

7 Issues

Environmental issues are among the major concerns raised by a project. They are defined on the basis of the worries and concerns of the affected communities and can tip the scales for or against the project. They are brought up repeatedly by communities affected by the project, the scientific community or the various specialists involved in the impact assessment.

Knowledge of the issues has made it possible to:

- Focus the inventories, giving greater importance to certain environmental components
- Thoroughly discuss the issues with the affected communities or with specialists from the public and private sectors, in order to clearly identify them and define satisfactory mitigation measures
- Take the issues into consideration at the planning stage in order to optimize project design in terms of the environment

Lessons learned from hydroelectric developments in Québec (particularly in the James Bay region), regular consultation of Cree and Jamesian communities and discussions with project analysts have identified four major issues linked with the Eastmain-1-A/ Rupert diversion project, namely:

- Conservation of fish and fish habitat in the Rupert River
- Continuation of Cree hunting, fishing and trapping
- Recreational and scenic value of the Rupert River
- Economic spinoffs for Cree and Jamesian communities

7.1 Conservation of fish and fish habitats in the Rupert River

The Rupert River is one of the major rivers on the east coast of James Bay. Its size, its many types of flow, the presence of areas where it broadens significantly such as Mesgouez Lake and Lake Nemiscau, and the diversity of the surface materials that it flows through make it a watercourse with varied habitats, which are home to many species of fish.

In the context of the Rupert diversion, preserving the fish community and the habitat functions of the reduced-flow reach (downstream of KP 314) is a major concern for the Crees as well as for the government authorities involved.

For the Crees, this concern mainly involves two species that they particularly value, i.e., lake sturgeon and anadromous lake cisco, which is traditionally fished every year at Smokey Hill (KP 24.5). The Crees are next concerned by other