



**PRESS RELEASE  
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## **Kebaowek First Nation in Third Legal Challenge for Ottawa River Radioactive Waste Dump**

**Ottawa, February 5, 2025** – Today, Kebaowek First Nation, alongside the Concerned Citizens of Renfrew County and Area, the Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility, and the Sierra Club Canada Foundation, is appearing in Federal Court to challenge the federal government's approval of a Species at Risk Permit for the Near Surface Disposal Facility (NSDF), a proposed radioactive waste dump located near the Ottawa River. The hearing continues on February 6.

This marks the third legal challenge against the controversial project, which has faced significant opposition from Indigenous nations, environmental organizations, and more than 140 municipalities. The NSDF site is located on unceded Algonquin territory on the Chalk River Laboratories property, approximately 180 km north-west of Ottawa. It is less than one kilometer from the Ottawa River, a critical water source for millions of Quebec and Ontario citizens downstream, including the City of Ottawa, Gatineau, and Montreal, and poses significant environmental risks. The plaintiffs contend that the government has wrongly granted a permit that allows the destruction of endangered species and their habitats during the construction of the NSDF.

The NSDF would be built on one of the most biodiverse areas within the Chalk River Laboratories 3,700-hectare site. The proposed dump location 1km from the Ottawa River would force the clear-cutting of 37 hectares of mature forests, undertake extensive blasting of a mountainside. This site selection threatens numerous species at risk, including the Canada Warbler and Golden-winged Warbler, and will destroy 26 hectares of critical habitat for the endangered Blanding's Turtle. Most critically, the Chalk River Laboratories site is home to the Eastern Wolf, also known as the Algonquin Wolf, a species of deep cultural significance to the Algonquin people. After years of advocacy and scientific review, this species was delayed in uplisting as recommended by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) in 2015 and was only uplisted in 2024 from "special concern" to "threatened" status, only after the Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) NSDF permit. The uplisting significantly increases Eastern wolf legal protection along with the protection of its habitat at the Chalk River site.

Kebaowek First Nation's [independent biodiversity assessment](#) also identified active bear dens, protected under provincial law, and a total of 26 confirmed species at risk, with up to 50 potentially present on the NSDF site. The NSDF threatens an already fragile ecosystem and disregards the First

Nations inherent right and responsibility to protect these irreplaceable species by Environment and Climate Change Canada approving its issuing of its species at risk permit for the project.

Kebaowek First Nation is leading efforts to protect the NSDF site through ECCC's Natural Climate Solutions Fund, aligning with Canada's goal of protecting 30 % of lands and waters by 2030 conservation goal and Indigenous-led stewardship commitments. The NSDF project would destroy 37 hectares of old-growth forest, yet no carbon storage assessment has been done. Partnering collaboratively with allies, Kebaowek will assess the carbon impact and advocate for stronger forest management. This builds on their long-standing work to protect biodiversity, including the Eastern Wolf and Black Bear. As Kebaowek states, "Canada should cooperate with Kebaowek's leadership if it is truly committed to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework."

### **Chief Lance Haymond's Statement**

"The government's decision to approve this dangerous project in an area so rich in biodiversity and cultural significance is unacceptable. The Ottawa River and its surrounding ecosystems are vital not only to the Algonquin people but to millions of Quebecois who rely on it for drinking water and sustenance. We will continue to fight for the protection of our lands, waters, and rights, and we will hold the government accountable for their reckless actions."  
— Chief Lance Haymond, Kebaowek First Nation

### **Ole Hendrickson's Statement**

"This is a fight for the future. The government's approval of this project ignores the irreversible environmental damage it will cause, especially to the endangered species that depend on the habitat at risk. The location was chosen for convenience, not for the protection of the environment or Indigenous rights. We stand with Kebaowek First Nation in holding the federal government accountable for failing to follow the law and put the health of our communities and ecosystems first."  
— Ole Hendrickson, Concerned Citizens of Renfrew County and Area

### **A Growing Movement Against the NSDF**

The NSDF has generated widespread opposition from Indigenous communities, environmental organizations, and municipalities due to its location near the Ottawa River and the potential environmental risks. Over 140 municipalities, including Gatineau and Montreal, have voiced their opposition to the project. The Assembly of First Nations, the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador, ten out of the eleven Algonquin First Nations and more than 20 respected environmental groups have also condemned the project, citing concerns about its impacts on Indigenous sovereignty and the environment.

This third legal challenge specifically targets the approval of a Species at Risk Permit, arguing that the government has failed to consider alternative sites with less ecological and cultural impact, as required by the Species at Risk Act.

### **How You Can Support the Legal Challenge**

The public is invited to support this legal challenge in several ways:

- Attend the hearing in person at the Supreme Court of Canada (East Room), Wellington Street, Ottawa, on February 5 from 9:30 AM to noon.
- Watch the hearing on Zoom by registering [here](#).
- Share this information with others who may be interested in supporting the cause.
- Contribute to the Kebaowek First Nation's legal fund here: [RAVEN Trust](#).

For more information on Kebaowek First Nation's efforts to halt the NSDF project visit: [HOME | Stop Nuclear Waste](#).

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**Source:**

Kebaowek First Nation

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