

# NWMO begins aerial survey work

By Samantha Hawkins

You may notice a few planes flying low overhead if you live around the Ignace area in the upcoming months. Sander Geophysics Ltd. (SGL) has been contracted by the NWMO to conduct airborne geophysical surveys of the potential sites for Canada's deep geological repository for used nuclear fuel.

Of the 15 communities currently involved in the process, four, including Ignace have recently advanced to the next phase which involves completing airborne geophysical surveys as well as geological mapping, environmental surveys and intensive learning and planning with local communities.



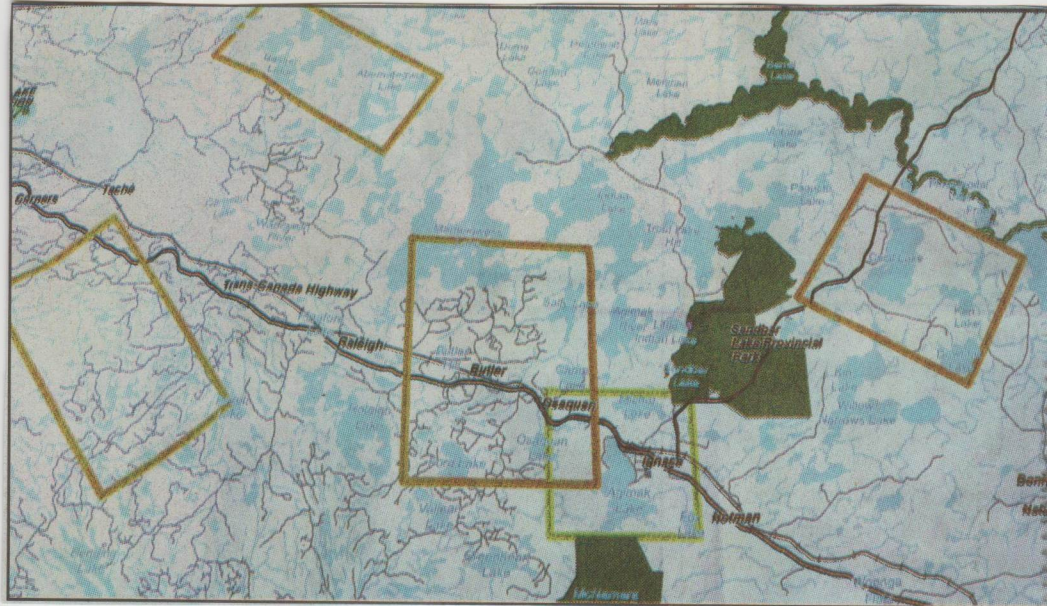
*Representatives from the NWMO and SGL met with media and council members from Ignace, Dryden, and Sioux Lookout at the Dryden Airport April 8 to discuss their planned airborne geophysical survey work in the area.*  
**Photo by Samantha Hawkins**

The airborne surveys, currently underway in the area, are expected to last one to three months depending on the weather says SGL Pilot André Lafontaine.

"We are flying visually,

so we need good weather to be able to safely see at 300 feet. We talked about a 5 mile visibility limit and 1500 foot ceiling, so when the weather starts hampering on that, the crews

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*A map of the local survey areas for the NWMO's airborne geophysical surveys to be conducted to determine whether there is suitable rock to allow Ignace to continue on in the selection process to host Canada's used nuclear fuel in the NWMO's proposed deep geological repository.*

are empowered to come back to base. SGL really puts an emphasis on safety to ensure the planes are not exposed to an unusual amount of risk, so we do have days that we are not going to fly because the weather is not that good."

The NWMO, through these surveys, is looking for a more detailed understanding of bedrock geology to help identify a suitable site. This is a new area of exploration for SGL says Lafontaine as usually they are looking for rock with fractures.

"I've done petroleum based surveys and mining based surveys, but I have never done this sort of survey, this is a new and interesting direction that the company is going to take."

Lafontaine says the magnetometers used to measure and record the underlying rock formations are totally passive and have no effect on residents or anything on the ground as it is a passive system which records the earth's natural magnetism and gravity field.

The two aircrafts will fly approximately 300 feet or 100 metres above the surface collecting data as they chart a number of straight lines over the areas, with approximately 100 metres of spacing between each adjacent line.

Should a suitable site be identified through this process, the NWMO says the people in the vicinity would then be engaged in discussions as to whether or not the project would be a good fit for the area.

The NWMO maintains that the \$16-\$24 billion project can only be implemented with the involvement of an informed and willing host community and that it will take several more years of study before a suitable location can be chosen.