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For Immediate Release

Northern Pulp reneges on commitment to hold public open houses before filing new plan for environmental assessment

Pictou County, NS: Concerned citizens and fishermen say they are appalled that Northern Pulp does not plan to hold any open houses or public consultation before filing for environmental assessment. Consultants for Northern Pulp have confirmed that key information, including the Receiving Water Study (RWS) for the new pipe route and outfall location and all studies required for the environmental assessment, will not be disclosed until Northern Pulp files their proposed project with Nova Scotia Environment in late January.

“This means there is going to be a massive dump of technical information when the project is submitted, and that stakeholders, independent scientists and the public will have only 30 days to read, analyze and provide written feedback on Northern Pulp’s proposal,” says Jill Graham-Scanlan of Friends of the Northumberland Strait (FONS).

“Just a few months ago Northern Pulp promised the public there would be a second round of open houses on the original proposal before they filed their project,” Graham-Scanlan points out. “Now, despite having a new receiving water location, new route, changes to the original technical proposal and several dozen new studies, Northern Pulp has decided to keep the public in the dark until the last minute.”

“Providing only 30 days for public input on a project of this complexity, with significant long-term consequences for the economies of three provinces is disgraceful and unacceptable,” says Bobby Jenkins, President of the PEI Fishermen’s Association. “This is one of the reasons we believe there must be a federal environmental assessment.”

Fishermen’s organizations along with FONS have criticized the government’s decision to hold an “expedited” Class 1 environmental assessment. More than 5,000 letters have been sent to the federal minister of Environment and Climate Change asking that the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency take on the assessment.

Carl Allen of the Maritime Fishermen's Union says fishermen have been constantly frustrated with Northern Pulp's unwillingness to provide information over the last year. "Knowing the composition of the treated effluent they plan to release is critical," says Allen. "We've asked for this information for almost a year, and have never received it. If the effluent is as harmless as Northern Pulp tells the public, why haven't they provided the information?"

"We also asked for simple information, such as whether there would be a "no-fish" area around the pipe, and Northern Pulp's only answer was that they did not know," added Allen.

Terri Fraser, Northern Pulp's project lead for the new effluent treatment facility, stated in an affidavit filed in Supreme Court on December 4, 2018 that the new route discharging effluent into the Caribou channel area would be beneficial because it "would avoid known lobster fishing grounds."

"I really can't believe that Northern Pulp does not know that this area is extensively fished by fishermen from the harbours of Caribou, Sinclair's Island and Pictou Landing," says fisherman Allan MacCarthy. "Everyone else knows it, and we certainly tried to tell Northern Pulp." MacCarthy fishes lobster out of Caribou Wharf, along with 70 other fishermen. Caribou is the largest fishermen's wharf on the Nova Scotia side of the Northumberland Strait. Lobster, crab, herring and other species are fished in the area.

Graham-Scanlan said FONS contacted Dillon Consulting to ask about the promised open houses, and to determine why none of the new studies Northern Pulp says they have been conducting have been posted on the project website. Dillon, the company hired by Northern Pulp to prepare for the environmental assessment, confirmed that there would be no public access to any information prior to the filing. Dillon also confirmed that the route that will be submitted is overland to Caribou with discharge in the Caribou channel area, and that Northern Pulp will file the project for environmental assessment with the province at the end of January.