



24 November, 2008

**Attention:** Reg Whiten, P.Ag. MCIP  
Senior Planner  
Peel Watershed Planning Commission  
# 201 - 307 Jarvis Street  
Whitehorse, YT Y1A 2H3

**Re: *Process, timeline and public involvement in the Peel Land Use Plan***

Dear Reg;

Following public release of four major PWPC documents in September/October 2008 and reflecting on the Stakeholder meeting held on 29/30 October, we would like to bring to your attention a number of concerns we have regarding the process, timeframe and information presented to date.

Process

First, let us say that we are encouraged to see the efforts you have put into meeting with Stakeholders and First Nations. We hope to receive a copy of the minutes from the Stakeholder meeting shortly and to hear how you are incorporating the messages put forward at that session into the work of the Commission.

We would also like to thank you for making time in the schedule for us to present to the Commission last week. It is crucial that Commission members are well informed about the options open to them and the impacts of their decisions, and we hope that there will be further opportunities to discuss the issues with them.

We also hope that the updated website will be publicly accessible very soon, so that all planning documents, the timeline, minutes from recent meetings, Stakeholder presentations etc. will be available as behoves the public process we are engaged in. We would like to see the Commission adopting a much more proactive strategy to inform the

public about the planning process in order to create a participatory plan and avoid a potential backlash when the proposed scenarios are released. This strategy should also include using the media, meetings, presentations and other well-established tools for involving the public and soliciting comment, and must include making publicly available the perspectives offered by First Nations, as well as tourism operators, conservation groups and other stakeholders.

Regarding the current process, we are very concerned that no time has been allocated for comment and discussion of the two documents (Planning Principles and Scenarios Methods Report) which were distributed at the Stakeholder meeting. It appears that no provision is being made for revising the *process* before it is used in determining the plan scenarios. The Scenarios Methods Report is not even on the Commission's website yet. Yukon people must have input into the process for arriving at scenarios and this fundamental step must not be missed in order to speed up planning.

#### Proposed Land Management Units

We have fundamental objections to the Land Management Units (LMUs) presented at the Stakeholder Session. The LMUs presented are too small to serve as functional management units; dividing the watershed into units which are not functional ecosystems is a flawed basis for further process work.

LMUs should be based on functional ecosystems such as high-order watersheds and be designed (and/or amalgamated) at a scale which ensures that the values listed in the statement of intent and specified by the UFA endure in perpetuity. Specifically, we remind you that:

- The Commission's Statement of Intent requires that the Land Use Plan will "ensure wilderness characteristics, wildlife and their habitats, cultural resources and water are maintained over time..."
- The Commission is required by the UFA and its Terms of Reference (point 4.4) to ensure sustainable development – "beneficial socio-economic change that does not undermine the ecological and social systems upon which communities and societies are dependent."

Biodiversity is the single most important basis of all the ecological systems upon which communities and societies are dependent, and large-scale protected areas are scientifically recognized as the only tool which ensures that biodiversity of functional ecosystems and populations of top predators are maintained over time. Therefore, it is unequivocal that the land use plan *must* set aside large-scale protected areas in order to ensure the aforementioned values which comprise the Commission's mandate.

#### Conflicts between land uses

One of the most troubling, unspoken assumptions underlying the Commission's presentations at the Stakeholder session is that all land use conflicts can be minimized and mitigated. We believe that allowing all resource uses and attempting to resolve conflict through mitigation, timing windows and best practices will not achieve the goals

of protecting wilderness values and wildlife resources. Mitigation is completely inadequate as a primary tool for dealing with resource use conflicts and, as was clearly demonstrated at the Stakeholder session, this approach is also completely unsatisfactory for many stakeholders.

Managing resource use does not require that all available resources are used, nor that all options for use of all resources are maintained for all time. Indeed, some uses are mutually exclusive. Of the seven resource uses listed in the Commission's statement of intent, six (traditional use, trapping, recreation, outfitting, wilderness tourism, subsistence harvesting) are compatible with each other and with maintaining wilderness characteristics, wildlife and their habitats, cultural resources and water, and with all the requirements of the UFA listed in the Terms of Reference, in perpetuity. One (non-renewable resource use) is not compatible, either with the other six resource uses or with maintaining wilderness, wildlife and First Nation traditional and cultural values.

It is our view that resource uses which compromise the ability of the land use plan to meet the requirements of the UFA, the Statement of Intent and Terms of Reference, and which undermine the ability of sustainable resource users to operate, should not be allowed in large parts of the watershed. The entire Peel watershed is currently a healthy ecosystem and, in an attempt to understand this ecosystem, the Commission first needs to ask what is required to keep it this way and only then what may be used or taken.

Planning for protection of the Peel's irreplaceable biological and ecosystem resources *must* be based firmly on the precautionary principle, as laid out in the Planning Principles document. This is also the *only* responsible way to plan for the benefit of future generations of all Canadians – the responsibility that each member of the Commission has undertaken by being on the Board.

We look forward to meeting with you to discuss these concerns.

Sincerely,



Mike Dehn, Executive Director  
CPAWS Yukon



Karen Baltgailis, Executive Director  
Yukon Conservation Society