



PEEL WATERSHED
PLANNING COMMISSION
TOGETHER FOR THE PEEL • CHUU TL'TI GEENJIT KHETOK

RECOMMENDED PEEL WATERSHED REGIONAL LAND USE PLAN RELEASED

The Peel Watershed Planning Commission released its Recommended Plan on December 2, 2009. The Plan, which can be viewed in full on its website www.peel.planyukon.ca/downloads/rlup.html will be considered by the Na-Cho Nyak Dun First Nation, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation, Gwich'in Tribal Council, the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, and the Yukon Government. The six-member Peel Watershed Planning Commission was appointed in 2005, as authorized by the planning provisions of the Umbrella Final Agreement (Chapter 11).

In writing this Plan, the Commission considered research and reports, stakeholder submissions, public consultations, as well as advice and statements from the Parties. The Recommended Plan differs substantially from the Draft Plan, issued in April 2009. The responses to the Draft Plan made clear that the conflicting visions for the Peel Planning Region were intractable and that its compromise approach satisfied no one.

As this planning process is founded in the UFA, the Commission focused on "Sustainable Development". The UFA definition is clear that ecosystems and social systems must be sustained, and development should be fostered insofar as it doesn't undermine them. The UFA also charged the Commission with recommending measures to minimize actual and potential land use conflicts, and instructed it to "recognize and promote the cultural values of Yukon Indian People"; and "promote the well-being of Yukon Indian People, residents of the region, the Yukon as a whole, and consider the interests of other Canadians". This Plan accomplishes these objectives.

In view of the starkly drawn conflicts over how to manage lands and resources in the planning region, the Commission wrote a conservative, cautious plan that preserves the maximum degree of future options for society. Though recommending a substantial amount of protection for the planning region, the Plan provides a process by which society can amend the Plan in light of new information, or changed priorities.

The Plan recommends that 80.6% of the planning region be give a high degree of protection as Special Management Areas, emphasizing a range of priorities: Heritage Management (2.1%), Fish and Wildlife Management (19.6%) Watershed Management (27.7%), and General Environmental Protection (31.2%). Areas proposed as Special Management Areas should be immediately withdrawn from staking, however continued aerial access to, and development of existing mineral claims will be allowed subject to specific management conditions. New surface access development is prohibited within Special Management Areas. A Plan Amendment will be required to modify this recommendation.

Mineral and Oil and Gas opportunities can be pursued in Integrated Management Areas (19.4%), subject to key land-use and environmental management considerations, including enhanced community consultation where specified.

The Commission will provide a briefing to the Parties on December 11 and will hold a Press Briefing on the same day at 3:00 at the Yukon Land Use Planning Council boardroom. Out of respect for the Parties, the Commission will defer questions and interviews until that time. The PWPC will release a Plan Summary document on December 18.

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