

Government of Yukon – Energy, Mines and Resources

Forest Management Branch

Draft Goldfields Timber Harvest Plan

Dawson Forest Resource Management Plan Region

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Goldfields Timber Harvest Plan (THP) is located approximately 42 km southeast of Dawson City on the Dominion Road and approximately 48 km east on the North Klondike Highway. It is on public land within the Traditional Territory of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and First Nation of Na-cho Nyak Dun.

The timber harvest plan consists of an area of approximately 9,455 hectares that burned in a 2019 wildland fire starting at Hunker Summit. The timber harvest plan encompasses approximately two thirds of the 2019 fire (Map – Appendix A).

Opportunities to develop commercial and personal use harvest areas close to Dawson City and surrounding residential areas are limited due to historical use, natural disturbance patterns (e.g fire) and other land use activities. This timber harvest plan will meet the objective of providing a fuelwood supply of fire-killed timber to Dawson City.

The timber harvest plan sets operational goals and objectives for the issuance of harvesting rights within the planning area. The *Forest Resources Act (FRA)* requires that commercial timber harvesting licences may only be issued where a timber harvest plan is in place. The timber harvest plan provides mitigations and management of identified values.

Goldfields Timber Harvest Plan identifies five operating units, with a total estimated fuelwood volume of 19,890 cubic meters (m³). Currently, access to the Goldfields Timber Harvest Plan is seasonally via the Dominion Road and year-round from the North Klondike Highway.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Goldfields Timber Harvest Plan (THP) encompasses a 9,455 hectare area that burned in a 2019 wildland fire starting at Hunker Summit. It is on public land within the Traditional Territory of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and First Nation of Na-cho Nyak Dun. The timber harvest plan is within the Flat Creek and Goldfields Landscape Units of the Dawson Forest Resources Management Plan.

The timber harvest plan follows the recommendations of the Dawson Forest Resources Management Plan's strategic direction and planning of the landscape units. Flat Creek and Goldfields Landscape Units are identified as priority areas for harvest development planning. Goldfields is identified as high priority for planning while Flat Creek is identified as medium priority.

The timber harvest plan is composed primarily of fire-killed spruce. The objective of the timber harvest plan is to provide opportunities for personal use and small to medium scale commercial harvesting (<1000 m³ cutting permits) that is accessible all-season. Some larger cutting permit volumes may be included.

This timber harvest plan identifies five operating units, with a total estimated fuelwood volume of 19,890 m³. Currently, access to the Goldfields Timber Harvest Plan is seasonally via the Dominion Road and year-round from the North Klondike Highway.

The timber harvest plan has been developed to meet the requirements of the *Forest Resources Act* and associated *Forest Resources Regulations*.

All applications for timber harvesting will be required to meet the submission requirements of the *FRA* Section 19(1). The pending harvesting licences require notification to the affected First Nations and public in the area of the application. The First Nation and public may make representations to the Forest Management Branch Director on the application for a period of no less than 30 days (*FRA*, Section 18).

In addition, a Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment may be required where a project falls within the requirements of the assessable activities regulations.

2 BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

2.1 SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS

Dawson City has a population of approximately 1,300 people. The predominant industry in the Goldfields is mining related activities with forestry, tourism, recreation, hunting, and trapping also occurring.

The forests in the Dawson City region provide significant ecological and aesthetic values, cultural and heritage values and recreation in addition to providing timber for local markets, energy, economic opportunity, and employment for the region's residents (Dawson Forest Management Planning Team, 2013). The industry consists primarily of one sawmill and numerous commercial fuelwood operators. Many of the residents of Dawson City rely on fuelwood as an economical heating alternative throughout the winter. The current annual timber demand in Dawson City is approximately 1,500 m³ for fuelwood.

2.2 ECOREGION AND DRAINAGES

This timber harvest plan lies in the Boreal Cordillera eco-zone within the Klondike Plateau eco-region. Leading species within the region consists of black spruce, white spruce, trembling aspen and white birch, which is characteristic of west central Yukon. Understory species include suckering species such as willow, birch and aspen regeneration. The most common natural disturbance is fire, with a return interval of approximately 170 years; therefore early seral communities are most common.

Characteristic terrain features include smooth, rolling plateau topography with moderate valleys and large structural basins composed of level to undulating terrain that were not glaciated during the last ice age.

Loamy moraine and sandy fluvial-glacial parent soil materials are dominant in the ecoregion. Much of the ecoregion is covered by a veneer of volcanic ash 2 to 15 cm thick. Permafrost is discontinuous to sporadic with high ice content associated with fine-textured valley deposits. Characteristic wildlife includes barren ground caribou, grizzly and black bear, moose, beaver, red fox, grey wolf, snowshoe hare, raven, rock and willow ptarmigan, and golden eagle.

2.3 WILDLIFE

The Government of Yukon, Department of Environment has identified key wildlife values within the Goldfields Timber Harvest Plan and suggested mitigations to avoid adverse impacts to wildlife.

Moose: The area is not currently considered high quality moose habitat after the 2019 burn; however, it is expected to become productive in 10-15 years and boast high moose densities.

Sharp-tailed grouse: There is reasonable chance nesting occurs within the timber harvest plan.

Mitigations:

Moose: As productivity in moose numbers increase in the timber harvest plan (over the next ten years) road management methods, such as gates on forest resource roads and skid trails, will be implemented that limit public access. Once timber harvest activities are completed reclamation/decommissioning of roads and skid trails will be conducted to ensure refuge for moose.

Sharp-tailed grouse: Every cutting permit issued within the Goldfields Timber Harvest Plan will include a fact sheet on sharp-tailed grouse and the following terms and conditions:

- 1) Sharp-tailed grouse leks found by the permittee shall be reported to the Natural Resource Officer.
- 2) If sharp-tailed grouse leks are found, harvesting activities shall be avoided:
 - Within 500 m of a lek from April 1 to April 20 between 5am and 10am
 - Within 1 km of a lek during the peak attendance period, from April 20 to May 4 between 5am and 10am.

All site plans and operational development within the timber harvest plan will be consistent with approved Wildlife Standards and Guidelines available from Forest Management Branch and Yukon.ca. The following terms and conditions will be included in each cutting permit to further ensure protection of wildlife:

- 1) All caribou sightings (or other unique wildlife) shall be reported to a Natural Resource Officer who will notify the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Fish and Wildlife Branch and the Government of Yukon Regional Biologist.
- 2) If caribou are encountered in the timber harvest plan, the operators shall halt operations until caribou have moved out of the area, and report sightings to the Natural Resource Officer.

This timber harvest plan will be accessed from the Dominion Road and North Klondike Highway, rather than from the ridge trail originating at Hunker Summit where caribou are more likely to be present. The start of the forest resource road will be gated to prevent public access.

See Sections 3 and 4 of this plan for further information on access management as well as seasonal timing of harvesting operations.

2.4 BIODIVERSITY

To maintain landscape level biodiversity over time, both the harvest rate and cut/leave pattern was considered. Forest harvesting should attempt to emulate the Natural Disturbance Zone regime, as described in the Dawson Forest Resources Management Plan. Areas with live trees will serve as retention and reserve areas.

2.5 SOILS, RIPARIAN AND WATER RESOURCES

The moisture regime is mesic to moist depending on aspect, with avoidable wet spots at lower elevation. Sandy loam to silty clay loam soils are present.

Harvesting activities will be determined in the site plan using the Soil Conservation Standards and Guidelines to assign the allowable percent soil disturbance (no greater than 5%) and associated hazards. Utilizing existing access in the area will help minimize soil compaction in the harvest areas.

The timber harvest plan is bound by Dominion Creek to the southwest, All Gold Creek to the northwest and Flat Creek to the northeast. There are a number of streams and contributing tributaries within the boundaries of the timber harvest plan (see attached map, Appendix A). Operations will avoid streams and appropriate protective reserves

(buffers) will be established as per the Forest Management Branch's Riparian Management Standards and Guidelines.

2.6 RECREATION AND VISUAL IMPACTS

The Goldfields Timber Harvest Plan area is not considered a high-use recreational or visitor area. Visual impacts of the area from harvesting and associated activities are expected to be low. Irregular boundaries, along with boundaries that follow the natural lines of force and existing disturbance will yield a harvest area that is natural in appearance.

2.7 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL VALUES

The Government of Yukon, Department of Tourism and Culture, Heritage Resources Unit has identified areas with elevated potential for heritage resources within the Goldfields Timber Harvest Plan area. Harvest activities that could impact the ground surface will be restricted from the areas identified with high heritage potential. Types of harvest activities that could impact the ground surface include road building, graded trail building, heavy equipment use, skidding, stream crossings, scarification, and graded landings.

It will be mandatory for all personal use and commercial harvest permittees to report any chance finds, if discovered during harvesting to the Natural Resource Officer. The Natural Resource Officer will immediately contact the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Na-cho Nyak Dun Heritage departments and the Government of Yukon Heritage Resources Unit.

All operators and permittees should familiarize themselves with the following Heritage Handbook and Best Management Practices before working in the Operating Units:

<https://emrlibrary.gov.yk.ca/Tourism/archaeology%20and%20palaeontology%20booklets/handbook-identification-heritage-sites-2007.pdf>

<https://emrlibrary.gov.yk.ca/tourism/land-use-and-land-applications-best-management-practices-for-heritage-resources-2015.pdf>

2.8 DISTURBANCE

The Goldfields area has experienced significant disturbance from mining and mineral exploration activities. There are numerous placer and quartz claims overlapping the

Goldfields Timber Harvest Plan, as well as existing access, cut lines and exploration trenches present.

2.8.1 Mining Overlap

Section 5.4 of the Dawson Forest Resources Management Plan supports the use of commercial timber on mining claims that are present within a timber harvest plan. Under the *Quartz and Placer Mining Acts*, a claim holder may only cut timber where timber rights have not otherwise been granted prior to the staking of a claim, and use the timber for mining-related purposes on their claim. The claim holder does not have the exclusive rights to all of the timber on that claim, as it remains the property of the Government of Yukon.

Prior to Forest Management Branch issuing commercial harvesting permits or forest resources permits, the mining claim holder will be sent a notification by the Dawson mining recorder's office of timber harvesting interests that overlap with the claims. If there is timber on site that the mining claim holder requires for mining purposes, the claim holder has to respond to the notification within the 2-week time period and give details of the volume and species required prior to the Forest Management Branch issuing a commercial timber permit. The Forest Management Branch will then facilitate communication between the timber permittee and the claim holder to coordinate activities on the land base.

2.9 OTHER LAND USERS

Registered single trapping concession 54 and group trapping concession 23 overlaps the timber harvest plan area. The concession holders will be sent a draft of the plan during the public notification period. Any representation(s) will have a response and mitigations included in the final approved timber harvest plan.

2.10 FOREST HEALTH

The area is a mosaic of recent burns with a healthy understory and presently shows no major forest health concerns. Natural populations of forest insects and diseases exist within the planning area, and play an important role in the function of a healthy ecosystem. Both systematic and general observations and reporting of insect and/or disease continue throughout the region on a regular basis, and an aerial survey of Dawson Forest Management Region was completed in summer of 2021. For a more

complete list of common pests and diseases that are present in the area, refer to the 2021 Forest Health Report. This report can be made available by contacting the Forest Management Branch or on Yukon.ca.

3 ACCESS MANAGEMENT AND HARVESTING OPERATIONS

3.1 ACCESS MANAGEMENT

3.1.1 Summary

Forest Management Branch regulates the construction, access, maintenance and decommissioning of Forest Resource Roads according to the specifications outlined in the Forest Resources Act Standards and Guidelines. See the map in Appendix A for more information regarding existing access into the Goldfields Timber Harvest Plan.

Forest resource roads and skid trails are not public roads and may be gated to restrict access to permit holders only in order to reduce negative environmental impacts, manage for safety and/or other considerations.

If additional access or upgrades is required, an Access to Highways permit from Highways and Public works would be obtained and would meet the specifications as outlined by the authorizations. Construction of new roads or accesses will require a submission to the Yukon Environmental and Socio-Economic Board.

Low stump (skid) trails may be developed throughout the operating units; however these do not require a Yukon Environmental and Socio-Economic Board assessment and disturbance will be limited according to FMB's operation standards and guidelines of less than 5% soil disturbance.

All new forest resource road construction will be decommissioned following completion of harvesting and silviculture activities in order to address erosional concerns and to limit access following completion, unless otherwise stated.

3.1.2 Vanderbilt, Flat Creek and Minnie Bell Operating Units

There is a number of existing accesses in the Goldfields Timber Harvest Plan. An unnamed, unmaintained road that is accessed at All Gold Creek/Flat Creek area off the North Klondike Highway will be utilized to access personal use and commercial harvesting in Vanderbilt, Flat Creek and Minnie Bell Operating Units. As this road is an

existing unmaintained road under the Highways Act, access cannot be restricted via a gate.

This access will require maintenance before use as a commercial forestry road; therefore, the Forest Management Branch intends to submit to the Yukon Environmental and Socio-Economic Board for grading and ditching.

Future roads and/or skid trails may be required to branch off of the existing access into Vanderbilt, Flat Creek and Minnie Bell Operating Units.

3.1.3 Chapman Operating Unit

Existing access locally called “Chapman Guard” off the Dominion Road will be utilized to access the Chapman Operating Unit. This access is a catguard constructed by Wildland Fire Management to access the fire when it burned in 2019. This access is a forest resource road under the *Forest Resources Act* as it was assigned to the Forest Management Branch after the fire was extinguished. This access will be utilized to access the Chapman Operating Unit; however, Chapman Guard may require upgrades due to poor condition (e.g ruts, wash outs).

3.1.4 Almeda Operating Unit

Almeda Road is an unmaintained public access road and borders the timber harvest plan to the northeast. No forest resources were initially identified directly off of Almeda Road; therefore, Forest Management Branch does not have intentions to upgrade and utilize the road unless timber resources are discovered.

Opening harvesting to Almeda Operating Unit may require construction from Almeda Road or Dominion Road. See Section 4.2.6 Almeda Operating Unit for details. If this is pursued, a submission to the Yukon Environmental and Socio-Economic Board may be required for road upgrades and/or construction.

3.2 OPERATING UNIT AREAS AND VOLUME SUMMARIES

3.2.1 Volume Summary

The timber harvest plan covers approximately 9,455 ha of burned area with five operating units covering approximately 2,194 hectares of the total timber harvest plan area. A total estimated fuelwood volume of approximately 19,890m³ encompasses the operating units.

Approximately 3% of the total timber harvest plan is reserved for personal use fuelwood harvesting. This may increase as areas are identified and need from the public increases. Approximately 23% of the timber harvest plan is within an identified operating unit for commercial harvest; however, not all timber in each operating unit is merchantable. Forest Management Plan defines a merchantable log as a minimum of 12.5 cm diameter at breast height at a height of 1.3m from the base of the tree, 8 cm in diameter at the top, and contains 50% sound wood. Approximately 74% of the burned area within the timber harvest plan consists of non-merchantable timber for commercial harvest and/or non-operable terrain or reserves and falls outside of a personal use fuelwood area or commercial operating unit.

Table 1 provides a summary of estimated fire-killed timber volumes in the operating units identified. Further information by operating unit is included in the table.

Table 1: Area and volume Summary by Operating Unit

Operating Unit	Total Area (ha)	Percentage (%) of Merchantable Area	Merchantable Area (ha)	Average Volume (m ³ /ha)	Total Volume
Vanderbilt	213	30 ¹	64	45	2880
Flat Creek	337	20 ²	68	25	1700
Minnie Bell	190	60 ¹	114	50	5700
Chapman	457	20 ¹	137	40	3640
Almeda	997	20 ²	199	30	5970
Total	2194	-	582	-	19,890

¹ Estimate determined based on site visits

² Site visit was not conducted and was instead determined based on knowledge of the area and using the Vegetation Inventory

Volumes in Table 1 are estimates derived from site visits in the early reconnaissance stage of development. They are further inferred using the Vegetation Inventory. These volumes may be adjusted when further work is conducted and will appear in the site plan that is issued with a cutting permit. As harvesting is completed in a progressive manner, new operating units may be identified and/or boundaries may be adjusted.

3.2.2 Vanderbilt Operating Unit

Vanderbilt Operating Unit is 213 hectares in size with approximately 30% of the total area being merchantable for a total of 64 hectares of merchantable timber. Areas in the

operating unit have been identified for harvest and could hold two to four harvest blocks. The initial total volume identified in this operating unit is 2,880m³.

The northern portion of the operating unit is characteristic of slopes averaging from 10-25% in benched terrain. The slope has a west-facing aspect. Fire-killed timber on this slope ranges from diameters of 12 cm-44 cm. Larger timber is more downslope and in seasonally-wet drainages.

The southern portion of the operating unit is shown as white birch leading; however, has a significant volume of mature spruce scattered within. Merchantable volume is more scattered and infrequent and has an increased presence of blown down timber than in the northern portion. The slope is 0-10% with diameters ranging from 12-32cm and heights from 10-21 m.

Forest Management Branch intends to develop Vanderbilt in the initial stages of the timber harvest plan due to the ease of access from Dawson City on the North Klondike and off the unmaintained public road as well as potential to keep open during winter season. There are few winter access harvesting options in the Dawson Forest Resource Management Plan area.

3.2.3 Flat Creek Operating Unit

Flat Creek Operating Unit is 337 hectares in size with an estimated 20% of total area being merchantable for a total of 68 hectares of merchantable timber.

Forest Management Branch did not conduct reconnaissance on Flat Creek Operating Unit, as it did not project initial potential; therefore, volumes are rough estimates based on knowledge of the area and the Vegetation Inventory. Flat Creek Operating Unit is included because knowledge of the area suggests merchantable timber is variable and tends to be in scattered pockets. Flat Creek Operating Unit shows potential for scattered merchantable timber; however, the timber is not immediately accessible from the unmaintained public road.

Therefore, Flat Creek was included for future potential but will not be initially developed. Forest Management Branch intends to conduct further reconnaissance within Flat Creek Operating Unit as other operating units are harvested progressively. If merchantable timber is found, it is expected to be in small pockets and will be decided on whether it is economically feasible to build access to.

3.2.4 Minnie Bell Operating Unit

Minnie Bell Operating Unit is 190 hectares in size with an estimated 60% of total area being merchantable for a total of 114 hectares of merchantable timber. The merchantable area is shown as aspen leading but has significant volume of spruce. The terrain is rolling with slopes varying from 5-20% and southeast facing aspect.

Timber is variable near the top of the slope with diameters of 12-25 cm. Down slope the timber gets sparse but larger diameters between 30-50 cm and lots of suspended merchantable blown down timber. Approximately five potential harvest blocks were identified in this operating unit. The initial total volume identified in this operating unit is 5700m³.

Forest Management Branch intends to develop Minnie Bell in the initial stages of the timber harvest plan due to the ease of access from Dawson City on the North Klondike and off the unmaintained public road as well as potential to keep open during winter season. There are few winter access harvesting options in the Dawson Forest resource Management Plan area.

3.2.5 Chapman Operating Unit

Chapman Operating Unit is 457 hectares in size with an estimated 30% of total area being merchantable for a total of 137 hectares of merchantable timber.

The area was selected as a fire guard was established in 2019 by Wildland Fire Management during the 2019 fire and was turned over post fire to Forest Management Branch for use as a forest resource road. The “Chapman Guard” starts at approximately KM 7 of the Dominion Road and climbs onto a ridge top between Chapman and Champion Pup.

Chapman Operating Unit is characteristic of very open birch and aspen leading stands with significant spruce presence. It varies from 15-20% crown closure and flat across the ridge top where the road is located but rolls over to 15-30% slope starting 60 m from the roads edge.

Tree heights are on average between 15-18 m with diameters between 15-40cm. However, due to the sparseness of trees the merchantable volume is low. The total volume identified in the operating unit is 3,640m³.

Due to the sparseness of the timber, the operating unit may be better suited for personal use harvesting rather than commercial harvest. The operating unit is of medium priority for development. As other operating units and personal use fuelwood areas are harvested progressively, Forest Management Branch will assess the need for Chapman Operating Unit as commercial or personal use fuelwood.

3.2.6 Almeda Operating Unit

Almeda Operating Unit is 997 hectares in size with an estimated 20% of total area being merchantable for a total of 199 hectares of merchantable timber.

Forest Management Branch did not conduct a site visit on Almeda Operating Unit. Almeda Operating Unit was identified based on the Vegetation Inventory and a helicopter reconnaissance in 2021 and due to similarities in terrain with nearby Mummie Pup Timber Harvest Plan (See Section 5.2 – Map).

Forest Management Branch intends to conduct further reconnaissance within Almeda Operating Unit as other operating units are harvested progressively. If merchantable timber is found, it will be decided on whether it is economically feasible to build access to the merchantable timber for harvest. Forest Management Branch roughly estimates a total of 5,970m³ of timber based on knowledge of the area and the Vegetation Inventory; however, slope constraints may limit the ability to harvest merchantable timber in this operating unit.

3.3 OPERATIONAL HARVEST SCHEDULING

Minnie Bell and Vanderbilt Operating Units have the highest potential for commercial interests, whereas Chapman Operating Unit is medium priority and may be targeted for personal use and Flat Creek and Almeda Operating Unit will be considered for future potential.

Soil conditions indicate moderate compaction, surface, and displacement hazard ratings. There is suitable potential for both dry summer and frozen winter seasons for road construction and harvesting, however this will be assessed further during site plan development.

Minnie Bell, Vanderbilt and Flat Creek Operating Units has potential to be open year-round due to access from the North Klondike Highway. Almeda and Chapman Operating Units may be open until the Dominion Road becomes impassable during

winter conditions. Should the proposed Northern Access Route to the Coffee Mine Project open the Dominion Road year-round, the option exists to harvest throughout the winter when the road may typically be shutdown during winter conditions.

All proposed harvesting will require site plans completed in advance of issuance of the cutting permit approved by Forest Management Branch and contain the operational details of harvesting. The site plan will address soil descriptions, season of operability, slopes and special concerns (constraints), stand and site conditions, roads and landings descriptions, riparian buffers, management objectives, and reforestation.

Once the area has been harvested for commercial purposes, Forest Management Branch will manage the area for personal use fuelwood harvesters, reforestation activities and eventual decommissioning. It is anticipated the maximum time to complete these activities is 10 years from the beginning of operations.

3.4 SILVICULTURE SYSTEMS AND REFORESTATION

Natural regeneration is the preferred method of regeneration for all operating units. During site plan development, advanced regeneration will be assessed to guide harvest operations to protect advanced regeneration.

Newly bladed trails, roads and landings used during frost free conditions (summer/fall) may require scarification to reduce compaction and aid in the re-establishment of vegetation within the harvest area following harvesting.

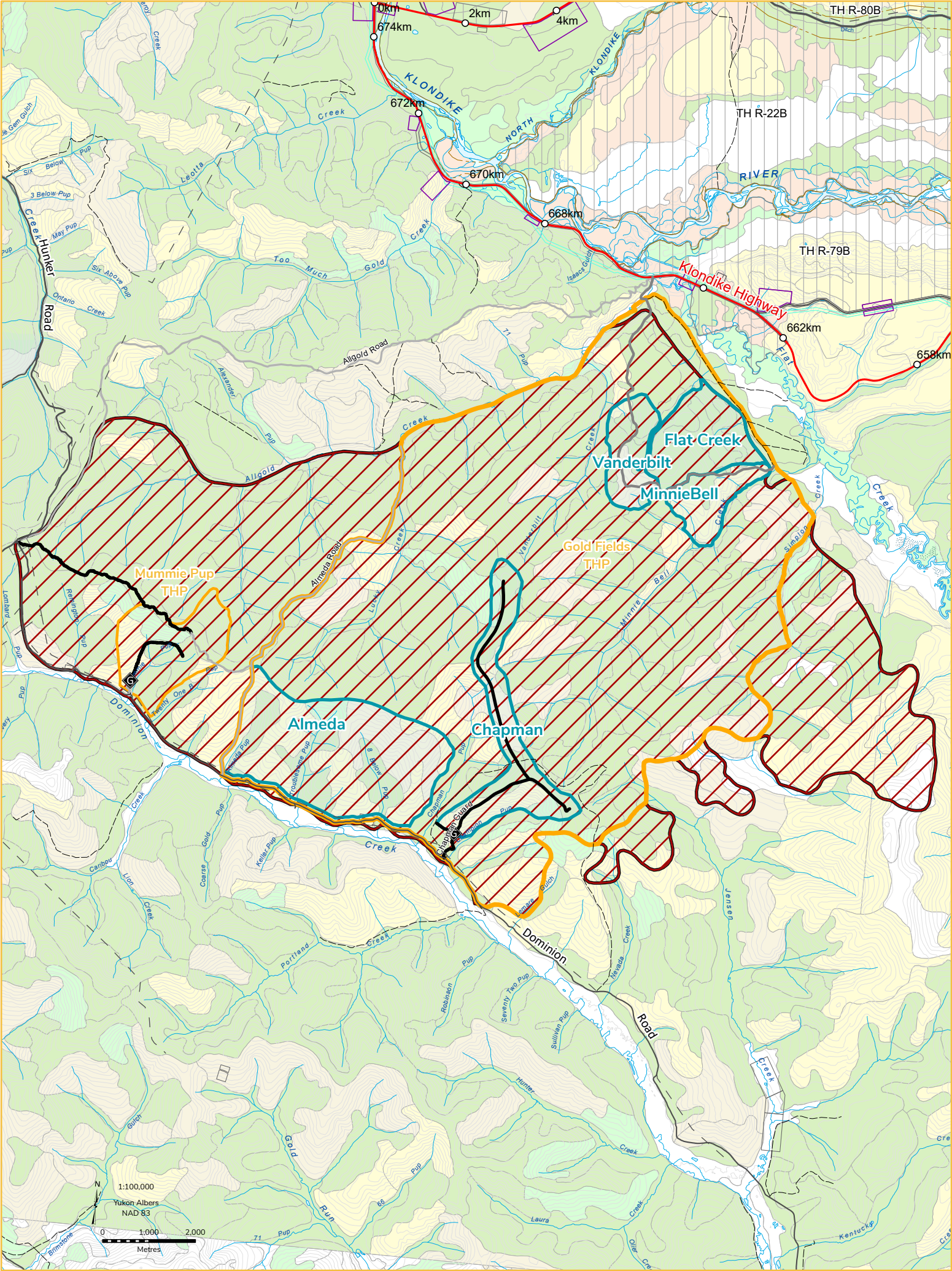
After harvest is complete, the harvest areas will be assessed to determine regeneration options. The Soils Standards limit the amount of on block disturbance (<5%) and are designed to promote the establishment of early successional forest and vegetation. Silviculture activities will be guided by the Silviculture Strategic Plan.

4 LIST OF APPENDICES

4.1 REPRESENTATIONS PAGE

To be completed following draft review.

4.2 MAPS



Goldfilelds Timber Harvest Plan Area

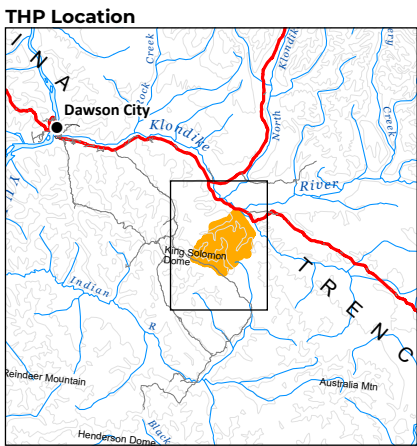
FRMP: Dawson Forest Management Plan

Fire Extent

THP STATS
Dawson NRO District
THP Area: 9454.50ha ±
Date: November 30, 2021

For more timber harvest information, visit our website:
www.yukon.ca

Forestry spatial data managed and maintained by the Forest Management Branch, Yukon Government. All other spatial data provided by Geomatics Yukon.



- Project Specific Features**

20 Pup THP Boundary

Operating Units

2019DA020 Fire

Existing Access

Forest Resource Road (Act)

Forest Resource Access (Non Act)

Public Access (Non Act)

Auxiliary Access

Trails
- Land Administration**

Land Dispositions

Land Notations

Surveyed Land Parcels

First Nation Administration

Surveyed Settlement Lands

Unsurveyed Settlement Lands

Interim Protected Lands