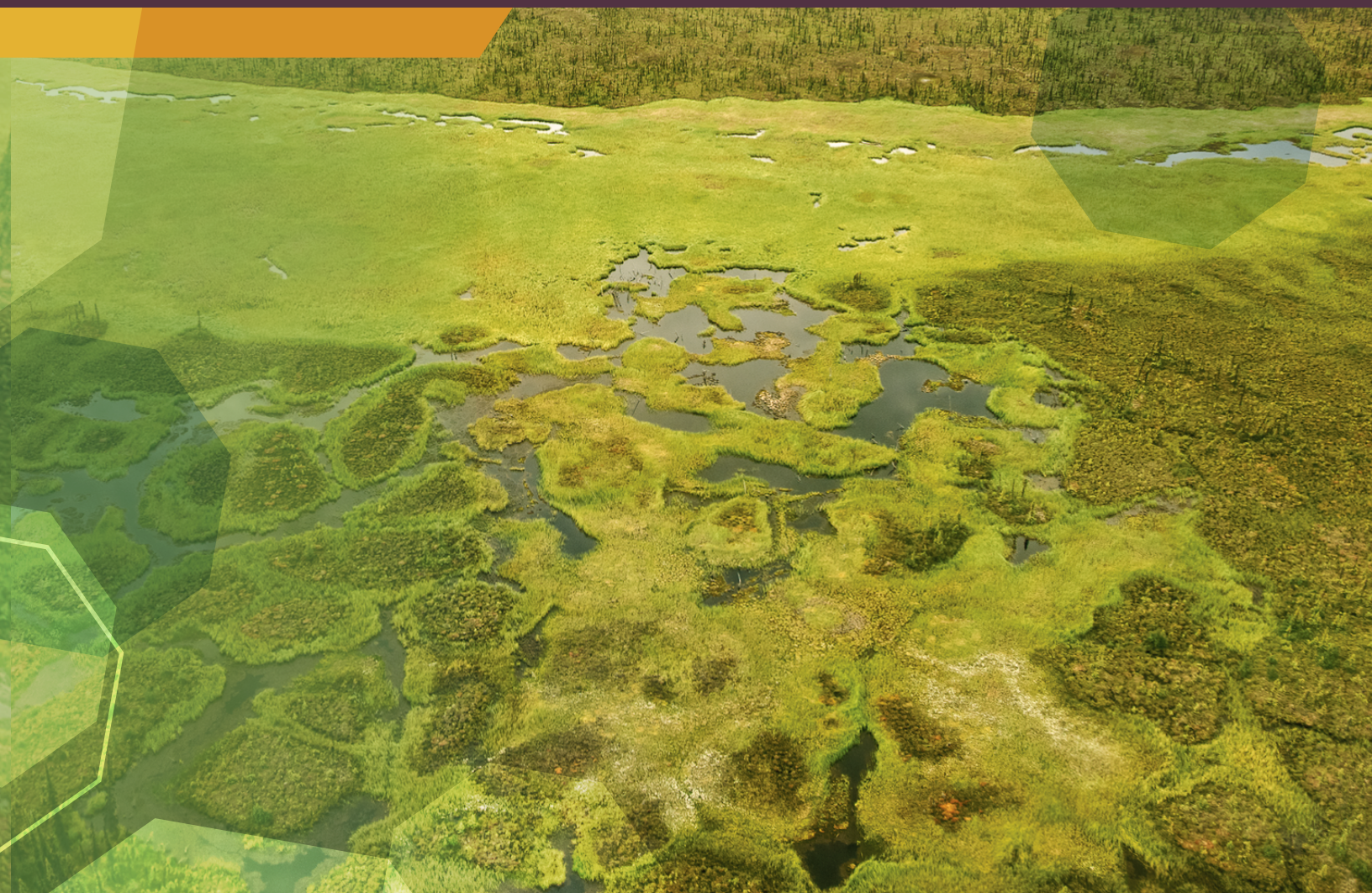




THE CH'IHILII CHÌK HABITAT PROTECTION AREA

MANAGEMENT PLAN
2019



Ch'ihilii Chìk Habitat Protection Area Management Plan

This plan was recommended by the Ch'ihilii Chìk Habitat Protection Area Working Group with representatives from the Vuntut Gwitchin Government, North Yukon Renewable Resources Council, and Government of Yukon.

Approved by:



Dana Tizya-Tramm
Chief
Vuntut Gwitchin Government



Pauline Frost
Minister of Environment
Government of Yukon

May 17, 2019
Date



Ch'ihillii Chik, flying around Berry Creek
(© VGFN 2009 -04-226)

MANAGEMENT PLAN

Prepared by the Ch'ihillii Chik Habitat Protection Area Working Group

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Ch'ihilii Chìk

a gathering place of the Gwich'in

Ch'ihilii Chìk is a long ago place, lake of plenty, land of our ancestors, the Dagoo people from Vuntut Gwitchin, Teetl'it Gwich'in, Dawson areas who had once inhabited this area with its rich resources in a vast country now known as Vuntut Traditional Territory. Their relatives; us, who have come here today to visit their homelands and rediscover and reconnect to our past.

It is the place to be, in upper Yukon, the lake that flows into Tizya Creek into Porcupine Lake which is a part of the Porcupine River with its still waters.

Ch'ihilii Chìk a small eroding island in the middle of a huge lake that is drying out slowly, filling up with the beautiful water lilies; the fish are there no more. Once a rich caribou hunting area shared by Teetl'it Gwich'in, Dagoo Gwich'in and Vuntut Gwitchin. The long ago stories speak of that. The close connections that was had between all Gwich'in of this vast area.

Ch'ihilii Chìk is the pristine wetlands with the many species of ducks and birds, the wildlife, now a protected area.

Ch'ihilii Chìk; remembered by our elders from a long time ago as a place of sustenance for traditional foods, the fat caribou, the drymeat, the blood soup, the itsuh and bone marrow and the tasty whitefish for which the lake is named.

We came here to connect with the past, to hear the stories from our elders of today of their travels and activities in the early 1900s, so we in turn could pass those stories to the younger generation to help them in their future deliberations, to know their true heritage going forward. Mahsi'

We came here to learn about where our roots lie, our identity, our connections to this rich land and our history; it makes one proud to have known we came from strong people, a strong nation. Their travel routes criss-crossed a huge area, travelled only by dog team in winter and walking long distances to Fort McPherson in NWT with dog packs and rafts/boats in the summer time. Hai'

Ch'ihilii Chìk is a special gathering place for the Dagoo who shared their resources off of the land with their neighbors, the Vuntut Gwitchin and Teetl'it Gwich'in kat.

Mahsi' Choo that we were able to connect with this land, to see the vast distances that have been travelled in the past between Ch'ihilii Chìk, Kàachik, Chuu Tl'it, and Jak Chyahnjik Vadzaih Tthał, [Berry Creek Caribou fence] a caribou fence, a spiritual place where hunters and families gathered for caribou, their markings still seen on the land, just seeing it meant so much, made by strong hands and strong minded people and all

other places where our people lived strictly off of the land for their livelihood. Their imprints, their markings on trees are still on the land to see with our own eyes.

Mahsi' for those happy times shared by our elders and the ancestors, of gathering together, laughing, sharing food, telling stories, celebrating but for a short time before they had to go back out on the land to survive which sometimes happened when there was hardly food around, still they moved on and survived so that we could be here today, a testament of their courage and determination.

Mahsi' Choo our Gwich'in people from long ago worked so hard together to make things work amongst themselves and visitors, working with happy hearts, helping each other so that we could be here today to reconnect, rediscover and carry on those stories, carry on the teachings and traditions and the practices of the Gwich'in. We are to be so grateful, Hai'. We are of the Gwich'in Nation, we have much to be proud of; we need to carry forth the teachings and skills handed down through the generations. Mahsi' Cho.

I am grateful for experiencing the White Fish Lake – Ch'ihilii Chik oral history project trip, a once in a lifetime experience for me personally. I felt happy for the first time, so relaxed knowing deep down my roots are from this area, my mother is a Dagoo, from Dawson area, an elder from Old Crow told me once that I am “real Dagoo”. I am Dagoo and proud of it. I had come home. I felt such a closeness to the land as never before, envisioning our ancestors in tune with the land and animals and all of nature. I left the Whitefish Lake - Itilii [my Teel'it Gwich'in dialect] with a happy heart.

Mary Jane Moses, July 23/09



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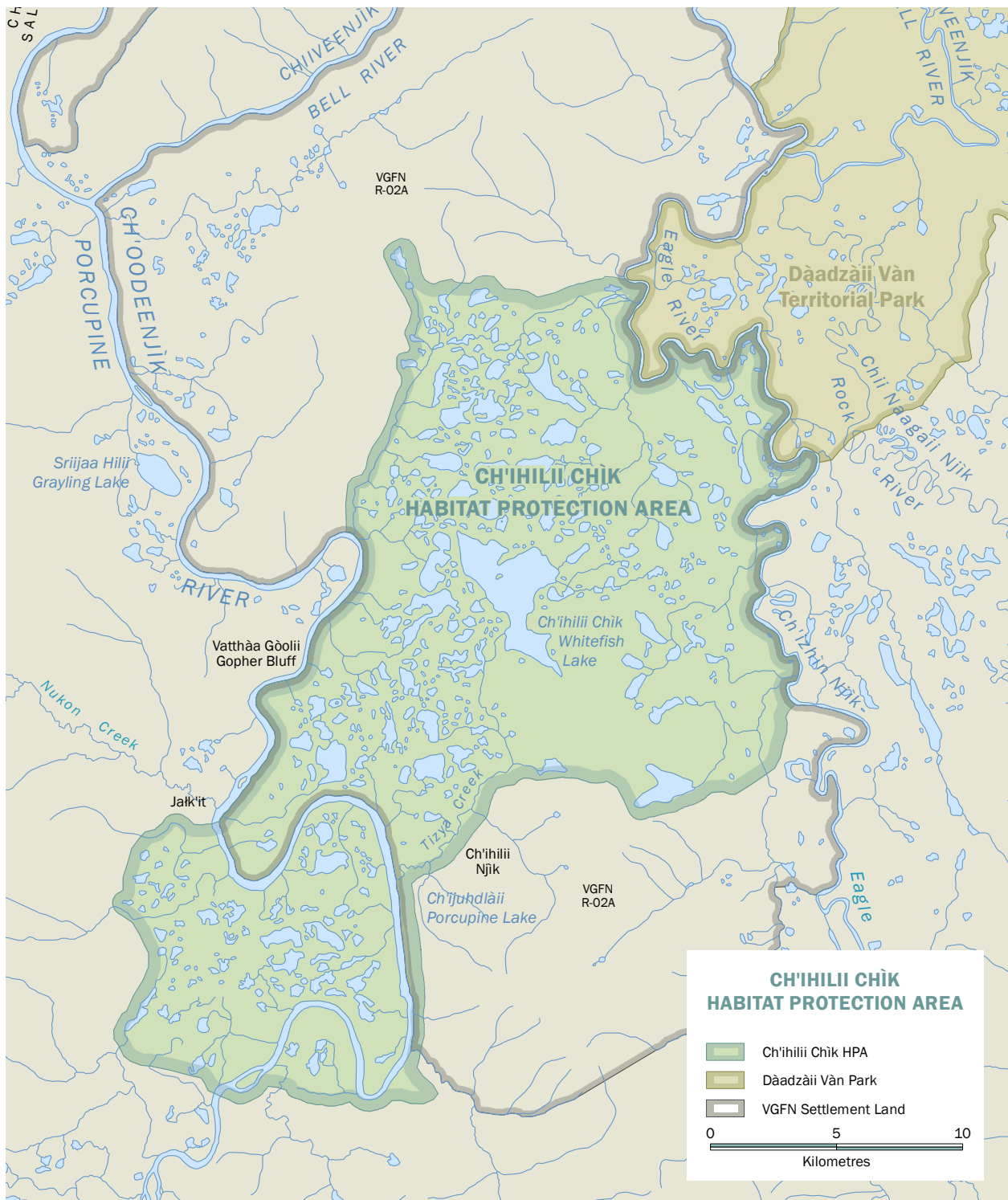
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Map 1: Ch'ihilii Chik Habitat Protection Area



Vision for the Ch’ihilii Chìk Habitat Protection Area

From time immemorial, Gwich’in have depended on the Ch’ihilii Chìk Habitat Protection Area (HPA) to fulfill their cultural and subsistence needs and values. Water to the Gwich’in, as in many indigenous societies, has immeasurable importance. The Gwich’in have a keen sense of the cycle of life and how water connects all living things together. The Gwich’in value system has, at its core, an uncompromising respect and reverence for all living things. Since all living things need water to exist, water is viewed as the most important resource on earth. Van Tat Gwich’in Elders identified the Ch’ihilii Chìk HPA as an important area to be protected for future generations. They recommended it be managed as one ecological unit with other protected areas in the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation (VGFN) Traditional Territory, including Vuntut National Park, Van Tat (Old Crow Flats), Ni’iinlii Njik Territorial Park (Fishing Branch) and HPA, and Dàadzàii Vàn Territorial Park (Summit- Bell)



Ch’ihilii Chìk - Whitefish Lake - island-camp Frances Bruce, Briana Tetlich, Erika Tizya-Tramm, Irwin Linklater, Bobby Netro ©VG2009_04_31

THE VISION FOR MANAGEMENT OF THIS AREA INCLUDES:

- recognizing the use of the area by Gwich’in for hunting, trapping, fishing, and gathering plants, and the importance of maintaining trails, access, and resting spots for people to use during their travels;
- conserving important fish and wildlife populations and their habitat for the benefit of all Yukoners;
- preserving and carefully considering water quality for aquatic and terrestrial health, and ecosystem function;
- encouraging public awareness and appreciation of the natural resources of the area;
- understanding the impacts of past industrial land uses, particularly oil and gas exploration and to allow for current land uses and activities that are compatible with the objectives of this management plan; and
- gathering information about fish and wildlife and their habitats, and other resources through studies and research to assist with management decisions.

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of This Management Plan

Special management of Ch'ihilii Chik was recommended in the North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan which was approved by the Vuntut Gwitchin Government and the Government of Yukon in 2009. In the North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan, the area is referred to as Whitefish Wetlands. For the purpose of this management plan, the area will be referred to only as the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA, though both names describe the same area. The Vuntut Gwitchin Government and the Government of Yukon (the Parties) further agreed to designate the area as an HPA under the Yukon *Wildlife Act*. Designating the area as an HPA requires a management plan be developed and approved by the Parties. A working group representing the Parties, and including the North Yukon Renewable Resources Council, was established in January 2013 to develop a management plan.

This management plan describes important values and provides recommendations to the Parties for the long-term management of the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA (Map 1). The ecological and cultural importance of the area to the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation was the key principle driving the working group and this management planning process.

During the North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan planning process Van Tat Gwitchin Elders voiced their vision for ecological connectivity throughout the Traditional Territory where all protected areas are considered on a regional scale as one connected unit, rather than in isolation (Map 2, Appendix B). This management plan recognizes that the different land ownership and management regimes will require a cooperative effort to jointly manage this important area.

Management Objectives

The management objectives are based on values reflected in the North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan and the working group's Terms of Reference (Appendix A).

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES ARE:

1. To conserve important fish and wildlife habitat in the area for the benefit of all Yukon residents;
2. To recognize the traditional, current and future uses of the area by Vuntut Gwitchin citizens;
3. To preserve and carefully consider water quality and quantity in the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA for aquatic and terrestrial health and ecosystem function;
4. To protect the fish and wildlife populations and their habitats from activities which are likely to reduce the area's capability to support fish and wildlife;
5. To encourage public awareness and appreciation of the natural resources of the area; and
6. To allow for activities compatible with these objectives and the management plan.

How This Plan Was Developed

The Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation (VGFN) Settlement Lands (VGFN R-02A, S-14A/D, and S-20A/D) within the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA were carefully chosen during land claim negotiations as important areas for conservation. This goal is further stated in the North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan "with the intent to protect the central Whitefish Lakes, the surrounding wetland and the water flowing into it" (page 4-2).

In the fall of 2013, the Vuntut Gwitchin Government and Government of Yukon (the Parties) agreed to develop a management plan which will lead to the designation of Ch'ihilii Ch'ik as an HPA under the Yukon *Wildlife Act*. A working group was established to create a recommended management plan; with two delegates from Vuntut Gwitchin Government, two delegates from the Government of Yukon, and one delegate from the North Yukon Renewable Resources Council. Terms of Reference for the working group were signed in January 2014.

The steps in the development of this management plan included:

- identification and review of the important ecological and cultural resource information;
- discussion of options for protection of the area and its values; and
- consideration of land designation options.

Local input and technical information helped determine outcomes of this management plan throughout the planning process. Community meetings were held in Old Crow in July and October 2013, February 2017 and in May 2018. Refer to Appendix C for a detailed list of all working group and public meetings held throughout the planning process.

This management plan documents the current ecological conditions of the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA, the historical and cultural connection of the Gwich'in to this important place, and identifies potential opportunities and risks from current and future land uses, development and climate change.

Legal Framework

Multiple pieces of legislation from the Vuntut Gwitchin Government, Government of Yukon, and the Government of Canada regulate activities within and adjacent to the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA. These include:

Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Final Agreement

Yukon Legislation

Wildlife Act

Historic Resources Act

Waters Act

Forest Resources Act

Oil and Gas Act

Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act

Placer Mining Act

Quartz Mining Act

Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act

Scientist and Explorers Act

Federal Legislation

Yukon Environmental and Socio-Economic Assessment Act

Fisheries Act

Migratory Birds Convention Act

Species at Risk Act

Development of a VGFN Lands and Resources Act is currently underway and is anticipated to be complete by the first review of this management plan.

Natural Setting and Area Description

The Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA is an important part of the homeland of the Dagoo Gwich'in and was also used by the Van Tat Gwich'in and Teet'it Gwich'in. The area is situated on the travel route over the mountains between Old Crow and Fort McPherson, close to other well-known areas such as Kàachik (Johnson Creek Village) and LaPierre House. The Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA is approximately 115 km southeast of Old Crow, in the Traditional Territory of VGFN. The area is 468 km² and encompasses Ch'ihilii Ch'ik (Whitefish Lake) and the surrounding wetlands (Map 1). Category A Settlement Land parcel VGFN R-02A, and Site Specific parcels S-14A/D and S-20A/D account for the majority of the area (358 km²) within the boundary and Yukon public land makes up the remainder (110 km²).

The Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA is most easily accessed by snow machine in winter and by boat in summer. When the Old Crow winter road is maintained, it runs adjacent to the south east border of the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA.

The Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA is comprised of three ecoregions within the Taiga Cordillera ecozone: the British-Richardson mountains, Eagle Plains, and the Old Crow Basin. The majority of the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA is within the Old Crow Basin. The Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA is the most significant wetland in this ecoregion and is more similar to the Van Tat (Old Crow Flats) than to the rest of the ecoregion. The area is at the confluence of three major river systems: Ch'izhìn Njik (Eagle River), Chiiveenjìk (Bell River), and Ch'oodèenjìk (Porcupine River). The Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA is situated at the end of the area known as Van Tat Gwich'in territory, and the beginning of the Upper Porcupine region, also known as Dagoo country. The Ch'ihilii

Ch'ik HPA is directly east of Chiiveenjìk (Bell River). It is connected by Tizya Creek to a stretch of river called Ch'ijuhdlàii ("Part of the river where the current is dead" – Porcupine Lake).

The wetland complex has a similar natural history to that of Van Tat (Old Crow Flats). The area was unglaciated during the Pleistocene. Much of the lower elevations were submerged under glacial lakes underlain by fine-grained, ice-rich lake sediments and continuous permafrost. Due to this, the sediments are highly vulnerable to surface disturbance. The major river valleys represent changing habitat types, from aquatic vegetation through various shoreline types to upland shrub and forest communities, with many associated oxbows at various stages of succession. The Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA contains wet or riparian shrub, wet herb, and wet forest vegetation communities. Black spruce lichen heath communities dominate the peat plateaus and floating mats of sedge and mosses are also common. There are approximately 1,000 lakes, ponds, creeks, peat bogs, swamps, fens and marshes that make up the wetland complex; the central Ch'ihilii Ch'ik (Whitefish Lake) being the largest at 14 km². The lakes and ponds are thermokarst in origin, typically small and shallow.

The Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA is next to Dàadzàii Vàn Territorial Park along the boundary of the Eagle River. The creation of Dàadzàii Vàn Territorial Park was also a recommendation of the North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan. Together with the Rat River Conservation Zone (in NWT), these protected areas provide important ecological continuity across 5,068 km². The

total area encompasses the wetlands, and the Chiiveenjik (Bell River) and Little Bell River to Summit Lake — straddling the Yukon River and Mackenzie River watersheds. The North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan states that “the land designation concept for this area creates a protected Area network connecting

Whitefish wetlands with Summit Lake-Bell River and the NWT Rat River Gwich’in Conservation Zone” (Section 4.2.2) (Map 2, Appendix B).

Importance of the Ch’ihilii Chìk Habitat Protection Area

The Ch’ihilii Chìk HPA is the most significant wetland complex in the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Traditional Territory outside of Van Tat (Old Crow Flats). The area is well known for abundant tùk dagàii (whitefish), tsèe (beaver), and dzan (muskrat) trapping, and vadzaih (caribou); it has been a traditional trapping and hunting area. The ability of the Ch’ihilii Chìk HPA to provide subsistence and cultural

nourishment to the Van Tat Gwich’in is economically and culturally important, and is the foundation for this management plan. During consultations on the North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan, Gwich’in Elders expressed interest in protecting the wetland complex, stressing the importance of this area for maintaining strong fish stocks, healthy wildlife populations, and clean water.



How the Dagoo Used Ch’ihilii Chìk

You know that Whitefish Lake, there’s a creek that runs into Porcupine River – Tixya Creek. We used to stay [Chuu Tl’it] Whitestone Village. We stay further up from Johnson Creek. Right after break-up we hunt beaver and then we come down to [Kâachik] Johnson Creek Village. John Charlie, Peter Charlie, that’s where they stay, Johnson Creek, and them, they leave a load there for my Dad. They say they’re going to go down to [Ch’ijuhdlàii] Porcupine Lake. [Where] Whitefish Lake runs into Porcupine [River], they say they are going to stop there for fishing. They leave a note there for my Dad in Loucheaux writing. No English, just Loucheaux.

So they told us, John Charlie, Peter Charlie they’re going to go down Itilii (Dagoo/Peel dialect for Ch’ihilii) that’s that Whitefish Lake. Fish run into Porcupine Lake right after break-up. Fish come down steady, big whitefish. That’s where they stay. We got there - fishing same time we were around the lake. John Charlie, Peter Charlie, my Dad. Me, I never go, I was kid then. They hunt beaver around that lake, muskrat. They stay there for a week. I was with my Mom. Peter Charlie and John Charlie, Lazarus and Charlie Peter were [big kids]. Just steady whitefish - cut it up, smoke it. They make one cache and just do everything just like one family. And then after we finish, we divide it up. Yeah, [in spring, fish] come down to Porcupine [Lake]. In fall they go [back] up [the creek] again. All kinds of fish. Even Baalam, Old Baalam, used to stay there too. Right at the Whitefish Creek that’s where he stayed.

Dick Nukon, January 1995
Interviewed by Agnes Charlie and Colin Bearisto

MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS: CULTURAL RESOURCES

Traditional and Contemporary Use

Historically, the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA was part of the traditional area of the Dagoo Gwich'in. The Dagoo are recognized as a unique group within the greater Gwich'in Nation, now dispersed between Old Crow, Fort McPherson and other Gwich'in villages. The Ch'ihilii Chik HPA was a frequent stopover along a heavily used Gwich'in travelling route (Map 3, Appendix B). The area is ecologically rich and continues to be a place where local residents of Old Crow spend time hunting, fishing and trapping, and bringing youth onto the land for traditional activities — to learn about and practice cultural values.

Traditionally, large camps would be erected near Itilii (Whitefish Lake). People travelling from both Old Crow and Fort McPherson would gather there to build fishing weirs in Tizya Creek to catch *tuk dagàii* (whitefish) (Map 4, Appendix B). The area was also used as a base for hunting vadzaih (Porcupine caribou herd) in the spring. In times when vadzaih (caribou) were scarce, people would hunt *dinjik* (moose) in the area. Families would spend time in the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA trapping *tsèe* (beaver), *dzan* (muskrat), *chihthee* (mink) and *niinjii* (lynx). Stories recorded from Gwich'in Elders clearly depict an important and diverse area used not only for traditional harvest practices, but also as a social gathering place.

The Ch'ihilii Chik HPA remains an important area today. It has significant ecological value to fish species such as *tuk dagàii* (whitefish), *altin* (jackfish), *sriijaa* (grayling) and *shii* (salmon). The area

supports the Porcupine caribou herd on its biannual migration. Many subsistence hunters use the area around Ch'ijuhdlàii (Porcupine Lake) for hunting vadzaih (caribou) and *dinjik* (moose), and trapping *tsèe* (beaver). While the traveling routes are no longer used to the extent seen in the past, the area is used frequently for shorter hunting and trapping trips. There are two actively used cabins in the area, as well as two older cabins that are no longer used.

Archaeologists spent time within the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA in the 1960s. During that time, they identified a historical camp site on the Ch'ijuhdlàii (Porcupine Lake), on the north side at the mouth of Tizya Creek. A copper trade kettle, cut bone, and bone fragments were collected. Also, two historical fish traps were identified on Tizya Creek. Given the importance of the area for hunting and fishing, it is likely further surveys would identify additional archaeological sites within the wetland complex.

The Ch'ihilii Chik HPA contains a well preserved Ice Age record in deposits of frozen silts that are now being exposed as modern rivers cut through the sediments. The Ch'ihilii Chik HPA is at the eastern edge of the Beringian region and likely contains fossil evidence of Pleistocene flora and fauna. Fossil sites have been identified on the Ch'izhìn Njik (Eagle River) near the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- | | |
|---|----------------------------|
| <p>1. Recognize where opportunities exist for the Vuntut Gwitchin Government and the Government of Yukon to collaborate on heritage and historical resource projects within the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA.</p> | <p>Who: VGG, YG</p> |
| <p>2. Create and maintain opportunities for Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation citizens to use the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • making the area accessible from the Ch'oodèenjik (Porcupine River) (mark and cut) trail; • establishing a cabin along the river for public use; • establishing a camping area on Ch'ihilii Chik Island; • recognizing contemporary personal camps in the area; • including local youth on site visits; and • exploring opportunities to work within the existing trapper incentives, and traditional pursuits programs to encourage trapping and subsistence harvest within the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA. | <p>Who: VGG, NYRRC</p> |
| <p>3. Establish a research cabin/base on the Ch'oodèenjik (Porcupine River), or at Ch'ihilii Chik (Whitefish Lake), to encourage research and create an opportunity for Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation citizens and youth to participate in research.</p> | <p>Who: VGG, NYRRC</p> |
| <p>4. Recognize opportunities to increase awareness and encourage educational and cultural opportunities that promote the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA for Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation citizens, community members, and visitors.</p> | <p>Who: VGG, YG, NYRRC</p> |



A Story About Whitefish Lake

I'm going to speak of Whitefish Lake. When I was ten years old, between Whitefish Lake and LaPierre House – White Creek Mountain – my father lived there, hunting for caribou. Whitefish Lake was also important to people, Van Tat Gwich'in people and Fort McPherson people. The Fort McPherson people come over and go to LaPierre House to trap and hunt in that area. The Van Tat Gwich'in and McPherson people used to hunt together in the LaPierre House area. They dry meat at [White] Fish Lake and get meat prepared. When the warm weather comes, the Fort McPherson people return back to their community and the Van Tat Gwich'in move back to Old Crow or to LaPierre House for the spring break up. When I was 30 years old, that time, Johnson Creek and Whitestone people, when the caribou is at [White] Fish Lake everybody move from there to [White] Fish Lake to dry meat. And this is the way they live [White] Fish Lake. From there, not too far to river. One old man stay there around September through the winter. The reason he goes there is before freeze up, he gets fish. He get lot of fish, [and] caribou [too] and dry it and put it on the cache. Different people from different places come and visit that old man. He gives them fish. That old man's name is Old Baalam. I remember he lived there in 1950. He got there before freeze up and he got a lot of fish. I know Old Crow people went there hunting and he gave fish away to people who had dog teams - even people from Fort McPherson. That's how much [White] Fish Lake was important. Below there is an area called Porcupine Lake [Ch'ijuhdlaii]. They lived also at [White] Fish Lake. Everything around that area was used, that's why people go there every year. Lots of muskrat and beaver there, mink - all this is used. People live there, they live good.

What I talk about before, McPherson people and Old Crow people gather at [White] Fish Lake. What they do, they stay there winter. They get caribou [and] moose, before they split and do what they're doing, they get moose and make feast with it and they join together. They have their supper. After supper, they play Indian games, many different games. My father told me about this. That is what they do for one week. And then people around there, strangers also come and they do their drum dances. 1930, my father told me, first time he said he seen a drum dance, 1930 and he didn't know what was going on. They share their drum music and they join the dancing. In North Yukon all kinds of different games and dancing during holidays. ...That's what old people used to do in our country, old people. So we still carry on what we do today. ...

[White] Fish Lake I'm talking about. In the past, people lived there and they used it. And they lived there many years. There is always caribou there. McPherson people come over the mountain, and Vuntut Gwitchin go up to there and they get some [caribou] together. Berry Creek and LaPierre House, around these areas they dry meat and set traps for marten, for mink, for wolverine [and] otter; what animal lives in the area, ptarmigan [and] rabbits [too]. That's the reason they travel around this area. McPherson people come to Johnson Creek, Whitestone; they also live in that area sometimes. They trap in those areas. Everything they do, they work together. When we live on this land, we look after it.

John Joe Kyikavichik, January 26, 1995
Interviewed by Agnes Charlie

ENVIRONMENT

Chuu/Wetland and Water Resources

Water resources within the the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA are considered to be relatively undisturbed. The conservation of fish, wildlife, and their habitats within the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA depends on the health of the wetland. Throughout the planning process, community members voiced concerns about potential changes to water quality and quantity, and the need for a better understanding of how water moves through the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA.

Community members voiced concerns about impacts on the land from past oil and gas exploration in the area, specifically barrels located at the confluence of Tizya Creek and Ch'oodèenjik (Porcupine River). In 2001, the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs found over 100 empty barrels at the Tizya Creek site and in 2003 Ducks Unlimited Canada discovered more barrels at Ch'ihilii Ch'ik (Whitefish Lake). In 2005, a barrel recovery project was completed and 168 barrels were removed.

The Vuntut Gwitchin Government completed a contaminated sites research and documentation project to record known contaminated sites in VGFN Traditional Territory from 2000 and 2015, the sites documented include, but are not limited to abandoned oil tankers trucks, buildings, oil drums, and other debris from abandoned seismic camps throughout the VGFN Traditional Territory. A number of these sites are located within the boundary of the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA. There is an ongoing need to determine if these sites

are, in fact, contaminated and require clean up and which agency is responsible for this work. Furthermore, there is a need to improve communication on past and future clean up work with community members.

Before future development occurs in areas adjacent to the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA, increased understanding of baseline conditions in the HPA is necessary. This will allow measurement and monitoring of any impacts to the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA due to development. A study was conducted in 2016 to evaluate available water resource information in the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA. Results determined that there was no water resources data available specifically for the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA. Additional studies were suggested to fill the data gaps for hydrology, surface and groundwater quality, meteorology, and aquatic organisms. Examples of beneficial information could include: water isotope studies, wetland and watercourse digitization and watershed delineation, water chemistry sampling, algae/diatom studies, land cover classification, and fisheries studies. There are more details of what future studies could include summarized in the report: *EDI Environmental Dynamics Inc. 2016. Whitefish Wetlands: Water Resources Evaluation. Whitehorse, Yukon.*

The working group discussed potential areas of work that could assist in furthering our understanding of water in the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA, which included:

- potential impacts on water from activities occurring outside the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA boundary (e.g. oil and gas, and mineral exploration);
- water flow through the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA (e.g. sub-surface, surface and deep groundwater);
- changes to the wetland as a whole (e.g. surface water area and vegetation as indicators of change over time, as well as changes due to climate change);
- changes to permafrost (e.g. some ponds or wetlands may drain due to permafrost melting);
- how wetland functions or the changes listed above may influence fish and wildlife populations.

While some of these concepts are addressed in this management plan's recommendations, as well as through environmental assessment, others may be more difficult to quantify.

The impacts of climate change, particularly in northern Yukon include: thawing permafrost, changes in water quality and quantity, changes in temperatures and precipitation trends; and changes in the diversity, health and distribution of wildlife. People travelling through the area are seeing more and more signs of climate change with dramatic slumping of west facing slopes. As the effects of climate on Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA are uncertain, understanding potential impacts and the strategies and tools that enable successful adaptation to these changes are necessary for long term management of this ecologically important area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

5. Consider the objectives and recommendations of this management plan in all appropriate environmental review processes of land and water-based disturbances outside the boundaries that may influence the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA.	Who: VGG, YG, NYRRC
6. Recognize and seek opportunities to coordinate and collaborate on water-related studies or monitoring activities in the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA within existing programs. There are a number of initiatives in the current Yukon Water Strategy and Action Plan that create the opportunity for such collaboration.	Who: VGG, YG, NYRRC
7. Continue to monitor for contaminated sites within the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA. Records should include number of sites, required reclamation work and should identify which other agencies should be involved. Communicate this information to community members.	Who: VGG, YG, NYRRC
8. Complete a climate change risk and vulnerability assessment to further the understanding of biophysical changes that may occur within the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA as a result of climate change, and identify options and opportunities for adaptation.	Who: VGG, YG, NYRRC

Łùk/Fish

In Gwich'in, Ch'ihilii Chìk translates loosely to “where fish come out of the lake” and refers to the whitefish that migrate out of Itilii (Whitefish Lake) at certain times of the year. The term encompasses a much broader concept, as do many Gwich'in words.

The lakes, streams and rivers of the Ch'ihilii Chìk HPA provide important year-round habitat for freshwater fishes. Of particular importance are the overwintering habitats provided by Ch'ihilii Chìk (Whitefish Lake), Tizya Creek and the Ch'oodèenjìk (Porcupine River). In these areas where river flow and groundwater input provides sufficient volumes of oxygenated water for fish winter survival. Historically, the area has been an important location for subsistence fish harvest, with several Van Tat Gwich'in families operating fish traps at Itilii and Tizya Creek (Map 4, Appendix B).

Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation (VGFN) citizens have the right to fish for subsistence purposes within their Traditional Territory. Local residents continue to use the area for fishing, and maintaining this tradition is a central aspect to this plan. Fishing pressure by

licensed resident and non-residents is not of concern at this time. Łùk choo (chinook), shii (chum) and nèhdlii (coho) migrate upriver to spawning areas and pass through the Ch'oodèenjìk (Porcupine River) and Ch'izhìn Njik (Eagle River) in the Ch'ihilii Chìk HPA. Adult salmon are in the these rivers from July to December. Chihshòo (lake and/or broad whitefish) spawn in the lakes of the Ch'ihilii Chìk HPA and stay for a year or two while they grow big enough to migrate. They start to move out of the lake in the spring when the ice thaws. They migrate to non-natal streams, lakes and smaller tributaries to continue rearing until they have reached their full size. They then move back into the lakes of the Ch'ihilii Chìk HPA to spawn in the late fall or early winter.

During the planning process, concerns were brought forward by community members about the effects of outside pressures from development and climate change on the water resources within the Ch'ihilii Chìk HPA and the possible impacts on fish and their habitats.



The Meaning of Ch'ihilii Chìk

Whitefish Lake name is Ch'ihilii Chìk. Ch'ihilii is Whitefish. Lots of Whitefish in that big lake and then there is a creek right to Porcupine Lake (Ch'ijuhdlaii) so the fish go down that creek to Porcupine [Lake]. Ch'ihilii vee lit [means] fish go to river. So if you hear about [Ch'ijuhdlaii], that creek [that comes from Ch'ihilii], right there is where it runs into Porcupine [River].

Alfred Tetlichì, 1995

RECOMMENDATIONS

9. No commercial fishing or fish farming licences shall be issued within the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA.	Who: VGG, YG
10. The cultural importance of the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA fishery should be carefully considered in the planning, assessment and regulation development within the Porcupine watershed.	Who: VGG, YG
11. Recognise opportunities to coordinate work with partners (industry, governments, universities, and others) to further our understanding of over-wintering areas and migration routes for freshwater fish in Ch'ihilii Chik HPA.	Who: VGG, YG

WILDLIFE

Vadzaih/Porcupine Caribou

This section summarizes the values and concerns related to the vadzaih (Porcupine caribou herd) raised and discussed during the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA planning process. However, we recognize these concerns will be addressed through the Porcupine Caribou Management Board (PCMB). The PCMB is an advisory board established under the *Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement (1985)* mandated to communicate information about the herd and to provide recommendations to the agencies responsible for managing the herd. PCMB membership includes federal, territorial, and First Nation governments.

The Porcupine caribou herd is the most significant and culturally important wildlife resource in northern Yukon. The Ch'ihilii Chik HPA sees concentrated use by the Porcupine caribou herd (Map 5, Appendix B). Rutting (fall) activity in the south end of

the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA, with winter activity in the north and south. Adequate winter habitat, with relatively low snow depths and sufficient lichen forage, is particularly important for pregnant cows. This is because they must receive adequate winter nutrition to migrate to their calving grounds, and give birth to and nurse their calves. The seasonal migration corridors are critical habitat for the vadzaih (Porcupine caribou herd). This herd is vital to the Van Tat Gwich'in culture and lifestyle for food and sustenance.

The Native User Communities listed in the *Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement*, have rights to hunt the Porcupine caribou herd for food without a Yukon hunting license. Yukon First Nations who are not recognised as one of the Native User Communities must have written consent from the VGG to hunt

vadzaih (Porcupine caribou) within the VGFN Traditional Territory. Licensed hunters must hunt under the laws of general application under the *Wildlife Act*. Licensed hunters require written consent from the VGG to hunt on VGFN First Nation Settlement Land. For more information

refer to the *Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement and Harvest Management Plan*.

Dinjik/Moose

The Ch'ihilii Chik HPA is valuable year-round moose habitat, with river valleys and wetland complexes that are especially important in spring, summer and early autumn (Map 6, Appendix B). Abundant aquatic, emergent, and terrestrial vegetation in the area provides plentiful forage. River and creek valleys, which feature relatively low snow depths and abundant willow forage serve as important winter habitat.

There is local harvest of moose in the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA. Residents of Old Crow have raised concerns with the amount of harvest pressure on the Ch'oodèenjik (Porcupine River), but no management actions regarding sustainability of harvest are recommended at this time. There is interest from local community members to gain a better understanding of moose populations that frequent the area and, in particular, seasonal movement patterns. Recently, moose seasonal migration and related habitat use was studied in the Van Tat (Old Crow Flats) area, which is considered physically and ecologically similar to the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA. Results of that study suggested that there may be landscape change due to a shift in climate that may affect dinjik (moose) habitat.

Furbearers

The Ch'ihilii Chik HPA has abundant furbearer populations including: tsuk (marten), chihthee (mink), niinjii (lynx), tsèè (beaver), dzan (muskrat), trùh (otter), nèhtrùh (wolverine), zhòh (wolf) and neegoo (fox). Trapping has been, and continues to be, an important activity in this area and the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA is part of the VGFN group trapline. The Ch'ihilii Chik HPA is identified in the Wildlife Key Areas database by the the Government of Yukon as a key area for muskrat. Traditional Knowledge indicates that tsèè (beaver) and niinjii (lynx) are also plentiful across the entire the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA. During the planning process, the community voiced concerns about tsèè (beaver) overpopulation and their potentially negative impacts on the wetland.

Zhòh (wolves) are considered an integral part of the ecosystem. Much work has been done to study zhòh (wolves) in Yukon. The *Yukon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan (2012)* provides a territory-wide strategy for managing wolves. These management objectives are appropriate in the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA as well.



How Ch’ihilii Was Used by Multiple Gwich’in Communities for Caribou, Moose, Fish, and Beaver

I don’t trap around [Ch’ihilii Chik] but I hunt there lots of times. That’s our caribou area. So we always come down and hunt around there for caribou. That’s pretty good country there, you know. There’s a few beaver there all winter. We trap around Johnson Creek, up around Eagle Plains across the south. After breakup we come down and we stop to hunt beaver. So we just come down here and there and hunt beaver. That’s good beaver country, that Whitefish Lake. That’s a good lake around there ... for beaver and muskrat. Not only us, sometimes some people from Old Crow go up there and hunt beaver. Everybody used that area.

Alfred Charlie, January 19, 1995
Interviewed by Agnes Charlie and Colin Bearsto

Shoh/Bears

Traditional Knowledge shows that the Ch’ihilii Chik HPA, and the Ch’oodènjik (Porcupine River) valley provide regionally significant habitat for shoh (bears) (Map 7, Appendix B). Shih (Grizzly bears) use the area mainly in spring and fall. Currently there are no concerns about the health of local shoh (bear) populations within the Ch’ihilii Chik HPA. There is interest from local community members to gain a better understanding of how shoh (bears) in the Ch’ihilii Chik HPA may be influenced by impacts in other areas such as the Dempster Highway and Ni’inlii Njik (Fishing Branch River). In 2012, when considering shih (grizzly bears) across all of Canada, the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife Canada designated shih (grizzly bears) as “Special Concern”. Shih (grizzly bears) are sensitive to human disturbance and subject to high mortality risk in developed areas. In Yukon, shih (grizzly bears) are considered Vulnerable (S3). The Government of Yukon and the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board are developing a Yukon Grizzly Bear Conservation and Management Plan that will consider all aspects of shih (grizzly bear) management and will be used to guide decisions related to shih (grizzly bear) management in the territory.

Dzhii/Birds

The Ch’ihilii Chik HPA provides an important stopover on the spring waterfowl migration (Map 8, Appendix B). In early spring, before wetlands have thawed, migrating waterfowl congregate in sections of the Ch’oodènjik (Porcupine River) in the Ch’ihilii Chik HPA, where currents create areas of open water. Once the ice melts, dzhii (birds) either move into nearby wetlands to breed, or they continue migrating to breeding sites in Van Tat (Old Crow Flats).

Thousands of waterfowl — over twenty different species — use shallow lakes and ponds of Ch’ihilii Chik for staging, feeding, nesting and moulting throughout the spring, summer and autumn. Ducks Unlimited Canada has conducted studies within and near the Ch’ihilii Chik HPA including; *Waterbird Reconnaissance Survey (2004)*, *Porcupine River Spring Staging Surveys (2005)*, *Wetland and Waterfowl Values of the Lower Bell River (2010)*, and a *Waterfowl Values of the Whitefish Wetlands (2010)*. Surveys have recorded daily use of the area by 6,000 individual waterfowl. The dense aquatic

vegetation typical of the shallow waterbodies provides important food for migrating and breeding dats'an (ducks), kheh (geese), daazraii (swans) and other waterbirds. Government of Yukon in conjunction with the Canadian Wildlife Service, Ducks Unlimited Canada, and the wetlands technical committee have identified this area as a key area for dats'an (ducks), kheh (geese) and daazraii (swans) during their moulting and breeding periods.

Van Tat Gwich'in harvest waterfowl as part of a subsistence diet; historical and current information on harvest of waterfowl within the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA is limited.

The Ch'ihilii Chik HPA has been identified as a key nesting area for raptors (Map 8, Appendix B). Breeding by two federally-listed species at risk, Short-eared Owls (Special Concern) and Ch'ichèè (Peregrine Falcons) (Special Concern) has been documented within this area. Another federally-listed bird, the Tsìlch'ùu (Rusty Blackbird) (Special Concern) is locally abundant in the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA. Gyrfalcon, listed as "Specially Protected" under the Yukon Wildlife Act, have also been observed breeding in the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA.



Ch'ihilii Chik: small black bird called Tsìlch'ùu
(Copyright VGFN_2009_VG2009-04-289)

Biodiversity – Species at Risk

Specific information on federally-listed species at risk is minimal as there has been no inventory work completed specific to the Ch’ihilii Chik HPA. There is information on use of the Ch’izhìn Njik (Eagle River) portion of the Ch’ihilii Chik HPA by Ch’ichèe (Peregrine Falcon) (Special Concern), Tsilch’ùu (Rusty Blackbirds) (Special Concern), and Short-eared Owls (Special Concern). There has been a recorded finding of a freshwater mussel known as the Yukon floater on the west side of the Porcupine River, and an orchid (*Malaxia paludosa*) just southeast of the HPA. Other species at risk found within the Eagle Plain ecoregion include the Olive-sided Flycatcher (Threatened), shih (grizzly bear) (Special Concern), nèhrùh

(wolverine) (Special Concern), and dolly varden (Special Concern). There are also ten species of global conservation concern in the ecoregion; six nanùht’ee (moths/ butterflies), three vascular plants.

Other species at risk found regionally in the north Yukon include Horned Grebes (Special Concern), Red-necked Phalarope (Special Concern), and Bank Swallow (Threatened). Although undocumented, it is likely these species are present in the Ch’ihilii Chik HPA.

RECOMMENDATIONS	
12. Recognize opportunities to coordinate work with partners (industry, governments, universities, and others) to further our understanding of moose movement patterns and habitat use in the Ch’ihilii Chik HPA.	Who: VGG, NYRRC, YG
13. Explore opportunities to work within existing trapper incentive programs and traditional pursuits programs to encourage trapping and subsistence harvest within the Ch’ihilii Chik HPA.	Who: VGG, NYRRC, YG
14. Maintain an accurate and current record of subsistence harvest of all wildlife species within the Ch’ihilii Chik HPA.	Who: VGG, NYRRC, YG
15. Encourage the monitoring of waterfowl and other bird populations by Environment and Climate Change Canada and Ducks Unlimited Canada, so that population changes can be detected and addressed if concerns arise.	Who: VGG, NYRRC, YG, with ECCC-CWS
16. Recognize opportunities to coordinate work with partners (industry, governments, universities, and others) to collect inventory information on species at risk within the Ch’ihilii Chik HPA. The Yukon Conservation Data Centre is a valuable tool for this coordination.	Who: VGG, NYRRC, YG, with ECCC-CWS

RENEWABLE RESOURCES

Dachan/Forestry and Kò'/Wildfire Management

The majority of fuel wood and forest harvesting for residents of Old Crow occurs within a 20 to 30 kilometre radius of the community in the winter. During summer, locations as far upstream as the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA are accessed by boat and logs are floated down to Old Crow. Timber within the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA is limited to small diameter trees and is restricted to riparian sites. The Ch'ihilii Chik HPA is remote and has limited merchantable wood in the area so it is unlikely that commercial harvesting would be practical. It is expected that personal use of forest resources within the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA will continue in

accordance with applicable forest management practices in the area.

Wildfires are monitored by the Wildland Fire Management Branch, Government of Yukon. A zoning system for response to fires is in place. The Ch'ihilii Chik HPA is in the Wilderness Zone, meaning that fire will be monitored but action to suppress the fires may only take place to protect valuable assets such as camps and cabins.

RECOMMENDATIONS

17. Future development of a forest resources management plan for Settlement Land and Yukon public lands within the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Traditional Territory will recognize the objectives of this management plan.

Who: VGG, NYRRC, YG

18. The Vuntut Gwitchin Government will continue to manage forest resources on Settlement Land in the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA on a case by case basis, recognizing the objectives of this management plan.

Who: VGG

NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCES

Oil and Gas Resources

The North Yukon contains a large portion of Yukon's total estimated natural oil and gas potential, specifically in the Eagle Plain Basin. As described in the *North Yukon Planning Region Resource Assessment Report (2007)*, most of the energy sector activity anticipated in this region would be focused in the southern portion of the Eagle Plain oil and gas basin south of the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA.

The potential impacts associated with oil and gas activities in the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA are considered incompatible with the objectives of this management plan. This is consistent with the management direction provided by the North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan, which identified the Ch'ihilii Chik area as a proposed protected area where oil and gas development should be prohibited.

Approximately twenty seismic survey lines, cut prior to 1975, are located within the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA. The lines have re-vegetated but are still visible from the air, likely due to the methods used at the time which resulted in damage to the soil layer. There are two abandoned dry wells (J-70 and I-05) within the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA. Both wells were inspected in 2010 and were shown to be overgrown and clean with no visible concerns.

RECOMMENDATIONS

19. The Vuntut Gwitchin Government will permanently prohibit surface and subsurface entry for oil and gas exploration and extraction on VGFN Category A Settlement Land portions of the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA. The objectives and recommendations of this management plan should be considered in all appropriate review processes of land and water based disturbances outside the boundaries that may influence the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA.

Who: VGG

20. The Government of Yukon will permanently prohibit the disposition of oil and gas rights on Yukon public land located within the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA. The objectives and recommendations of this management plan should be considered in all appropriate review processes of land and water based disturbances outside the boundaries that may influence the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA. Such activities could include those that have a high risk of altering existing hydrology, or negatively impacting wetland function.

Who: YG



Ch'ihilii Chik, island, Irwin Linklater
 (© VGFN 2009-04-32)

Mineral Resources

Mineral assessments were conducted to create a mineral deposit model of North Yukon for the North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan mineral assessments measure areas that may have similar geological characteristics containing economically viable mineral resources. This assessment indicated that the Ch'ihilii Chik Habitat HPA has low mineral potential based on the regional geology.

There are no mining claims (active, pending, or expired) within the boundary of the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA. However, there are a few groups of

expired quartz mining claims located approximately 70 kilometers northwest and 50 kilometers southeast (near the Dempster Highway) of the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA boundary.

The potential impacts of mineral exploration and development activities are not compatible with the objectives of this management plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

21. The Vuntut Gwitchin Government will permanently prohibit surface and subsurface entry for mineral exploration and extraction on VGFN Category A Settlement Land portions of the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA.

Who: VGG

22. The Government of Yukon will permanently prohibit surface and subsurface entry for mineral exploration and extraction on Yukon public land portions of the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA.

Who: YG

LAND USE

Land Dispositions and Land Use Activities

Historically there have been no land dispositions in the Ch’ihilii Chìk HPA and there are no private land parcels. Vuntut Gwitchin Government is responsible for managing surface and sub-surface land use activities and land dispositions on Category A Settlement Land. The *Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act* guides how land use activities are permitted on Yukon public land.

Commercial land use involves any connection with trade, business, professional manufacture or other venture for profit. Industrial land use describes a light or heavy

use related to construction, forestry, mining, commercial fishing, agriculture, quarrying transportation or other industrial activity. The potential impacts associated with commercial and industrial land use in the Ch’ihilii Chìk HPA are considered incompatible with the objectives of this management plan. There is support for the VGG’s future plans to build new cabins within the Ch’ihilii Chìk HPA for use by the community for cultural activities and research purposes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

23. The Vuntut Gwitchin Government will permanently prohibit the disposal of land for industrial and commercial use on Vuntut Gwitchin Settlement Land within the Ch’ihilii Chìk HPA. Commercial activities associated with trapping and tourism may be considered on a case by case basis and will align with the objectives and recommendations of this management plan. Non-industrial and non-commercial land use on Settlement Land will be regulated through Vuntut Gwitchin Government.

Who: VGG

24. The Government of Yukon will permanently prohibit the disposal of land for industrial and commercial use on Yukon public land within the Ch’ihilii Chìk HPA. Commercial activities associated with trapping and tourism may be considered on a case by case basis and will align with the objectives and recommendations of this management plan. Non-industrial and non-commercial land use on Yukon public land will be regulated through Government of Yukon.

Who: YG

25. Land tenure will not be granted for the following activities; gravel extraction, agriculture, or grazing leases. Rural and recreational residences (cabins) will be jointly considered by VGG and YG on a case-by-case basis and will align with the objectives and recommendations of the management plan.

Who: YG & VGG

Access

The Ch'ihilii Chik HPA is remote and access is currently restricted to winter trails (snow machine and dog teams) and by river (motor boat, canoe) in the summer months. The area is also accessible by float plane or helicopter.

When the winter road to Old Crow is maintained, it runs adjacent to the southern boundary of the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA. This road is built when needed and when weather conditions permit it considering the community of Old Crow's needs for the shipment of goods for larger-scale projects. The road was last constructed in 2004 and 2014; it is expected a winter road will be maintained as often as every three years in the future.

Vuntut Gwitchin Government completed a project in 2014 to map traditional trails and routes. A network of traditional trails are located in the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA, with segments heading east towards the Richardson Mountains, heading southwest

towards Whitestone Village, connecting to a trail heading northwest to Old Crow. A winter trail between Fort McPherson and Old Crow does not overlap the HPA, however people may occasionally still use the trail to access the HPA (Map 3, Appendix B).

The *Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act* applies to access or surface land use activities on Yukon public land. Any new access routes wider than 1.5 m are subject to a land use permit through the Land Regulation and are assessed through the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-Economic Assessment Act* process. The Vuntut Gwitchin Government administers access on VGFN Settlement Land, subject to the access provisions of the VGFN Final Agreement.

Development of new access routes or the levels of current access is not a concern at this time.

RECOMMENDATIONS	
26. Monitor use of existing trails and other means of access and if necessary develop guidelines for access into the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA.	Who: VGG, NYRRC, YG
27. Maintain and record traditional routes within the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA.	Who: VGG
28. Consider the objectives and recommendations of this management plan when evaluating and permitting proposed construction of the Old Crow Winter road and any new access routes.	Who: VGG, NYRRC, YG

PEOPLE

Recreation and Tourism

People travelling on the Ch'izh'n Njik (Eagle River), Chiiveenjik (Bell River), and Ch'oodèenjik (Porcupine River) and camping along their shores make up the majority of summer tourism activity within the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA. This typically occurs in the earlier part of the summer when water levels are higher. In the winter, snowmobilers and dog mushers travel in the area.

There are currently no commercial tourism ventures within the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA. Possible tourism ventures in the future could include boat tours, wildlife viewing and dog mushing. Tourism opportunities will need to be carefully considered to ensure they do not impact the traditional use and ecological values of the area and respect the objectives of this management plan.

An important aspect to any tourism venture involving the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA would be the incorporation of education about First Nation culture and traditional practices. Any approved tourism venture should be beneficial to the people of Old Crow, and shall be in accordance with the provisions of the VGFN Final Agreement.

Unmanaged tourism and recreation could affect wildlife behaviour and habitats, environmental values and traditional uses. It is important that ways to effectively manage and control visitor use be in place before increasing tourism opportunities. Public awareness of the area and cooperation from tourism operators can help minimize recreation and tourism effects at this time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

29. Tourism developments within the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA are to benefit the community of Old Crow, rely on traditional knowledge, and respect the traditional and cultural uses and values of the area.

Who: VGG, NYRRC, YG

30. Consider the objectives and recommendations of this management plan when evaluating and permitting any tourism operation in the area.

Who: VGG, NYRRC, YG

Research and Public Awareness

The Vuntut Gwitchin Government conducted a cultural technology project in the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA between 2007 and 2011. This project was completed with the aim of providing a distinctive Gwich'in perspective by drawing on Van Tat Gwich'in oral history.

The Vuntut Gwitchin Government has guidelines for visitors or researchers on VGFN Settlement Land and administers access on Settlement Land. A Yukon Scientist and Explorers Act permit is required for researchers on Yukon public land. Researchers are encouraged to meet with Old Crow residents prior to conducting any research within the VGFN Traditional Territory and research results must be shared with the Vuntut Gwitchin Government and local community members

once completed. All organizations conducting research within the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA will be encouraged to employ and/or mentor community members as a way to build capacity and skills in the community.

The Ch'ihilii Chik HPA should be promoted as an area to learn about traditional use and cultural activities for VGFN citizens, local residents and visitors; this may be done through initiatives already in place by the Chief Zzeh Gittlit School, Vuntut Gwitchin Government, or the North Yukon Renewable Resources Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS

31. All research or projects conducted within the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA will be coordinated by the parties. Research results must be shared and made available to the Vuntut Gwitchin Government and local community members. Information will be provided in a format that is compatible with other data used by the Vuntut Gwitchin Government.
32. Identify a process for all parties to review proposals for research and monitoring and results from such studies completed within the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA.

Who: VGG, NYRRC, YG

Who: VGG, NYRRC, YG

NEXT STEPS

Plan Approval

This management plan requires approval by the Parties (Vuntut Gwitchin Government and the Government of Yukon). The Parties may develop co-operative ways to implement and monitor the recommendations in this management plan.

Plan Review

The Parties will jointly review this management plan and its implementation no later than five years after its initial approval. Thereafter, the need for reviews will be considered every five years, with joint reviews performed at least every ten years. There is also opportunity to have this management plan reviewed in coordination with the Dàadzàii Vàn Park Management Committee once established.

Plan Implementation

By approving this management plan, the Parties commit to management plan implementation. In developing recommendations, the working group has tried to ensure there is reasonable integration with existing programs and activities of the Parties.

The management planning process was intended to lead to an integrated management regime for the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA. The area will be co-managed by the

Parties. As per the VGFN Final Agreement, laws of general application will continue to apply to VGFN Settlement Land until such laws are replaced by laws enacted by the Vuntut Gwitchin Government. It is anticipated that the Vuntut Gwitchin Government will have a Lands and Resources Act in place by the date of the first review of this management plan.

In order to implement plan recommendations, adequate funding sources need to be identified by the Parties. The working group acknowledges that resources required for implementation are allocated annually based on management priorities of the Parties. When appropriate, managers of the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA will coordinate management decisions with a Dàadzàii Vàn Territorial Park Management Committee.

Local participation and employment opportunities in all fieldwork, off-site interpretation and education is considered important to the success of the implementation of this management plan. These opportunities should be considered by the Parties.

Through implementation, this management plan is intended to maintain an intact ecosystem, including healthy wildlife populations, for the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA. It should encourage local use of the area, and provide clarity and certainty for land users in the area.



Patterned ground/marsh by Ch'ihillii Chik between Whitefish Lake and Bell River
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APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A: WORKING GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE

Ch'ihilii Chik (Whitefish Lakes Wetland) Habitat Protection Area Management Planning – Terms of Reference

1.0 Purpose

The Purpose of this Terms of Reference is to identify the background related to the establishment of Whitefish Wetlands as a Habitat Protection Area (HPA) and describe the structure and process that will be used to undertake management planning for the area.

2.0 Background and Rationale

The North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan (NYRLUP) was approved by Yukon government (YG) and the Vuntut Gwitchin Government (VGG) in 2009. In section 4.2.1 of the NYRLUP the Parties (YG and VGG) recommended that Whitefish Wetlands (Unit 8A) should be designated as a Protected Area category. The area includes the central portion of Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation (VGFN) Settlement Land R-02A as well as a parcel of Yukon Crown Land (Figure 1). VGFN identified that R-02A was selected for conservation purposes with the intent to protect the central Whitefish Lake, the surrounding wetland, and the waters flowing into it.

The Parties agreed to proceed with creating a management plan for the area as a Habitat Protection Area (HPA) under the Yukon government's *Wildlife Act*. The *Wildlife Act* provides the Yukon government with the mandate and authority to create Habitat Protection Areas. Specifically, Section 187 allows for the designation of an area as an HPA where YG is of the opinion it is necessary to do so because of the sensitivity to disturbance, the likelihood of disturbance and the importance of the area as habitat for any species, population or type of wildlife.

The management planning process is intended to lead to an integrated management regime for Whitefish Wetlands. The planning process will allow for the area to be managed collaboratively by YG and VGG including the implementation of their respective legislation. As per the VGFN Self-Government Agreement, laws of General Application will continue to apply to VGFN Settlement Land until such laws are made inoperative by laws enacted by VGFN. It is anticipated that VGG will have a *Lands Act* in place by the date of the first review of the management plan. If this is the case, the Settlement Land portion of the Whitefish Wetlands would be amended to become a VGG designation. It is noted that VGG would intend to create a special designation for the Settlement

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Lands that reflect the Approved Management Plan. The YG portion would remain as a HPA.

3.0 Boundaries

The boundaries of the Whitefish Wetlands area are shown on the attached map (Figure 1).

The Working Group will limit its management plan recommendations to this area, while recognizing it may need to consider factors beyond the boundary that may affect the Whitefish Wetlands HPA.

4.0 Working Group

A Working Group will be established to prepare a management plan for the Whitefish Wetlands HPA. The Working Group will be comprised of five members, two appointed by YG, two appointed by VGG and one appointed by the North Yukon Renewable Resources Council (NYRRC).

The Working Group will develop operating procedures as may be necessary.

5.0 Management Objectives

The management objectives for the Whitefish Wetlands HPA are:

1. To conserve important fish and wildlife habitat in the area for the benefit of all Yukon residents;
2. To recognize the traditional, current and future uses of the area by Vuntut Gwitchin citizens and other residents of Old Crow;
3. To preserve and carefully consider water quality and quantity in Whitefish Wetlands for aquatic and terrestrial health and ecosystem function.
4. To protect the fish and wildlife populations and their habitats from activities which are likely to reduce the area's capability to support fish and wildlife;
5. To encourage public awareness and appreciation of the natural resources of the area; and
6. To allow for other activities which are compatible with these objectives and the management plan.

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6.0 Preparation of the Management Plan

The Working Group shall:

1. Prepare a work plan with identified timelines and budget requirements for the management planning process, for review and approval by the respective planning partners (YG, VGG, NYRRC);
2. Prepare a management plan that considers available traditional, local and scientific knowledge, and;
3. Include a process for public review and input, which for greater clarity will include outreach with Vuntut Gwitchin citizens and other residents of Old Crow.

The management plan will be guided by the above management objectives (See Section 5.0). In preparing the Recommended Management Plan, the Working Group shall consider recommendations pertaining to:

1. Fish and Wildlife management and protection;
2. Habitat management and protection;
3. Strengthening the understanding of hydrological systems within the wetland to assist with management decisions.
4. The need for essential baseline data of fish and wildlife, fish and wildlife habitats and other resources in the area to assist with management decisions.
5. Harvesting in the area by VGFN citizens and others;
6. Traditional and current uses of the area;
7. Other potential land, water or resource uses in the area;
8. Measures to enhance public awareness and appreciation;
9. Permitting or other methods of regulating activities and land uses in the area in accordance with the management plan and current legislation;
10. An initial implementation plan and subsequent review process.

APPENDIX A: WORKING GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE

7.0 Roles and Responsibilities

The Parties and NYRRC are responsible for the costs incurred by their respective members of the Working Group.

The Parties and the NYRRC will make available all necessary information to support the management planning process.

The Working Group will be responsible for:

1. Making best efforts to operate on a consensus basis;
2. Bringing forward the respective issues of their Parties or NYRRC to the Working Group and represent their Parties;
3. Communicate and coordinate matters that arise from the Working Group back to their respective Party or the NYRRC.

The Department of Environment (ENV) will provide the services of a Fish and Wildlife Planner to coordinate the planning. ENV will also cover the administrative costs of public meetings and all printing costs of the Approved Management Plan and its drafts.

8.0 Management Plan Approval

The Working Group will make best efforts to recommend a management plan to the Parties within 18 months from the sign off of the Terms of Reference. In this regard, the Working Group members will seek feedback and preliminary approval-in-principle from their respective parties for the plan components and any other issues that require further review.

Where the Working Group cannot resolve any outstanding provisions or disagreements the matter shall be referred to senior officials or principals of the parties. Upon final receipt of the recommended management plan from the Working Group, VGG and YG will each decide whether to approve the management plan.

When a recommended management plan is accepted by VGG and YG, the Plan will become the “Approved Management Plan”.

APPENDIX A: WORKING GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE

9.0 Implementation of the Approved Management Plan

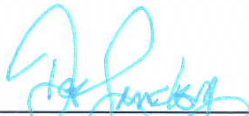
The Parties will each manage their lands within the Whitefish Wetlands HPA in accordance with the Approved Management Plan (See Section 8.0) and their respective mandates.

The management plan will identify a date or period when the next review of the plan contents will occur collaboratively by the Parties.

Any changes to the management plan shall first be approved by VGG and YG.

10.0 Other

Nothing in these Terms of Reference shall create, affect, define, interpret, or apply any roles, responsibilities, rights or interests under the First Nation of Vuntut Gwitchin Final or Self-Government agreements or create any legally binding commitments or obligations on the planning participants.




Director, Fish & Wildlife
Environment Yukon

Director, Natural Resources
Vuntut Gwitchin Government

And

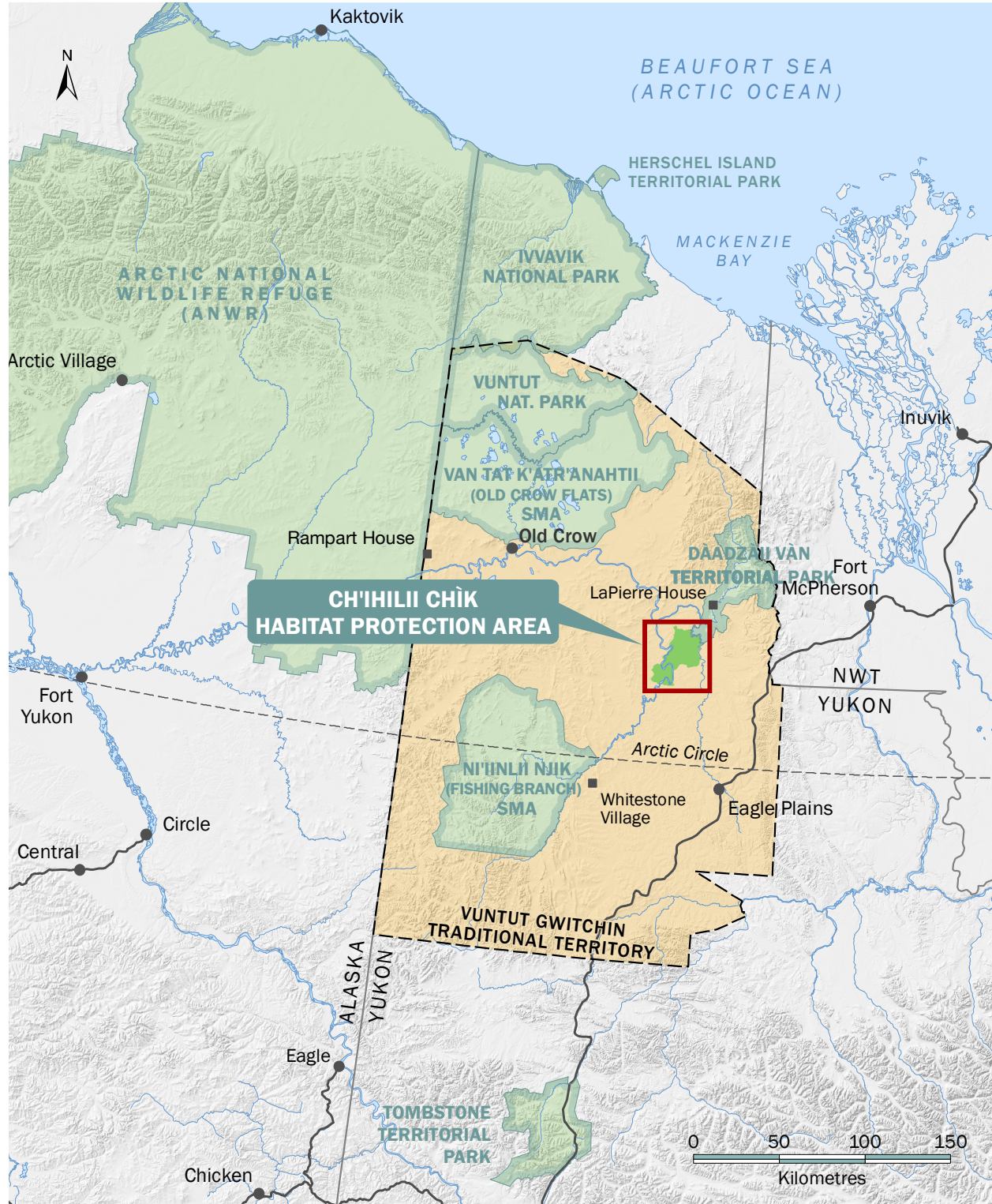
Acknowledged by:



Chair, North Yukon Renewable Resources Council

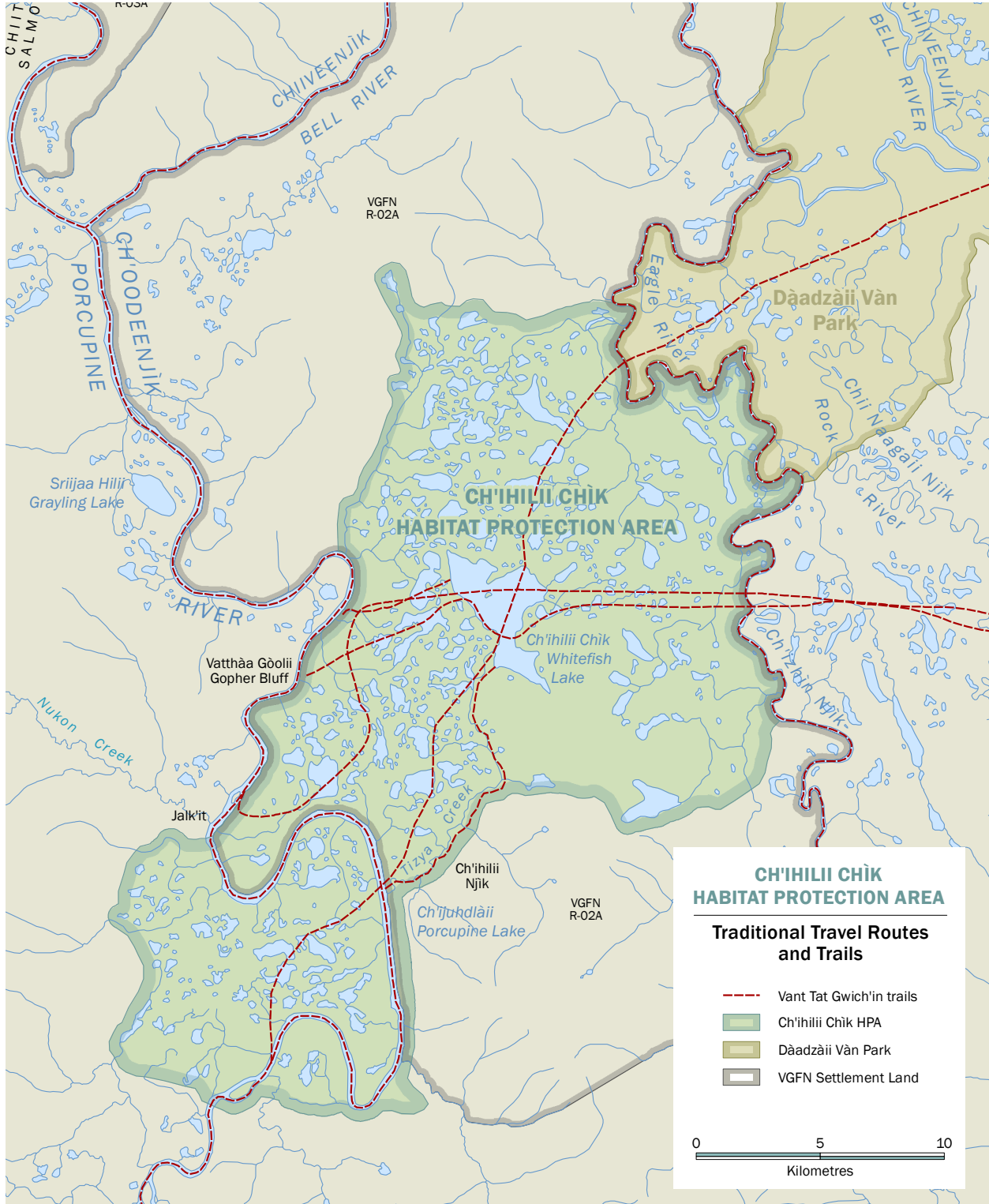
APPENDIX B: MAPS

Map 2 – Ch’ihilii Chìk Habitat Protection Area within the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Traditional Territory



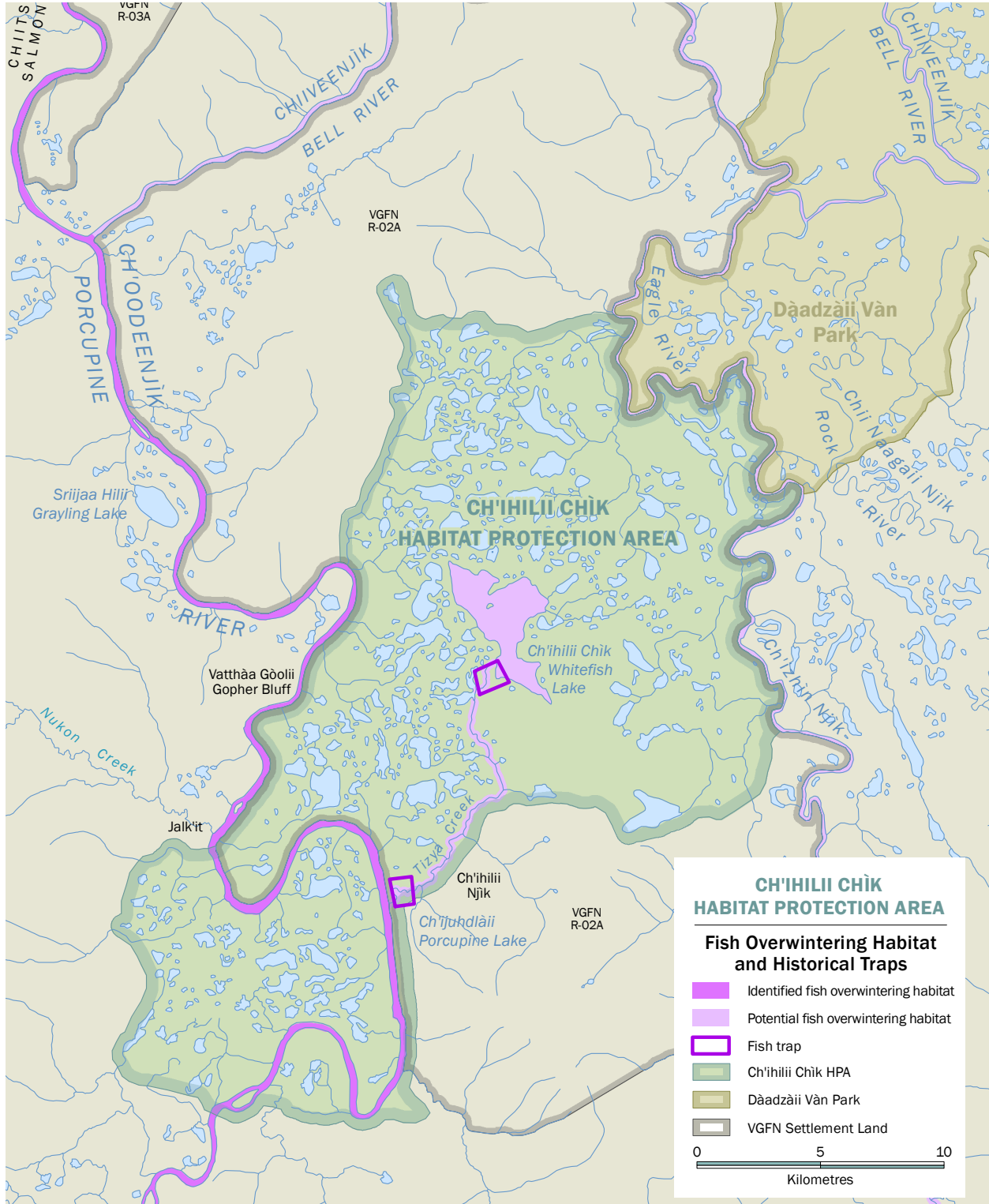
APPENDIX B: MAPS

Map 3 – Ch’ihilii Chìk Habitat Protection Area: Van Tat Gwich’in Trails



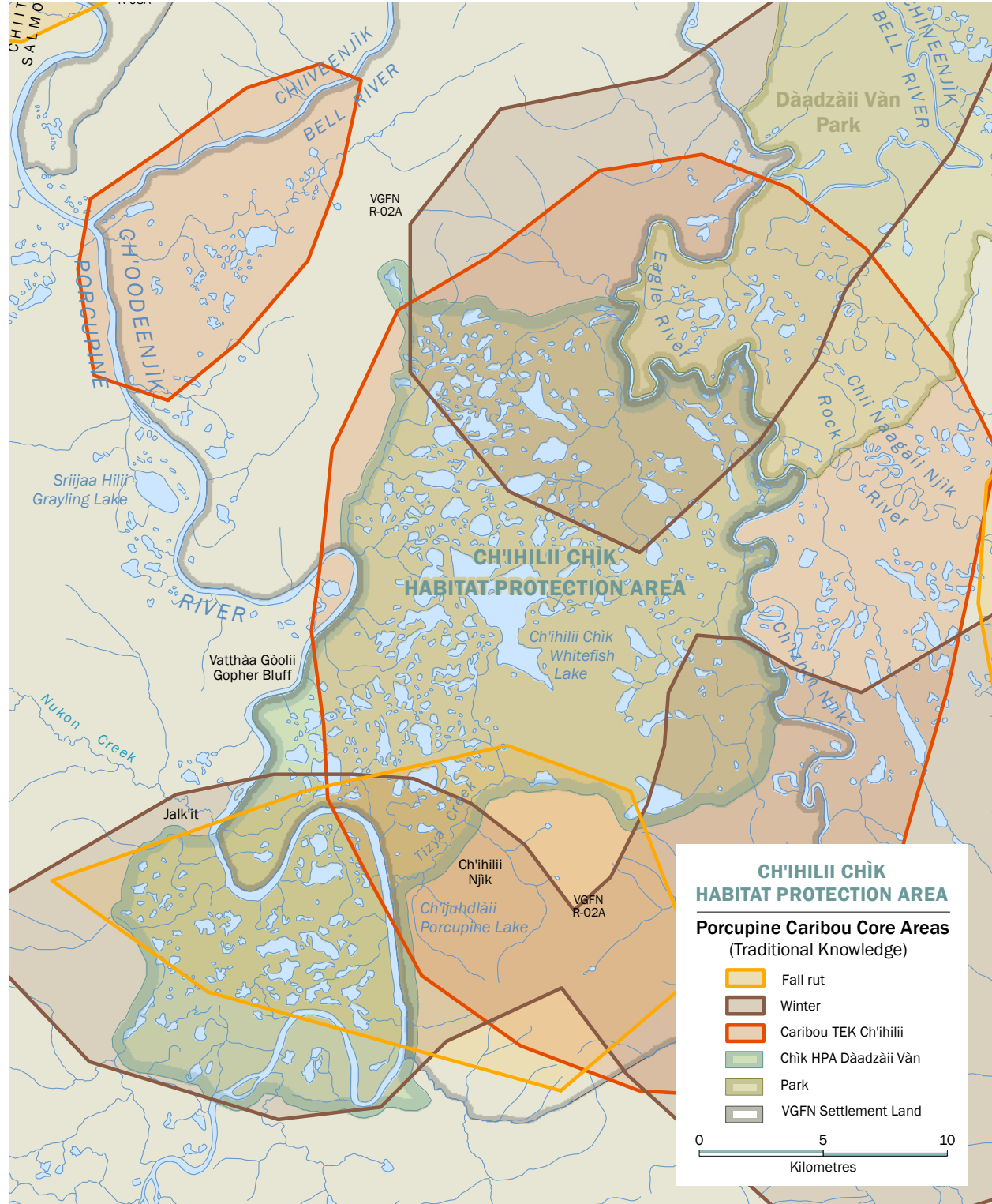
APPENDIX B: MAPS

Map 4 – Ch’ihilii Chìk Habitat Protection Area: Fish Overwintering Habitat and Historical Traps



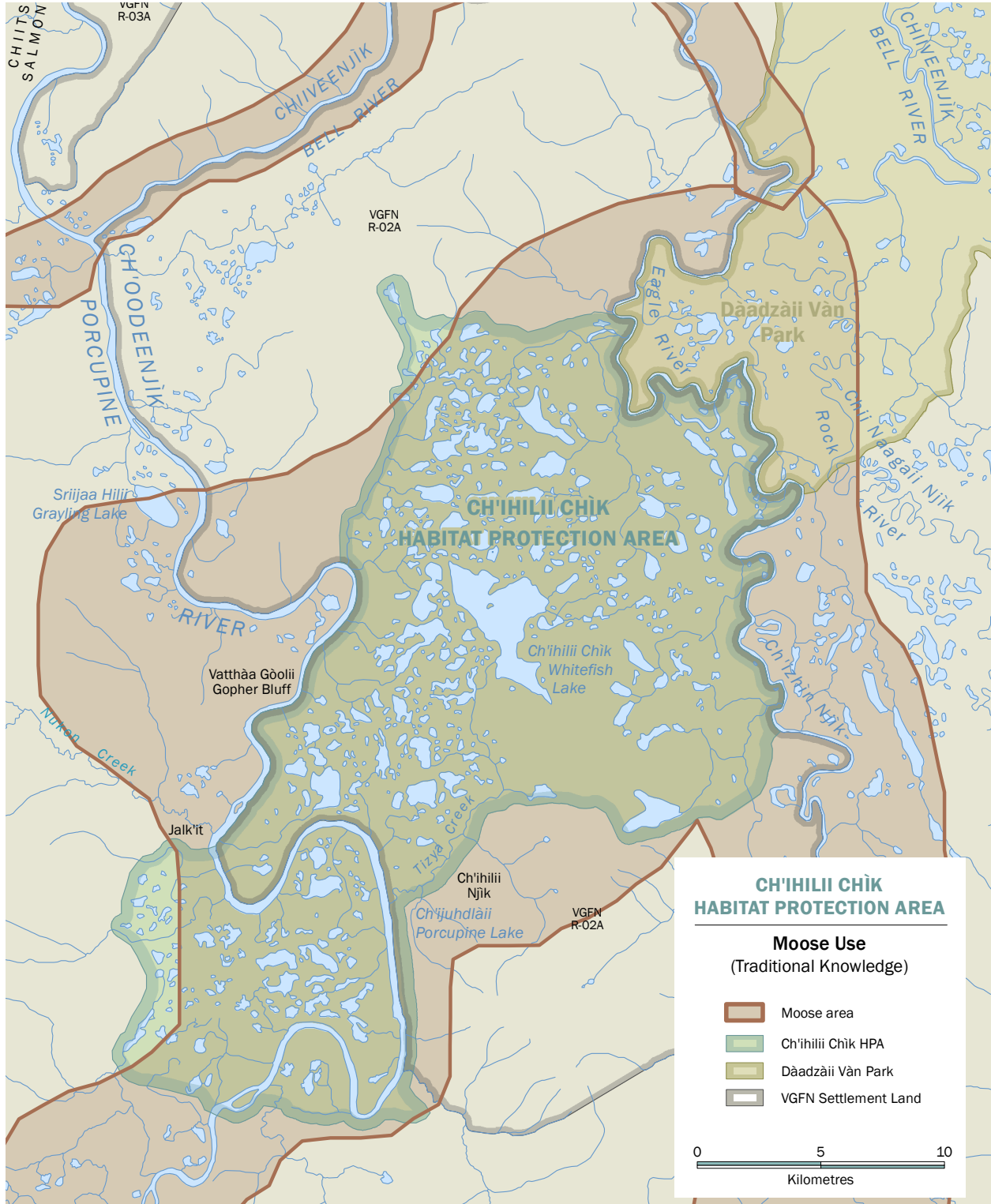
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Map 5 – Ch’ihilii Chìk Habitat Protection Area: Porcupine Caribou Core Areas (Traditional Knowledge)



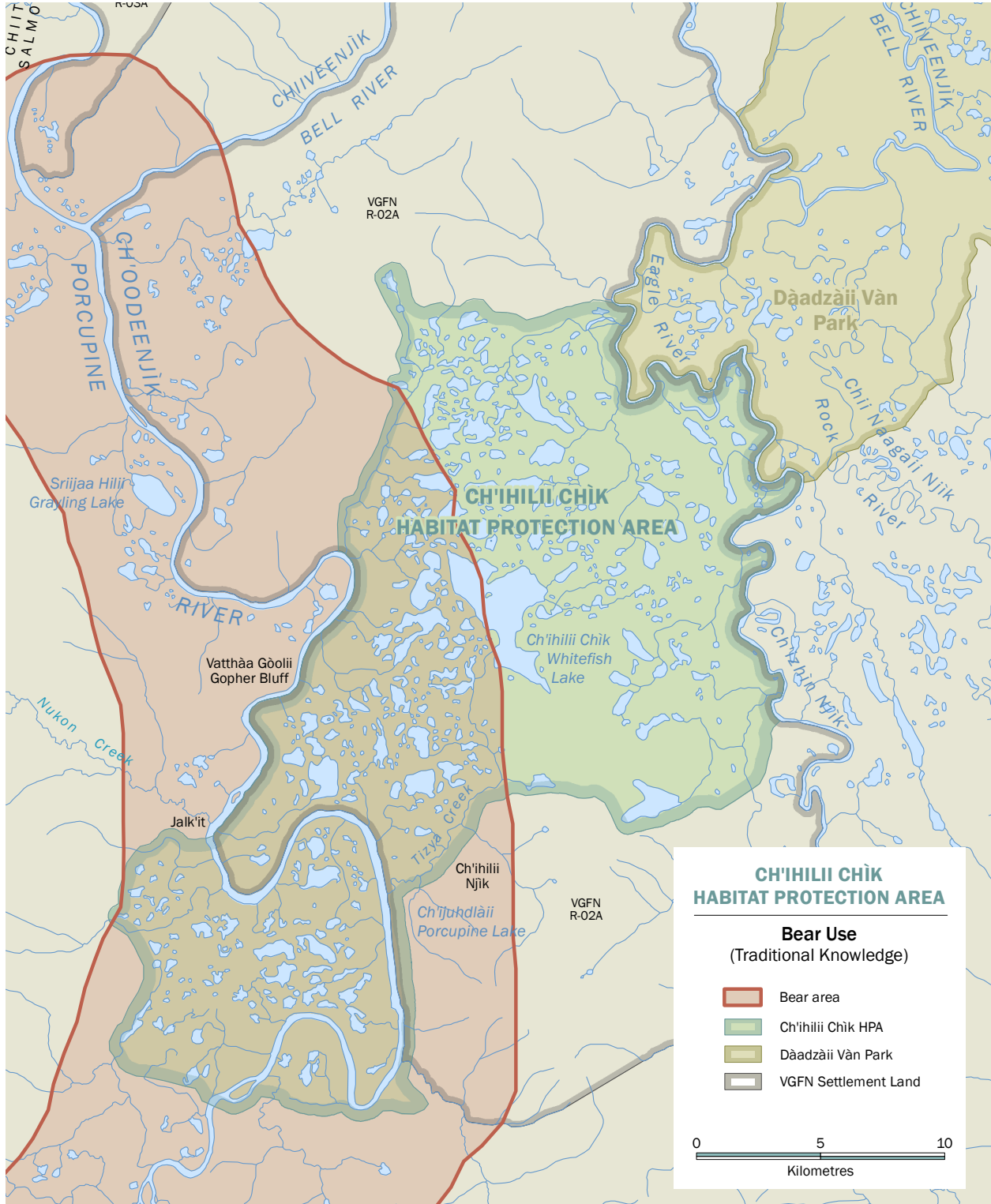
APPENDIX B: MAPS

Map 6 - Ch'ihilii Chik Habitat Protection Area: Moose Use (Traditional Knowledge)



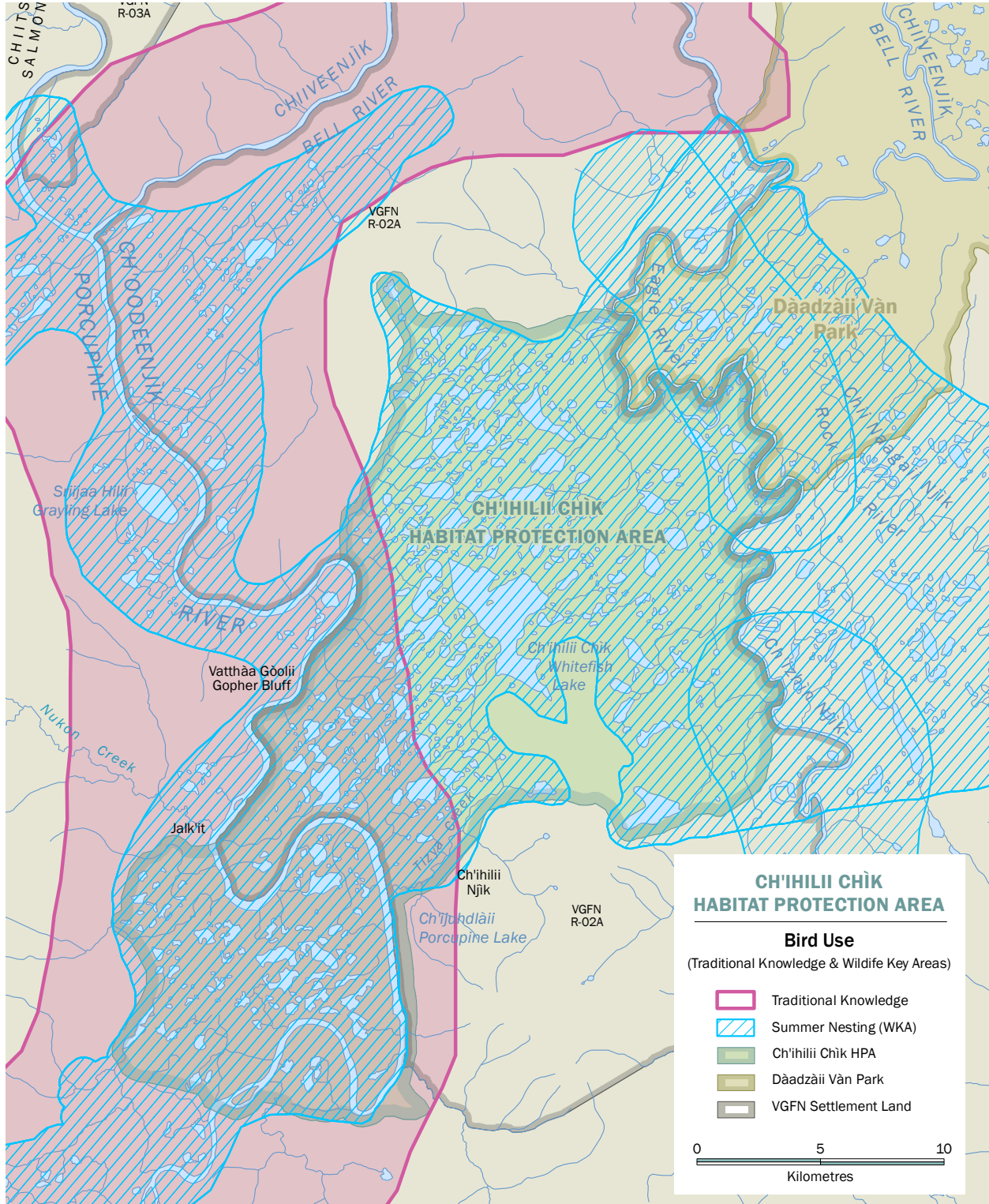
APPENDIX B: MAPS

Map 7 – Ch’ihilii Chìk Habitat Protection Area: Bear Use (Traditional Knowledge)



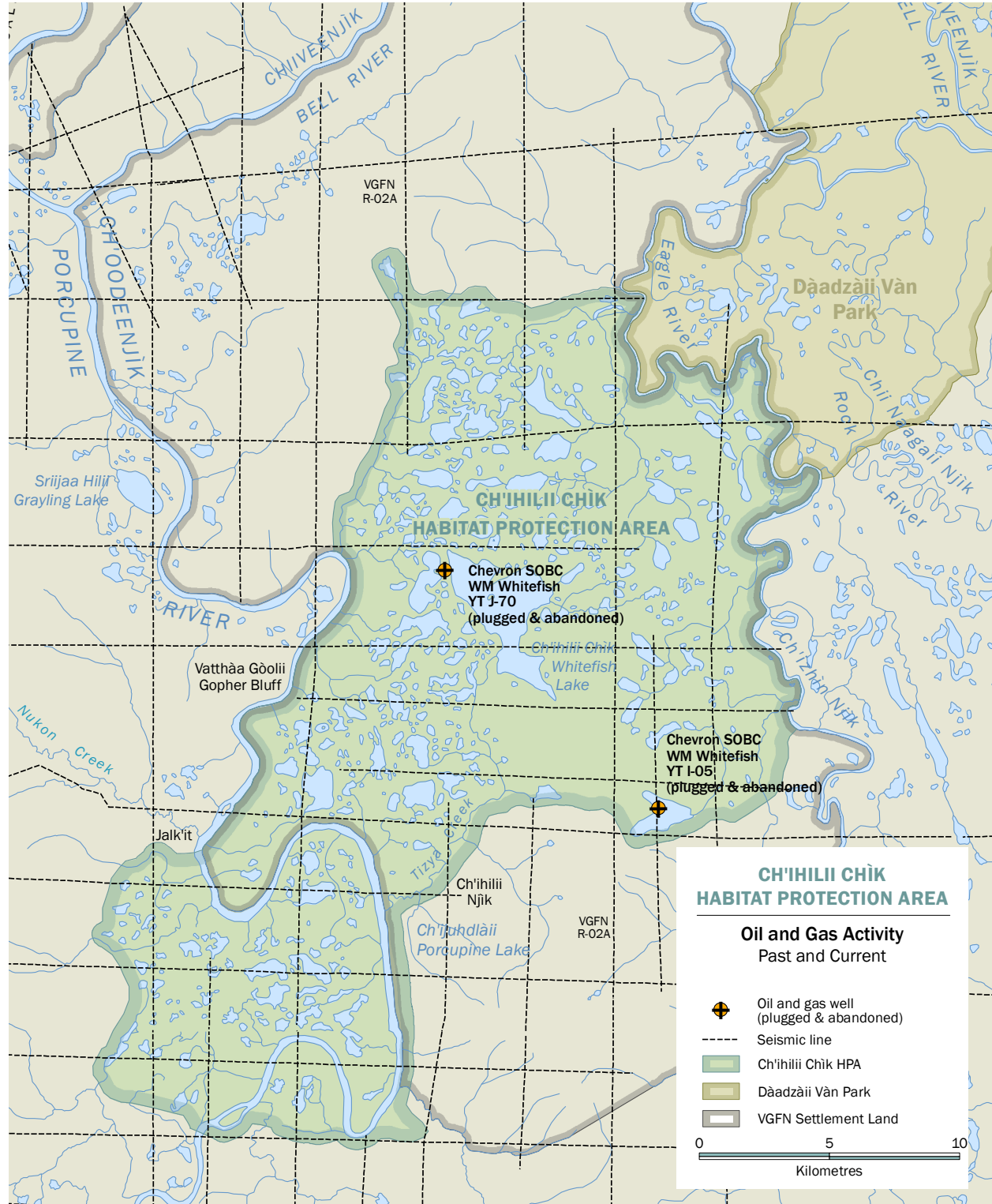
APPENDIX B: MAPS

Map 8 – Ch’ihilii Chik Habitat Protection Area: Bird Use (Traditional Knowledge and Wildlife Key Area Data)



APPENDIX B: MAPS

Map 9 – Ch’ihilii Chìk Habitat Protection Area: Oil and Gas Activity (Past and Current)



APPENDIX C: DETAILED LIST OF WORKING GROUP MEETINGS

Dates of Meeting	Topics Covered	Working Group Members Present and Attendees
March 21, 2013 Working Group Meeting, Whitehorse	Establishing the working group, budgets, and work planning	William Josie, VGG Bruce McLean, YG Ella LeGresley YG Tess McLeod YG
April 29 & 30, 2013 Working Group Meeting, Old Crow	Discussion on what was heard through the North Yukon Regional Land Use planning process; drafting of Terms of Reference and Operating Procedures; and work planning.	William Josie, YG Ella LeGresley, YG Tess McLeod, YG Nick Gray, NYRRC Lance Nagwan, VGG Erika Tizya, VGG Mike Suitor, YG Joel Peter, NYRRC Robert Bruce, VGFN Elders Council
July 3, 2013 Working Group Meeting, Old Crow	Review of Terms of Reference. Oil and Gas Bidding process. Preparations for community meeting and potential field work.	Ella LeGresley, YG Erika Tizya, VGG Bruce McLean, YG Joel Peter, NYRRC Dennis Frost, VGG William Josie, VGG Tess McLeod, YG Nick Gray, NYRRC Robert Bruce, VGFN Elders Council
July 3, 2013 Community Meeting, Old Crow	Dinner to engage with community members on the planning process and to introduce the Working Group and to hear feedback on values of the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik Habitat Protection Area	Working Group and Community Members.
October 29 & 30, 2013 Working Group Meeting, Old Crow	Discussion on historical information collection project. Working planning and public communications. Management plan visioning. Water Resources presentation.	Ella LeGresley, YG Erika Tizya, VGG Bruce McLean, YG Joel Peter, NYRRC Mike Suitor, YG Stan Njootli Jr., NYRRC Tess McLeod, YG Erin Linklater, NYRRC Robert Bruce, VGFN Elders Council Heather Jirousek, YG
March 17, 2014 Working Group Meeting, Conference Call	Updates and preparation of historical information collection project.	William Josie, VGG Erika Tizya, VGG William Linklater, VGG Erin Linklater, NYRRC, Bruce McLean, YG Ella LeGresley, YG

APPENDIX C: DETAILED LIST OF WORKING GROUP MEETINGS

Dates of Meeting	Topics Covered	Working Group Members Present and Attendees
May 12, 2014 Working Group Meeting, Conference Call	Updates on historical information collection project, preparation for engagement with community and for the VGFN General Assembly in August.	Erika Tizya, VGG Erin Linklater, NYRRC Bruce McLean, YG Ella LeGresley, YG Mike Sutor, YG Marcel Barrault, YG
December 10, 2014 Working Group Meeting, Whitehorse	Review of the heritage information report. Updates with the Summit-Bell Park Working Group. Administrative plan. Discussion on working planning and plan content.	Erika Tizya, VGG Rosa Brown, VGG Ella LeGresley, YG Bruce McLean, YG Marcel Barrault, YG Brian Johnston, YG
February 16, 2015 Working Group Meeting, Conference Call	Discussion and review of the baseline change detection project. Work planning for 2015 and completing plan drafting.	Ella LeGresley, YG David Frost, VGG Rosa Brown, VGG Bruce McLean, YG Joel Peter, NYRRC Mike Sutor, YG Jason Van Fleet, NYRRC Tess McLeod, YG Melissa Valja, YG
June 16, 2015 Working Group Meeting, Conference Call	Meeting preparations for July meeting in Old Crow.	David Frost, VGG Rosa Brown, VGG Bruce McLean, YG Joel Peter, NYRRC Jason Van Fleet, NYRRC Tess McLeod, YG Erika Tizya, VGG
July 14, 2015 Working Group Meeting, Old Crow	Planning Process overview and updates. Review of draft plan recommendations. Further work on the heritage collection project. Work planning for 2015/16.	David Frost, VGG Rosa Brown, VGG Bruce McLean, YG Ella LeGresley, YG Joel Peter, NYRCC Erika Tizya, VGG Michelle Sicotte, YG Mike Sutor, YG Jason Van Fleet, NYRRC Brandon Kyikavichik Stanley Njootli Sr. Frances Ross James Itsi
October 20, 2015 Working Group Meeting, Conference Call	Discussion on further needs on information on water resources to better inform the recommendations.	Rosa Brown, VGG Bruce McLean, YG Ella LeGresley, YG Jason Van Fleet, NYRRC Tess McLeod, YG William Josie, VGG

APPENDIX C: DETAILED LIST OF WORKING GROUP MEETINGS

Dates of Meeting	Topics Covered	Working Group Members Present and Attendees
November 25, 2015 Working Group Meeting, Conference Call	In depth discussion with the YG Water Resources Branch on water resource values in the area.	Rosa Brown, VGG Bruce McLean, YG Ella LeGresley, YG William Josie, VGG Tess McLeod, YG Jean Beckerton, YG John Millar, YG Richard Janowicz, YG Justin Lemphers, YG Stanley Njootli Sr., VGG Paul Josie, VGG Mike Sutor, YG
March 4, 2016 Working Group Meeting, Conference Call	Management plan drafting.	Rosa Brown, VGG Bruce McLean, YG Jim Bell, YG Joel Peter, NYRRC Jason Van Fleet, NYRRC Tess McLeod, YG Erika Tizya, VGG
February 22, 2017 Community meeting, Old Crow	Presentation on planning process and question and answer period.	Working Group and community members ~40 attendees.
September 21, 2017 Working Group Meeting, Conference Call	Final edits to the management plan draft.	Rosa Brown, VGG Bruce McLean, YG Jim Bell, YG William Josie, VGG Jason Van Fleet, NYRRC Tess McLeod, YG Darius Elias, VGG
February 27, 2018 Working Group Meeting, Whitehorse	Final public engagement preparation.	Rose Brown, VGG Darius Elias, VGG Tess McLeod, YG Bruce McLean, YG Jim Bell, YG
May 17, 2018 Community Meeting Old Crow	Final community engagement and plan review.	Working Group and community members ~ 20 attendees.
May 24, 2018 Open House Whitehorse	Final public engagement event	Working Group and ~5 attendees

2019
THE CH'IHILII CHÌK HABITAT PROTECTION AREA
MANAGEMENT PLAN

Prepared by The Ch'ihilii Chìk Habitat Protection Area Working Group

