

## Porcupine Caribou Management Board

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September 28, 2009

Reg Whiten  
Senior Planner  
Peel Watershed Land Use Planning Commission  
201-307 Jarvis Street  
Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2H3

Dear Mr. Whiten:

### **Re Draft Peel Watershed Land Use Plan**

Thank you for your presentation to the Porcupine Caribou Management Board during our recent meeting, and for seeking the Board's input on the Draft Peel Watershed Land Use Plan. Please find our comments to your specific questions below:

1. Much of the PCH winter range in the PWPR is on flat terrain adjacent to the NYPR. The PWPC is considering applying the CE indicators of the NYPC to these flat areas (e.g., Eagle Plains, Kandik Plateau (upper Ogilvie River), Peel Plateau). Does the PCMB support this?
  - A. The Board supports the application of the NYPC CE indicators in these areas, provided they are applied in a manner that adequately protects the ecological and cultural values of the LMU. The recommended land-use zoning in LMUs 4, 5, 6, 9 and 10 adequately represent the Board's conservation interests in the Peel watershed.
2. Much of the PCH winter range in the PWPR is on mountainous terrain unlike that in the NYPR. As such, the CE indicators do not work as well or thresholds cannot be calculated like in the NYPR. Any recommendations on indicators for these areas?
  - A. The Board is unclear as to why the surface disturbance and linear density cumulative effects indicators used in the North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan could not also be applied to the mountainous portion of the Peel Watershed Planning

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Region. If the intent of the Peel Watershed Land Use Plan is to maintain ecological integrity for the Integrated Management Zone LMUs, these indicators are appropriate. Linear density has been shown to be a reasonable proxy for other ecological indicators such as core area or habitat availability.

3. Are there any key/crucial passes or focused migration corridors that require higher levels of protection?
  - A. The entire Richardson Mountains represents an important travel/migration corridor for the PCH. In the Draft Plan, LMU 9 is appropriately zoned as IMZ II, which is consistent with the North Yukon Land Use Plan. The Blackstone Uplands and surrounding area, represented by LMUs 5 and 6 is also an important travel corridor, with appropriately designated land use zones. The Horseshoe area of the Dempster Highway, in Eagle Plains, is also an important east-west movement corridor.
4. Could the impacts of development (especially mining) be mitigated through timing windows, e.g., winter shutdowns?
  - A. The Peel River Watershed is part of the winter range of the PCH. Given the permafrost conditions found in low-lying areas, winter work during frozen ground conditions would be required for both the energy and mineral sectors (during this period, mineral sector activity is primarily transportation). This creates a situation where land-use activities would be occurring while the PCH is on its winter range.

While in some situations, timing windows may be effective mitigation strategies, the Board feels it is unlikely that shut-downs of industrial activity would be practical, based on the variable nature of the herd's use of the range. In some cases, small-scale exploration programs may be able to cease operations while caribou are in the area, but in most cases this would not be practical. Timing windows may be used in some situations to lessen potential impacts, but it is unlikely that such strategies would be employed for producing mine sites or oil and gas wells.

For these reasons, cumulative effects indicator levels (i.e., thresholds) and land withdrawals for the most critical and sensitive areas, therefore, represent the most effective long-term risk mitigation strategies. These approaches would also provide land users with a higher level of certainty than the use timing windows that are sporadic.

5. Dempster Highway – is a sub-regional plan needed?

A. Future road and trail access originating from the Dempster Highway is arguably one of the most important future planning issues for PCH in the region. Managing potential access locations, and controlling access from these points, may require a more detailed management plan for the Dempster Highway corridor.

6. What could the RLUP recommend as goals for the sub-regional plan?

A. Beneficial goals for the PCH would be to minimize new access roads and to control access on any new roads.

7. Is it realistic or useful for the RLUP to recommend enforced no-hunt buffer or timing windows to let the leaders pass?

A. No, hunting and harvest issues are best handled in harvest management plans and other initiatives by mandated agencies and boards, such as the Porcupine Caribou Management Board.

8. What width should the Dempster Corridor LMU be?

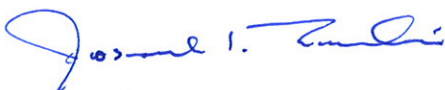
A. The North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan identifies a two-kilometre corridor on either side of the Dempster Highway. This appears to be a reasonable transportation and infrastructure planning corridor width.

9. A higher level of protection for an area east and north of Tombstone TP may be recommended because of the winter use of BOTH the PCH and the Hart River Herd. Are there any specific recommendations for this LMU?

A. The Board feels that maintaining a higher level of conservation focus in this LMU through the application of cumulative effects indicators (IMZ I or II) is a reasonable management strategy.

The Board appreciates the opportunity to provide input to your planning process regarding the Peel Watershed area. Should you require further information respecting the above information, please contact our office.

Sincerely,



Joe Tetlich  
Chair