



April 30, 2006

To: Brian Johnston, Senior Planner, Peel Land Use Planning Commission

From: Sue Kemmett, Yukon Conservation Society

Regarding: Planning for the Peel Watershed

Dear Mr. Johnston,

We would like to contribute our thoughts to the consultation on land use planning for the Peel River watershed. The Yukon Conservation Society has a mandate to contribute to ecosystem well-being throughout the Yukon. We do this while recognizing that the well-being of humans and communities is dependent upon fully functioning, healthy ecosystems. We believe that ecosystem functions need to be considered and protected at all scales of planning.

In order to protect fully functioning healthy ecosystems, effective conservation-based land use planning in the Peel River watershed must occur before there are any proposals or allocations for industrial use. This is because the people, communities and wildlife in this area depend upon healthy, functioning ecosystems, clean water and abundant wildlife to sustain themselves. Conservation based land use planning will consider and protect the places that are needed to protect these values. This land has sustained First Nations cultures and ways of life for generations and continues to do so. It must continue to do so.

From an ecological perspective, the Peel watershed and Three Rivers wilderness are globally significant and vital to northern conservation. This area is a pristine mountain boreal ecosystem with a full complement of predator and prey species and freely evolving ecological processes. The largest intact woodland caribou herd in the Yukon inhabits this area, a species that is threatened and endangered elsewhere in Canada. Thorough conservation-based land use planning must occur before industrial allocations in order to allow the ecological values in this area to continue to exist and contribute to the cycle of life in the Peel River watershed. As wildlands and mountain rivers such as those of the Peel watershed become increasingly rare in the world, we have the responsibility to conserve and protect these wonders of nature to future generations and for the benefit of all.

From an economic perspective, the pristine wildlands in the Peel River watershed are perhaps the most valuable asset to sustain the regional economy. As well as providing traditional subsistence values, the Peel watershed is valued as a premiere destination for canoeing, backcountry travel, photography, education, cultural activities and scientific research. To ensure that these values and low-impact opportunities continue, thorough conservation-based land use planning must occur before industrial allocations occur in the Peel River watershed.

The Yukon Conservation Society urges the Peel Land Use Planning Commission to begin a robust conservation-based land use planning process for the entire Peel River watershed. We specifically request that the Peel River Land Use Plan protects the Three Rivers (Wind River, Snake River, Bonnet Plume River) and the many wetlands in the watershed from industrial allocation and development – for people living in this area and using its fish, wildlife and water; and for people living in the Yukon, Canada and other countries who, although they may never have been to the Peel River watershed, still intrinsically value the social, economic and ecological benefits of intact northern wildlands.

Thank you. Please call me if you would like additional information.

Sincerely,

Sue Kemmett, Forest Ecologist