



Dena Cho

Environmental and Remediation Inc.

A Dena Nezziddi Development Corp. Company

Dena Cho Environmental Limited Partnership (Dena Cho) is a 100% Ross River Dena Council owned and operated environmental management company.

Welcome to our newest newsletter! This newsletter focuses on activities from February to April 2022. Dena Cho is committed to regularly communicating with the community of Ross River, and more importantly, gathering feedback and direction on our projects. With this goal in mind, we aim to provide quarterly newsletter updates to Ross River community members and leadership. We also post our newsletters and other updates on our website: www.denacho.ca.

We encourage feedback on the content of this newsletter as we aim to keep our community informed and engaged. Let us know what you would like to see from Dena Cho! Please contact Cassia Jakesta if you have any questions or concerns (cjakesta@denacho.ca).



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Whitehorse Office

Suite 201-208 Main Street
Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2A9



Our Team

Jody Inkster, Biologist/Project Lead

Billie Maje, Field Technician/
Project Lead

Cassia Jakesta, Biologist/Project
Lead

Eric John, Field Technician

Danika Maje, Field Technician

Tyler O'Brien Field Technician

Chris Bemister, Field Technician

Stu Van Bibber, General Manager

Caitlynn Beckett, Researcher/
Project Lead

Current Projects

From February to April 2022, Dena Cho has worked on the following projects:

- ✧ Faro Mine Remediation Projects:
 - Leading the Faro Community-Based Revegetation Strategy (tree planting and other vegetation work) with Integral Ecology Group
 - Reviewing and reporting to the Ross River YESAB office, the Ross River Lands Office and RRDC Leadership on the Faro YESAB process
 - Coordination of an Environmental Monitoring Program with Golder Associates and Ensero Solutions
- ✧ Ketz River Mine Projects:
 - Coordination of an Environmental Monitoring Program with Hemmera
- ✧ Wolverine Mine Project:
 - Coordination of an Environmental Monitoring Program with Environmental Dynamics Inc.
- ✧ North Canal Trail Projects:
 - Telegraph Wire Cleanup—Phase 3
 - Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment (ESA)
- ✧ Cantung Mine Remediation Project:
 - Reviewing and participating in a Cantung Review Committee and reporting to RRDC Leadership

Faro Mine Remediation Projects

Faro Community-Based Revegetation Work: Together with the Integral Ecological Group (IEG), we are planning for another tree planting program for June 2022. This year we will be planting 24,000 trees: *ts'u* (white spruce), *gadze* (lodgepole pine), and *shoba* (trembling aspen). In addition to the tree planting program, we are planning for two new revegetation programs this summer: local seed collection and research on contamination and metal uptake in plants at the Faro site. We will be having discussions with Elders and other community members over the coming months to help determine community revegetation priorities at Faro and how tree planting and other research should be shaped by Dena protocols. We are in the process of hiring tree planters, and will begin the tree planting program on June 15 with a community kick-off event at Blind Creek—see posters at the Dena Store (and on Facebook) for more details!

Faro YESAB Review Updates: The Faro Mine Reclamation Plan is still being reviewed by YESAB (Yukon Environmental and Socio-Economic Assessment Board), the organization in Yukon responsible for assessing projects before they start, including protecting and promoting the well-being of First Nations and guaranteeing the use of First Nations' knowledge and experience in the assessment process. In the fall of 2021, the Faro YESAB review process moved from the 'Adequacy' stage to the 'Screening' stage: <https://www.yesab.ca/the-assessment-process/how-does-yukons-assessment-process-work>.



Eric John collecting a water sample at the Faro Mine.

YESAB has been hosting workshops every few months to help them ‘scope’ aspects of the Faro Project that they will review in depth and how they will evaluate the Project Proposal. Dena Cho attended these workshops in October and December, 2021.

Check out this link (<https://www.yesab.ca/faro-remediation>) for a plain language summary of the Faro Remediation Project and instructions on how to participate in the public comment process, if you are interested. As always, feel free to reach out to us if you have any questions.

Faro Mine Environmental Monitoring: Dena Cho assisted Golder during the surface water monitoring programs in February, March, and April. Cassia Jakesta is the lead on the monthly programs with the support of Golder and Scott Dudiak (Redberry Environmental).

This summer, Dena Cho field technicians (Eric John, Danika Maje, Chris Bemister, and Tyler O’Brien) will be assisting Ensero Solutions for weekly environmental monitoring at Faro.

Ketza River Mine Project

Ketza Environmental Monitoring: The environmental monitoring program at Ketza is undertaken by Hemmera and Dena Cho. In February, Jasmine Tom assisted Hemmera with the surface water sampling program. There was a lot of snow on site which made sampling a bit more challenging than usual. Dena Cho couldn’t participate in the March and April programs; however, we anticipate improving our involvement over the next year as the contract for this project ends in March 2023. A bit of background on this project, Dena Cho has been participating in the program since April 2021. Our aim is to increase Ross River Dena participation in projects that affect Dena lands and people.

Wolverine Mine Environmental Monitoring

Dena Cho's longest running project is ending this summer! During the past five years, Dena Cho's Billie Maje successfully led five full years of environmental monitoring, which included weekly sampling of local creeks, groundwater monitoring wells, tailings storage water, and water coming out of the mine portal. Our contract is ending this summer; however, Dena Cho is still being asked to manage a full trail clearing and brushing program, in order to make it safer for all future staff that use the site. Hopefully, we will be asked to return, where we will continue our amazing work at the mine site, and continue to include local members in keeping the lands and waters safe from historic mining practices!

North Canol Projects

North Canol Wire Cleanup- Phase 3: In summers 2020 and 2021, Dena Cho worked with Hemmera to clean up the remaining telegraph wire along the North Canol, between Ross River and km 232 (to the NWT border). Our team, including Ted and Franklin Charlie, surveyed and removed telegraph wire, as well as historic garbage and waste associated with the construction and use of the North Canol Trail.

This summer, Dena Cho will clean up any remaining wire and waste, as well as complete the cleanup of wire along the South Canol from Ross River to the border of the Teslin Tlingit Council Traditional Territory. After this, we will have completely cleaned up and removed all wire and most waste along the Canol Trail in Kaska territory. We are just starting the planning for this program, and are expecting to start cleaning up the final bits of wire in August of this year!

Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment: Dena Cho is working on a Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment (ESA), in coordination with Stantec, along the North Canol Road from Ross River to the NWT border. The purpose of this ESA is to locate and record any potentially contaminated sites (for example, areas on the road where oil spills have happened or contaminated areas where truck shops were located) along the North Canol Trail. This work includes archival and aerial photography research to identify potentially contaminated areas; interviews with Ross River community members to help identify sites of concern; and summer 2022 fieldwork to 'site truth' our desk research and characterize the sites that require cleanup. Our findings will be presented to RRDC leadership at the end of 2022.

Dena Cho has so far completed 11 community interviews to help understand possible contaminated sites, reviewed over 300 aerial photos spanning from the 1940s to the present, and are now determining twelve sites our team wants to investigate further during the field component of the project for July 2022.



Jody Inkster and Caitlynn Beckett interviewing Dorothy Dick.

Training and Other Initiatives

Training over the last few months:

- Ice rescue – In March, Cassia Jakesta and Scott Dudiak (a subcontractor for Dena Cho) participated in a 2-day training event in Whitehorse.
- Wilderness First Aid – In March, Billie Maje, Danika Maje, and Cassia completed a 5-day training course at Yukon University.
- Wildlife survey field methods – In April, Cassia and Jody Inkster participated in a 3-day training session with Natural Resources Training Group
- Avian nest sweeps – In April, Cassia and Jody participated in a 2-day training session with Natural Resources Training Group
- Mining the Connections 2022 conference – In April, Caitlynn Beckett and Kathlene Suza attended this conference in Québec City as panelists for the “Indigenous Experiences and Perceptions of Mine Closure” discussion. Stories of the Faro Mine and Remediation Project were shared. Councillor Roberta Dick, Stephanie John, Josh Ladue, Cassia, Jody, and Stu attended virtually and shared their experiences of the Faro Mine and other mining on Kaska territory. Our power point presentation also included several quotes from Elders from the Blind Creek area, talking about their experiences of Faro and their hopes for the future.

Elder Quotes

“It’s because of the land we’re all alive, its that simple. Without vegetation, without anything out there, we’re all going to be gone.”

