78	\$157,274.62	\$155,567.05	\$141,153.57	\$715,788.06

Administrative Expenses

Category	Funds Disbursed 2018-2019	Funds Disbursed 2019-2020	Funds Disbursed 2020-2021	Funds Disbursed 2021-2022	Funds Disbursed 2022-2023	Funds Disbursed to March 31, 2023
Trustee Fees	\$41,543.01	\$51,455.33	\$49,306.51	\$45,909.58	\$43,211.51	\$231,425.94
HST	\$5,302.65	\$6,689.20	\$6,409.84	\$5,968.25	\$5,617.50	\$29,987.44
Total Administrative Expenses	\$46,845.66	\$58,144.53	\$55,716.35	\$51,877.83	\$48,829.01	\$261,413.38

Total Funding

Category	Funds Disbursed 2018-2019	Funds Disbursed 2019-2020	Funds Disbursed 2020-2021	Funds Disbursed 2021-2022	Funds Disbursed 2022-2023	Funds Disbursed to March 31, 2023
Total Pre-remediation Funding	\$2,831,524.21	\$3,436,178.86	\$3,988,381.97	\$4,775,895.38	\$1,366,513.98	\$16,398,494.40
Total Capacity Funding	\$3,689,368.72	\$3,171,192.20	\$1,842,472.51	\$2,193,634.48	\$1,921,480.19	\$12,818,148.10
Total Other Administrative Fees	\$102,462.04	\$159,330.78	\$157,274.62	\$155,567.05	\$141,153.57	\$715,788.06
Total Administrative Expenses	\$46,845.66	\$58,144.53	\$55,716.35	\$51,877.83	\$48,829.01	\$261,413.38
Total Funding	\$6,670,200.63	\$6,824,846.37	\$6,043,845.45	\$7,176,974.74	\$3,477,976.75	\$30,193,843.94

Balance of funds remaining in the Trust as of March 31, 2023

The balance of funds in the Trust as of March 31, 2023, was \$59,798,563.93 (compared to \$62,055,769.65 on March 31, 2022). As of March 31, 2023, the Panel approved, but has not yet disbursed, funding for ongoing pre-remediation activities totalling \$374,682.93 and for capacity funding totalling \$746,416.87.

Forecast of the expenditures from the Trust for the five-year period beginning April 1, 2023

During this reporting period, the Panel continued funding pre-remediation projects aimed at characterizing mercury contamination in the English and Wabigoon Rivers system. Given that remediation options have not been selected, it is not possible to provide an accurate forecast of expenditures from the Trust for the following five-year period at this time.

The Panel does, however, forecast that a range of \$25-\$40 million will be required in the next three years to continue the characterization of mercury in the river system; to develop remediation objectives and goals, remediation options and responsible party advice to the Minister. This forecast also reflects the funds required for Panel operations. It is anticipated that significant additional funds will be required if remediation activities are commenced in the next three to five years. The Panel expects that it will be better able to forecast future expenditures once characterization efforts are complete and remediation planning is underway.

Recommendation of whether additional funds will be required to fund the Trust and in what amount

Based on the advice of remediation professionals and others, the Panel suggests that significant additional funds beyond the current Trust balance will be required to complete the remediation of the English and Wabigoon Rivers, including long term monitoring. Given the remediation options have not been selected, the Panel does not have a recommendation on the specific amount of additional funds that may be required at this time.

Description of how the activities funded by the Trust have contributed to the remediation of the English and Wabigoon Rivers

The activities funded by the Panel during this reporting period focused largely on continued assessment and characterization of mercury levels in water, sediment, fish and other biota, wetlands and plants in the river system. There are over 200 km of the river system that are impacted by mercury contamination and a large amount of sampling has been required to locate mercury deposits, identify how mercury is moving in the system, understand how and where mercury is being changed to the more toxic methyl mercury

form, and understand how the mercury is getting into fish and plants. These efforts are filling in data gaps and enhancing the current understanding of why mercury remains elevated in the English and Wabigoon Rivers system. The resulting information will be required to develop remediation objectives and goals advice to the Minister, assess and select remediation options, and in the development and implementation of a remediation plan.

All of the First Nation communities performed sampling/assessment work during the year and reported on their work completed. In addition to sampling and assessment of sediment, water and biota, other work was undertaken including land topographic and bathymetric surveys; hydrodynamic and mercury transport modelling; evaluation of mercury depositional history and river recovery projections; and the creation/maintenance of a consolidated database.

Considerable progress has been made in identifying concentrations of mercury in sediment, water and fish, but more work will be needed to fill in data gaps. Additional work is also needed to develop a conceptual site model and to fully understand mercury transport, mercury methylation dynamics and whether other contaminants should be considered for remediation.

Funding was also provided to each member and participant First Nation to meaningfully participate in the work of the Panel, as well as for their governance and for the engagement of their communities and youth.

Vetting proposals, prioritizing funds and involving the participating First Nation communities are key components of the Panel's work. Thanks to the important contributions of each represented government, the Panel is currently making progress towards remediation of the English and Wabigoon Rivers.