



Yukon

Department of Energy, Mines and Resources



West Dawson and Sunnydale Local Area Plan

August 2013



Office of the Minister
Box 2703, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6

November 7, 2013

Sebastian Jones, Chair
West Dawson Sunnydale Local Area Plan Steering Committee
PO Box 66
Dawson City, YT Y0B 1G0

Dear Mr. Jones:

Re: West Dawson and Sunnydale Local Area Plan

I am pleased to advise you that on behalf of Yukon government, I have approved the West Dawson and Sunnydale Local Area Plan as an advisory document with the proviso that the area not be withdrawn from mineral staking as suggested by recommendation 5.4.1.3.

I appreciate the perspectives of the Steering Committee on this matter and wish to convey that there are regulatory and dispute resolution processes in place to address conflicts that may arise between surface and subsurface users.

Energy, Mines and Resources looks forward to using the West Dawson and Sunnydale Local Area Plan as a guide for land use within the planning area. The plan will be subject to existing or future legislation, regulations or policies and its adoption does not commit Yukon government or other agencies to develop any of the infrastructure projects suggested in the plan. Completion of a future comprehensive review will also be dependent on available resources and established planning priorities.

I would like to thank you and the other members of the Steering Committee for their commitment and hard work on development of the West Dawson and Sunnydale Local Area Plan. The completion and approval of this plan marks a milestone, as it is the first local area plan in Yukon that was developed collaboratively by a First Nation, Yukon government and community members.

Sincerely,

Scott Kent
Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources

cc: Peggy Kormendy, West Dawson Sunnydale Local Area Plan Steering Committee
Mabel Henry, West Dawson Sunnydale Local Area Plan Steering Committee
Shirley Peirson, West Dawson Sunnydale Local Area Plan Steering Committee
Lee Whalen, West Dawson Sunnydale Local Area Plan Steering Committee
Wendy Fellers, West Dawson Sunnydale Local Area Plan Steering Committee



**West Dawson and Sunnysdale Local Area Plan
Steering Committee**

OCT 25 2011

c/o Sebastian Jones, Chair
Box 66, Dawson City, YT Y0B 1G0

Minister of Energy Mines and Resources
Government of Yukon
Box 2703
Whitchose, Yukon Y1A 2C6

Chief and Council
Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in
PO Box 599
Dawson City, Yukon
Y0B 1G0

Re: West Dawson and Sunnysdale Local Area Plan

We are pleased to submit to you the Recommended West Dawson and Sunnysdale Local Area Plan (WDSLAP) in fulfillment of the West Dawson and Sunnysdale Local Area Planning Committee's Terms of Reference. Considerable time and effort has been taken to provide a Plan with clear recommendations grounded in both scientific fact and traditional or local knowledge, shaped by thorough public consultation and formed into a practical framework for implementation.

We are confident that the recommendations and management directions presented by the Committee are well substantiated. Our team had the benefit of working with the staff at affected Yukon Government and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Government departments and the team at Inukshuk Planning and Development.


Since the inception of the process in 2007, we have engaged in multiple sets of round-table consultations with the goal of creating a better understanding of WDSLAP resources, issues, opportunities and challenges.


We are satisfied that the Committee and our planning team strove to fully consider all submissions, research findings, public and Party input within the limits of available resources and time. We take great satisfaction in the level of engagement in our process, and trust that the lessons learned from our work will serve future Local Area land-use planning efforts in the Yukon.

Yours sincerely,

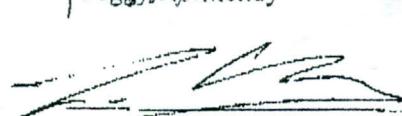
Members of the West Dawson and Sunnysdale Local Area Plan Steering Committee

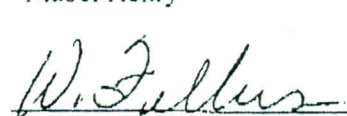

Sebastian Jones


Peggy Kormendy


Mabel Henry


Shirley Peirson


Lee Whalen


Wendy Fellers

copy: Trish Hume, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation
Jerome McIntyre, Director, Land Planning Branch



Office of the Minister
Box 2703, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6

September 23, 2013

Chief Eddie Taylor
Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in
PO Box 599
Dawson City, YT Y0B 1G0

Dear Chief Taylor:

Re: West Dawson and Sunnysdale Local Area Plan

I am pleased to advise you on behalf of Yukon government, I have approved the *West Dawson and Sunnysdale Local Area Plan* as an advisory document with the proviso that the area not be withdrawn from mineral staking as suggested by recommendation 5.4.1.3.

I appreciate the perspectives of the Steering Committee on this matter, we recognize there are existing regulatory and dispute resolution processes in place to address questions that may arise between surface and subsurface users.

Energy, Mines and Resources looks forward to using the West Dawson and Sunnysdale Local Area Plan as a guide for land use within the planning area. The plan will remain subject to any existing or future Yukon government legislation, regulations or policies. Adoption of the plan does not commit the Yukon government or other agencies to develop any of the infrastructure projects suggested in the plan. A future comprehensive review of the plan will also be dependent on available resources and established planning priorities.

It is noted the plan calls for new zoning regulations to be developed to implement the land use policies of the plan. Department staff will be contacting your officials soon to discuss the process for preparing new zoning regulations for the planning area.

Sincerely,

Scott Kent
Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources

Table of Contents

1.0	Introduction	1
1.1	<i>Purpose of the Local Area Plan</i>	2
1.2	<i>How the Local Area Plan was Prepared</i>	2
1.3	<i>Visioning Questionnaire</i>	3
1.4	<i>Local Area Plan Goals and Objectives</i>	3
2.0	West Dawson/Sunnydale Area Characteristics	6
2.1	<i>Community Profile</i>	6
2.2	<i>Bioregional Assessment</i>	6
2.3	<i>Existing Landscape Conditions</i>	7
2.4	<i>Vegetation</i>	8
3.0	Land Tenure	9
3.1	<i>Existing Land Use and Land Tenure</i>	9
3.2	<i>Aggregate Potential</i>	10
3.3	<i>Agricultural Potential</i>	10
3.4	<i>Forest Resource Potential</i>	11
4.0	Land Capability	12
4.1	<i>Assessment of Local Area Land Capability</i>	12
4.2	<i>Developable Land</i>	12
4.3	<i>Climate Change</i>	14
4.4	<i>Forest Harvest Proposals</i>	15
5.0	West Dawson and Sunnydale Land Use Designations and Policies	18
5.1	<i>Residential</i>	18
5.1.1	<i>Residential Policies</i>	19
5.2	<i>Agriculture</i>	20
5.2.1	<i>Agriculture Policies</i>	21
5.3	<i>Public Service & Institutional Uses</i>	21
5.3.1	<i>Public Service & Institutional Uses Policies</i>	22
5.4	<i>Commercial & Industrial Land Use</i>	23
5.4.1	<i>Commercial & Industrial Land Use Policies</i>	24
5.5	<i>Traditional Use</i>	24
5.5.1	<i>Traditional Use Policies</i>	24
5.6	<i>Open Space</i>	25
5.6.1	<i>Open Space Policies</i>	25
5.7	<i>Forest Management</i>	25
5.7.1	<i>Forest Management Policies</i>	26
5.8	<i>Protected Areas</i>	26
5.8.1	<i>Protected Area Policies</i>	27
5.9	<i>Land Use Plan</i>	27
5.9.1	<i>Interpretation of Land Use Boundaries</i>	27
6.0	Implementation	28
7.0	Plan Review and Amendment	29
7.1	<i>Bridge Construction</i>	30
8.0	Conclusion	31

List of Tables

Table 1	Positive and negative attributes of development pockets.	13
Table 2	Comparison of land capability characteristics for development pockets	14
Table 3	Attributes of Top of the world Highway Fuelwood Harvest Blocks	15

List of Maps and Schedule A (at the end of Document)

Map 1	Community Values Mapping
Map 2	Existing Landscape Conditions
Map 3	Vegetation
Map 4	Existing Land Use
Map 5	Agriculture and Aggregate Potential
Map 6	Land Use Capability
Map 7	Development Considerations
Map 8	Residential Existing
Map 9	Residential Suitable
Map 10	Residential Proposed
Map 11	Agriculture Existing & Proposed
Map 12	Traditional Use Proposed
Map 13	Protected & Open Space Proposed
SCHEDULE A - Land Use Plan	

West Dawson and Sunnydale Local Area Plan

1.0 Introduction

The West Dawson and Sunnydale local planning area is within the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Traditional Territory and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in (TH) has a number of Settlement Land parcels in the area. The Yukon Government has partnered with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in to coordinate planning for public, private and TH settlement land within the West Dawson and Sunnydale area. The Local area plan respects the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Final and Self-Government Agreements.

Local area planning began with a request from the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in to the Minister of Community Services. The respective government land planning agencies met to design a local area planning process resulting in a Memorandum of Understanding between the two governments to proceed in a collaborative Local Area Plan process pursuant to Final and Self-Government Agreements. A steering committee was formed comprised of three appointees from the Yukon Government and three Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in appointees.

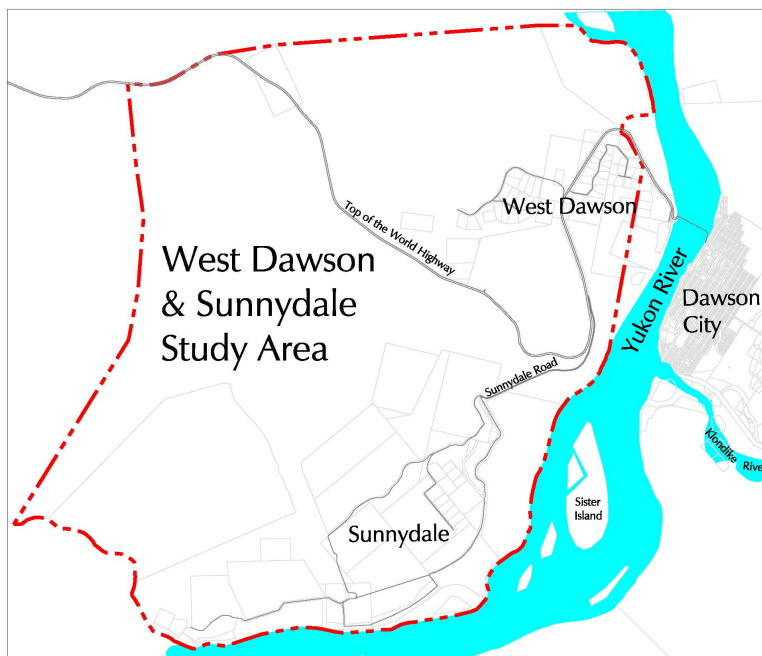


Figure 1: West Dawson and Sunnydale Study Area

The Local Area Plan will guide land use and policy direction for future land management decisions within the West Dawson and Sunnydale area. The plan is a result of a collaborative process involving local residents and government agencies. It responds to desires to respect the existing lifestyle and character of the West Dawson and Sunnydale area while allowing for potential growth and change. The Local Area Plan recognizes Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in land claim settlement rights and interests in the area while providing a common framework for the development of both Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and non-Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in lands. Each government will approve the Local Area Plan and apply the land use policies contained herein to guide land development and management decisions within their respective jurisdictions.

1.1 Purpose of the Local Area Plan

The West Dawson and Sunnysdale Local Area Plan was developed to guide long-term land use. The need for a local area planning arose from a number of issues in the local community, triggered most notably, by the potential construction of a bridge linking West Dawson and Sunnysdale with the City of Dawson. The lack of year round access has been the principal limiting factor in development interest in this area.

In addition to the possibility of a bridge being built, the following issues have been raised that are best resolved through development of a local area plan:

- Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in management plans for the use of their settlement lands in the West Dawson and Sunnysdale area;
- Changing land use patterns (e.g. an increase in requests for spot land applications, pressure to convert prime agricultural land to other purposes etc.);
- A need to protect other land values such as rare plant species, wildlife habitat and surface water quality;
- The desire of residents to maintain the existing rural residential and agricultural character of the two areas;
- The need to improve basic infrastructure and services (e.g. road network, fire protection, community well); and
- The need for an organized and logical approach to local area development and resource protection to guide decision making and make efficient use of the limited land base.

1.2 How the Local Area Plan was Prepared

Local area planning began in the fall of 2007 with start-up meetings with the West Dawson and Sunnysdale community as well as with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in elders. As part of this process, a local steering committee was formed. In December 2007, a working paper (*Inventory and Analysis Discussion Paper*) was developed that compiled inventory information on the planning area from a number of sources including: local knowledge, scientific data from the Agricultural and Forest Management Branches of Yukon Energy, Mines and Resources, the Yukon Geological Survey, and land tenure information from Yukon Community Services. The results were summarized in a series of maps depicting existing land use, the resource values present and inherent land capability.

Meetings with the community and local steering committee continued through 2008 and 2009. As part of the planning process, a visioning questionnaire was circulated to residents of West Dawson, Sunnysdale and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in members in the spring of 2008. Following the completion of the questionnaire, a set of goals and objectives were established to guide development of the Local Area Plan. Using the goals and objectives as guidelines, initial policy and possible land use designations were developed in June 2009. These were presented to the community at an open house. The feedback

received from the community was used to further refine the initial concepts into this local area land use plan.

1.3 Visioning Questionnaire

The intent of the 2008 questionnaire was to understand how residents of West Dawson and Sunnydale viewed their community and what kind of future they envisioned for it. Some of the highlights of the survey were:

- A majority of respondents felt that the current use of the area – rural residential and agricultural – was appropriate.
- There was considerable support for keeping undeveloped areas in a natural state as much as possible and for preserving the present, generally rural and “off the grid” lifestyle.
- The survey indicated strong support for increased fire protection, a community well, road upgrades and protection of environmentally important areas.
- About half the respondents indicated they would like to see the area remain as is.

1.4 Local Area Plan Goals and Objectives

A set of goals and objectives were established for the plan. They are based on the information received from the visioning questionnaire and through discussions with community residents as well as the local steering committee. For clarity in the planning process, it is important to differentiate goals from objectives. A goal is a pre-determined and desired end state having one or more objectives to be achieved within a particular timeframe. Objectives are more specific, tangible and measurable than goals. Objectives include targets and outcomes that once completed, help attain the specified goal. The following goals and objectives were developed to guide the planning process for West Dawson and Sunnydale:

1. To maintain the existing character and rural lifestyle of the West Dawson and Sunnydale neighbourhoods.

- To build a cohesive and sustainable community by providing lifestyle choice and resolving issues of common interest including the provision of basic infrastructure that addresses the need for wildfire protection, road refurbishment and community facilities.

2. To work with the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in government and local area residents to identify lands suitable for development and conservation.

- To make land available for a variety of land uses while respecting the interests of existing landholders.
- To establish development controls to ensure that development occurs in an orderly and well-planned manner.

3. To maintain and enhance the quality of the planning area's natural environment for present and future generations.

- To ensure the continued ability of Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in citizens to practice their traditional activities by preserving wildlife habitat and environmentally important areas within the planning area.
- To protect the area's biodiversity and habitat quality including the protection of rare plants, the provision of wildlife movement corridors and the recognition of these values in the plan.

Part One: Analysis



Sunnydale West Dawson Orthophoto Image

2.0 West Dawson and Sunnydale Area Characteristics

2.1 Community Profile

The West Dawson and Sunnydale local planning area covers 4,372ha on the west side of the Yukon River opposite Dawson City, YT. The area consists of two distinct neighbourhoods: West Dawson and Sunnydale. West Dawson is situated off the Top of the World Highway, in relatively close proximity to Dawson City. West Dawson is primarily a rural residential area with a young population of approximately 50 people (winter population - Community Services, 2005). Lot sizes in this neighbourhood have an average area of 1.5-2ha. Conversely, the neighbourhood of Sunnydale is characterized by agricultural land use and lot sizes exceed 10 ha on average.

Consequently, the distribution of residences in the Sunnydale area is more dispersed than in West Dawson. Additionally, Sunnydale has an older population and fewer residents than West Dawson. During the initial work on the local area plan, consultations with residents of the study area revealed that the two communities are fairly insular, and that little collaboration on issues in the study area has occurred in the past. One of the objectives of the planning process was to help residents appreciate the similarities and differences between the two areas and how they can work together to achieve common objectives.

2.2 Bioregional Assessment

As part of the work done for the initial working paper (*Inventory and Analysis Discussion Paper, December 2007*), a bioregional assessment was undertaken to highlight key issues and valued components of the study area. Local knowledge was gathered through discussions with both residents and people living in Dawson City who know and use the area. The information collected from the bioregional assessment has been captured spatially in **Map 1 – Community Values Mapping**.

A number of observations resulted from this local input:

- The distribution of wildlife is relatively uniform throughout the study area and includes bear, moose, caribou, and fox. Conservation Officer Services also reported marten, lynx, and wolf, grouse, geese, and Sandhill cranes. No spatial information for the ranges of these species was available at a scale appropriate to the size of this study area (Conservation Officer Services, 2007). Wildlife movement corridors reported by residents correspond to the course of creeks in the study area. OK Creek was reported as a common movement route for a number of species. Bear movement was reported near the courses of two dry creeks in Sunnydale.
- Reported heritage sites are mostly situated along the Yukon River. One site of tourism interest, the Klondike Big Inch Claim used in a Quaker Oats marketing campaign, has unfortunately since been sold under the Yukon Agricultural Program (Lands Branch, 2007).

- Local residents also use of the road network for winter recreation because traffic is minimal and the Top-of-the-World highway closed. Such activities include snowmobiling, dog mushing, snowshoeing, and hiking.
- More hiking/snowshoeing activities were reported in the West Dawson area than in Sunnydale where there is greater snowmobiling and dog mushing use.
- A sheltered area of the Yukon River along Spud Island serves as a winter trail. This sheltered area also provides swimming and other summer recreation opportunities to residents.
- Potable water sources are scarce in the study area. The only year-round access for potable water is provided by Swede Creek. Water from OK Creek is reported to have a high mineral content and is unsuitable for drinking. Wells are uncommon and many residents haul water from town as needed.
- The local infrastructure is substandard particularly the road network. Electrical power is also not available on this side of the river so residents rely on off the grid solutions to meet their needs.

2.3 Existing Landscape Conditions

Using existing sources of information, an analysis of the West Dawson and Sunnydale landscape was completed. Slope, drainage, and contour information was created for the area and illustrated in **Map 2 – Existing Landscape Conditions**. Major characteristics of the existing landscape include:

- Steep slopes characterize the study area. Slopes of 30% or more cover approximately 2721ha or 62% of the study area. These slopes are generally southeast facing with good solar aspect. A small proportion of the slopes along Swede Creek face southwest while a portion of the OK Creek slopes are oriented northwest.
- The study area is composed of five watersheds. These watersheds drain into OK Creek, Dawson Creek, Swede Creek, and Benson Creek with two dry creeks providing intermittent drainage in Sunnydale.
- There are two plants of ecological importance in the West Dawson and Sunnydale area. There is a significant population of an orchid, *Cypripedium guttatum*, as well as the rare plant *minuartia yukonensis* (Yukon Stichwort). These plants are only found in specific locations that are relatively accessible. Yukon botanists and Yukon Environment have raised this concern and seek their protection.
- Detailed information on permafrost was not available (Yukon Geological Survey, 2007). However, permafrost is generally found on north facing slopes, near valley bottoms, along the Yukon River and in areas of fine-grained soils. The effects of permafrost degradation are most visible in the lower portions of the golf course. The study area is within the discontinuous permafrost zone that means that it is not

always possible to predict its presence or thickness. When present it may melt out when the land is cleared and the surface vegetation removed.

- Soils and soil drainage information was only available for 26% of the eastern edge of the study area along the Yukon River. Of this area, 25% was cited as having poor soil drainage for a number of reasons including steep slopes and permafrost (Walmsley and McKenna, 1987). The areas of poor soil drainage were evenly distributed across both the West Dawson and Sunnydale neighbourhoods.

2.4 Vegetation

The West Dawson and Sunnydale area is predominantly mixed coniferous and deciduous forest with only a small proportion having been purposefully cleared for agricultural and other land uses. Black spruce and white birch are the most common species in the West Dawson and Sunnydale area (Forest Management Branch Inventory, 1990).

Stands in the forested area of the study area are proportionally dominated by:

- Balsam Poplar (*Populus balsamifera*): 130ha or 3% of the study area
- Black Spruce (*Picea mariana*): 1169ha or 27% of the study area
- Trembling Aspen (*Populus tremuloides*): 725ha or 16% of the study area
- White Spruce (*Picea glauca*): 754ha or 17% of the study area
- White birch (*Betula papyrifera*): 1490ha or 34% of the study area.
- Non-forested: 192ha or 4% of the study area

Map 3 – Vegetation depicts the spatial distribution of various tree species in the West Dawson and Sunnydale area. A review of the distribution of trees species in the planning area reveals:

- Forest age is generally between 61-120 years. Black spruce is recorded as having the lowest stand age of 21-40 years. White spruce is recorded as having the oldest stand age of 121-150 years.
- West Dawson is generally characterized by spruce and birch.
- Sunnydale has a greater diversity of tree species than West Dawson with significant stands of aspen and balsam poplar and mature white spruce.
- Small stands of trees are being harvested for personal fuel wood use and there is some limited potential for commercial timber harvest.

3.0 Land Tenure

3.1 Existing Land Use and Land Tenure

Land use and land tenure information was compiled from numerous secondary sources including taxation records, mineral claims, agricultural application records, settlement land distribution records, building permits, leasing records of the Yukon Government and others. Land tenure in the West Dawson and Sunnydale area has experienced some transition. Some early mineral claims evolved into titled lots, some of which later reverted back to the Crown for taxation reasons. Subsequently, some of this land was then transferred to the Commissioner from the Crown during the devolution of Federal responsibilities to the Yukon Government. Land use and land tenure information has been compiled based on available information and is presented spatially in **Map 4 – Existing Land Use**. Some of the major characteristics of land tenure in the area are the following:

- 75% (3288ha) of the study area is classed as open space. This land is registered with the Yukon Government. Of the remaining 25% of land in the study area, 885ha is registered to the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in as settlement land. Settlement land is currently undeveloped. Consequently only a small proportion of land in the West Dawson and Sunnydale area has been developed.
- The dominant land use classes in the study area are agriculture and rural residential.
- Agricultural titles and applications are recorded for 240ha or 5% of the study area. These lots are exclusively located in Sunnydale. 135ha (3%) of land in Sunnydale has been cleared for agriculture, although some of these clearances are not located on land recorded as agricultural and may represent old farms.
- Only 64ha (27%) of the 240ha currently recorded as agricultural land has been cleared. Recent agricultural applications on record show a high interest in farming in Sunnydale.
- Privately owned rural residential land accounts for 130ha or 3% of the study area. Rural residential land is predominantly found in West Dawson, with the exception of two subdivisions on former agricultural land in Sunnydale.
- Commercial recreational land accounts for 48.5ha (1% of the study area). The Top of the World Golf Course accounts for the majority of this land.
- Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in maintains a community trap line encompassing the entire West Dawson and Sunnydale planning area.
- Industrial land refers to placer claims in good standing and gravel pits. Currently gravel pits registered to Highways and Public Works are located at both primary access points to West Dawson along the Top of the World highway, with a third near the northern boundary of the study area (Highways and Public Works, 2007). A fourth gravel pit is centrally located near Sunnydale. Gravel pits account for 7.5ha or less than 1% of the study area.

- Placer claims in good standing account for 122.9ha or 3% of the study area. The distribution of placer claims is exclusive to West Dawson where a number of claims overlap rural residential properties (Dawson Mining Recorder records). This is not uncommon in the Yukon where sub-surface and surface rights are equally protected.
- A relatively small and eclectic trail system can be found in the study area. The majority of trails are found in West Dawson, with only two trails reported in Sunnydale. Residents have commented that they frequently use roads for recreational purposes.
- The road system in the West Dawson and Sunnydale area evolved in an adhoc manner following various trails and has not been upgraded to Yukon engineering standards. Sunnydale Road for example is narrow, steep and meets other roads at awkward angles and intersections have poor associated lines of sight. The key roads into West Dawson and Sunnydale are essentially excessively long cul-de-sacs with no secondary egress for emergency access.

3.2 Aggregate Potential

The surficial geology of the West Dawson and Sunnydale area is characterized by glaciofluvial terraces, alluvial fans, alluvium plains, and colluvium deposits (Duk-Rodkin, 1996). Generally, gravel and finer materials underlie the entire study area. The glaciofluvial terraces are considered to be good potential aggregate sources. The spatial distribution of potential aggregate sources is shown in **Map 5 – Agriculture and Aggregate Potential**. Yukon Highways & Public Works reports that accessible aggregate sources suitable for road construction are generally in limited supply in the Dawson City area and their importance should be recognized in the plan (Marynowski 2008). An analysis of the aggregate potential of the area reveals:

- Good potential aggregate sources make up 14% of the study area (617.6ha). Lower potential aggregate sources form the remainder of the study area, 3754.4ha.
- Potential aggregate sources are loosely distributed in three parts of the West Dawson and Sunnydale area. The majority of these sources are found in Sunnydale (445.5ha or 72%) and only 27.6ha (4.5%) is found in West Dawson. The remainder, 144.5ha (23%), is found in the proximity of Swede Creek.

3.3 Agricultural Potential

The most suitable agricultural land is located along the Yukon River. Of the 1738.7ha of land that was classed as agricultural, only 448.6ha (26%) is located in West Dawson. The remainder is distributed throughout Sunnydale. The distribution of agricultural land is shown in **Map 5 – Agriculture and Aggregate Potential**. These lands have an agricultural capability ranging from Class 4 (the most productive soil in the Yukon) to Class 7. The majority of soils in the surveyed area have a relatively high capability class (Walmsley and McKenna, 1987). Analysis of the agricultural potential of the area indicates:

- 68.5ha (15%) of 448.6ha of agricultural land surveyed in West Dawson is classed as 6-7.
- 181.9 (16%) of 1108.1ha of agricultural land surveyed in Sunnydale are classed as 6-7.
- West Dawson is dominated by Class 5 soils, with Class 4 soils additionally constrained by topography. Sunnydale conversely is composed mainly of Class 4 soils located on relatively even grades.
- Agricultural productivity is relatively limited by topography, adverse climate conditions, soil moisture deficiencies, and permafrost.
- Sunnydale has the best agricultural growing conditions in the Yukon.

3.4 Forest Resource Potential

A small sawmill did operate in the Sunnydale area historically but has not been operational for some time. Fuel wood cutting permits continue to be issued in the study area. EDI Environmental Dynamics Inc completed an assessment of fuel wood opportunities in the fall of 2009 for Yukon Forest Management Branch, The Department also noted that conversion of more forested land to agricultural use represented an opportunity for additional harvesting activity as part of the land conversion activity.

EDI identified the potential for eight new fuel wood harvest blocks in the study area. These sites are shown on **Map 6 –Land Use Capability**. All sites are “characterized by pure (>80%) white birch (*Betula papyrifera*) stands situated on relatively adverse slopes (>30% in some areas). Other common elements found within the proposed harvest area include exposed, detached rock, fresh to moist and well-drained soils and uniform vegetation consisting of species indicative of well-drained, drier sites.

The proposed harvest blocks consist of open/closed white birch stands with a small mixture of trembling aspen (*Populus tremuloides*), white spruce (*Picea glauca*) or black spruce (*P. mariana*); the latter two species mainly found in the lower canopy as regeneration. Ground cover was consistent throughout the harvest area with deciduous leaf litter being a major component. The abundance of leaf litter was evidently preventing growth of understory species such as moss and other small shrubs. Where leaf litter was patchy, step moss (*Hylocomium splendens*) and red-stemmed feathermoss (*Pleurozium schreberi*) were prominent. Alder (*Alnus spp.*) and willow (*Salix spp.*) were the primary understory species while the shrub layer consisted of prickly rose (*Rosa acicularis*), Labrador tea (*Ledum groenlandicum*), bastard toadflax (*Geocaulon lividum*), ground cedar (*Lycopodium complanatum*) and lingonberry (*Vaccinium vitis-idaea*). Grasses were common in open stands¹.

¹ Energy Mines & Resources Forest Management Branch. Interim Letter Report: Top of the World Highway Harvest Area, EDI Environmental Dynamics Inc. October 2009

4.0 Land Capability

4.1 Assessment of Local Area Land Capability

Land capability was based on slope, soils, solar aspect and drainage. Forest species were used as indicators for permafrost and vulnerability to forest fire based on the fuel type description and the hazard classes listed in the FireSmart Plan for the Dawson Region (Tobler and Muraro, 2005). Land capability was designated in terms of high, medium, and low capability and is presented in **Map 6 – Land Use Capability**. Analysis of the area's land capability shows the following:

- Relatively level slopes (<15%), good drainage, and good soils, especially Class 4 agricultural soils, characterize high capability land. High capability lands are least vulnerable to forest fire. These areas are suitable for residential development or agriculture. High capability lands make up 960.6ha (22%) of the West Dawson and Sunnydale area.
- Medium capability lands have slopes between 15- 30% and poorer soils. Forest fire outbreak is an increasing concern in these areas. Medium capability lands are suitable for some forms of development, although some site improvements may be necessary. Limited, non-soil based agriculture may be possible. 1170.3ha (27%) of the study area is classed as having medium capability.
- Steep slopes (>30%) characterize low capability lands. These areas also have the highest vulnerability to forest fire outbreak. They may also contain near surface bedrock, shallow soils and discontinuous pockets of permafrost subject to mass wasting and erosion from surface disturbance. Low capability land comprises the majority of the study area (51% or 2241.1ha).

4.2 Developable Land

Three pockets of developable land of either high or medium capability exist within the West Dawson and Sunnydale area. These areas are shown on **Map 7 – Development Considerations**. The distribution of low capability land between pockets loosely corresponds to reported major wildlife movement routes and steeper slopes. An assessment of the positive and negative features that would influence development is summarized in **Table 1**.



Steeper slopes Sunnydale access road



Sunnydale Class 4 agricultural land

Table 1: Positive and Negative Attributes of Development Pockets

Pocket	Positive Characteristics	Negative Characteristics
West Dawson	Currently rural residential in character – 13% of total area has been developed as private rural residential.	Moderately vulnerable to forest fire outbreak.
	Established road network that can be readily improved on.	Single road access Some steep slopes that may require improvement before development is possible.
	Established FireSmart.	Can be expanded.
	Distribution of high capable land along Top of the World highway provides an opportunity for cost effective development without the installation of much new infrastructure.	Need to avoid sprawl. Spot land applications and maintain view quality.
Sunnydale	Is the largest development pocket and has an established agricultural character. Best land for agriculture.	Rural residential uses may out compete agriculture and create pressure for agricultural land conversion.
	Has the highest proportion of high capability land.	Existing infrastructure is not well established and requires repair and upgrading to modern standards.
	Has the highest proportion of Class 4 soils in immediate proximity to Dawson City.	Drained by two dry creeks that will require protection to avoid seepage and/or flooding.
Swede Creek	Land is predominantly owned by either Yukon or Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in governments.	No infrastructure currently exists and the development of necessary roads may cost prohibitive.
	No existing land use or neighbourhood character established.	Only existing road into this pocket requires repair and the construction of a bridge where it crosses OK Creek.
	Higher probability of encountering potable well water – Swede Creek surface water already used locally by some.	Area is relatively isolated with poor access.

A comparison of capability characteristics is presented in **Table 2**. These pockets of developable land have been labelled West Dawson and Sunnydale according to the neighbourhoods they encompass. For convenience, the third pocket has been named for the most prominent feature in the area – Swede Creek.

Table 2: Comparison of Land Capability Characteristics for Development Pockets			
Pocket	Total area of pocket (ha)	Proportion of High Capable Land (%)	Proportion of Medium Capable Land (%)
<i>West Dawson</i>	588.7	42	58
<i>Sunnydale</i>	789.3	45	55
<i>Swede Creek</i>	646.5	51	49

4.3 Climate Change

Climate change may have a range of impacts upon land use within the West Dawson and Sunnydale area. Although much work remains to be done to understand the potential long-term impact of climate change upon this area, preliminary analysis suggests that West Dawson and Sunnydale may experience a variety of changes in coming years.

These climate change impacts include:

- A warmer climate in which agricultural areas may become more productive and therefore have increased value than is currently anticipated.
- Hot summers that may increase the risk of wildfire to vulnerable areas. Trees may become stressed due to shifting hydrology and changing winter conditions.
- Insect outbreaks have increased as milder temperatures affect seasonally restricted insect populations to a lesser degree.
- Increased permafrost degradation can be anticipated. This may affect hydrology, bank stability and erosion characteristics. Shifts may include changes in water quality if the reported permafrost barrier between aquifers breaks. Melting permafrost, especially along steep slopes, may lead to mass wasting. Slumping may shift current drainage patterns and negatively affect roadways, increase marshy areas, and increase the risk of flooding in low lying areas.
- Animal species may change their distribution and range in response to warmer weather. Some species such as caribou may become less frequent in the area, while others such as deer may be more prevalent. A northern shift in the range of

herbivores may create additional stress for forest species. Additional stress may in turn increase the risk of forest fire.

- Increased variability of severe weather, especially rain, may create new challenges for residents. Increased wind speeds may also cause more trees to blow down indirectly contributing to an increased risk of forest fire.
- Shorter, warmer winter weather may affect the duration of an ice bridge in winter, which may increase the seasonal isolation of residents.

4.4 Forest Harvest Proposals

The EDI Environmental Dynamics assessment identified a total harvest area of 163.6 hectares containing approximately 11,860 m³ of suitable fuel wood. **Table 3** summarizes the attributes of the 8 proposed harvest blocks and identifies which blocks have the best harvest potential based on quantity and best access from the highway.

Table 3: Attributes of proposed blocks in the Top of the World Highway Fuel Wood Harvest Area

Harvest Area	m ³ /ha	Slope (%)	Aspect	Block Size (ha)	Total Est. Volume (m ³)	Species Composition	Average Stem Height (m)	Notes
TWH-1A	63.80	18	Northeast	2.39	152.48	W6Sw4	12.8	Relatively small block not very accessible.
TWH-1B	57.97	16	North	30.22	1751.27	W9Sb1	11.7	Harvest area; access road exists.
TWH-2A	77.55	22	Southwest	25.81	2001.57	W7Sw2Sb1	14.8	Optimal volume
TWH-2B	85.23	26	Northeast	13.42	1143.79	W8Sw2	15.4	Steep slopes
TWH-2C	84.00	30	Northeast	7.29	612.36	W9Sb1	14.0	Adverse slope and inaccessible area
TWH-3	99.57	26	West	29.67	2954.24	W7Sw2A1	16.0	Optimal volume
TWH-4	92.03	13	Southeast	17.86	1536.56	W7Sw2Sb1	16.6	Accessible, high harvest potential
TWH-5	46.23	25	East	36.93	1707.40	W5Sw3A2	14.0	Steep slopes
Totals:				163.60	11,859.67			

Source: EDI Environmental Dynamics Inc Project #: 09-YC-0054 Draft Report October 2009

The 4 harvest blocks contain approximately 8,244 m³ of wood spread across 104 hectares. This is equivalent to 69.5% of the identified potential and 63% of the land area identified for this type of use. The four harvest blocks (TWH-1B, TWH-2A, TWH-3, TWH-4) are shown on **Schedule A - Land Use Plan** at the end of this document.



West Dawson Subdivision Fuelwood pile

Part Two: Designations & Policy



Inukshuk staff working with Steering Committee October 2007

5.0 West Dawson and Sunnydale Land Use Designations and Policies

This section outlines the designations and policies that will guide future land use in the West Dawson and Sunnydale area. Both the policies and the designations have been developed with the participation and input of Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Yukon Government agencies and local community. The proposed designations and policies are intended to create a planning framework to manage future development while maintaining the existing lifestyle of residents and preserving the area's rural residential and agricultural character.

5.1 Residential

The amount and nature of further residential development in the West Dawson and Sunnydale area was one of the significant issues of community concern. There is ongoing interest in obtaining land in this area. Construction of a bridge across the Yukon River would spark increased interest in the area as year round access has to date been the main factor limiting development interest. The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in also has significant land holdings in this area and an interest in both development and protection of the values present.

In the course of developing the local area plan, local residents emphasized that the plan needed to maintain their existing lifestyle along with the area's rural residential and agricultural character. Others supported this interest provided residents acknowledged the interest of others who may want to move to the area. Consequently, policies to guide future residential development must balance the desire of local residents to preserve their existing lifestyle and neighbourhoods (**Map 8 – Residential Existing**) with the need to provide expanded opportunities for residential development to accommodate new residents (**Map 9 – Residential Suitable**).

The planning process identified areas suitable for residential development through mapping, site analysis and discussions with the steering committee and community residents. With further discussion of potential demand, plan objectives, and land use compatibility, areas suitable for infill as well as new residential subdivision is shown on **Map 10 - Residential Proposed**. Actual site boundaries may be modified during detailed design following geotechnical assessment. These areas are close to existing road access, consistent with nodal development and support Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in plans to develop some of their settlement land for residential purposes. Proposed future residential development is concentrated in the West Dawson area and would be developed in phases in conjunction with the Yukon Government and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in.

Trail networks are a valued attribute of the West Dawson and Sunnydale community and it is recognized that any infill and new subdivision development should be designed to accommodate such features. The objective is to maintain access to the hinterland and to ensure new developments do not unduly restrict future land use options for development or conservation of adjoining lands.

Environmental protection is also a significant concern for local residents. Consequently, the land use plan ensures that future residential development respects riparian buffers in the area and does not encroach upon existing wildlife corridors and areas of rare flora.

Proper fire smarting is recognized as being essential for any proposed future residential development. Any new residential subdivisions must also have secondary access allowing residents and emergency personnel access/egress in case of a major fire. Secondary access is not mandatory in infill development if the existing access is considered satisfactory. Each situation will be evaluated on its merits.

Self-reliance and self-sufficiency have always been part of the West Dawson Sunnydale lifestyle. This is reflected in the level of interest in and support for home-based businesses as a secondary land use. There are generally two types of home-based businesses. Home occupations generally refer to the provision of a service, carrying out of a profession, trade or craft in the residential dwelling unit by only the owner or resident occupant.

A major home-based business allows for the business activity to be conducted either within the principal residential building or an accessory structure and may include several employees. In both cases the activities are subordinate to the residential function of the property and include limits on the proportion of space devoted to business activities, restrictions on outside storage and other activities so as not to change the residential character of the neighbourhood.

The principal planning concerns raised during the public consultation were the need to ensure that the nature of activity permitted does not interfere with the residential character of the surrounding area or end up as simply commercial use of a residential lot. These matters will be dealt with in more detail in the Area Development Regulations.

The following policies have been developed to guide residential development in the West Dawson and Sunnydale area:

5.1.1 Residential Policies

1. All infill opportunities should be explored within West Dawson and Sunnydale before any further new residential subdivision development takes place.
2. New residential development should be concentrated in West Dawson and away from lands with high agricultural land capability.
3. Lot size in West Dawson and Sunnydale will determine the types of uses permitted, the nature of the development regulations for each area and the appropriate subdivision and development standards to be applied.
4. New residential development should be phased and developed sequentially in conjunction with Yukon and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in governments.
5. Residential uses will include single-family residences and may include home occupations and home based businesses where the business activity is

secondary and subordinate to the residential function and the activity involves the resident property owner directly.

6. The scale of any future residential development will respect the character of the existing residential neighbourhoods and include consultation with affected citizens.
7. Maintaining access to existing recreational trails is a priority. Trails will be identified and accommodated within any future residential development to the extent possible.
8. Spot residential land applications will not be accepted in the planning area.
9. Infill and new subdivision development shall maintain public access to hinterland areas and not inhibit access to lands beyond the new subdivision for conservation or development purposes.
10. Residential development will respect a minimum 30 m setback along either side of all waterways within the planning area.

5.2 Agriculture

Sunnydale has the best growing conditions for agricultural production in the Yukon. Consequently, the preservation of the area's agricultural capability is amongst the local area plan's primary objectives. In the summer of 2009, the Agriculture Branch reviewed the capability of lands identified for possible agricultural development. **Map 11 – Agriculture Existing & Proposed** shows both the existing and updated potential agricultural lands in the West Dawson and Sunnydale area.

David Murray, Manager, Agriculture Land Resources, Energy Mines & Resources notes the mapping summary states that "permafrost is found throughout most of the mapped area, but because the bench is likely underlain by gravels with resulting ice contents, clearing of this permafrost susceptible bench for agricultural development should be possible." The Agriculture Branch cautions that such lands should be developed with care and persons contemplating such development would be wise to consult their neighbours who have experience in successfully managing the conversion of such lands for agricultural use.

Despite having excellent growing conditions, the present agricultural potential of the developed agriculture land parcels in the Sunnydale area has not been fully utilized. Public comment suggested more land could be made available for local food production and the existing agricultural lands better utilized if the minimum lot size was reduced. It was also suggested that climate change might have a positive impact on agricultural production in this area. Consequently, the local area plan facilitates small-scale agricultural production by allowing for agricultural capable land to be subdivided into smaller lots than is currently allowed under present regulations.

The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in is aware of the agricultural capability and local food production capability of much of their settlement lands within the Sunnydale area. Consequently,

the majority of their settlement land within this area has been designated for this type of future use.

The plan acknowledges that the Sunnydale area has some of the most productive soils and growing conditions in the Yukon. Preserving the area's agricultural capacity supports the principle of "highest and best use" as well as long-term sustainability objectives such as local food production. Complimentary activities (i.e. the golf course and agritourism) would also continue to be permitted.

5.2.1 Agriculture Policies

1. The agricultural capability of Sunnydale will be preserved with the objective of providing opportunities for local food production and agritourism.
2. The local area plan will allow for complementary activities (i.e. the existing golf course) that are compatible with the agricultural character of the Sunnydale area.
3. A range of agricultural lot sizes will be permitted ranging from 3-65 ha to encourage local food production.
4. Privately held agricultural parcels that are not subject to prohibition of subdivision, as per *Subdivision Act (1995)* section 3, may be subdivided where no resulting lot is less than 3 hectares in area.
5. Applications for non-soil based agriculture will not be permitted on lands identified as having a high capability for soil-based production.

5.3 Public Services & Institutional Uses

During the public consultation process, the need for various community infrastructure improvements was raised. Residents of West Dawson and Sunnydale must by nature be more self-reliant and adaptable than people living on the east side of the Yukon River because access is restricted to these neighbourhoods each spring and fall during freeze-up and break-up. Some services others take for granted such as fuel delivery, electrical power etc. are not available or restricted during these periods and residents must plan accordingly.

This has raised concerns by some suggesting the need for local fire protection and a community well while others have suggested a need for some sort of community recreation facility to reduce each neighbourhood's isolation from the other. Others find the status quo acceptable given the small population and low level of development.

From a land use planning perspective, determining an appropriate location for a community well and fire protection facility would be an appropriate first step coupled with development of a fire protection strategy and protection of the Swede Creek drainage that serves as the informal surface water source for some. Community facilities could include a well or water storage facility coupled with a Firehall in a central location.

There is general consensus that changing climatic conditions will increase the forest fire risk and an overall wildfire management strategy consistent with the Local Area Plan is

needed. It is recognized that part of a comprehensive plan should include a Firesmarting program on both developed and undeveloped land and this could be coordinated with the identification of areas for personal fuel wood harvesting and possibly, a limited commercial harvest. This idea was also raised in the context of possibly establishing a sustainable community forest.

As noted during the local area planning process, much of the local road network has not been constructed to any acceptable road standard. There is a real need to improve the local roads and make sure that the local road network adheres to territorial standards. A detailed engineering analysis to examine the state of the local roads and pose solutions to the numerous shortcomings of the local road network was beyond the Local Area Plan scope of work.

The results of such a study should address emergency secondary access to both neighbourhoods and may require existing road realignments to meet geometric standards for safety, maintenance and effective traffic circulation.

The availability of gravel suitable for road construction in the Dawson City area is more limited than many people realize according to Yukon Highways & Public Works. This is especially true along the Top-of-the-World Highway. Approximately 14% of the study area is underlain by accessible aggregate sources. Seventy-two percent of that potential is located in the Sunnydale area. Generally these areas correspond with lands suitable for a range of other surface land uses including residential development and agriculture.

The immediate need will be for gravel to bring local roads up to an acceptable minimum standard. Estimating the quantity required is premature until a complete engineering assessment is completed and agreement reached on what the minimum acceptable road standard should be. Since the bulk of roadway improvements will be required in the Sunnydale area where the greatest aggregate potential exists, it only makes sense to identify an area suitable for this purpose. One small pit already exists and could be expanded.

Public concern relates to how aggregate resources are extracted and what the post development land use might be following pit reclamation.

In the longer term, a Yukon River bridge would generate the greatest immediate demand for substantial aggregate extraction primarily for bridge abutments, bank riprap protection and concrete production. Again, it is difficult to project what quantities will be required and when so the logical planning approach is to identify where the resources are located (see **Map 5 - Agriculture and Aggregate Potential**) and provide direction on appropriate land management policies.

5.3.1 Public Services & Institutional Uses Policies

1. A central location in West Dawson along the Top-of-the-World Highway will be identified and set aside for community facilities including as a minimum, a well (or water storage) potential fire hall and community meeting/recreation space.

This area is identified as Potential Community Use on ***Schedule A – Land Use Plan.***

2. Rationalization of the present road network including future expansion will be a priority. The appropriate engineering study should identify minimum construction and maintenance standards, priorities for existing road upgrades to address public safety and secondary access deficiencies, and confirm local aggregate production needs.
3. All gravel pits shall be considered an interim land use to be developed and reclaimed according to best practice standards. The location, size and life of each pit should be defined in a management plan that addresses issues as noise, traffic, dust, screening, sequential reclamation and other issues of local concern.
4. Applications for aggregate production will be considered on their merits. Priority will be given to applications in locations identified on Schedule A and directly related to local road improvements and/or the maintenance needs of the Top-of-the-World Highway.
5. The Local Area Plan supports an active fire smart program and local integrated forest management plan that includes consideration of local fuel wood needs, the potential for small-scale commercial harvest and protection of other local values including watershed protection, wildlife use and recreation.

5.4 Commercial & Industrial Land Use

Not all residents supported the idea of allowing for commercial and industrial facilities as some expressed concern over the scale and type of activities that might be compatible or incompatible with the character of the existing area.

Historically, placer mining, a small sawmill operation and the golf course represent the range of commercial/industrial activities that have taken place. More recently there has been interest in and the emergence of some home based businesses including a distillery.

In reality, the current population and the projected population of West Dawson/Sunnydale without a bridge over the short to medium term is insufficient to support viable year-round businesses oriented to the needs of the local population. Even seasonal, tourism businesses such as the golf course face business challenges. The most likely scenario, as discussed in the residential policy section, is the growth of home-based businesses catering to specific business niches.

From a planning perspective, there is some undeveloped potential for tourism businesses along the Top-of-the-World Highway in particular. Identifying a small commercial node, perhaps in conjunction with other community facilities would be more in keeping with the character of the area than endorsing spot land applications on an adhoc basis. One of attributes of the highway corridor in the study area is the very lack

of development and opportunities for scenic views from the highway as it climbs out of the valley bottom to follow the ridgelines.

At this time demand for commercial land is minimal. However, should a bridge be built across the Yukon River, the speculative demand for both commercial and residential land can be expected to increase substantially. Thus it would be prudent in the coming years to encourage further community discussion to identify appropriate locations for such activities and clarify the nature of commercial uses the public is prepared to support.

It is recognized that the sub-surface rights associated with all placer claims in the planning area will continue to be protected under the Placer Mining Act and the Mining Land Use Regulations

5.4.1 Commercial & Industrial Land Use Policies

1. Spot land commercial and industrial land use activities will be discouraged.
2. The location of any future commercial development along the Top-of-the-World Highway will be evaluated on its merits taking into account the following: the nature of the activity proposed, the potential for encouraging a concentrated urban form and discouraging sprawl, compatibility with adjacent land uses and protection of scenic views among other factors.
3. It is recommended that the Yukon Government withdraw a portion of the planning area from future mineral staking. Specifically, the area that would be removed from future staking would encompass all of the lands located within 250m of any area designated as Residential, Agricultural, Protected Area, or Traditional Use on the **Schedule A - Land Use Plan** map.

5.5 Traditional Use

West Dawson and Sunnysdale are within the Traditional Territory of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. Consequently, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in have considerable settlement land in the West Dawson and Sunnysdale area. The traditional use designation (see **Map 12 - Traditional Use Proposed**) ensures that Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in members are able to pursue their traditional activities on designated settlement lands in accordance with Final and Self Government Agreements. These traditional activities could include a range of heritage, cultural and spiritual uses. Traditional use activities also occur on non-settlement lands throughout the study area and the treaty rights of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in to continue these uses remain.

5.5.1 Traditional Use Policies

1. The majority of R-68B and C-17B have been reserved primarily for traditional use activities by Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in members for a wide range of activities (including

but not limited to, heritage, cultural and spiritual uses) that are consistent with a subsistence lifestyle, and in accordance with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in land management regime.

2. On all other settlement land within the study area, traditional use activities will continue until such time as more detailed planning identifies a need to accommodate the future Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in interests as shown, on **Schedule A – Land Use Plan**.

5.6 Open Space

The majority of the West Dawson and Sunnysdale area is designated as open space. Public open space is an important attribute of the West Dawson and Sunnysdale area. Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in citizens recognize the intrinsic value of undeveloped open space and the opportunities such spaces provide to pursue traditional use activities. Similarly, local residents value the recreation and lifestyle benefits that come from living in an area close to nature that is largely undeveloped. The open space designation (see **Map 13 – Protected & Open Space Proposed**) is intended to ensure lands are developed in an orderly and economical manner while preserving as much of this area in its current state as possible. Spot land applications in this area are discouraged while some limited resource extraction may be permitted in accordance with the Local Area Plan's objectives. The areas designated as open space also provide corridors for wildlife movement throughout the West Dawson and Sunnysdale area.

5.6.1 Open Space Policies

1. Existing recreational trails within areas zoned as open space will be identified and mapped in more detail to ensure adequate protection.
2. Some public uses, such as trail development and forest resource permits for personal fuel woodcutting, would be permitted in the open space designation.
3. A 30 m buffer (from top of bank) will be implemented along each side of all waterways within the area designated as open space as well as throughout the entire planning area to enhance watershed protection objectives.
4. Other uses may be considered in the open space designation subject to a review of the Local Area Plan.
5. Within the area designated as open space, corridors will be maintained to allow for the movement of wildlife through the planning area.
6. The respective Yukon and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in governments will establish a mechanism to ensure cooperative use of public open space areas.

5.7 Forest Management

Forest Management activities occur within the larger Open Space designation and should be undertaken in a manner compatible with other values. The EDI Environmental

Dynamics Inc forest resource assessment identified areas of birch suitable for small-scale commercial and personal woodcutting. Additional areas may be added in the future as determined by timber harvest planning as it occurs from time to time.

5.7.1 Forest Management Policies

1. Forest management and fuel abatement activities may be permitted where necessary within open space areas. Forest resource permits for 25m³ of wood (10 cords or less) for personal non-commercial use will continue to be permitted. Commercial use and fire abatement programs may be permitted subject to community notification and completion of a timber harvest plan.
2. All merchantable timber and fuel wood should be salvaged to the extent possible as a condition of agricultural land disposition and subdivision development.
3. The option of establishing a community forest should be examined to encourage greater community participation in sustainable forest management.
4. Existing access should be used wherever possible to access fuel wood harvest areas with due regard to any recreational use and safety. Highly significant recreational trails should either be avoided or rehabilitated after harvesting operations are completed.
5. No woodcutting will be allowed within the boundaries of the area identified for the protection of rare plants.
6. Existing timber harvests permits will be grandfathered in the study area.
7. Forest harvesting activities in the area described as “Traditional Birch Harvesting Area” on the Schedule A-Land Use Plan shall be limited to traditional birch harvesting as identified in any timber harvest plan completed by the Forest Management Branch of Energy Mines and Resources.
8. Any timber harvest plan completed by the Forest Management Branch of Energy Mines and Resources shall ensure that any forest harvesting activities which may be permitted in the area described as “Community Trapline” on the Schedule A-Land Use Plan shall incorporate best management practices to address potential impacts on trapping activities and/or the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in’s interest in using the area for educational trapping purposes.

5.8 Protected Areas

The West Dawson and Sunnydale area contains two plant species of regional and territorial importance. There is a significant population of the orchid *Cypripedium guttatum* (Spotted Lady’s Slipper) within the planning area that may be vulnerable to poaching.

In addition to the *Cypripedium guttatum*, there is also a population of the rare plant *Minuartia yukonensis* (Yukon Stichwort). The proposed protected area (see **Map 13 – Protected & Open Space Proposed**) is intended to protect both these plants and their specific habitat requirements.

5.8.1 Protected Area Policies

1. Any all-terrain vehicle (ATV) use of the area must keep to existing trails and to the extent practical, will be relocated.
2. No development will be allowed within the protected area until the completion of a management plan.
3. Fire-smarting activities may be permitted if necessary within the protected area as long as such activities do not endanger the local rare flora.
4. Collection of the plant species identified for protection is prohibited and an appropriate land designation under existing Yukon legislation will be put in place to ensure the necessary form of protection needed.

5.9 Land Use Plan

The land use plan developed for West Dawson and Sunnydale is attached as **Schedule A – Land Use Plan**. It is comprised of the various land use designations discussed previously and illustrated in **Maps 10 - 13**.

5.9.1 Interpretation of Land Use Boundaries

The land use designation boundaries illustrated in Schedule A for public lands have been interpreted from aerial photography, generally available resource mapping at different scales and visible site conditions. The boundary lines between public and private land is determined by the legal plan of survey. The land use designation boundaries as shown on Schedule A, are for general land use planning policy purposes only. They are “soft” boundary lines that illustrate the preferred land use intent and boundary relationships while providing administrative flexibility for final boundary determination during subdivision. The intent is to avoid triggering the need for unnecessary minor plan amendments where the land use proposed is consistent with the plan’s intent.

A “minor administrative boundary adjustment” may be requested by a proponent or the government with approving authority after a detailed site inspection. Factors that would be considered include but are not limited to, proximity to environmentally sensitive lands, site topography, parcel shape, access, resolution or mitigation of minor land use conflicts and similar matters. Notice of requests for such amendments will be posted on the lands in questioned and advertised publicly.

Administrative boundary adjustments cannot be applied to Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in settlement land boundaries as they are defined by the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in Land Claim Agreement. The Local Area Plan also does not envision administrative boundary adjustments that would reduce the 30m minimum buffer requirement set out in section 5.6.1.3.

6.0 Implementation

Effectively implementing the Local Area Plan for West Dawson and Sunnydale will require a number of actions. The following action steps are recommended:

1. Preparation of Area Development Regulations

At present, only the existing West Dawson Homestead subdivision adheres to any residential subdivision regulations. Developing a consistent set of standard regulations to apply to the entire West Dawson and Sunnydale area is the first step in plan implementation. The lack of a general standard for residential subdivision development was one of the primary reasons for developing a local area plan, it is recommended that the development of area regulations for the West Dawson and Sunnydale area be given top priority and address in more detail, minimum lot size, the type and nature of land uses allowed, the rules applicable to land conversion and subdivision as well as any other matters related to land management that warrants more clarity to ensure land use compatibility and implement the intent of the policies outlined in this Local Area Plan.

2. Explore Options for Area Resident Input in Local Governance Decision Making

The residents of West Dawson and Sunnydale need to consider how they wish to ensure their input into future local decision-making including the implementation of the Local Area Plan. Possibilities include establishing a local advisory committee or maintaining the status quo. Future growth in the community or the scenario of a bridge being constructed to link the area with the City of Dawson may necessitate a more formalized local governance structure than presently exists in the area. It is recommended that the West Dawson and Sunnydale community take action to address this issue.

3. Phasing of Future Development & Road System Improvements

The local area plan has proposed general locations for future residential development in the West Dawson and Sunnydale area. While the general location and extent of these areas has been defined, the phasing and sequencing in which these areas would be developed has not yet been done. The pace, scale and timing of future development is difficult to project.

Construction of a bridge or other alternative to improve year round access to the west side of the Yukon River is the key consideration in the probable pace of change. In the interim, a number of basic infrastructure improvements are required. A number of these improvements are quite costly and favour a more compact development form as suggested in this land use plan.

As noted earlier, much of the local road network has not been constructed to any acceptable road standard. There is a real need to improve the local roads and make sure that the local road network adheres to territorial standards. A detailed engineering

analysis needs to be undertaken to examine the state of the local roads and present solutions to the numerous shortcomings of the local road network.

Related to the issue of improving the local road network is the issue of emergency access for residential subdivisions in West Dawson and Sunnydale. In the event of a catastrophic wildfire or any serious emergency, all existing and proposed residential subdivisions in West Dawson and Sunnydale should have emergency access. It is recommended that the engineering analysis of the local road system consider the need for secondary access to each neighbourhood and recommend an appropriate service standard.

While further subdivision development in the area may still be some time in the future, it is recommended that local residents, in conjunction with Yukon Government and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, identify how future development will be phased in conjunction with an overall infrastructure improvement strategy, starting with rationalization of the existing road network.

4. Fire Protection Strategy

Given changing climatic conditions that may increase the risk of forest fire in the West Dawson and Sunnydale area, it is recommended that a comprehensive fire protection strategy be developed for the planning area taking into account the Local Area Plan's recommendations for future development. As part of a comprehensive fire protection strategy, proper Firesmaring of both developed and undeveloped areas in West Dawson and Sunnydale would reduce the risk which wildfire poses to local residents.

7.0 Plan Review and Amendment

This is the first local area plan for the West Dawson and Sunnydale area. Circumstances invariably change over time. This plan has a 10-20 year time horizon. New opportunities, issues and land management concerns will likely emerge during this period. They may be triggered by the availability of new resource information, completion of plan implementation priorities, and other matters not considered during initial plan preparation. Generally, such plan reviews are scheduled within 5 to 10 years depending on the level of land development activity, nature of land disposal or Area Development Regulation zoning requests received.

Area Development Regulations are the primary method to implement the direction and policies set out in the Local Area Plan. They must be consistent with the approved Local Area Plan. Where a requested amendment to those regulations would be inconsistent with the Local Area Plan, the Local Area Plan would need to be amended first. While requests for amendments to either the Local Area Plan or Area Development Regulations are considered on their merits, such requests are generally considered premature unless they involve a significant amount of new information not available at the time of initial plan preparation.

The useful life of every local area plan differs depending on the quality of information available for initial planning purposes, the level of detail considered and the circumstances triggering a request for review or amendment. In the case of the West Dawson and Sunnydale Local Area Plan, the construction of a bridge across the Yukon River was identified as a circumstance that should automatically trigger a plan review because it would result in significant new land development pressure.

The Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act process also provides a mechanism for the consideration of the individual and cumulative impacts arising from specific development proposals. That process also considers whether a proponent's proposal is consistent with an approved local area or regional land use plan and requires the assessor to consider what actions might be taken to bring a non-conforming proposal into alignment.

A proposal to re-designate public or private lands within **Schedule A – Land Use Map** to uses not contemplated in the Local Area Plan would trigger a plan review and possible amendment.

The process would include public notification, government-to-government consultation between the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and Yukon governments, a requirement for a public meeting and a minimum 30-day comment period. Where the proposed amendment would affect only settlement or non-settlement land, the government having jurisdiction for the lands in question is the decision-making authority. The respective government will notify the applicant, the other government and residents of the planning area of the decision reached. Where the consequences of an amendment request affect both governments, best efforts will be made during the review process to arrive at a consensus decision.

7.1 Bridge Construction

The construction of a bridge linking West Dawson and Sunnydale with the Town of the City of Dawson is one of the issues that initially drove interest in undertaking a local area plan for the West Dawson and Sunnydale area.

Construction of a bridge should trigger an automatic review of the Local Area Plan to determine its current capacity to manage land use and development pressures triggered by bridge completion.

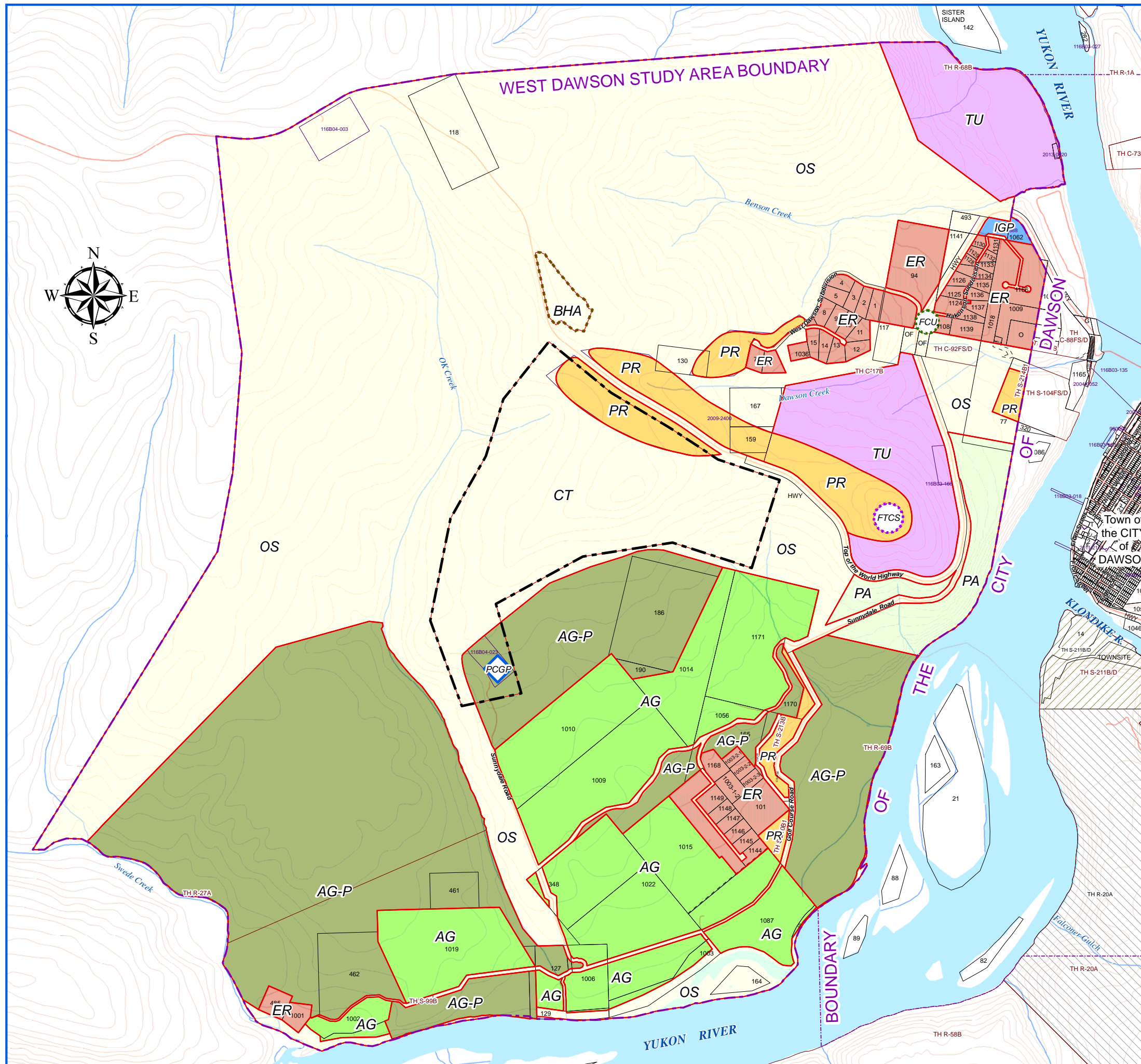
8.0 Conclusion

The West Dawson and Sunnysdale Local Area Plan balances the desire of local residents to maintain their existing lifestyle with the likely demands of growth and change. No community ever remains static and the West Dawson and Sunnysdale community is no exception. While it is not possible to know with any certainty the future of the West Dawson and Sunnysdale area, it is possible to create a planning framework to manage growth and promote desirable change in the community. The West Dawson and Sunnysdale plan was developed through an interactive process involving local residents, government agencies, and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. It is hoped that the results of the planning process accurately reflect the needs and aspirations of local residents, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in members and future residents of the area.

It should be noted that the Local Area Plan is not intended to remain as a static document. The plan will continue to evolve with the changing realities of the local area. The Local Area Plan provides a foundation for land management decisions in the area as well as a general vision for the future of West Dawson and Sunnysdale. While the plan cannot anticipate every issue that may emerge in the future, it is hoped that the principles and general vision articulated in the plan will help to guide land use planning in the area for the long-term.

SCHEDULE A LAND USE PLAN

West Dawson & Sunnydale Local Area Plan



Legend

- AG Existing Agriculture
- ER Existing Residential
- IGP Industrial (Gravel Pit)
- I Institutional
- OS Open Space
- AG-P Proposed Agriculture
- PR Proposed Residential
- PA Protected Area
- TU Traditional Use
- BHA Birch Harvesting Area
- CT Community Trapline
- FCU Future Community Use Site
- FTCS Future THFN Tourist Commercial Site
- PCGP Proposed Central Gravel Pit Reserve
- Study Area Boundary

