

# A Summary of the Draft Dawson Forest Resources Management Plan



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**The planning team welcomes all feedback  
on the draft plan.**

To provide comments, get more information, or pick up copies  
of the full text version of the draft Dawson Forest Resources  
Management Plan contact:

**Dawson District Renewable Resources Council**

Madame Tremblay Building (Third and King), Dawson

Phone - (867) 993-6976

Email - dawsonrrc@northwestel.net

**Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation**

Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Main Administrative Building, Dawson

Phone - (867) 993-7160

Email - Renee.Mayes@gov.trondek.com

**Government of Yukon**

Client Services and Inspection, Energy Mines and Resources

Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Main Administration Building, Dawson

Phone - Chad Dyce (867) 993-5468

Email - Chadwick.Dyce@gov.yk.ca

Forest Management Branch, Whitehorse

Mile 918.07 Alaska Highway

Phone - Lyle Dinn (867) 456-3813

Email - Lyle.Dinn@gov.yk.ca

## **A Summary of the Draft Dawson Forest Resources Management Plan**

This document provides a summary of the draft Dawson Forest Resources Management Plan (FRMP). The draft plan was prepared by Dawson Forest Management Planning Team in consultation with many parties and individuals. Team members include representatives of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation, the Dawson District Renewable Resources Council, and the Government of Yukon.

In developing this draft plan, the Dawson Forest Management Planning Team considered the values and views of the region's residents, the members of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation, the Dawson District Renewable Resources Council, and the Government of Yukon, as well as Yukon non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders.



Forest harvesting located along the South Klondike River. *Photo: YG*

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Dawson Forest Resources Management Plan (FRMP) is to provide a framework for the sustainable management of a forest-based economy in the Dawson forest planning region. The plan provides practical guidance for forest managers and planners to protect and integrate ecological, traditional, resource, heritage, and other community values. As stipulated in Chapter 17 of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Final Agreement, the FRMP identifies and provides recommendations to address the issues, concerns, values, and interests, as forest resource development progresses in the region.

The Dawson Forest Resources Management Plan:

- 1) Identifies the key forest resource-related issues in the region;
- 2) Identifies the potential land base for forest development;
- 3) Identifies strategic directions for forest management; and
- 4) Provides a framework of goals, objectives, and indicators to guide forest resource development in the region and monitor the results.



Specially designed forest harvesting machinery at work. Using mechanical equipment during the winter reduces the risk of soil compaction and worker injury. A large proportion of harvesting occurs during the winter resulting in very little disturbance to the forest floor.  
*Photo: YG*



### Key steps in developing the Dawson Forest Resources Management Plan

January 2004	In the absence of any regional forestry planning, a wood supply planning team was assembled to identify wood supply areas for vicinity of Dawson.
June to October 2005	Wood supply planning team identified the need for Regional Forest Management Plan.
January 2006	Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation and Yukon governments started discussions on a formal agreement to establish a regional forestry planning team.
May 2006	Formal agreement signed and planning team established. Planning team began work on the plan.
May 2006 to present	Planning team meetings were held in Dawson, hosted by Dawson District Renewable Resources Council.
March 2009	Public open house held in Dawson.
Fall 2009	Draft plan presented to public for review.
Next Steps	Plan recommended to the Governments for approval. Implementation begins.

A forest worker uses a bull dozer to disturb the forest floor to promote seedling establishment. As part of adaptive management process, trying different types of treatments helps find forest practices that work to reduce the thick moss layer or create suitable areas to plant so seedlings can get established and grow.

*Photo: YG*

## THE PLANNING REGION

The Dawson FRMP planning region is located in the north-central Yukon Territory. It includes all public and settlement (First Nation) forest lands within the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Traditional Territory, including a portion of those lands that overlap with the First Nation of Nacho Nyäk Dun Traditional Territory (see map inside back cover). The management responsibility and boundary of the FRMP is consistent with the Sharing Accord between the First Nation of Nacho Nyäk Dun and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in signed July 26, 2006. The region covers approximately 34,000 km<sup>2</sup> of land, including forested areas, tundra, rivers, lakes, wetlands, rock, and human developments. This area includes most of the Y11 Forest Management Unit.

## FOREST PLANNING AREAS

The entire Dawson FRMP region is sub-divided into smaller forest planning areas known as Landscape Units (LU) (see map inside back cover). These units facilitate area-specific management planning and form the boundaries for detailed information gathering and monitoring. LUs are based on landscape features, such as watershed boundaries, as well as forest cover type and general forest-related values. They usually contain similar management concerns and forest types.

The plan identifies 17 different Landscape Units in the FRMP region and lists the key values in each. These values were determined through a review of existing information and through community consultation. Identified key values include: wildlife key habitat areas and critical habitat for species at risk; protected areas and key wilderness tourism areas; heritage resources including archaeological sites and traditional use areas; settlement lands, and; existing commercial operations. The Planning Team assessed the values in each LU and determined a priority for planning and a timeframe for development. Each LU has been assigned one of three possible types of strategic forest land use zones. A strategic designation system is a key component of an integrated forest resource management framework.



A log barrier is left to limit access to the harvesting area. Roads are a concern to wildlife managers and the public. *Photo: YG*

## FOREST RESOURCES IN THE DAWSON PLANNING REGION

The dominant tree species in the region are black spruce, white spruce and white birch. Black spruce dominates on wetter, poorly-drained sites. Mixed forests of white spruce, paper birch, trembling aspen, and balsam poplar are found on warmer sites and south-facing slopes. Black spruce stands are mixed with aspen and birch on sites where disturbance, such as fire, has occurred within the last 100 years. Lodgepole pine is also occasionally found with black spruce, although this species is at the northernmost extent of its range in this region. Paper birch communities can be found on lower and mid-elevation slopes. Balsam poplar stands grow along floodplains. Alpine fir is occasionally found at higher elevations.

Traditional economic activities have been and remain an important use of forest resources in the Dawson region. Fishing, hunting, berry gathering, and small game trapping are important activities that require consideration in forest resources planning. In addition to resource values, forests in the Dawson region provide significant ecological and aesthetic values, cultural and heritage values, recreational values, and other non-timber values.

The 1898 Gold Rush brought an increase in small scale timber harvesting and milling, with cabin logs being cut and sold to the wave of prospectors arriving in Dawson City. Timber was also harvested for steamer fuelwood, mining, and construction of houses and boats. With a current, annual harvest of approximately 3000 to 4000 m<sup>3</sup>, small scale forestry continues to contribute to the local Dawson economy.

Forestry is necessarily a small scale industry in the Dawson region as forest productivity is limited by the cold climate and short growing season. With careful management, however, Dawson's forests can sustain a vibrant, small scale forest industry that provides timber for local markets, energy, economic opportunity, and employment for the region's residents over the long-term.

Forest resources planning brings with it the opportunity to support local economic development and to encourage investment in the Dawson region. Forest resources planning also responds to local interests in securing access to the forested land-base and facilitates longer-term forest tenure.

*The Dawson planning region is home to at least 29 species of small mammals, 19 species of large mammals, 165 bird species, as well as several species of freshwater fish and salmon. The plan recognizes the importance of maintaining fish and wildlife and populations and protecting habitat.*

### ***Vision for Forest Management***

*The Dawson Forest Resources Management Plan recognizes and supports the following vision as a guide to forest management in the planning region:*

*“ Our vision is for a healthy forest that provides environmental, economic, social and cultural benefits for present and future generations.”*

### ***The framework for forest planning***

*The recently developed Yukon Forest Resources Act identifies three main levels of forest management planning.*

- 1 Forest Resources Management Plan (FRMP)** – A FRMP is a strategic, overarching, landscape level plan intended to provide broad direction on where and why forest resource management activities should be undertaken. The purpose of an FRMP is to identify forest resource values and sensitive areas, identify forest resource management zones establish management intent, and landscape level targets or management of these zones. FRMP extend over large landbases, often greater than 1,000,000ha in size.
- 2 Timber Harvest Plan (THP)** – A Timber Harvest Plan is a development plan that identifies areas proposed for harvesting of forest resources, and strategies for reducing or eliminating environmental consequences and impacts on other resources identified in the FRMP. Timber Harvest Plans can extend over landscape units, or watersheds, ranging from 5000ha to 100,000ha in size.
- 3 Site Plan** – A site plan is a site specific management plan. It identifies the specific area and attributes of the area proposed for harvesting, as well as the stand level management activities, methods and standards for harvesting to ensure the protection of the forest resource values on that harvest area; and a reforestation plan with proposed silviculture activities. A site plan extends over one to 500ha in size.

*A woodlot plan is similar to a Timber Harvest Plan; however it is designed for a woodlot license area and may have an annual allowable cut specific to the woodlot license.*

## **STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS AND DIRECTIONS**

In developing the plan, the Planning Team had to consider all the various factors that influence the management of forest resource in the Dawson forest planning region. In the plan, these factors are presented as strategic considerations. Strategic considerations include several planning and legislative initiatives, as well as the mandates and responsibilities of management agencies. The plan also identifies a number of key issues as additional strategic considerations that affect forest management.

The strategic considerations form the basis for the strategic directions that are also described in the plan. Some examples of strategic directions identified in the plan are:

### **Heritage and archaeological resources**

- Adhere to the provisions of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Final Agreement and the Yukon Historic Resources Act with respect to management of heritage resources including archaeological and heritage sites.

### **Local fuelwood market**

- Develop accessible burns for fuelwood opportunities for both commercial and personal use fuelwood harvesters. Over time, develop fuelwood harvesting opportunities within Flat Creek, Dempster Highway and North Fork Road burns.
- Develop and maintain white birch harvesting areas surrounding Dawson. Key areas for potential white birch harvesting are Hunker Creek, Bonanza Creek and the Top of the World Highway.
- Manage the volume of white birch harvested so that over harvesting does not occur and opportunities remain for traditional uses of birch stands.

### **Forest sector development**

- Establish a forest land base which will contribute certainty for investment in the forest sector.
- Support stable and secure access to forest resources as a foundation to a healthy forest industry.
- Support diversity as a community economic development strategy.
- Support tenure allocation procedures that provide opportunity for a variety of industry applications.

**Green energy**

- Support the development of a green energy industry and tenure opportunities for the local forest industry that utilize wood fibre and reduces community dependence on burning fossil fuels.

**Timing and distribution of harvesting**

- Utilize a variety of opening sizes consistent with the disturbance history.
- Consider concentrating logging in some areas and leaving other areas undeveloped, as well as utilize existing access in order to reduce land use conflict caused by road access and human caused disturbance.

**Woodland caribou**

- Maintain the quality of core caribou winter range habitats by differing commercial harvesting of timber within the critical core caribou winter range for the period of the plan. Harvesting may be necessary for access or essential control of insect infestations, wildfire or diseases or in association with other land uses.
- Consult applicable caribou management plans as they are created and amended.

**Tourism and visual quality management**

- Integrate management of valued viewsapes into planning along the Dempster and North Klondike highway corridors and major recreational and historic trails and routes.
- Design harvest blocks that simulate natural forest openings and blend into the landscape to reduce the visual impacts.

**Placer mining and forestry**

- Ensure that the higher value timber in riparian areas where placer mining activity is occurring is accessible and is being utilized by the forest industry or by other users.
- If possible, reduce or remove forest management guidelines and standards for riparian management if placer activity is planned or is occurring in the riparian management area so that forest industry operators can salvage the forest resource before it is impacted by placer activity.
- Ensure that clarity and proper approvals are sought from regulatory authorities pertaining to rights to harvest timber on mining claims.

### **Traditional and non-timber uses of forest resources**

- Identify opportunities for harvesting of non-timber forest resources during harvest planning.  
Support continued access and management of traditional and non-timber forest resources.

***See the full text version of the plan for the complete description of the strategic considerations and directions.***

### ***Timeframe for planning and forest activities***

*The Dawson FRMP has been developed with a 20-year planning horizon. Forest managers should review and update the plan whenever necessary to accommodate major and unforeseen changes in the forested landscape. A full review should occur every 10 years. Revisions may also be necessary based on the results of monitoring. To provide for the long-term sustainability of the region's forests and the needs of future generations, the planning time frame for some values, such as timber resources, is 200 to 300 years.*



Current view of forest opening created by logging in 1985. Photo: YG

## FOREST MANAGEMENT GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND INDICATORS

The plan presents five goals for forest management in the Dawson region:

- A Conserve biological diversity
- B Maintain forest ecosystem health and productivity
- C Conserve and maintain soil and water resources
- D Maintain and enhance multiple socio-economic benefits
- E Maintain and enhance community sustainability

### ***Adaptive management***

*The Dawson FRMP follows a strategy of adaptive forest management. Forest ecosystems are complex and dynamic and our ability to predict how they will respond to management actions is limited. An adaptive management approach means that forest managers are able to improve overall management practices by adjusting their responses and activities as conditions change.*

For each of these five goals, the plan identifies a number of more specific objectives. These objectives further define the forest values that the community wishes to sustain and enhance in the region. Objectives set the future direction for forest management decisions and actions, and provide a basis for evaluating the outcomes of forest management.

For each objective presented in the plan, there is a corresponding set of indicators. Indicators are used to monitor how well the outcomes of forest management fulfill the objectives stated in the FRMP. Indicators are used to answer the question, "Are we achieving the goals and objectives of our plan?" Indicators also allow forest managers and the community to identify aspects of forest management that need improvement. More importantly, they tell managers how the outcomes of forestry and forest-based activities will be evaluated by the community.

Indicators are a critical component of monitoring programs and a key tool in adaptive forest management. They are not meant to be used for enforcement purposes. If they are monitored regularly and supported by good information (including scientific, traditional and local knowledge), indicators can serve as early warning signs of forest management issues that require attention. Indicators requiring attention should help inform the adaptive management process and lead to new and improved management.

***See the full text version of the plan for the complete description of the forest management goals, objectives and indicators.***

## PLAN IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW

The plan is a working document that must be responsive to a changing environment and changing needs and values. It will require monitoring, and periodic review and revisions. It will be implemented by all relevant government departments and agencies through their management and regulatory activities.

### Roles and responsibilities

The role of the Planning Team ends with the approval of the plan. However, it may be reconvened to consider periodic amendments to the plan. These amendments will be based on changing circumstances, conditions and feedback.

Government of Yukon Forest Management Branch and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Lands and Resources Department are responsible for the following activities:

#### a) Plan implementation

- Review existing or new plans to ensure consistency with this plan.
- Coordinate implementation on their respective landbase.
- Distribute copies of the plan to licensed resource users, lands and resource management staff, stakeholders, and the public.
- Manage resource use within existing or future legislation, regulations, and standards.
- Develop supporting policy for implementation of FRMP.
- Continue to work together on forest management and forest management planning on a government-to-government basis.



Ground view of area recently logged. *Photo: YG*

b) Plan monitoring, amendment and review

- Facilitate the development of an effective and practical monitoring program.
- Collect and compile indicator information, revise the indicators as necessary, and raise issues that need to be addressed.
- Prepare a monitoring report that reviews and compiles indicator information and assess how well the plan is meeting its objectives. (The monitoring report shall indicate how the objectives and strategies in the FRMP are being met through specific forest management activities, subsequent planning processes and timber harvest plans and permits.)
- Determine timing of review of the plan.
- Strive to complete monitoring report within three years of approval of the FRMP.

Dawson District Renewable Resources Council has responsibilities for activities identified in Chapter 17 of the Umbrella Final Agreement and for the following:

a) Plan implementation

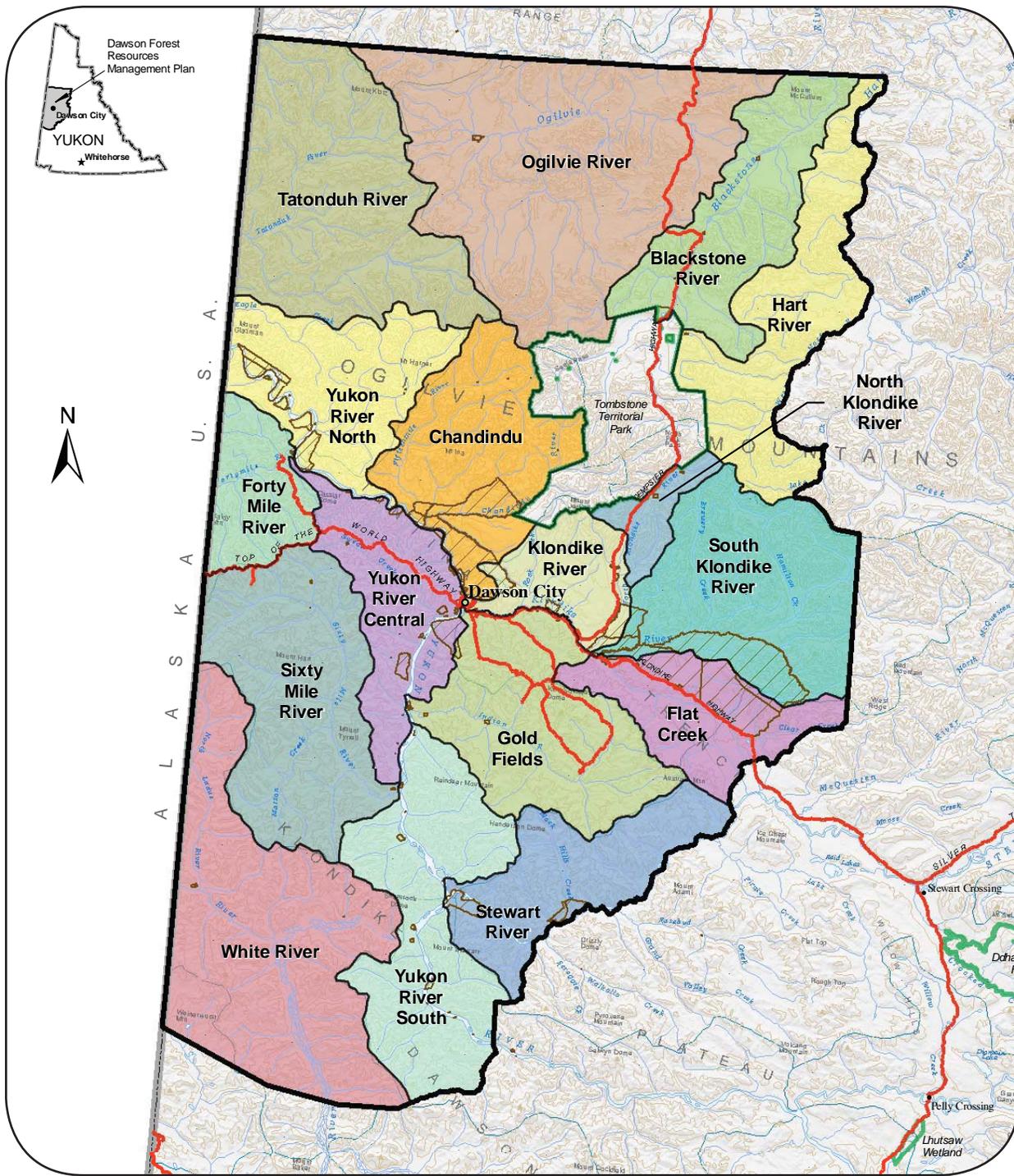
- Facilitate effective consultation of forest plans and information sharing throughout the planning region.

b) Plan monitoring, amendment and review

- Recommend revisions to the plan to the Forest Management Branch and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Lands and Resources Department.

**Approval bodies**

*The approval bodies for the FRMP are the Yukon and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in governments. The Government of Yukon is responsible for approval and implementation of the FRMP on public lands, while the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in is responsible for approval and implementation of the plan on settlement lands (Chapter 17.5 of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Final Agreement).*



**DAWSON FOREST RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PLAN**

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**Landscape Units**

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April 2009

**Legend**

- Dawson Forest Resources Management Plan
- Landscape Units
- Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Settlement Land
- Parks and Protected Areas
- Road

0 10 20 40  
Km  
North American Datum 1983  
UTM Zone 8N  
1:1,500,000

**Yukon** Forest Management Branch  
Energy, Mines and Resources  
Énergie, Mines et Ressources  
Yukon Territory

Area covered by the plan showing Landscape Units.