



Wind River

Photo: R. Vladars, PWPC

The Issues & Interests Report

The Commission completes an important step in the planning process

From May through November of 2005 the Peel Watershed Planning Commission held public consultation sessions in the Yukon communities of Mayo, Dawson, Old Crow and Whitehorse, and the NWT community of Fort McPherson. The purpose of the consultations was to gather issues and interests related to land use planning in the Peel watershed planning region. More than 30 formal presentations and many comments from a wide variety of stakeholders were heard by the Commission during these sessions.

The Commission compiled this input in its *Issues and Interests Report*, which was circulated to stakeholders and made available to the public in January 2006 (www.peel.planyukon.ca). This document will guide the Commission and help focus its attention on the land use planning issues that need consideration. Comments were organized into the following themes:

- Water
- Fish, Wildlife & Habitat
- Culture & Heritage
- Tourism & Outfitting
- Mineral Exploration & Development
- Oil & Gas Exploration & Development
- Transportation & Related Infrastructure
- Other Potential Development Activities

The opinions expressed under the Issues and Interests section of the report do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Commission. No attempt has been made, at this stage in the planning process, to reconcile potential land use conflicts, although the report suggests some potential management directions that could be recommended by the Commission.

The consultation sessions identified current land use activities and infrastructure in the Peel watershed planning region, which include: subsistence harvesting, the Dempster Highway, big-game outfitting, wilderness tourism, and mineral exploration.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

The Peel Watershed Planning Commission has maintained a busy and productive planning schedule. The coming year is certain to be even busier and more productive.

So why are we developing a regional land use plan for a region that currently has so few land use activities and impacts?

As the Commission works towards a draft land use plan, it becomes more apparent that this is a unique and special opportunity for all Yukoners. The Peel watershed represents a region that is largely in its natural state, and is rich in renewable and non-renewable resources.

There are a variety of advantages to planning now rather than later:

- Land use planning helps to set a vision in place for the region, and it is much easier to define that vision before major changes occur to the landscape;
- Land use planning helps to minimize potential land use conflicts when land use intensifies; and
- Land use planning helps to set the desired pace and coordination of development in the region.

There are numerous examples elsewhere in Canada where land use planning is pursued after intensive development has already occurred. But it is much harder to build a vision and act on it if developments have already taken the region on a different path.

The Commission is excited to work on this unique planning exercise with First Nations and Yukon Governments and Yukoners as a whole. We hope that all Yukoners see the value in planning ahead.

— *Albert Genier, Chair*

Communication is Key

It is important for the Commission to ensure that the planning process is public and transparent. It is equally important for the Commission to give stakeholders, planning partners, and the general public an opportunity to voice their interests and concerns, and share their knowledge about resources in the Peel watershed. A number of avenues have been utilized: public consultation sessions, public commission meetings, website downloads, newsletters, formal presentations to the Commission, interviews, and workshops.

Traditional Knowledge Workshops

The Commission held traditional knowledge

workshops in Dawson and Fort McPherson. The purpose of the workshops was to gather information about First Nation land use (ie. camps and cabins, travel routes, fishing, hunting, trapping, and berry-picking locations), as well as information about key fish and wildlife areas in the Peel watershed. These meetings were coordinated jointly with the Tr'ondëk Heritage Department and Gwich'in Land Use Planning Board, respectively.

Harvester & Outfitter Interviews

The Yukon Department of Environment, on behalf of the PWPC Commission, has conducted numerous interviews with Nacho

Nyak Dun hunters and trappers, and with commercial hunting outfitters, to gain greater knowledge of the key wildlife areas in the Peel watershed.

First Nations Meeting

Representatives from the four affected First Nations (Tetlit Gwich'in, Nacho Nyak Dun, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, and Vuntut Gwitchin) gathered in Dawson, along with a Yukon Government representative, Commission members and staff. Discussion focused on the First Nations' perspective regarding their vision for the Peel watershed, as well as outstanding issues and interests.

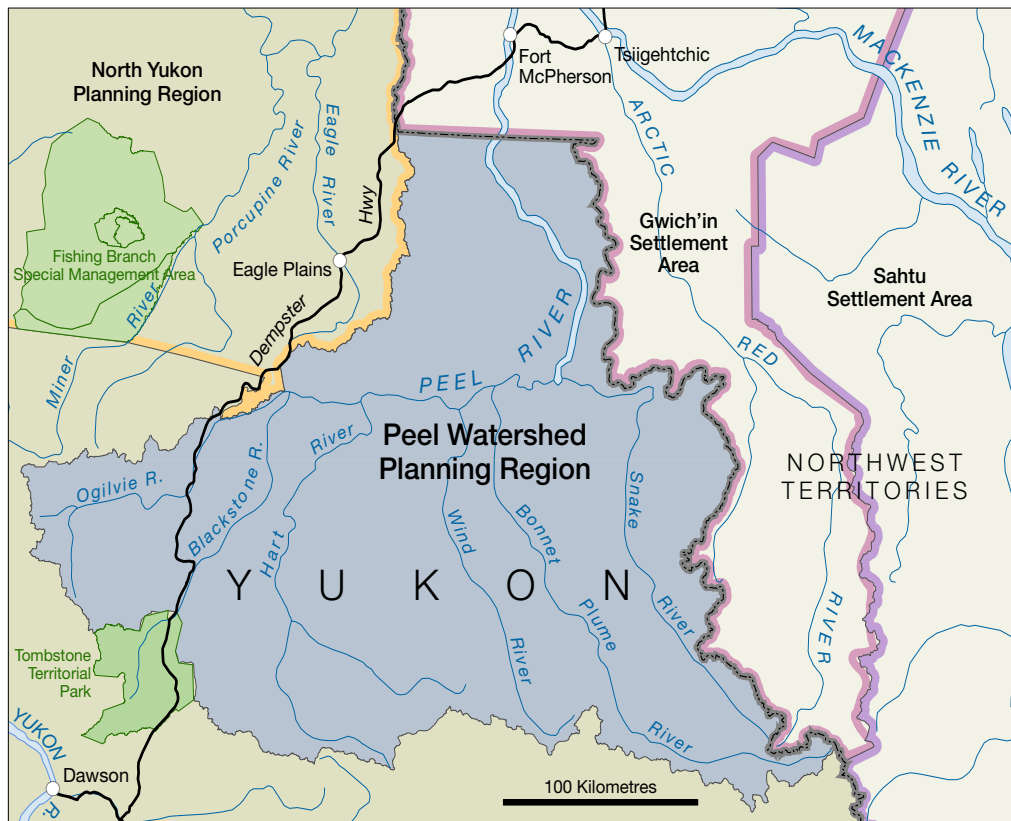
PWPC Website

The Commission has posted a number of documents on the PWPC website and invites comments from the public.

These documents include:

- *Issues and Interests Report* (PWPC)
- Public Responses to the *Issues and Interests Report*
- *Strategic Overview of Possible Mineral Development Scenarios – Phase I Peel Watershed Planning Region* (by Gartner Lee Ltd., prepared for the Economic Development Branch, Yukon Government)
- *Peel River Watershed Fisheries Information Summary Preliminary Assessment* (by Environmental Dynamics Inc., prepared for PWPC)
- PWPC minutes
- PWPC newsletter

As additional documents are produced, the Commission will post these on the website. We encourage you to comment on any documents we have produced. We will then post those responses on the website.



Overview of the Peel Watershed Planning Region



Goz Lake, Bonnet Plume watershed

Photo: R. Vladars, PWPC



Peel Watershed Planning Commission meeting at Goz Lake (June 2006)

Photo: R. Vladars, PWPC

THE PEEL WATERSHED PLANNING PROCESS



Next Steps in the Peel Watershed Planning Process

The issues identified in the *Issues and Interests Report* will help guide the Information Gathering component of Phase II, which is now underway. This work will consume the remainder of 2006. Information gathering focuses on the collection of existing data that is relevant to the Peel watershed – from ecological to economic to geophysical topics. Interviews and workshops with community elders, First Nation land users, and outfitters have also been conducted to fill some of the information gaps.

Information Gathering & Analysis

The Commission sought assistance from private consultants to address information gaps. Gartner Lee Ltd. was contracted by the Economic Development Branch of Yukon Government, on behalf of the PWPC, to assess potential mineral development scenarios in the Peel watershed. The Commission also retained Environmental Dynamics Inc. to provide a summary of the fisheries information in the Peel watershed. These reports are available for download on the PWPC website.

Some projects still need to be completed in the Information Gathering Phase. These projects include:

- Biophysical Map (Oct/06)
- Habitat Suitability Workshops (Nov/06)
- Fish & Wildlife Assessments (Feb/07)
- Conservation Priority Assessment (Feb/07)
- Resource Assessment Report (Winter 2007)

The Commission will use this gathered information to assess the resources and land uses of the Peel region. A resource assessment report will summarize this information.



Woodland caribou

Photo: Chris Widrig

Planning Scenarios

The Commission will consider various planning scenarios and explore the implications of those scenarios. It will also look at potential land use conflicts, and environmental and economic impacts.

Draft Regional Land Use Plan

The final step will be drafting a regional land use plan that recommends a particular management path and vision for the region. Stakeholders will continue to have an opportunity to comment throughout the planning process. The coming months will require a significant investment of Commission time to compile, analyze, and summarize the information. The

Commission is fortunate to have the assistance of Territorial, Federal and First Nation governments, NGOs, and contractor expertise in order to ensure that the Commission is working with the most comprehensive data.



(L-R) Steve Taylor, Brian Johnston, and Dave Loeks discuss flight path into the Peel with pilot from Black Sheep Aviation (Photo: R. Vladars, PWPC)

Peel Watershed Planning Commission Statement of Intent

Preamble

The Commission has heard from First Nations, Yukon Government, the private sector, and the general public with respect to the Peel watershed. The Commission has drafted a *Statement of Intent* as an expression of the Commission's guiding principles and vision for the Peel watershed, which will provide the foundation for the Commission's recommendations for the management direction of the Peel watershed.

The goal of the Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan is to ensure wilderness* characteristics, wildlife and their habitats, cultural resources, and waters are maintained over time while managing resource use. These uses include, but are not limited to traditional use, trapping, recreation, outfitting, wilderness tourism, subsistence harvesting, and the exploration and development of non-renewable resources.

Achieving this goal requires managing development at a pace and scale that maintains ecological integrity**. The long-term objective is to return all lands to their natural state as development activities are completed.

* Wilderness is defined as: any area in a largely natural condition in which ecosystem processes are largely unaltered by human activity or in which human activity has been limited to developments or activities that do not significantly modify the environment, and includes an area restored to a largely natural condition. (Yukon Environment Act)

** Ecological integrity is defined as: a concept that expresses the degree to which the physical, chemical, and biological components (including composition, structure, and process) of an ecosystem and their relationships are present, functioning, and capable of self-renewal. Ecological integrity implies the presence of appropriate species, populations and communities and the occurrence of ecological processes at appropriate rates and scales as well as the environmental conditions that support these taxa and processes. (U.S. National Park Service)



Mount McDonald, Snake River watershed

Photo: R. Vladars, PWPC

The Commission welcomes further comments from the public throughout the planning process. Public participation is vital to the success of this exercise, and to the implementation of the ultimate product, the Regional Land Use Plan. We encourage the public to visit our website for updates.



Peel Watershed Planning Commission: (L-R) Steve Taylor, Peter Kaye, Albert Genier, Sam Wallingham, Marvin Frost and Dave Loeks
(Photo: R. Vladars, PWPC)

THE COMMISSION

Albert Genier, Chair
Marvin Frost
Peter Kaye
Dave Loeks
Steve Taylor
Sam Wallingham

Established in 2004, the Peel Watershed Planning Commission is composed of six public members appointed by the responsible government parties whose jurisdictions include interests in the Peel Watershed: the First Nation of Na-cho Nyak Dun, the Tetlit Gwich'in First Nation, the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation and the Yukon Government.

THE STAFF

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