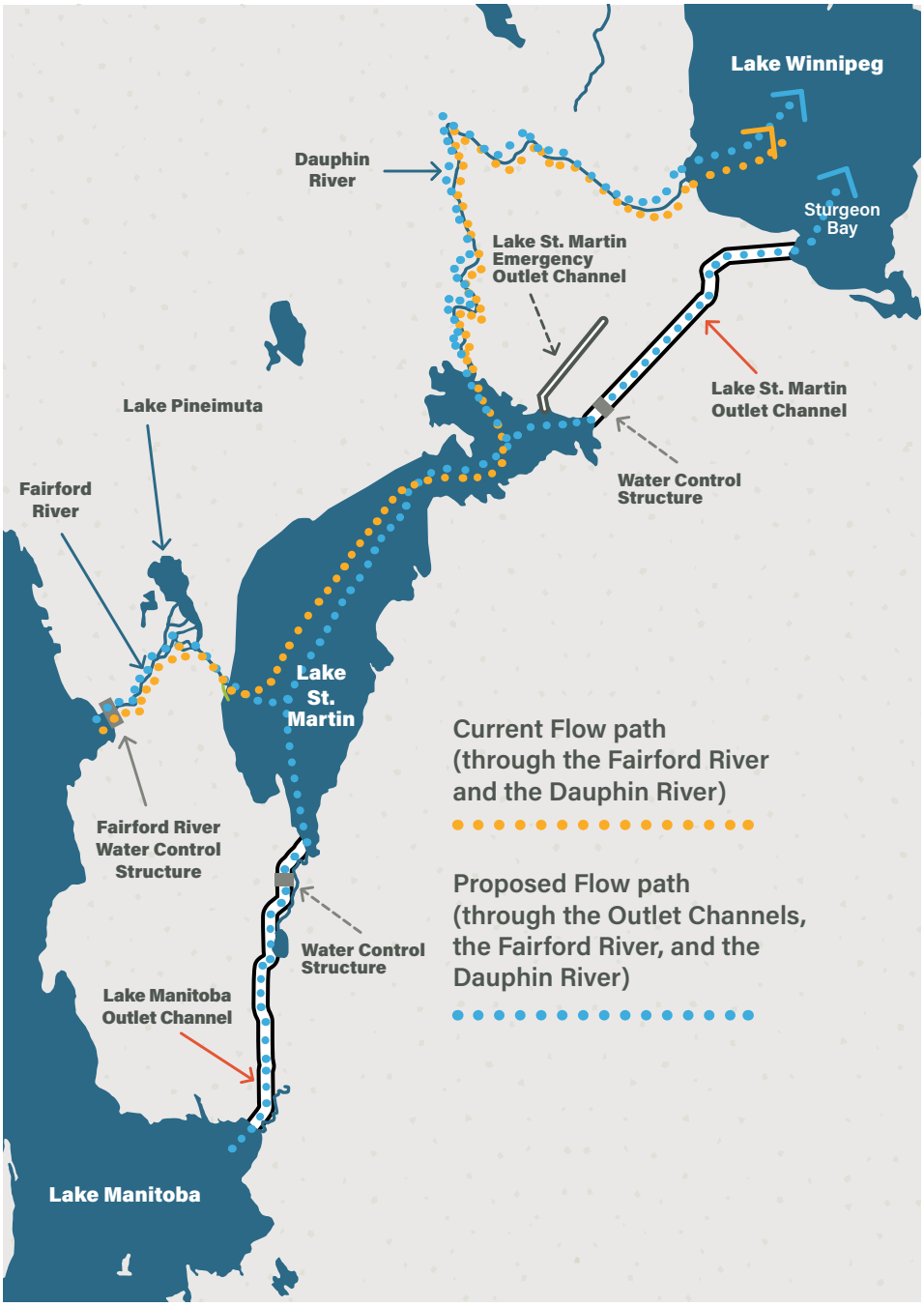
LAKE MANITOBA LAKE ST. MARTIN

OUTLET CHANNELS PROJECT

Progress Report – Fall 2021 Update



Beginning in December 2020, Manitoba Infrastructure (MI) has been sharing monthly newsletters to provide updates and information about the Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin Outlet Channels Project (Outlet Channels Project). A summary of the key topics covered in each issue is provided below:

- December 2020: Project timelines, field work video, environmental management and monitoring plans, and land expropriation
- January 2021: Environmental assessment process, environmental management plans, and environmental field work
- February 2021: Consultation and engagement activities, heritage resources field work
- March 2021: Design, consultation activities, and upcoming field work
- April 2021: Consultation activities, stakeholder engagement meetings, and upcoming field work
- May 2021: Consultation activities, stakeholder engagement meetings, and upcoming field work
- June 2021: Consultation activities, stakeholder engagement meetings, and upcoming field work, environmental assessment timelines, and upcoming communications resources
- July 2021: Proposed construction sequencing plan
- August 2021: Consultation activities, stakeholder engagement meetings, and upcoming field work

For previous issues please visit **www.manitoba.ca/mit/wms/lmblsmoutlets/resources/reports.html**.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Indigenous Consultation

Manitoba has a legal duty to consult with First Nations, Métis communities and other Indigenous communities if there is a possibility that the exercise of Aboriginal or Treaty Rights may be adversely affected by a proposed decision or action. The Manitoba government is committed to fulfilling our responsibility for consultation under Section 35 of the Constitution Act before proceeding with construction of the Outlet Channels Project.

The Manitoba government is currently in Phase 2 of its consultation and engagement process. To date, highlights include:

- MI is consulting and engaging with 39 Indigenous communities and groups.
- Six Crown Aboriginal Consultation Participation Funding Agreements, covering eight communities, have been signed.
- The Environmental Impact Statement was shared with all Indigenous communities in March 2020.
- A summary of initial concerns of what Manitoba has heard to date was shared with all Indigenous communities in September and October 2020.
- The Environmental Management and Monitoring Plans and Questionnaires was shared with all Indigenous communities in November and December 2020.
- Secondary source information was shared with all Indigenous communities in March 2021 for verification and feedback.
- Community meetings to discuss the Environmental Impact Statement and Environmental Management Plans have been ongoing throughout 2020 and 2021.
- Traditional Knowledge and Land Use Studies have been submitted, where applicable.
- MI met with Indigenous communities and groups to discuss heritage field investigations and the proposed mitigations for the Outlet Channels Project. MI has committed to continuing discussions with these groups and will be scheduling another session after receipt of feedback on the Heritage Resource Impact Assessment Report.
- MI will be initiating discussions in September with Indigenous communities in the Project area and the R.M. of Grahamdale on the establishment of an Environmental Advisory Committee.
- MI has begun sharing draft responses to the Impact Assessment Agency's information requests and associated engineering reports with Indigenous communities, and the R.M. of Grahamdale.
- As of September 10, 2021, the Manitoba government has communicated by letter (896), meetings (208), and emails/phone (3,733) with 39 Indigenous groups and communities about the Outlet Channels Project.

Continued discussions with Indigenous groups and communities through this phase will help the Manitoba government to further understand potential impacts, interests and concerns related to the Outlet Channels Project.

The Manitoba government anticipates advancing to Phase 3 after the community work plans are complete.

Stakeholder and Public Engagement

Stakeholder and public engagement to address flooding in the area began following the 2011 flood event, with meetings and discussions with the RM of Grahamdale, other rural municipalities, landowners, fishers, hunters, trappers, cottage owners, recreational users, and the public. The outcome of these discussions confirmed that new flood protection infrastructure was required. Between 2017 and 2019, Manitoba held four rounds of open house events to solicit public and stakeholder feedback about the Outlet Channels Project. Open house events were held in Moosehorn, Portage la Prairie, St. Laurent and Winnipeg. Additional open house events to share results of the environmental assessment will be scheduled once the process is complete.

Highlights of recent meetings include:

- April 2021 - Meetings with the R.M. of Grahamdale to present the draft Environmental Management Plans (EMPs) and obtain community feedback and local considerations.
- April 2021 - Meeting with the R.M. of Grahamdale to discuss PR 239 drainage and traffic plans, bridge detours at sites.
- May/June 2021 - Meetings with the R.M. of Grahamdale to discuss groundwater, local hydraulics, overland drainage issues, sediment, aquatics.
- July/September 2021 - Meetings with the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association and Winnipeg Construction Association to discuss the proposed construction sequencing plan and tendering strategy for work on the Outlet Channels Project.

Consultation during a Pandemic

Due to the unprecedented circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, all in-person meetings and non-essential travel to Indigenous communities were placed on hold. Manitoba made adjustments and adapted the consultation and engagement processes to align with public health orders and to prevent and avoid the spread of infection while continuing to obtain feedback and facilitate important discussion with Indigenous communities and groups.

Various means for engaging in distance-friendly and meaningful ways have been carried out, including:

- offering virtual meetings
- providing technological support
- offering additional resources and funding
- being flexible on scheduling
- extending response timelines

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Manitoba Infrastructure continues to advance the Outlet Channels Project through the provincial and federal environmental assessment processes.

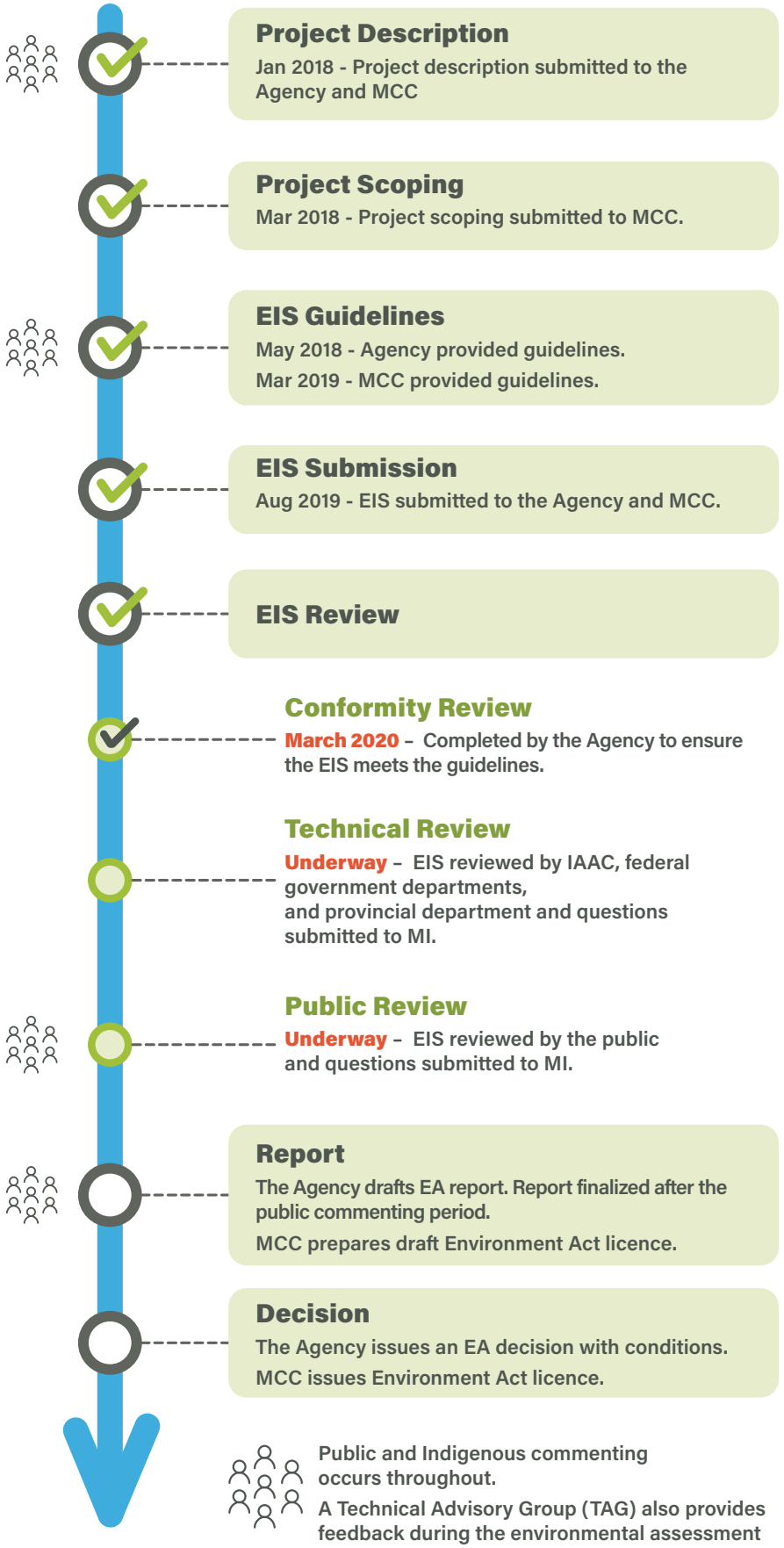
Ongoing Indigenous, stakeholder and public feedback continues to be incorporated throughout all stages of the environmental assessment process. As more information becomes available, adjustments will made to reflect this knowledge through:

- Preparing and responding to information requests. MI has begun sharing draft responses to the federal government's information requests and associated engineering reports with Indigenous communities, and the R.M. of Grahamdale. Feedback from this review will be incorporated before final responses are submitted to the federal government.
- Updating the Environmental Management and Monitoring Plans (EMPs).
- Finalizing detail design work and completing additional modelling and analysis, where required.

Environmental Assessment Timelines

The environmental assessment process and approvals can take from 12 to 24 months once the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is submitted, but the exact duration depends on the complexity of the project. A comparable flood protection project in Alberta called the Springbank Off-Stream Reservoir Project, submitted their EIS in March 2018 and received federal approval in July 2021. By comparison, Manitoba submitted the EIS for the Outlet Channels Project in August 2019 and is expecting to have met all federal requirements by fall 2021. Manitoba is prepared to start construction in the winter of 2021/22, pending federal and provincial approvals.

Manitoba recognizes the length of time required to achieve environmental licencing is a concern for some project stakeholders. The Manitoba government is committed to collaborating with the federal government to ensure efficient review of the project, but are also committed to ensuring that expressed concerns are addressed through the environmental approval, project design, and Indigenous consultation processes.



FIELD WORK

The Manitoba government is undertaking several phases of field work to further understand the existing environmental conditions before construction of the Outlet Channels Project. The first phase of field work provided a summary of existing environmental conditions of the Outlet Channels Project area and supported the preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement. The information gathered during the second phase of field work supports the planning and design phases of the project. Monitoring activities will continue throughout the construction and operation phases to confirm predictions of the environmental assessment, determine if unanticipatedeffects are occurring and whether modifications to planned mitigation measures are required. Final field work reports are posted to the Outlet Channels Project website. Highlights of recent environmental field work includes:

Surface Water Quality

- Field measurements and water quality data from Lake Manitoba, Fairford River, Lake St. Martin, Dauphin River and Sturgeon Bay (Lake Winnipeg), Watchorn Creek, Mercer Creek, Birch Creek, Goodison Lake, Water Lake, Clear Lake, Reed Lake and Buffalo Creek.
- Water quality data collected from cattle runoff operations along the Lake Manitoba Outlet Channel.

Groundwater Monitoring & Water Quality

- Water level readings and water quality data from monitoring wells in areas along the Lake Manitoba Outlet Channel right-of-way, and the Lake St. Martin Outlet Channel right-of-way.

Fish and Fish Habitat

- Investigations to document current fish communities and substrate conditions in Lake St. Martin and Sturgeon Bay.
- Investigations to further understand the timing of Lake Whitefish and other species in the Dauphin and Fairford River during fall spawning.

Red-headed Woodpecker Surveys

- Two replicate surveys of the Lake Manitoba Outlet Channel right-of-way done during peak breeding season. Surveys to estimate the number and location of red-headed woodpecker breeding pairs and to estimate the number and general location of suitable decadent trees that could be salvaged. Results will inform continued mitigation and monitoring planning.

Geotechnical Investigations

- Investigations for the proposed future bridge crossings along the Lake Manitoba Outlet Channel. Work involved augering and coring of soils and bedrock to determine subsurface conditions.

Fisheries Investigations

- Larval fish captured at the entrance to the Fairford and Dauphin Rivers and within Lake St. Martin to determine species composition and abundance.
- Spring aquatic habitat conditions in Buffalo Creek and Birch Creek documented. Fish captured to document fish abundance and species occurrence in the creeks.

DESIGN

The Outlet Channels Project involves the construction of the Lake Manitoba Outlet Channel, Lake St. Martin Outlet Channel and other components such as outside drain, bridges, water control structures, Manitoba Hydro distribution line, PR 239 realignment and municipal roads realignments. Manitoba is prepared to start construction in the winter of 2021/22, pending receipt of environmental licences and construction is anticipated to take four years to complete.

Design Work

Preliminary design of the Outlet Channels Project is complete and has been approved by the department. Detailed design work is underway and will incorporate feedback received from key stakeholders and Indigenous communities as well as from the federal and provincial environmental assessment processes.

PROJECT CONSTRUCTION

Construction will involve tree clearing, earth excavation, solid rock excavation, aggregate crushing, constructing pavement surfaces, placing concrete and steel culverts, and concrete pouring and will comply with conditions of environmental approvals received for the project.

Tree Clearing

- Right-of-way (ROW) clearing will generally be 400 metres wide and will consist of the removal and disposal of trees, shrubs, fallen timber and surface litter.
- Whenever possible, clearing will not take place between April 1 and August 31 of any year in order to avoid sensitive breeding periods for migratory birds.

Excavation

- Includes, peat moss removal, top soil removal, till excavation, and solid rock excavation.
- These activates will take place along the proposed channel alignments year-round.

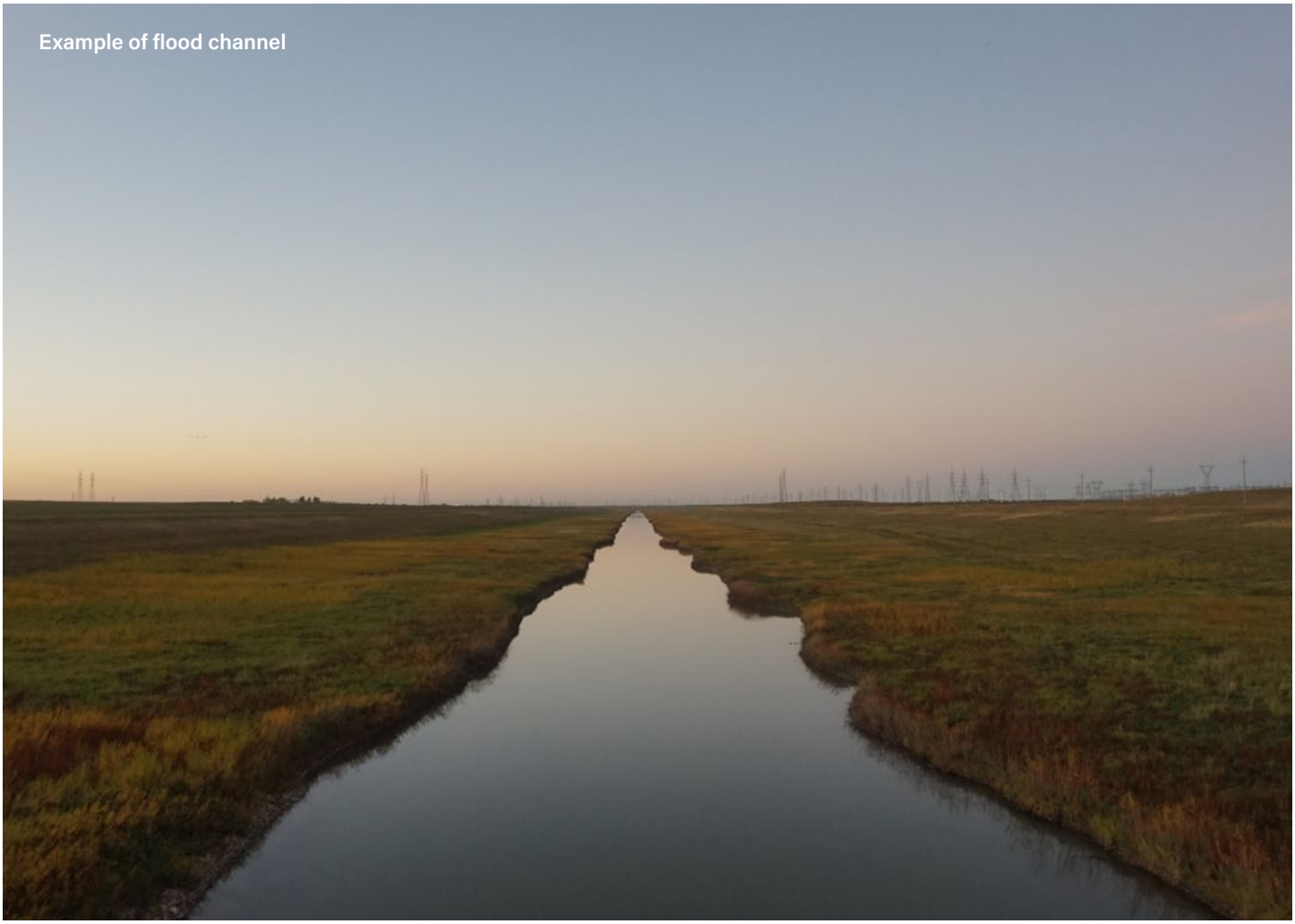
Blasting

- Will occur to produce aggregate and different sizes of riprap. Channel excavation will also involve blasting of rock outcrops to reach the design grades.
- The timing of blasting activities will consider area-specific environmental sensitivities, such as minimizing disturbance to stakeholders, avoiding disturbance to rare species and sensitive time periods, and to minimize potential effects on animal species hunted by Indigenous communities.

Bridges, Water Control Structures and Drop Structures

- Bridges, water control structures (WCSs) and drop structures will be constructed under dry conditions, with some minor exceptions. Since most construction will take place in dry conditions, scheduling of work relative to fish spawning windows will not be required.
- It is anticipated that construction will take place year-round.

Example of water control structure



Example of flood channel

Access Roads and Road Realignment

- Lake St. Martin Outlet Channel: Construction activities do not impact existing road network.
- Lake Manitoba Outlet Channel: Road work includes PR 239 realignment, municipal roads realignment, and shoofly detours. Temporary and permanent sections of roads and shoofly detours will be constructed to minimize interruption to traffic during construction. Traffic will be managed and controlled during construction activities through a Traffic Management Plan and dust control will be utilised on haul roads to maintain safety for road users.
- Lake St. Martin Outlet Channel Access Road construction resumed in late August 2021 and is expected to continue until December 2021. This work includes hauling and placing of borrow material; installation of culverts; hauling and placing of traffic gravel; seeding of disturbed areas; and reclamation of borrow areas.

Construction Sequencing

Overall construction of the Outlet Channels Project will follow a work schedule that balances the timing of activities to minimize environmental impacts. The proposed construction sequencing plan can be found in the July issue of the Outlet Channels Project newsletter - **www.gov.mb.ca/mit/wms/lmblsmoutlets/resources/reports.html**.

We Want To Hear From You

Please share your comments on the potential effects of the project by participating in meetings, or by contacting your local project Community Coordinator, band office, government office or association. You can also email **outletchannels@gov.mb.ca** or visit manitoba.ca/outletchannels.

The environmental assessment is both a planning and decision-making tool. This process is iterative and evolves as additional project information and community and stakeholder feedback is received. Project design, proposed mitigations, and proposed monitoring activities can be adapted to ensure that feedback received through this process is addressed.

Manitoba