



Fish Habitat Management System for Yukon Placer Mining

Adaptive Management Report (2008)

Prepared by

The Yukon Placer Secretariat

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The Fish Habitat Management System for Yukon Placer Mining replaced the Yukon Place Authorization (YPA) in 15 Yukon watersheds on April 11, 2008. Founded on principles of adaptive management and incorporating a risk-based approach to decision-making, the system is intended to balance the objectives of a sustainable Yukon placer mining industry with the conservation and protection of fish and fish habitat supporting fisheries

Adaptive management recognizes that the effectiveness of any management system is hampered by a degree of uncertainty and lack of knowledge. It seeks to improve the system by monitoring the effects of management actions, in order to learn from the results. The Adaptive Management Framework for Yukon placer mining is complemented by traditional knowledge and water quality objectives monitoring, aquatic health monitoring and economic health monitoring programs. The results should provide new information and a rational basis for making any adjustments required to achieve the two management objectives.

The Adaptive Management Framework (November 2008) describes how information generated from the three monitoring programs and traditional knowledge will be reviewed and considered. It also guides the development of recommendations for changes that may be required to ensure the objectives of the fish habitat management system are achieved.

Adaptive management recommendations will be made by the Yukon Placer Secretariat's Inter-governmental Management Group (IMG). Typically, the IMG consists of representatives from Fisheries and Oceans Canada, The Yukon's Departments of Environment and Energy, Mines and Resources, and the Council of Yukon First Nations. Individual First Nation governments will be invited to participate on the IMG when the adaptive management framework is applied to watersheds in their traditional territory.

On June 18, 2009, a meeting was held to discuss the results of the monitoring conducted in 2008. The IMG was augmented by representatives from the Tr'ondek Hwech'in government, the First Nation of Na-cho Nyuk Dun, the Selkirk First Nation, the Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation, and the Teslin Tlingit Council.

It should be noted that with the exception of water use licenses issued after April 11, 2008, the new fish habitat management system did not result in reduced sediment discharge standards or stricter site management practices in 2008. Consequently, the monitoring results for 2008 are an assessment of the *status quo*, as opposed to the beneficial influence of the new rules for Yukon placer mining.

The meeting commenced with a brief overview of the Fish Habitat Management System for Yukon Placer Mining, and a review of the Adaptive Management Framework and its guiding principles. This was followed by a presentation of the results of the water quality objectives monitoring, aquatic health monitoring and economic health monitoring programs. No additional traditional knowledge was shared for consideration under the Adaptive Management Framework in 2008.

A question and answer period with ample time for comments and suggestions followed each presentation. Many questions pertained to the sampling and analytical methods, and were fielded by the technical staff supporting the IMG. There were also questions about the data presented in the three monitoring reports. Participants in the meeting were complimentary about the comprehensive nature and scope of the reports, but were also somewhat overwhelmed by the volume of data to be considered.

The following recommendations were made by meeting participants:

- An attempt should be made to summarize results in a way that makes it easier to share with community members.
- Plain language should be used whenever possible, and explanations should be provided for all acronyms.
- Information should be provided on the specific species of fish found during sampling, as opposed to simply reporting upon fish species diversity.
- There should be one map that shows all monitoring sites in the Yukon.
- All monitoring results and the associated links should be available from the Yukon Placer Secretariat website.
- The annual monitoring reports should be distributed on a compact disc (CD), rather than in a printed volume.

The meeting participants did not provide any further comments or suggestions in writing. This draft Adaptive Management Report has been distributed for review by all parties, and written comments will be accepted until August 14, 2009. The IMG will give full and fair consideration to all submissions, after which the Yukon Placer Secretariat will publish the final report.

The annual adaptive management report is intended to influence the following year's monitoring programs. The Yukon Placer Secretariat and its partners are resolved to adhere to the data collection, analysis and reporting timelines required to make this possible, and to publish a final report by April each year.