



Dawson Regional Planning Commission

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Dawson Regional Land Use Plan Interests and Issues Report

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Executive Summary

This report is the Commission's record of the input it has received from the Yukon Government, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Government and interested public stakeholders. In this report, the Commission provides a summary of the interests and issues presented in written submissions to the Commission and from comments made at community meetings.

Some of the interests identified by the Plan Partners and public directly concern the land and resource base; others are connected to the relationship people have with the land and resource base. Some interests are shared among stakeholders, while others may be in direct conflict with other interests.

The Commission recognizes the challenges presented by such a diverse range of ecological, cultural and economic interests sharing a common resource base. The mandate of the Commission is to define a common, sustainable vision for the foreseeable future that minimizes land use conflict among interests. This document will be used to guide research and further consultation to help understand how that future might unfold.

Though a diversity of interests and issues were expressed, the Commission recognizes four key themes that will be addressed in the regional land use plan:

1. Mineral Exploration and Mining

The Dawson Region has experienced significant historic mineral exploration and mining activity. Recent discoveries in the region will lead to further exploration and possible mine development. The Land Use plan will need to address the cumulative affects of mineral exploration, mine development and access issues.

2. Conservation of fish& wildlife habitat

The desire to maintain a healthy ecosystem was clearly expressed. The regional plan must provide the framework for identification and designation for protection of areas of high ecological significance or sensitivity.

3. Defining a “Workable Balance” for sustainable development

Balancing economic development with environmental protection may provide greater equity in social outcomes by sustaining traditional subsistence activity. A regional land use plan can establish a framework for evaluating the “workable balance” of alternative approaches to achieving the desired future state.

4. Land Use Conflict within the Yukon River Corridor

The Yukon River is a key artery for the region and Yukon. It experiences multiple uses and a wide range of user groups. It is very important to the subsistence of the TH First Nation. This will be one of the more important issues that the land use plan will need to address.

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Summary of Interests	2
2.1	Cultural.....	2
2.2	Ecological	2
2.3	Economic.....	2
3	Summary of Issues	3
3.1	Yukon Government.....	3
3.2	Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in Government.....	4
3.3	Public Submissions.....	5
3.4	Community Meetings	7
4	Key Themes for a Dawson Regional Land Use Plan	9
4.1	Mineral Exploration and Mining	9
4.2	Conservation of Fish and Wildlife Habitat.....	9
4.3	Defining a “Workable Balance”	10
4.4	Yukon River Corridor	10
5	Next Steps in the Planning Process	10

1 Introduction

The Commission is required to conduct public consultations to identify regional interests and planning issues relating to, but not limited to traditional uses, land surface tenure, renewable resource uses, oil and gas, mining and mineral exploration, water resources, agriculture, climate change, transportation, communication, waste management, tourism, recreation, heritage and culturally significant sites. The Commission's first significant product is a public document summarizing the interests and issues identified through the planning process.

This report is the Commission's record of the input it has received from the Yukon Government, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Government and interested public stakeholders. In this report, the Commission provides a summary of the interests and issues presented in written submissions to the Commission and from comments made at community meetings.

"Interest" is intended to refer to an ecological, economic or cultural value that is contained in, expressed by, supported by or inspired by land, water, fish, wildlife, historic and heritage resources within the planning region.

"Issues" is intended to refer to any aspect of the abundance, status or condition of an interest or value about which people have expressed need, desire, concern or fear.

"Themes" are significant issues driving regional change, either economically, ecologically, or both. Key themes for preparation of a regional land use plan are identified from common concerns expressed in the submissions. The Commission must develop a Plan that responds to the challenges associated with these themes.

The Commission recognizes the challenges presented by such a diverse range of ecological, cultural and economic interests sharing a common resource base. The mandate of the Commission is to define a common, sustainable vision for the foreseeable future that minimizes land use conflict among interests. This document will be used to guide research and further consultation to help understand how that future might unfold.

The summary of issues and interests contained in this report is neither exhaustive nor reflective of the Commission's priorities for the development of the land use plan. It is intended that this summary report should reflect the diversity of interests as expressed in submissions to the Commission. The Commission will continue to receive feedback from the Plan Partners and consider input and comments from the public until completion of its draft plan.

2 Summary of Interests

Some of the interests identified by the Plan Partners and public directly concern the land and resource base; others are connected to the relationship people have with the land and resource base. Some interests are shared among stakeholders, while others may be in direct conflict with other interests. Interests from all submissions taken together may be broadly characterized as reflecting ecological, economic or cultural value. Below is a summary of interests identified to the Commission at community meetings or in written submissions:

2.1 Cultural

- Protection of traditional land use practices and subsistence harvest
- Preservation of heritage and historic resources
- Ensuring continued use of oral history and traditional knowledge
- Protection of touristic and recreational experience
- Managing contribution to climate change from human activity
- Adaptation of human activity and buildings to climate change
- Adoption of best practices to reduce impacts from human activity

2.2 Ecological

- Protection of water quality, quantity and rates of flow
- Protection of wildlife habitat and wildlife populations
- Protection of fish habitat and fish populations
- Protection of rare or endangered species
- Protection of representative ecological benchmarks
- Maintaining connectivity between habitat areas

2.3 Economic

- Sustainable use of known economic resources
- Potential for discovery of new mineral deposits
- Potential for discovery of oil and natural gas resources
- Protection of Accessibility to resources for economic development
- Realization of economic benefit from resource development
- Subsistence economy based on trapping of furbearing wildlife
- Sites and routes of cultural, heritage or historic significance for tourism
- Scenic viewsapes that enhance recreational and tourism activity
- Managing community growth and related infrastructure
- Potential for development of hydro, solar and biomass energy resources

3 Summary of Issues

The Plan Partners each took a different approach to identifying issues for a regional land use plan. In the case of Yukon Government, issues are identified separately within departmental mandates, with some commonality evident in the interests and areas of concern. In the case of Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, the issues and interests are identified in terms of the relationship between people, the land and culturally important resources. Public submissions and input from community meetings address a diverse range of issues that will present a challenge to developing consensus on objectives for a regional land use plan.

3.1 Yukon Government

The complete Technical Report on Issues and Interests may be found in the “Appendix A” to this report. Online links to supporting documentation from the Technical Report may be found in Table A1.

A summary of issues is presented below:

- The range of issues identified reflects the diversity of departmental mandates.
- Most departments observed that the level of activity associated with mineral staking and exploration was a key driver in the need for land use planning, assessment of conservation priorities or management of cumulative effects.
- Some departments indicated that future economic development would require additional land base, new physical access and infrastructure corridors.
- Other departments noted that the additional land base and road access required to sustain current levels of economic activity could diminish ecological resource values and increase the potential for conflict between resource users.
- A common concern was expressed that existing information resources might be inadequate: to assess priorities; to identify potential conflicts; to estimate resource demand; or to monitor and evaluate change.
- A need was identified for an integrated approach to: protection of critical conservation areas; routing of access roads; phasing of land uses; provision of infrastructure; and to monitoring the cumulative effects of human activity.
- The Regional Plan is identified as an opportunity to minimize conflict between competing land uses and foster sustainable development of the region's renewable and non-renewable resources.

3.2 Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Government

The complete Preliminary Report on Issues and Interests may be found in the Appendix "B" to this report.

A summary of issues is presented below:

- Principles, goals and management responsibilities respecting the rights and interests of Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in citizens are contained in the First Nation Final Agreement.
- An increasing level of activity within the region may escalate the potential for cumulative impact on land, fish and wildlife resources.
- Critical issues identified with Heritage Resources are: Recognizing the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Perspective; Implementing Adequate Heritage Management Procedures; Avoiding conflict between industrial activity, heritage resources and subsistence harvesting.
- Issues associated with Fish and Wildlife Harvesting and Habitat are: Conflict between resource development and traditional pursuits; Protection of important harvesting and trapping areas.
- Issues concerning Sustainable Development are: appropriate thresholds on activity associated with mineral exploration to sustain flow of benefits over longer time; comprehensive access management to limit habitat fragmentation and negative cumulative effects; phasing of development to facilitate successional land use activities; adaptation and mitigation of climate change effects, including carbon sequestration; integrated management of timber and non-timber harvest resources; and adequacy of baseline data for assessment of cumulative effects.
- A Land Use Plan would be more effective than project-by-project assessment as a tool for management of cumulative effects.

3.3 Public Submissions

Over the summer of 2011, the Commission invited written submissions from the public. Issues contained in the submissions are summarized below, and attributed to the originating author. Copies of written submissions received by the Commission to date may be found in the Appendix “C” to this report.

Acronyms

YCM – Yukon Chamber of Mines

KPMA – Klondike Placer Miners Association

CWS – Canadian Wildlife Service, Environment Canada

WCS – Wildlife Conservation Society Canada

YCS – Yukon Conservation Society

YSSC – Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee

YEC – Yukon Energy Corporation

- Mineral exploration and mining is a highly regulated industry in Yukon. A land use plan should minimize overlap or redundancy of assessment and regulatory mechanisms. (YCM, KPMA)
- Identifying areas of high potential for mining requires availability of access to large tracts of land for mineral exploration. (YCM, KPMA)
- Economic feasibility of mineral resource development is dependent on physical access and energy supply. (YCM, KPMA)
- Unique and highly valued riparian and wetland habitats occurring within the region should be conserved for migratory birds, species of conservation concern and to sustain biodiversity within the region. (CWS)
- Access development for socio-economic activities should maintain the integrity of highly valued ecological corridors. (CWS)
- Habitats of rare and unique species endemic to the region (Beringian mammals, insects and plants) require conservation, although their distribution is not well known. (WCS)
- Protected areas established primarily for conservation of wildlife habitat need to be large enough to maintain the integrity of ecological processes. (WCS)
- Heritage, cultural and economic land uses occurring within the Yukon River Corridor each require specific management designations to preserve other values. (WCS)
- Public access occurring as a result of resource extraction in wilderness areas should be managed to maintain status and quality of wildlife habitats and populations. (WCS)
- The Yukon River should be managed to protect overlapping ecological, heritage and recreational values. (YCS)
- Areas of significant ecological value (wintering habitat, lambing areas, spawning grounds) unaffected by previous industrial activity (mining) should be granted the highest level of protection. (YCS)

- All methods of access for economic development have potential for adverse impact and should be managed accordingly. (YCS)
- Declining salmon returns affect subsistence, commercial and recreational harvest; International Treaty obligations for salmon management and habitat protection.(YSSC)
- Potential exists for hydro power generation within the region. (YEC)

3.4 Community Meetings

The Commission conducted community meetings in Dawson City (May 27), Whitehorse (June 08) and Old Crow (June 20). In total, about 30 people attended these sessions, which presented an overview of the Commission and the planning process and gave people an opportunity to ask questions of the Commission and the planning team. Comments provided by those in attendance are summarized under general headings below:

Governance and Decision Making

- Commission presence is essential at community meetings
- Presentation at General Assembly would raise profile for Plan
- Previous plans should be considered:
Fortymile, Trochek, Porcupine Caribou Management Plan, Dawson Forest Management Plan, Klondike Valley Plan, Tombstone corridor plan
- Important to think ahead, anticipate change, make plans

First Nation Land Claims

- Constitutionally protected rights to access and use of land and resources
- Decision authority on settlement lands
- Purpose for land selections not clear
- Contiguous boundary between TH and VG should follow watershed

Traditional Knowledge

- Long oral history about relationships with land
- Importance of maintaining FN culture for future generations
- Losing the elders with real “traditional knowledge” and time on the land

Wetland and aquatic habitat

- Identify and protect habitat for waterfowl, fish and wildlife populations
- Salmon habitat is critically important
- Harvest management to increase escapement

Fish & Wildlife habitat

- Key habitat for moose and sheep needs to be identified and protected, especially near potential development areas (i.e. White Gold)
- Biodiversity of unglaciated terrain, lots of endemism, but distribution is not well known; how can new discovery be dealt with?
- Mitigation required to protect & restore habitat
- Staking moratorium on critical conservation areas
- Critical habitat for grizzly bears and salmon (Fishing Branch)
- Access corridors (E-W) should not interfere with caribou migration (N-S), in vicinity of Miner and Whitestone Rivers
- Better fish information needed

Watershed management

- Maintain long term water quality, quantity and rates of flow
- Issues with ownership & export of fresh water
- Plan should designate one protected watershed

Landscape scale

- Salmon/caribou are important as ecosystem and economic components
- Vistas are highly regarded, Yukon River is an important travel corridor
- Adaptation to climate change (mass wasting, permafrost melt)
- Consider cumulative effects indicators and thresholds

Economic Development

- Maintain availability of residential and commercial land
- Quality of life dependent on both economic development and environmental conservation
- Access management needed, consider number and location of access points along existing routes
- Consider cumulative effects of development

Conservation areas

- Should be representative and large enough to maintain ecological processes
- Not restricted to wetlands and lakes, other habitats require conservation as well

4 Key Themes for a Dawson Regional Land Use Plan

Implementing a regional land use plan is a key milestone in achieving the broader objectives of the First Nation Final Agreements. In producing the land use plan, the Commission will be-challenged to address the interests and ~~current~~ issues raised by the Plan Partners and public. Though a diversity of interests and issues were expressed, common themes emerge that require consideration in the drafting of a regional land use plan.

4.1 Mineral Exploration and Mining

Quartz claim staking has increased in the White Gold, Klondike Gold and Dawson Range districts, and east of the Dempster Highway. This “staking rush” has prompted concern about the cumulative effect of follow-up exploration activity, direct conflict with other resource values, and the consequences of increased access into hinterland regions for resource exploration. On-going mineral exploration and future mineral development may be dependent on short-term exploration access and long-term access and infrastructure corridors, for placer as well as for hard rock mining. Industrial development, access roads or energy corridors will need to be managed to mitigate adverse impact to fish and wildlife habitat, to limit hunting pressure on sensitive, remote wildlife populations and to minimize loss of traditional use. Cumulative effects of access, mineral exploration and mine development are best dealt with at the landscape scale in a regional plan, rather than at a site level through project assessment.

4.2 Conservation of Fish and Wildlife Habitat

Many secondary benefits are derived from a healthy ecosystem, from meeting the food and cultural needs of Yukon First Nations to providing wildlife viewing and general tourism opportunity. Over the longer term, conservation of habitat extends the material, aesthetic and spiritual values associated with wildlife and natural habitats to future generations. Salmon and caribou in particular are culturally important, migratory species that require a broad regional and trans-boundary management perspective. The limited knowledge about the spatial extent of some ecological values makes them susceptible to direct impact from individual project activities. A comprehensive assessment of priority areas for conservation has never been undertaken within the planning region. A regional plan provides the framework for identification and designation for protection of areas of high ecological significance or sensitivity.

4.3 Defining a “Workable Balance”

Mineral exploration and mining activity, tourism, forestry, trapping and guide outfitting provide economic benefit to the region, and the Yukon as a whole. Maintaining access to land and mineral resources, and further growth of alternative economic activities, including non-timber forest products, agriculture, oil and gas development are important to the long-term sustainability of the regional economy. Balancing economic development with environmental protection may provide equity in social outcomes by sustaining traditional subsistence activity. No ecological baseline or monitoring activities are in place to facilitate management of cumulative effects. A regional land use plan can establish a framework for evaluating the “workable balance” of alternative approaches to achieving the desired future state.

4.4 Yukon River Corridor

The Yukon River is a key artery for the region and Yukon. Many ecological resource values, such as migration routes and seasonal habitat are concentrated within the limited confines of major tributaries and within a corridor along the Yukon River. The Yukon River is also highly valued for its historic legacy and as a major travel and freight route to resource rich areas of the central Yukon that are inaccessible by road. Its viewsapes are a substantive part of the recreational and educational river trip experience. The multiple uses of this corridor may lead to conflict between users groups or overuse of limited landing areas. Prescriptive approaches to land use management within a river corridor should be considered in a region or basin wide planning framework.

5 Next Steps in the Planning Process

The interests and issues presented to the Commission are the start of a process to identify, evaluate, prioritize and recommend public policy that will promote objectives for sustainable development; promote the cultural values of Yukon First Nations; and minimize land use conflict within and between Settlement and Non-settlement lands.

The next step in the planning process is for the Commission to take this input and, working with technical staff of Yukon and TH governments, to analyze the available information and traditional knowledge about the renewable and non-renewable resource uses. From this, a comprehensive report will be prepared, including maps representing a consolidation of values of the region. The Resource Assessment report is scheduled for completion by March 31, 2012.

Table A1: Information Sources from Yukon Government Interest and Issues Technical Report

Theme	Links
Agriculture	http://www.emr.gov.yk.ca/agriculture/index.html
Climate Change	http://www.env.gov.yk.ca/monitoringenvironment/ccactionplan.php http://www.env.gov.yk.ca/monitoringenvironment/documents/state_of_env_report2008.pdf http://www.taiga.net/nce/adaptation/Dawson_Plan_Final.pdf
Culture/Heritage	http://www.tc.gov.yk.ca/programs/index.html
Archaeology	http://www.tc.gov.yk.ca/archaeology.html http://www.tc.gov.yk.ca/1589.html http://www.tc.gov.yk.ca/palaeontology.html
Economic Development	http://www.eco.gov.yk.ca/stats/index.html http://sewp.gov.yk.ca/region?regionId=YK.DW http://www.statcan.gc.ca/start-debut-eng.html
Contaminated Sites	http://www.env.gov.yk.ca/monitoringenvironment/contaminated_sites_regs.php#registry
Fish & Wildlife	http://yssc.ca/ http://www.yukonplacersetariat.ca/ http://www.yfwmb.ca/northernmountaincaribou http://www.sararegistry.gc.ca/document/default_e.cfm?documentID=2244 www.env.gov.yk.ca/wildlifebiodiversity/wildlife_key_areas.php
Outfitting & Trapping	http://www.environmentyukon.ca/maps/view/nav/2/15/ http://www.environmentyukon.ca/maps/view/nav/2/30/ www.env.gov.yk.ca/wildlifebiodiversity/cdc.php www.env.gov.yk.ca/wildlifebiodiversity/elc.php http://www.emr.gov.yk.ca/forestry/pdf/Y-EMF_bk_FMP3_draft.pdf http://www.emr.gov.yk.ca/forestry/204.html
Lands	http://www.emr.gov.yk.ca/mlv_jump.html
Local Area Planning	http://www.emr.gov.yk.ca/lands/west_dawson_sunnydale.html
Mining and Minerals	www.geology.gov.yk.ca/databases_gis.html http://www.emr.gov.yk.ca/mining/
Placer Mining/ Exploration	http://www.yukonplacersetariat.ca/placer_atlas.html http://www.geology.gov.yk.ca/databases_gis.html
Oil and Gas	http://www.emr.gov.yk.ca/oilandgas/
Parks and Protected	http://www.env.gov.yk.ca/parksconservation/tombstonepark.php
Tourism	Tourism Information Report (no link)
Renewable energy	http://www.energy.gov.yk.ca/energy_strategy.html http://www.energy.gov.yk.ca/renewable_energy_map_viewer_jump.html
Water Resources	http://yukonwater.ca/ http://www.env.gov.yk.ca/monitoringenvironment/snow_survey.php http://www.env.gov.yk.ca/pdf/hydrometricmanual2005.pdf http://ngwd-bdnes.cits.nrcan.gc.ca/service/api_ngwds:gin/en/wmc/aquifermap.html http://ec.gc.ca/eaudouce-freshwater/Default.asp?lang=En&n=95862893-0

Appendix "A" – YG Submission

Appendix "B" – TH Submission

Appendix "C"- Public Submissions

Appendix "D" – Community Meeting Minutes