



BACKGROUND

June 8, 2005

Whistler Sliding Centre – Environmental Screening Process

Overview

The environmental assessment for the Whistler Sliding Centre project on Blackcomb Mountain in Whistler was conducted by Federal Department of Canadian Heritage under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (CEEA). The screening commenced in September, 2004 and was completed on June 1, 2005.

A number of local, provincial and federal agencies participated in the extensive review of the project including: VANOC, Squamish First Nation, Lil'wat First Nation, BC Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management, BC Ministry of Forests, Land and Water BC, Vancouver Regional Health Authority, Environment Canada and the Canadian Wildlife Service, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, Health Canada, Natural Resources Canada – Geographical Survey of Canada, BC Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection, Resort Municipality of Whistler, and Whistler-Blackcomb (Intrawest).

In consideration of VANOC's implementation of mitigation measures, commitments and assurances, Canadian Heritage, as the federal Responsible Authority, has determined that the proposed Whistler Sliding Centre is not likely to cause significant adverse environmental effects. Construction of the facility can now begin.

Location

The Whistler Sliding Centre will be the venue for bobsleigh, luge and skeleton competitions during the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. It will feature a 1,450 meter track and access road. The venue will occupy approximately 15.6 hectares of Crown land. The land required for the project is currently under long term tenure to Intrawest, the operator of Whistler and Blackcomb Mountain ski operations. VANOC has received approval in principle from the Province of British Columbia, Intrawest and the Resort Municipality of Whistler for use of the site.

Size, Scope and Phasing of the project

Construction of the Whistler Sliding Centre will include land preparation, road and parking lot improvements, track construction, infrastructure construction and the installation of a track refrigeration plant. Track and access road construction will require forest clearing, mainly within an area of second growth forest.



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Scheduling

VANOC is planning Whistler Sliding Centre construction so that the venue is operational for test events and athlete training beginning in the winter 2007/2008 season. Construction will take place over a 28 month time frame commencing on June 6, 2005 and continuing until October 2007. Most of the track-related construction will be completed during 2006 and 2007.

Conditions of the CEAA Screening Determination

As a result of the CEAA screening and review, VANOC has provided a number of commitments to protect the environment. These measures include:

- surveys of nesting birds will be conducted in advance of tree clearing
- removal old growth trees will be avoided wherever possible
- water quality will be monitored
- drainage and water run-off protection will be conducted in advance of any tree clearing and will be maintained throughout all phases of construction, operation and decommissioning of the site to ensure that there is no net loss of fish or fish habitat in nearby Fitzsimmons Creek
- a wildlife management plan will be established to provide guidance to the project design, site activity and ongoing operations

The Whistler Sliding Centre project will incorporate sustainable environmental design principles around the site access, energy use, lighting and construction materials.

VANOC has committed to undertake further discussions around a First Nations employment strategy. It will also ensure that employees and contractors in the construction zone report and protect any discovered archaeological sites. VANOC will also work closely with existing users of the area, Blackcomb Skiing, Ziptrek Adventures and Canadian Snowmobiling Adventures to minimize impact to their business operations.

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