



September 22, 2009

Peel Watershed Planning Commission
Att: Albert Genier - Chair
201 – 307 Jarvis Street
Whitehorse, YT Y1A 2H3

Fax: 867/667-4624

Dear Mr. Genier:

Re: Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan – Gwich'in Tribal Council Official Response

The Gwich'in Tribal Council (GTC) would like to provide the following comments with regard to the Draft Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan (PWRLUP). As the PWPC is aware, the Tetlit Gwich'in have used the Peel Watershed as their homeland for generations and would like the watershed to be left in a pristine, untouched wilderness environment as our ancestors left for us to look after and pass on to the future generations of the Gwich'in.

1. The porcupine caribou use much of the planning area as their winter range and the GTC does not support permanent access development through these areas, ie: Peel Plain, Eagle Plains and the river corridors are all critical habitat for the porcupine caribou
2. The Gwich'in use the Peel River and other rivers identified within the PWRLUP, ie: the Vittrekwa River for traditional harvesting of fish, specifically coney, whitefish, dolly varden, herring. These species also use these rivers for spawning during different times of the year – more monitoring has to be completed within these areas, to ensure development activities are not impacting fish and fish habitat. Spawning windows should be included into potential terms and conditions of land use activities.
3. Turner lake and Caribou lakes are also part of the Porcupine winter range and habitat protection of these areas are more important than opening them up for resource development such as oil and gas and minerals.
4. Mineral staking should not be free entry and should be limited within the PWRLUP area, especially where there is potential for uranium and coal bed methane development. The Gwich'in do not support the development of these resources as the impacts are far greater than the benefits.
5. Full integration of traditional knowledge on decision making should be incorporated prior to allowing land use that could have significant and potential impacts to traditional and cultural pursuits.
6. Community based monitoring programs should be developed for fish, water and wildlife, including caribou, to ensure there are no impacts from upstream activities.
7. Ecotourism rather than industrial development should be promoted within the region.

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8. Future development of tourism lodges should be owned, operated and managed by First Nation organizations rather than non-aboriginal ownership and management.

Clause 7.2.3 of Appendix C – The Yukon Transboundary Agreement of the Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement states:

The committee (Peel River Advisory Watershed Committee) shall consider and make recommendations respecting:

(c) the need for, and establishment of, Special Management Areas, as defined in the UFA, or protected areas, as defined in this agreement, in the Peel River and Arctic Red River watersheds.

Therefore the GTC also recommend:

1. Conservation and Special Management areas should be used rather than the more permanent Protected Area status within the Primary and Secondary Use Areas of the GSR.
2. The mouths of the Wind, Snake, Bonnetplume should be designated a Special Management Area.
3. A more similar plan design as the Gwich'in Land Use Plan should be utilized as these designs are easier to manage and designate zones if they were comparable with the Gwich'in Land Use Plan.

The Gwich'in Tribal Council would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments and concerns with regard to the draft Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan. If you have any questions with regard to this letter, please contact the GTC at 867/777-7900.

Yours truly,



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