



Your file

Our file

August 12, 2009

Peel Watershed Planning Commission
307 Jarvis St, Suite 201
Whitehorse, YT Y1A 2H3

Dear Commission Members:

RE: Draft Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan

On behalf of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in (TH), please accept our congratulations on the release of your draft plan. You have identified the sensitivity of river corridors and acknowledged the fragility of the northern landscape. However, the application of these ideas will need significant adjustment to better reflect the experience and values of the First Nations who have been managing this region for countless generations.

Within the TH Traditional Territory there are a number of Land Management Units (LMU) that will require boundary changes and Land Use Designation changes. There are also areas that will be better addressed through the Special Management Area provisions in Chapter 10 of the Final Agreements.

Of particular concern is the manner by which the plan includes the Dempster Highway Corridor in the surrounding LMUs. A better solution may be to exclude the Dempster Highway Corridor and recommend it for a sub-regional land use plan.

Furthermore, TH has identified areas that are suitable for establishment as Special Management Areas (SMA). One is the Cache Creek watershed and the portion of the Blackstone River to the north of the Cache Creek. This takes in parts of LMU 5a, 6a, and 6b north of Tombstone Park. The purpose of this SMA is to adequately manage this highly significant cultural and ecological area. This area has been known to be a critical wintering area for two caribou herds, prime grizzly bear habitat containing many known dens, and Dall sheep breeding, lambing, and wintering habitat, as well as containing numerous other values identified through traditional knowledge.

Another area identified as a SMA is LMU 4b, portions of LMU 4a, and portions of LMU 5a, which are important Hart River Caribou habitat. This area is already designated at CLZ, but we recognize the long-term health of the Hart River Caribou Herd will require much closer management. Creating this SMA is an important step in that direction.

Of further concern is that the Plan does not adequately address the connectivity required to ensure the health of the Porcupine Caribou Herd and the Hart River Caribou Herd, especially with

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regards to ensuring the preservation of wildlife corridors, wintering grounds, and other sensitive habitat.

For clarification of the above mentioned issues, please review the confidential traditional knowledge submission that TH made to the Commission. We invite you and your staff to meet with TH to review the areas in greater detail with the goal to better understanding the value of these areas. Moreover, please see the enclosure for an in-depth review of the Plan, which expounds on the foregoing points.

As you know, the entire Peel Watershed is an extremely sensitive area that requires careful management to protect its integrity for current and future generations and to ensure the continuing ability of the people to practice traditional activities. This plan affects not only the First Nations having settlement lands and traditional territories within the Peel Watershed, but also neighbouring First Nations and those impacted by the migratory wildlife using this watershed.

In closing, we look forward to receiving a recommended plan this winter and to continuing on the path set for us in the Final Agreements.

Sincerely,

TR'ONDĚK HWĚCH'IN

Chief Eddie Taylor