

The Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board told the company it would have to conduct an environmental assessment of its mine in the ecologically sensitive area. This order was confirmed by the NWT Supreme Court last month. The company is appealing that ruling, and now it has been given a stay, which allows NATCL to not start work on the environmental assessment until after the appeal has been heard.

*"This is a dangerous strategy for the company," says Karen Wristen Executive Director of the Canadian Arctic Resources Committee. "If the environmental work is not done in time, the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board can refuse an extension of the water licence under which the mine is currently operating. Our concern is the same as it was at the beginning of this case, that the company is simply putting up legal roadblocks to enable it to finish its short-term mining plans without having to put up the security required to clean up the site once it is done."*

Although the company has bought itself some breathing room, it is a long way from persuading an appeals court judge to overturn the environmental assessment order.

*"We will continue to back the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board's decision through the court proceedings," says Greg Yeoman of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society-NWT Chapter. "The Board is there to implement an integrated environmental management regime in the Mackenzie Valley. Northerners will live with the legacy of this company long after it has taken its profits and left."*

There is no date set yet for the court to hear NATCL's appeal. It is expected to take place in February or March of this year. The NATCL water licence has been extended twice last year and now expires in November 2003.