

Infrastructure Canada

and

Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Report

Federal Public Consultation on the Environmental Assessment of the Project
to Develop Versant Soleil and Camp Nord, Mont-Tremblant

December 2004

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Public consultation

Pursuant to subsection 18(3) of the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*, Infrastructure Canada and Fisheries and Oceans Canada invited the public to comment on the factors under consideration, the findings and the recommendations of the Screening Report.

To this effect, an electronic version of the Screening Report was made available on Infrastructure Canada's Web site and sent on CD-ROM to those who requested it by telephone or by e-mail. Hard copies were also available for consultation at the following locations:

- The Mont-Tremblant Library
- Bibliothèque du Couvent (Mont-Tremblant)
- Bibliothèque du Lac (Saint-Faustin-Lac-Carré)
- Gaston Miron de Sainte-Agathe Municipal Library

The organizations and residents concerned were asked to submit their comments in writing, in the official language of their choice, between August 23, 2004, and September 20, 2004.

A total of ten (10) letters with comments were received within the established deadlines:

- Lake Tremblant Property Owners Association Inc.
- Three residents
- Fiducie du Domaine Saint-Bernard
- Club des Moucheurs EnDiablés
- CRE Laurentides
 - *Les Amis du Parc*
 - *Domaine Saint-Bernard*
 - *Association des propriétaires du grand lac Caché (APGLC)*
 - *Huguette Larose-Curtis*
- Environnement-Mont-Tremblant
- Mouvement Au Courant
- Tremblant Resort Association

Main concerns of the public

The public's concerns, submitted during the public consultation period, regarded all of the environmental factors assessed in the Screening Report, namely the physical environment, the biological (aquatic) environment, the biological (terrestrial) environment, the human environment and the cumulative effects. However, it seems clear that the main concerns revolve around water management and its potential impacts.

For summary and analysis purposes, the content of the comments is broken down according to the following topics:

- 1) Water management
- 2) Wastewater treatment
- 3) Road/station/bridge construction
- 4) Clearing
- 5) Cumulative effects
- 6) Cumulative effects on the quality of life of the residents
 - noise environment
 - traffic
 - landscape
 - luminosity
- 7) Impacts on the ichthyofauna
- 8) Impacts on the terrestrial fauna
- 9) Air quality
- 10) Artificial lakes and loss of wetlands
- 11) Public hearings / Independent/in-depth study
- 12) Conclusion

1. *Water management*

Management of the hydraulic and hydrogeological environments was the main concern identified by the public, due to the fear of possible impacts on the environment and on the quality of life of the residents.

- According to some respondents, the data used to assess water management and the measures to be implemented are sometimes vague and may not reflect reality.

[Translation]

Even more worrisome is the lack of fundamental data, such as precipitation levels, the flow of rivers and, finally, the capacity of lakes and water tables to serve as reservoirs. We also noticed that the wetlands and flood-risk areas do not appear as they were observed.

(Memo submitted by Environnement-Mont-Tremblant, p. 3)

[...] the LTPOA has a number of concerns with respect to water use within the proposed project and in the Ville de Mont-Tremblant region. Given the importance of water use throughout the entire project, the LTPOA is concerned that some of the data presented in the various reports may not reflect the actual conditions in the area.

(Comment from the Lake Tremblant Property Owners Association Inc. LTPOA / L'association des Propriétaires du Lac Tremblant inc., p. 1)

Response

The water supply issue was discussed at length as part of the environmental assessment for the project, as demonstrated by the question-and-answer process and the mitigation measures that were identified as a result.

Aware of the importance of this issue, the Government of Canada asked for an independent second opinion to verify the methods analyzed and assess the results of the proponent's hydrologic analysis. The authors of this second assessment, Nicolas Lauzon and François Anctil (2003) of the Faculty of Sciences and Engineering at Université Laval, concluded that based on evidence provided, they were in agreement with the findings of MTR.

In addition, several follow-ups (Table 5.1, Roche Ltd. – October 2003) were added to ensure that the scenario presented in MTR's environmental assessment is the one that would prevail following completion of the project, or to make corrections if required.

- Furthermore, the respondents have serious reservations regarding water withdrawals from Diable River and the anticipated flows. Their concerns are

based on the results of a study entitled "*Évaluation environnementale de la rivière du Diable*," that the Ville de Mont-Tremblant commissioned SNC-Lavalin to perform.

[Translation]

We can confirm that a withdrawal of groundwater in the Camp Nord sector would be equivalent, from a hydrological point of view, to pumping it directly from the river

SNC LAVALIN, item 4.3.2, page 21.

(Memo submitted by Environnement-Mont-Tremblant, p. 7) (Comment from the Club des Moucheurs EnDiablés, p. 2)

[Translation]

A certificate of authorization was issued for the collection of water from Diable River, but the flows are insufficient for the supply of drinking water to Camp Nord.

(Annexe CRE Laurentides Appendix, p. 11)

[Translation]

The documents consulted confirm that, for several days each year, the river's minimum flow will not be respected.

(Memo submitted by Environnement-Mont-Tremblant, p. 7)

Response

In the course of the environmental assessment, the responsible authorities established the requirement that the water supply come from a groundwater source. At Camp Nord, the water supply sources studied in the environmental assessment are therefore from groundwater and from Diable River. Current results show that a groundwater supply will meet approximately 25% of needs, and that it is highly probable that this figure could reach 50%, according to Mont Tremblant Resort (MTR). Furthermore, federal and provincial authorities give priority to this supply source. It is for this reason that the environmental assessment specifies in the third paragraph of section 3.1.2.4 that MTR may keep the option to source water from Diable River as a temporary solution, until an adequate aquifer capacity is found, or as a last resort if the aquifer capacity proves insufficient, but only once it has been proven that no other solution could be considered. In order to ensure the implementation of this requirement, federal authorities established a new mitigation measure in the Screening Report, as follows:

"MTR will continue its studies to supply Camp Nord exclusively from groundwater. The supply of drinking water from Diable River shall be accepted up to 1,531 m³/day, only if MTR takes measures to prove, to the satisfaction of the federal authorities, that the groundwater is insufficient." [tr.]

The analysis presented in the environmental assessment indicates that even the worst-case scenario, i.e., a supply of 1,531 m³/day taken from Diable River, has little impact on the river flow, given that wastewater (which will have been pre-treated) will be released slightly upstream from the water intake (200 m) and will

therefore equalize the flow. However, to ensure that the ecological controlled flow is respected, a mitigating measure was added during the environmental assessment, aiming to deduct future drinking water withdrawals from the authorized quota for snow-making purposes.

Furthermore, the water supply from Diable River and groundwater will have to be authorized by the ministère de l'Environnement du Québec and by the ministère des Ressources naturelles, de la Faune et des Parcs du Québec. Granting of these authorizations is conditional on certain policies being respected, such as those on the ecological controlled flows. MTR will also have to submit to a follow-up program to ensure that it respects the criteria previously established by both levels of government.

Comments regarding the water supply raised as part of the federal public consultation will be forwarded to the ministère de l'Environnement du Québec.

- Various scenarios of deteriorating water quality and water shortage were also among the main concerns of the respondents, who wonder about the alternative solutions that will be implemented as needed and their potential impacts.

[...] In the event that the water quality within the Diable River downstream of the confluence with the Cachée River in the area of St-Roch filtration plant deteriorates to the point where it is no longer suitable as a drinking water supply, have any provisions been made for an alternate drinking water source? Would water from Lake Tremblant be used as an alternate source? If so, has the impact of this additional water take been considered?

(Comment from the Lake Tremblant Property Owners Association Inc. LTPOA / L'association des Propriétaires du Lac Tremblant inc., p. 2)

[Translation]

If it becomes impossible to confirm the availability of water near Camp Nord, does this mean that this area will be hooked up to the municipal water supply system, which draws its water from Tremblant Lake, and which will also supply Versant Soleil?

(Memo submitted by Environnement-Mont-Tremblant, p. 7)

Response

The modelling of the quality of the water discharged into Diable River via the outfall at Camp Nord indicates that the water meets the criteria for water quality established by the ministère de l'Environnement du Québec (2001) at 30 m from its disposal, due to a highly reduced dispersion plume, despite the fact that the effluents of the wastewater treatment system will cause a higher concentration of fecal coliforms and a greater organic matter and nutrient load in Diable River.

As for the possibility of collecting water from Tremblant Lake to meet the needs of Camp Nord, this solution was not brought to our attention. It is therefore considered hypothetical and has not been dealt with in the present study. However, it should be noted that any major modification to the project as it is presented, which would create new impacts that have not been analyzed by the federal authorities, would trigger the reopening of the environmental assessment.

2. *Wastewater treatment*

Several respondents firmly objected to the projected site of Camp Nord's aerated ponds. Various organizations and citizens allege that this site is located in a flood-risk area, as attested to by the photographs of floods (1994, 1996, 2004) supplied by Environnement-Mont-Tremblant.

[Translation]

The development of ponds in close proximity to Johannsen Stream must be formally rejected. This site is located on flood-prone terrain, and entails considerable risks [...] for the population that depends on the river for its drinking water.

(Memo submitted by Environnement-Mont-Tremblant, p. 8)

[Translation]

Trustees also deem problematic the management of all the surface runoff generated by the intensive clearing of the developments and the precarious location of the disposal fields next to Johannsen Stream. The risk of overflow of the surface runoff in extreme situations is real, as we saw last September 10 [...].

(Comment from the Fiducie du Domaine Saint-Bernard, p. 2)

Response

The location and design of the aerated ponds were subjected to a considerable optimization effort to prevent encroachment in sensitive environments, including fish habitats. Several statutory aspects were taken into consideration, including the Bank, Shoreline and Flood-risk Area Protection Policy, the zoning by-law, the RCM development plan, *An Act respecting the conservation and development of wildlife* and the Wildlife Habitats Regulations, the *Fisheries Act*, and the Federal Policy on Wetland Conservation.

In order to meet this broad range of requirements, the aerated ponds were located outside the 0-20 year flood-risk area and even the 0-100 year flood-risk area (pp. 3-39, Roche Ltd. – October 2003 report). Several design, mitigation, monitoring and follow-up measures were developed jointly with the various authorities with responsibilities in this field and incorporated in the Screening Report.

Furthermore, the provincial government is responsible for issuing the necessary permits for the aerated ponds. The information received as part of the federal public consultation regarding this issue will be forwarded to the ministère de l'Environnement du Québec so that the department may also look into this matter.

The proponent will accordingly have to devise its plans and estimates, as well as build and operate the wastewater management at Camp Nord in accordance with provincial requirements regarding environmental protection. Mont Tremblant Resort (MTR) is responsible for obtaining in a timely manner all the permits and authorizations required for the operation of aerated ponds and management of wastewater.

A protocol designed to test the quality of the wastewater disposed of in Diable River will have to be drawn up by MTR and approved by Environment Canada before the aerated ponds begin operating. A wastewater quality test result analysis report will have to be sent to Environment Canada in the first year of operation. Environment Canada will assess the system's efficiency and determine whether any corrective measures need to be implemented by MTR. The proponent will be responsible for implementing the necessary corrective measures so as to abide by the *Fisheries Act*, particularly section 36(3), if applicable.

Furthermore, Ville de Mont-Tremblant created the Versant Soleil Environment Committee, which is responsible for environmental monitoring. Members include several representatives from Ville de Mont-Tremblant and MTR and one resident. As for Camp Nord, the Interim Diable River Drainage Basin Board also involves Ville de Mont-Tremblant, MTR and residents.

3. Road/parking/bridge construction

Whereas some respondents wonder about the course of the road planned as part of the project, others granted greater importance to the construction of road infrastructures to help prevent traffic congestion.

[Translation]

[...] the projected course of the road between highway 117 and chemin Duplessis (on Roche map 4.12 – Land Development) is located in the northeast corner of Domaine Saint-Bernard. The trustees strongly oppose any infringement of its territorial integrity; representations were made to this effect before provincial authorities. Building a road cutting right through this unique conservation area, surrounded as we are by this urban flood, is pure lunacy!

(Comment from the Fiducie du Domaine Saint-Bernard, p. 2)

[Translation]

Where will the main parking lot be located? I am having trouble picturing a major road (similar to Montée Ryan) along the 1.7 km that separate the foot of the mountain from chemin Duplessis. There is a swamp, the stream and all those trees to be protected.

(Comment from the Tremblant Resort Association)

Response

The access road planned between highway 117 and chemin Duplessis is beyond the scope of Phases 3 and 4 of Mont Tremblant Resort's (MTR) project, and therefore not dealt with in the environmental effects in this report. However, this concern is dealt with as part of the cumulative effects with respect to the noise environment (see Section 6).

The access road will represent a project in itself, given that the main contractor for this new access road is the ministère des Transports du Québec, not MTR. Therefore, construction of this road will be submitted to an environmental assessment in keeping with this type of project, in accordance with the federal and provincial laws in place. Furthermore, options for the layout of the road are still under study.

As for the main parking lot, the lots planned for Versant Soleil are on the periphery of the hotel complex that will be built. They were designed to avoid sensitive areas such as the wetlands as much as possible. Figures 3.1 and 4.9 of the Roche Ltd. – October 2003 report clearly indicate the location of the parking lots at Versant Soleil. A single parking lot is planned next to wetlands, which will be disturbed by the project. This area will thus be the subject of a compensation plan, as Environment Canada has determined that there would be loss of wetlands.

According to the Club des Moucheurs EnDiablés, a moratorium on the construction of new bridges crossing Diable River must be promoted, otherwise:

[Translation]

They will destroy the aesthetics of the natural environment, contribute to noise pollution and further destroy the aquatic habits of Diable River.

(Comment from the Club des Moucheurs EnDiablés, p. 3).

Response

The scope of Mont Tremblant Resort's (MTR) project includes no new crossings over Diable River. The ministère des Transports du Québec will take charge of the latter with a time-frame and location that are not yet known. The federal authorities are accordingly unable to express an opinion on the effects of such a project. This issue will be dealt with in another federal environmental assessment should a federal government department declare itself a responsible authority.

4. Clearing

Several respondents identified clearing as one of their concerns. However, adverse effects have more to do with soil quality and erosion than loss of forest. Therefore, even though it came up a few times, clearing is a factor the impacts of which are difficult for respondents to assess and for which the comments received were somewhat vague.

[Translation]

This forest has many mature trees, some of which are very large compared to what we usually see in Quebec. I would appreciate it if everything possible were done to save these trees.

(Comment from the Tremblant Resort Association)

[Translation]

The burial of the anticipated volume of wood cuttings required to expand the current skiable area by an additional 185 ha is of great concern to us because it is a method that is far from proven as to its long-term effects. The anticipated biomass inputs that are thus injected into the ground significantly exceed normal attrition rates due to the natural evolution of a forest's ageing process.

(CRE Laurentides Appendix / Les Amis du Parc, p. 2)

Response

At Versant Soleil, the proponent will undertake a conservation approach wherever possible. The forest areas or trees to be saved have been marked with coloured ribbons by a landscape architect and biologists. However, trees located on road or building sites, or in areas with too great a difference in ground level, will not be preserved.

Only the Camp Nord clearing requires that the wood remain on-site because Quebec's *Parks Act* prohibits the commercial harvesting of timber as well as its transportation. Therefore, in general, down trees will be buried under the ski trails and, if the park deems it appropriate, a portion of them may be supplied by the proponent so that they may be used for park-related purposes.

Several mitigation measures were introduced during the environmental assessment in an effort to reduce the risk of soil erosion during the construction of the ski trails. These measures, presented in Table 5.1 of the environmental assessment (Roche Ltd. – October 2003), include, among others, the revegetation of the grounds soon after the construction work, the spacing of drainage swales, minimal disturbance of the soil (including the conservation of stumps underneath the ski lifts), application of the *Guide d'aménagement des pistes de ski*, the installation of silt barriers, etc. Among other things, burial of the biomass will be done outside of the drainage water and surface runoff areas. In addition, this method was used for the development of Versant Sud and no significant effect has been reported to date. Furthermore, MTR indicated that the work will be carried

out from the top of the mountain to the bottom to prevent the equipment from going over the disturbed soil more than once. Seeding will begin as soon as a segment of trail is ready to ensure proper soil stabilization as quickly as possible.

The federal authorities agree that these measures are adequate to limit the risk of erosion as much as possible. Furthermore, a second opinion on the water quality, conducted by André P. Plamondon (2003) at the request of the federal authorities, found that the anticipated impacts of the construction work on water quality will be low if mitigation measures are applied. This construction work will also be subject to monitoring and follow-up programs.

5. *Cumulative effects*

Under this heading, respondents expressed their concerns regarding the scope of the whole range of development projects planned in the region, beyond the Mont Tremblant Resort project, and of their cumulative effects on their quality of life and on the environment. Some respondents also deplore the lack of a city plan for the new Ville de Mont-Tremblant and of a more regional plan.

[Translation]

Municipal authorities are displaying a lack of vision when it comes to development of the territory [...] “Minor” exemptions are freely granted, and outright violation of urban planning regulations is quite common.

(Memo submitted by Environnement-Mont-Tremblant, p. 9)

[...] has any thought been given to the impact upon the lake and the infrastructure requirements to service property development beyond the immediate lakeside properties?

(Comment from the Lake Tremblant Property Owners Association Inc. LTPOA / L’association des Propriétaires du Lac Tremblant Inc., p. 3)

[Translation]

[...] it must be acknowledged that all of the development in the sector has been accomplished, for over a decade, without a master plan for the territory's development.

(Comment and position of CRE Laurentides, p. 2)

Response

According to the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*, the responsible authorities must take into account the project's cumulative environmental effects combined with those of previous, current and future projects and activities.

Future actions that are approved within the study area must be considered; officially announced and reasonably foreseeable actions should be considered if they may affect those VECs and there is enough information about them to assess their effects. (Cumulative Effects Assessment Practitioners Guide – 2003-10-07)

The law also acknowledges that not everything can be known regarding the process by which the environmental effects of other projects or activities will combine with the environmental effects of the project in question. Further according to the Practitioners Guide:

The analysis of these effects use [sic] quantitative techniques, if available, based on best available data. This should be enhanced by qualitative discussion based on best professional judgement.

The list of activities or projects that Mont Tremblant Resort (MTR) submitted in its environmental assessment is comprehensive. Thus, only projects for which permit applications had been submitted or were being prepared were considered. Some projects may have changed status during the drafting process; some may not be carried out, and others may be added. This is the case, among others, of the Cap Tremblant residential project, which had been turned down by Ville de Mont-Tremblant at the time the report was being drafted.

The space boundaries were established in collaboration with the federal authorities and are therefore deemed adequate.

As for the time boundaries (between 1990 and 2017), they appear to be adequate, since in most cases they represent the foreseeable future for transportation projects and other large-scale infrastructures.

The responsible authorities are of the opinion that the study of the cumulative effects presented in the report (Roche Ltd. – October 2003) respects the methodology and criteria set out in the documents issued to this effect by the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency. The environmental components developed for the assessment of the cumulative effects were properly identified in the report. Furthermore, they match most of the concerns that were raised as part of the federal public consultation for this project.

With respect to the water supply, Environnement-Mont-Tremblant raises several concerns, shared by the Lake Tremblant Owners Association Inc., with regard to the cumulative effects of future projects concerning this component:

[Translation]

[...] the data [used for the study of the Diable River and Tremblant Lake drainage basin] were extrapolated from a study of the Doncaster River basin. Yet it is a well-established fact that these two basins differ greatly in terms of their size and often with regard to their climate. It is accordingly logical to assume that the figures used could include a certain margin of error, and as a result, that the cumulative effects on the water supply may be more significant than expected. (*Memo submitted by Environnement-Mont-Tremblant, p. 7*) (*Comment from the Lake Tremblant Property Owners Association Inc. LTPOA / L'association des Propriétaires du Lac Tremblant inc., p. 2*)

[...] several studies suggest that there may be increases in water demand by as much as 70% over the next 20 years in the areas downstream of the lake, none of the studies have examined the impact of potentially increased development in the immediate area of the lake.

(Comment from the Lake Tremblant Property Owners Association Inc. LTPOA / L'association des Propriétaires du Lac Tremblant inc., p. 3)

Response

The water supply to Versant Soleil via the municipal network, with its water intake located at Tremblant Lake, was not treated as a direct effect of the Mont Tremblant Resort (MTR) project. It was not included as part of the scope of this project because, among other things, Ville de Mont-Tremblant is the main contractor and is responsible for the planning project for the water management structure at Tremblant Lake, including the related water supply facilities. Therefore, we cannot make any comments regarding the direct effects of this project as part of the current assessment at Mont-Tremblant. The water supply project at Tremblant Lake was treated more as a cumulative effect of Phases 3 and 4 project for the reasons given in Appendix 10 of the environmental assessment (Roche Ltd. – October 2003).

The analysis conducted as part of an assessment of the cumulative effects indicates that the data available when the environmental assessment was being drafted make it possible to conclude that the supply flows currently authorized by the ministère de l'Environnement du Québec in Tremblant Lake will be exceeded by 2009 (when Versant Soleil will be in operation) if no other modification is made. As such, discussions regarding improvements to management of Tremblant Lake should be provided for in response to this issue for a period extending as far as 2021.

Indeed, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) is currently analyzing a project to rebuild and develop the water management system at Tremblant Lake in an effort to improve the municipality's long-term supply potential, as part of a separate project. DFO's analysis is made pursuant to the *Fisheries Act*, and, so far, no environmental assessment under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* has been initiated.

6. Cumulative effects on the quality of life of the residents

The noise environment, traffic and the landscape are the elements that define the impact on the quality of life of the residents, not to mention luminosity, which is worsened as a result of lighting for the new real-estate projects.

Noise environment

The increased noise environment was raised on several occasions. There is, however, little detail on the repercussions of the increased noise environment, and comments to this effect were limited.

One resident of Ouimet Lake, an administrator at CRE Laurentides, singled out four main sources of noise pollution, which, according to her, is one of the main problems affecting quality of life.

[Translation]

[...] snowmobiles on Parc linéaire, seaplane rides based at Ouimet Lake (a nuisance acknowledged by the municipality), the reopening of the Mont-Tremblant Race Course and the reactivation of the La Macaza International Airport for IntraWest.

(CRE Laurentides Appendix / Resident of Ouimet Lake and administrator of CRE Laurentides, p. 13)

Furthermore, the *Fiducie du Domaine Saint-Bernard* demanded that a noise limit of 40 dbA be respected between 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. with respect to the noise environment.

Response

Geographically speaking, the main entrance to Versant Soleil is located on chemin Duplessis, near the aerated ponds for Versant Sud already in place and at the entrance to the existing P-3 parking lot for Versant Sud. The distance between the entrance to Versant Sud and the future entrance to Versant Soleil is approximately 1.6 km, along the Le Géant Golf Course and Diable River.

As for the existing entrance to Camp Nord, the only way to get there is by using chemin Duplessis, via either Montée Ryan (the road currently used to reach Mont Tremblant Resort) or Lake Superior Road. Chemin Duplessis is flanked by the Park on one side, and Diable River with its various escarpments on the other.

It should be mentioned that during the land exchange between MTR and the Mont Tremblant National Park (Park) for the future creation of Camp Nord, Mont Tremblant Resort ceded to the Park the land running alongside Diable River, thereby ensuring the conservation of this sector. The forest cover along chemin Duplessis will therefore remain intact.

Following a visit in the field by Infrastructure Canada on November 1 and 2, 2004, we noted the location of several sites that were the subject of concerns expressed during the federal public consultation with regard to the noise level that these projects surrounding phases 3 & 4 could cause. For example, by land (road), the race track is located over 5 km away from the Versant Sud development site, and the La Macaza International Airport is more or less 30 km away. Seaplane

rides are permitted on Ouimet Lake (approximately 7 km from Versant Sud), Mercier Lake (over 5 km away) and Tremblant Lake (approximately 2 km away). These activities already exist and are regulated by both the federal and provincial governments. As for the snowmobile and ATV trails, they are located over 5 km from the project. MTR confirmed to us that they do not plan to link up to this independent trail network.

With respect to Domaine Saint-Bernard, the access entrance to this site is via Montée Ryan, turning off onto highway 327 and again onto chemin Saint-Bernard. The distance between the Domaine and the entrance to Versant Soleil is over 8.5 km. However, the only thing visible from the buildings in Domaine Saint-Bernard is the cliffs of Avalanche Peak through a tiny opening in the forest cover. From this same location, Versant Soleil is not visible, since Mont Bellevue obstructs the view between these two points. Furthermore, Diable River separates Mont Bellevue from chemin Duplessis, and there are several rapids at this level, including some forest cover along most of the river, in addition to escarpments. Consequently, it seems very unlikely that the Mont Tremblant Resort (MTR) project will affect the noise environment in Domaine Saint-Bernard to any significant degree.

As well, so as to reduce traffic on chemin Duplessis, MTR will provide its clients with a shuttle service between Versant Sud, Versant Soleil and Camp Nord.

Finally, construction of a new access road between highway 117 and chemin Duplessis will reduce the increase in traffic on chemin Duplessis and thereby reduce the effects on the noise environment. This new access road will be submitted to the environmental process in effect for this type of project, and the ministère des Transports du Québec will be the main contractor. The final layout has not yet been determined.

Landscape

Respondents had negative feelings about tampering with the landscape. The *Fiducie du Domaine Saint-Bernard* clearly expressed its expectations with regard to transformation of the landscape.

[Translation]

[...] Versant Soleil should not be visible from the other side of the river where Domaine Saint-Bernard is located. The forest cover must remain intact between chemin Duplessis and the first drop of Avalanche Peak's cliffs.

(*Comment from La Fiducie du Domaine Saint-Bernard, p. 2*)

Response

The forest cover will remain a priority since Mont Tremblant Resort's (MTR) project favours the preservation of the natural environment wherever possible. The visual impact from chemin Duplessis is very limited since the latter is built in a valley and the preservation of the buffer strip on both sides of this road along Diable River provides very few visual openings. The landscape changes resulting from the project will be visible mostly in the region's higher points (other mountain), and in most cases only the ski trails and ski lifts will be visible.

As for the cumulative effects of the other projects, which may add to the visual impacts caused by MTR's development project, the Laurentides regional county municipal is responsible for the management of regional development.

To this effect, the RCM recently updated its development plan, which includes the MTR project (phases 3 & 4) and other projects in the peripheral area under the immediate influence of the Resort's centres.

Traffic

The issue of increased traffic was raised by some respondents, including the issue of safety and the negative repercussions related to the noise environment.

[Translation]

In our opinion, the construction of what has been referred to as the central axis, i.e., a new road south of Saint-Jovite, linking highway 117 to chemin Duplessis, should be a priority.

(Memo submitted by Environnement-Mont-Tremblant, p. 9)

With the construction of more homes and hotels in the Versant Soleil and Camp Nord areas, is the existing road infrastructure sufficient to support this growth?

(Comment from the Lake Tremblant Property Owners Association Inc. LTPOA / L'association des Propriétaires du Lac Tremblant inc., p. 2)

Response

The issue of the noise environment has already been dealt with in this document.

As for traffic safety, a protocol signed by Ville de Mont-Tremblant and Mont Tremblant Resort (MTR) will assess if the planned measures for road improvement projects are adequate to meet the expected increase in traffic. Furthermore, according to this protocol, this study will have to be updated every five years or for every additional 700 housing units, whichever occurs first. This will help coordinate the timetables between MTR development phases and road improvement projects, thereby avoiding the overburden of the current road network.

Furthermore, MTR confirmed that an access route reserved for emergency vehicles to reach Versant Soleil has already been built.

The responsible authorities therefore agree that these measures are satisfactory.

Luminosity

Several respondents identified luminosity as a form of pollution. The Fiducie du Domaine Saint-Bernard also pointed out that this factor was not included in the assessment and that it could have a certain impact on the quality of life of the residents. Environnement-Mont-Tremblant claimed that excess lighting only serves to reinforce the urbanization effect of a natural and rural environment.

[Translation]

All planning should favour lighting oriented downward to ensure a dark sky. Otherwise, the astronomy and astrolabe project currently in preparation at Domaine Saint-Bernard could be seriously compromised.
(*Comment from the Fiducie du Domaine Saint-Bernard, p. 2*)

Response

Following a meeting with Mont Tremblant Resort (MTR), the proponent formally stated that there were no plans to illuminate the ski trails at night. Only the village will be lit with low-intensity lighting facing downward. However, as for the road network, MTR will abide by municipal by-laws to this effect. The obligation to light up intersections will accordingly be respected.

As for the impacts on Domaine Saint-Bernard, according to MTR there is a 100 m difference in ground level between the Domaine's building and the village at Versant Soleil. Furthermore, Mont Bellevue and Diable River separate the two sites; the lighting in the village should therefore not be visible from Domaine St-Bernard.

In view of these clarifications, the responsible authorities uphold the findings of the Screening Report, namely that the brightness effects are not deemed significant.

7. *Impacts on the ichthyofauna*

The project's potential impacts on the ichthyofauna were among the concerns of several participants, and the Club des Moucheurs EnDiablés's main concern. The latter claimed that the withdrawal of water, particularly during the low-water level period in winter, endangers several fish species in Diable River.

[Translation]

The flow reduction in Diable River following the proposed developments will lead to increased fish mortality and migration [...] the planned withdrawal of water from Diable River to make artificial snow for Versant Nord (not to mention the withdrawals for drinking water and other purposes), contributing to a drop of between 15% and 25% of Diable River's natural winter flow, is unacceptable
(SNC, pp. 32-33).

[Translation]

The degradation of the river's biomass will [...] be devastating for the river's aquatic ecosystem [...] such degradation will have negative repercussions on current and future economic benefits for the region as a result of the reduced demand for fishing in the river.

(Comment from the Club des Moucheurs EnDiablés, p. 2)

[Translation]

A clogged spawning bed cannot be "unclogged." The losses caused by the construction work will be irreversible.

(CRE Laurentides Appendix / l'Association des propriétaires du grand lac Caché, p.7)

Response

In light of the observations regarding the flows described in the section on water supply, the environmental assessment conducted by Roche Ltd. – October 2003, supported by a second opinion, estimated that the modifications to the flow of Diable River would only be reflected over a distance of approximately 200 m, where the water level would be reduced by approximately 100 mm. Given this conclusion, Fisheries and Ocean Canada feels that the loss of fish habitat in Diable River is not significant and that no compensation for loss of habitat is required.

8. *Impacts on terrestrial fauna*

Concerned about the destruction of white-tailed deer habitats caused by the proponent's construction work, the Association des propriétaires du grand lac Caché asked that this species' circulation corridors be maintained.

(CRE Laurentides Appendix / l'Association des propriétaires du grand lac Caché, p.9)

Response

Several mitigation measures and a follow-up program were included in the Screening Report in an effort to mitigate the effects. Because the white-tailed deer falls under provincial jurisdiction, the information provided as part of this environmental assessment was validated by our expert colleagues from the provincial government.

Furthermore, discussions between Ville de Mont-Tremblant, the ministère de l'Environnement du Québec and Mont Tremblant Resort (MTR) are ongoing in an effort to create a natural reserve. This zone would help preserve a significant circulation corridor for the white-tailed deer.

The responsible authorities feel that these measures are satisfactory.

9. Air quality

Some respondents voiced their concerns regarding air quality caused by the increase in the number of housing units and vehicles, referring namely to the pollution problems in Aspen, Colorado.

(Memo submitted by Environnement-Mont-Tremblant, p. 10).

Response

Mont Tremblant Resort (MTR) confirmed that the fireplaces planned for the hotels and condos will burn natural gas. However, MTR cannot implement this ruling for twenty lots that will be developed by independent contractors in the residential sector.

However, the municipality has the power to regulate the fireplaces. It is therefore possible for them to demand that all new fireplaces meet EPA standards, which emit fewer pollutants and thereby help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

10. Artificial lakes and loss of wetlands

Residents questioned the justification to divert watercourses to supply the artificial lakes at Versant Soleil.

[Translation]

Watercourses are public property and should be used to make private goods.
(CRE Laurentides Appendix / Les Amis du Parc, p. 3)

[Translation]

The diversion of waterways can only have negative repercussions on the environment's ecosystem. Are such diversions necessary?
(CRE Laurentides Appendix / Les Amis du Parc, p. 3)

Response

The environmental effects of the artificial lake and of the diversion of the waterways to Versant Soleil were described in the environmental assessment (Roche Ltd. - October 2003) and are the subject of mitigation measures. Federal authorities agree that the creation of the artificial lake and the diversion of waterways at Versant Soleil are justified for the completion of this project, particularly within the context of the Federal Policy on Wetland Management. Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) feels that these facilities are located outside the fish habitat, and that the impacts have been sufficiently reduced downstream from the lake (fish habitat) for them to be acceptable as part of the Policy for the Management of Fish Habitat. Even though the effects downstream from the artificial lake (stream 115) are acceptable to DFO, losses due to the deterioration of the fish habitat will be compensated by an aquatic development project in Mercier Stream.

The loss of wetlands at Versant Soleil was raised by the Association des propriétaires du grand lac Caché (APGLC) as being disturbing:

[Translation]

Wetlands on the edge of stream 115-1, Versant Soleil—near the real-estate development area, artificial lake and road around the lake. Backfill of the wetlands to create a play area.

(CRE Laurentides Appendix / l'Association des propriétaires du grand lac Caché, p.6)

Response

The Federal Policy on Wetland Conservation (Policy) consists first and foremost in assessing all possible options to help prevent the degradation or loss of function of wetlands now and in the future. The aim of this Policy is to offset the unavoidable loss of function with the restoration of degraded wetlands or the development of viable and functional wetlands. As a last resort, an attempt may be made to compensate the lost functions by means other than wetlands where there were none before.

The responsible authorities and Environment Canada (EC) (as expert department) are of the opinion that planning sequence as established in the Policy, namely to avoid, minimize encroachment on wetlands and compensate for degradation or loss of function was respected in this project.

As for unavoidable losses, a compensation plan of 5,000m² of wetlands is being prepared and will be submitted to EC for its approval, as part of the mitigating measures set out in the Screening Report.

11. Public hearings / Independent/in-depth study

A good number of respondents felt that an independent study, in-depth study and/or public hearings would have been necessary as part of the impact study for this project.

The respondents were not questioning the competence of the consultant firm that conducted the impact study. On the contrary, *Environnement-Mont-Tremblant* acknowledged the professional approach taken by the experts who drafted this assessment.

[Translation]

The documents examined allowed us to appreciate the professionalism of the engineers and other specialists who drafted them. In addition to the work itself, whether it involves aquatic or terrestrial flora, wildlife, erosion, ice removal, etc., no stone was left unturned.

(Memo submitted by Environnement-Mont-Tremblant, p. 4)

However, some respondents felt that a study conducted by an independent firm or by the ministère de l'Environnement would have been more objective.

[Translation]

For the abovementioned reasons, we ask that in your capacity as "responsible authority" you recommend to the ministre de l'Environnement that an in-depth study and the related public hearings be initiated.

(Comment from and position of CRE Laurentides, p. 2)

[Translation]

Given the scope of the destruction of the environment and the project's reach, Mouvement Au Courant is asking that the project be sent to a review panel and that public hearings be held.

(Comment from Mouvement Au Courant)

[Translation]

The impacts and repercussions are always considered low, negligible, unlikely, insignificant, very limited... Does this not show a lack of objectivity? Given the extent of the work, we find this baffling.

(CRE Laurentides Appendix / Les Amis du Parc, p. 5)

Response

In accordance with the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (CEAA)*, only the projects listed in the Comprehensive Study List Regulations receive this type of environmental assessment. Given that this type of project is not on the list of comprehensive studies, a screening report was conducted.

Furthermore, the CEAA provides for a recommendation to be made to the Minister of the Environment only if the responsible authorities deem the effects significant, uncertain or if the public's concerns justify it. Following the public

federal consultation conducted under the CEAA, concerns were raised and taken into consideration in the final Screening Report. Mitigation measures were modified in some cases and added in others. Furthermore, the Screening Report was amended to better support the findings which all in all remained the same, given the adjustments made. Therefore, the authorities feel that an assessment by a review panel is not necessary.

I [...] would insist on a totally independent study before taxpayers [sic] monies are given to this project. Studies paid for by Station Mont Tremblant are as good as the foxes guarding the hen house. Let's get serious.

(Comment from a resident)

Response

In addition to the federal government's areas of expertise, the authorities called on experts in certain fields to verify the findings presented in the Roche Ltd. – October 2003 report. Among other things, expert opinions and second opinions were commissioned with respect to the hydrological analysis (water intake), water quality and the characteristics of the biophysical components. In addition, the various provincial departments with an interest in or responsibility for this project were consulted throughout the federal environmental assessment process, all of which was taken into account in the Screening Report.

[Translation]

[...] in spite of the enormity of the development, no level of government felt it necessary to submit the entire development on this specific territory to one of the usual consultation and public hearing procedures.

Response

The first objective of the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* is to assess projects before federal authorities take any measures to their effect so that no significant adverse effects to the environment is incurred. As such, only the project is assessed along with its effects combined with those of other existing or planned projects.

Assessment of all the development on the territory does not fall under federal legislative jurisdiction. It is up to the RCMs of the various regions to oversee the planning of their territory.

12. Conclusion

Pursuant to the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* and taking into account the federal mandate, the mitigation measures modified and/or added and the committees established by Ville de Mont-Tremblant in collaboration with Mont Tremblant Resort (MTR) and residents, the federal government responsible authorities are of the opinion that environmental effects of the project are not significant.

It is suggested that Mont Tremblant Resort (MTR) continue to work with the community via committees involving Ville de Mont-Tremblant and residents. The public consultation also raised the possibility that MTR follow the example of Hydro-Québec, which in its large-scale projects earmarks part of the capitalized cost for allocation to a fund to be used for environmental initiatives. These funds are used for monitoring committees and regional development, among other things. We therefore recommend that MTR take this public request into consideration.