

Dawson Region Draft Plan Public Engagement Community Conversations Summary October 13, 2021 at TH Hall

On October 13, the Commission held an all-day session at the TH Hall in Dawson City. The format of the session was Community Conversations supplemented by an Open House set up around the room that allowed anyone to come and learn about Yukon Regional Land Use Planning, the Draft Plan, and activities undertaken so far. Throughout the day there was 30+ people in attendance. Throughout the day there were three times when small group discussions were held. Participants were invited to select from a list of topics or to suggest their own topic. These conversations were facilitated by the Commission and staff, and at the end of each session, tables were invited to share the outcomes of their conversation.

1 Draft Plan Feedback

1.1 General

- Future relevance of the Plan
 - Ensure nimble
 - Mechanism to review
 - Adaptive management
 - Notion of 'closing doors to the future' for all values, not just economic, so all values can be upheld
- Plan accessibility
 - Language too technical and hard to understand
- Link the plan to other chapters:
 - Chapter 1 (Definitions)
 - Chapter 2 (General Provisions)
 - Chapter 6 (Access)
 - Chapter 10 (SMAs)
 - Chapter 12 (Development Assessment)
 - Chapter 14 (Water)
 - Chapter 16 (Fish & Wildlife)
 - Chapter 17 (Forestry)
 - Chapter 22 (Economic Development)
- Sustainable development as defined in UFA
 - Plan needs to expand on what that means
 - Measurable targets
 - What does sustainable development look like in practice?

- Plan has to uphold UFA – currently doesn't do enough
 - FA supersedes any other legislation
 - Commission has influence -can help educate everyone about rights in THFA
- LMU 20 should be a higher ISA
- LMU 19 – wounded moose and Australia creek is a major area of placer potential that would employ lots of locals if permitted to operate. Designating it as a SMA will put them out of business. 67 miles of creek.

1.2 Industry

- Highlighting Placer
 - Showcase successful work! Not just bad work
 - Successes not recognised
- Plan should make more mention of PROCESS and WHY decisions were made – not clear at the moment
 - Scary when there's things perceived as being hidden
 - Threshold rule – what is it based on? No context. Seems restrictive without background. Education is really important
- A lot will rely on the modernization of the mining act
 - May nullify regional plan if it massively restricts and changes rules for mining
- Crisis in mining – there are ways to do things better rather than restrict
 - Encourage mining reclamations e.g. biodiversity
 - Fossil fuels
 - Plants and revegetation
- Trust from Industry
 - Sense that time to cut and run – just need to get through next license
 - Feeling Dawson will defend Placer at the end of the day
 - New proponents: we are paying the price for bad actors – key is incentives
- Staking withdrawal?
 - Yes can loose future potential, but lets focus on areas we do know.
 - Has some people scared – is this thin edge of the wedge?)
- There is a very negative outlook on the mining industry that exists because of some bad actors
 - It can be done well – there should be trust that they will be good stewards
- At the beginning of the land claim agreements there was a lot of speculative staking, we don't want that to happen again.
- In 10 years the placer industry has changed immensely
- It is taking 1-3 years average to obtain a water license to operate
- Idea – permit to operate over 25 years with a more streamline renewal or review process half way
- Perception of industry is bad and people want to work to change that.

- Areas where 'old timers' [past miners] overlooked the gold potential are actually areas of high mineral value with new technology LMU 19 is one of those areas. Ultimately the disturbance that is estimated to occur there would be about 2.5% of the LMU to get the gold out.
- The mineral prospectively map is not reliable alone

2 Wetlands

- Upper Indian River
 - Is there a way to optimise specific areas without a whole block?
- The Draft Plan Wetland definition is broad and not very specific, there is also not enough reference to function and value
- Noted how Alaskan reclamation standards work and was noted that Placer industry worked closely with Bureau of Land Management (federal) and Department of Natural Resources (State) on how to develop policies / regulations that are applicable to Placer (most activity in State was / is Hard rock)
 - Functionality of wetlands and assessment wasn't well known – goal is to ultimately reclaim to a higher value than what existed previously. It is possible to reclaim to a higher standard
 - Acknowledged they wouldn't be the same but the functionality can be improved
 - Acknowledged that it can take a few years for shallow ponds
 - Alaska Framework is simple to understand and has clear expectations for things like Moose and Wildfowl requirements. Also requires 50% more functionality than was there previously once reclaimed
 - Does take a few years but it is possible to replace value. Without having a good understanding of values though, difficult for miners to work with people
- Concerning when you hear 'no wetlands' as this speaks to misinformation – can be reclaimed but will be different
 - Hard to compromise when you don't know what the other side wants
- It is important not to develop wetlands because they are hard to 'bring back' (restore)
- There is a lot of mineral interest in wetlands.
- On TH settlement land the wetlands should be left alone
- Mineral potential
 - 80% of the mineral reserves (*unsure of location*) are located in wetlands
 - No mining in Bogs is bearable for miners, marsh is a bit more difficult to avoid
- In the Yukon there is actually very little disturbance in wetlands

- The Draft Plan Wetland definition is broad and not very specific, there is also not enough reference to function and value
- The YG wetland policy should guide the wetland direction in the plan
- There needs to be better mapping of wetlands
- Offsetting – option to fix wetland areas elsewhere (legacy placer) or contribute to the land stewardship fund

3 Mineral Development

3.1 Reclamation

- Questions for the Draft Plan & Commission is what is the desirable value? What is important? How can industry support protection?
 - Placer miners can only do what is asked of them – they are flexible and will want to work to keep industry
- Shifting views – miners now embracing reclamation standards and accepting the need for increased royalties
 - Industry should eventually work to 0% disturbance
 - A bonded system like in Alaska could feed into Stewardship program
 - Concern about looking further afield for examples – Yukon and Klondike are very different to other jurisdictions e.g. Alaska and B.C. Bond system would likely work though and could open doors for people who do the work
- Everyone is living off the land in some way. Most miners have mentality that they're living off the land, and want to look after it
 - Lots would support reclamation of legacy mining
 - Many placer miners love the land and want to ensure good reclamation
- Reclamation a factor in climate change
- Encourage better practices e.g. reclamation, and acknowledge partial reclamation e.g. if trees planted but not yet grown, should count towards threshold [return]
- Best practices or legislation?
 - KPMA developing an app
 - Legislation too prescriptive
 - Legislation changes but needs more monitoring. Legislation is needed to back up management
 - Need to adapt quickly
- Reclamation & Plan for legacy mining
 - Could be funded by Stewardship fund
 - i.e. Increase royalties (e.g. 3% – 1% Stewardship Fund, 1% FN, 1% Territory)

- Privilege to mine public land therefore need to give back to public purse (i.e. not view it as 'generosity')
 - Alternative – security for projects for reclamation based on value of project
 - Insurance costs decrease when projects completed successfully
 - High insurance costs would put a lot of small operators out of business – bonding needs to be based on size of operations and reputation, or only applicable if more than project size limits. Would need to be flexible
 - Can't look to other jurisdictions because will favour bigger operators – Klondike is unique
 - Should be some way to favour locals e.g. online staking registered to YG or 2-week advantage
- Timeframe for restoration
 - Wetlands do come back. Maybe not in our lifetime, but they will
 - Marsh, swamp and open water are 'easy' enough to bring back
- What is the goal (objective) with industry and wetlands? What are people looking for? Better reclamation? Less surface disturbance?
- Idea: there should be a recommendation in the plan from the commission that the Parties work WITH the KMPA to create reclamation standards

3.2 Legislation, Enforcement & Assessment

- Placer miners don't know where all their data is
 - Assessment reports – lots of data to be gathered from these if digitized
 - YGS digitized records – hard to access the future based on past
- Where would reports go? To mining recorder? But they are already too busy. Need better frameworks and clarity about what happens in the interim
- Industry suffers when lenient to bad operations - and they should be penalized as it's not fair. Accountability is important.
 - Alaska fines \$100k for 4-5 people operation – significant and it works, becomes a deterrent
 - Tolerance exists of band mining and work, mining inspectors just aren't able to keep track
 - Fear that actions to eliminate bad actors will eliminate responsible miners
 - KPMA have been encouraging better practices for last 3 years - don't want to lose buy-in for 'borderline' operators
- Mineral developers take short cuts.
 - Disincentives [for bad operators]
 - There are bad actors out there.
 - Are regulations being enforced?
 - Requires enforcement – there are already rules, just not enforcement

- Legacy impacts & need teeth to deal with them
- Assessment process
 - Negatives assessed not positives (hard to quantify)
- How open are miners to making changes / sacrifices?
 - 5-10 years of actions e.g. fuel efficiency, smaller footprint, improved reclamation
 - Adjustments will be necessary → Mineral Development Strategy, wetlands policy
- Miners want to know more about what they can and cannot do in the plan. It is stressful trying to keep a business going with this uncertainty
- Reclamation should be incentivised
- As a miner 'my' personal goal is to leave the land as I found it
- LMU Coffee
 - This is a traditional use area and historic site/ traditional trail (road house and Dalton trail)

3.3 Thresholds

- Satellite imagery can be misleading & there's room for error. Can make out there's disturbance where there's not
 - Should be a first pass done via satellite or whatever methodology is used, and then industry should review and be able to respond / challenge if they disagree or have different data
 - Ground truth & drone work could do this
- What is the impact of big operators on small operators?
- There is a concern that there will be a race to the limit (threshold) in industry
- There should not be restrictions on the people who already hold claims – the threshold should apply to new claims only
- There is a great interest in how the thresholds were agreed to and what data supports them (transparency)

4 Access

- Resource road regulation is being drafted and hopefully passed by spring. This regulates roads that are not on claims. It tries to limit the number of access points off major roads (highways) thus maintaining viewsapes and cultural features
- What are the impacts of roads on other values?
 - Could improve the timber harvest and make it more sustainable. Yukon is currently importing wood from BC which seems ridiculous and unsustainable.
 - Roads could serve as fire breaks and access points for Wildland fire crews if designed strategically.

- 'We talked about carefully weighing the decision to put in a new resource road by looking at all the other resources that could potentially benefit, and if the road goes in, to do so strategically'
- Could greater access improve hunting and berry picking? Maybe additional mining roads could be a good thing. But what other pressures do roads put on the environment, especially when non-locals would have access to these roads and to the resources (moose, berries)
- Access is about more than physical access
 - 'It seems like those with more means [they] have more access'
 - Hunting requires tags
 - Required for Trapslines
- Access Management Plans
 - Can be a helpful tool for many
 - LMU Issues
 - Seasonal, size
 - Can be used to manage the intent
- When does a road become de facto public?
 - What if there is a moose, A.R. & Title guarantees that harvest
- Problem to solve: requires good planning to minimise redundant roads, think about turn-around
- How do we manage access in the North LMU – how do we limit people going in there?
- Climate change
 - Emissions of vehicles on roads is a consideration
- Traffic on the highways is having a negative impact

5 Culture & Traditional Use

- The Indian River is so torn up that it can no longer be used for traditional activities
 - The word "stewardship" is just a token work when it comes to ISA 4s
 - The presence of existing claims seems to trump everything else but this is in direct conflict with the UFA. The legislation we currently have in place re: mining laws is also in conflict with the UFA and thus with the Constitution of Canada.
 - To avoid going to court, we have to uphold the UFA.
- Witnessing big changes on the landscape
 - Cleaning up some yes, but not everything
 - What is the impact on water?
 - 'Smoking fish, we learned to keep our camp clean [from bears]'
- Understanding of rights because not in public view
 - Entrenched rights exist
 - Want to walk on land without being harassed

- Given up 99% of land, great loss
- Families picked land parcels
- Need food, shelter water
- Rights are protected regardless of land use plan outcomes
- Why rush? Why deadline? Take time that is required. Get it right
- Expand Matson Highlands
- Struggling with accommodation of claims
 - Claims shouldn't trump FN rights and needs for ecological
 - Traditional activities need to continue unencumbered
- Thresholds can be a way to balance interests and allow some level of development to occur
 - Encourage people to do a better job
 - Believe its possible to uphold UFA while allowing some level of development
 - 'Allow FNs to access land'
 - It may look different but may still be useable
- Must be some way to increase communication between operators and FNs to know which areas are a problem when people aren't feeling comfortable accessing the land

6 Stewardship

6.1 What is Stewardship?

- Needs to be clear about what it means so it's clear to stewards
 - Connection leads to care
 - If you need the land, have water, cut wood... More than just play
 - Build that connection
 - Guidance form Elders about Stewardship
 - Responsibility to the land and animals
 - We need to do something different (e.g. salmon are disappearing, water is too hot and overfishing)
 - Take what you need
 - Schools & students
 - Chapter 11
 - Have YFN citizens talking about stewardship
 - 'Why is the animals quiet in the country'
 - Spirit of the Umbrella Final Agreement, bring it to life
 - Can't be about shaming people who do not have enough / 'the right' stewardship (including TH)
 - Success requires connecting people with the Heart
- What is 'stewardship' in the Dawson region?

- A care for the land
- It's a feeling: you just know; land use & put back together
 - Why? Care & respect, 'thinking about bigger than myself'
- Marty & the Dawson swimming hole: just do it
- Stewardship is broader than Land Use planning – connected to culture & heritage
- Connecting families on the land
- Trapping
 - Decreasing number of FN trappers
 - One vehicle to connect to the land, challenge it market conditions
- Why is it hard for Western thinking?
 - 'Interconnectedness' is a difficult concept
 - Importance of schools and education from FNs to learn about stewardship
 - Bring people on the land, kids can learn about cultural practices (e.g. trapping)
 - Stop asking people to care, no it has to happen
 - Shift – even our First Nations are stopping to care like we used to
 - TH Land / Animals are struggling
- Stewardship
 - TH Community Development Corp. – build local community capacity
 - The Stewardship Trust needs to be better defined
 - There are more developers from outside that would not necessarily act as stewards. Used to know all the players [in summer], not anymore – not as much vested interest as once was

6.2 Land Stewardship Trust

- Getting people on the land takes resources
 - Could Stewardship Trust help readiness (e.g. comfort & sleeping bags)
 - Fish and Wildlife Trust: Tried to fund a fish camp but there was little interest
- Place to learn stewardship, 'if good with the land, good with myself' (health)
 - Can the trust support accessibility for those to become stewards?
- Who manages? Transparency
 - Need to identify 'impact'
 - Could it be a permutation of the Commission (RRC)
 - How will it be resilient to future governments?
- Opportunity to showcase good work
- Maybe have themes? E.g.:
 - Reclamation
 - Community development

- Housing development
- Multi-use (e.g. forestry & placer or agriculture & placer)

•

7 Climate Change

- How do we make Planning decisions when climate change is changing animal patterns?
 - Shelf life
 - Living document to be adaptive
 - Clarity of review process is important
 - Recognise Indigenous Protected Areas as potential mechanism
 - We know that more is changing faster – continual surprise & flip state, like ice to H₂O
- To what extent was change taken into account during the Draft Plan?
 - E.g. caribou corridors – focus on immediate threats but need to also recognise unknowns
- With climate change we will have to make sacrifices – plan should acknowledge
 - Everyone needs to contribute, some groups are already making sacrifices
 - Can't carry on as before
 - Need acknowledgement from all Parties & Stakeholders
- Climate change needs to be throughout plan, not just in 1 section
 - Need inspiring encouragement and prepare people for these eventualities
 - Adaptive / flexible plan
 - Assurances that land will be better
- Are longer mining seasons possible with less permafrost [due to climate change]
 - Hasn't been noticed much, depends on areas
 - Longer season for him because he lives here
-

8 Wildlife & Conservation

- Landscapes & ecology
 - More research is needed in impacts and modelling in areas at most risk e.g. wetlands
 - Can claims be traded or removed if no demonstrable value? i.e. if 'mining done' with area A can they release it for protection & access to a new area?
 - Borders? How will this affect things like salmon management?
- Responsibilities

- FNs
 - Need resources
 - Historic TK should be used
- YG
- Independent 3rd parties
- SMA 2
 - Issue is legislation only triggers YG, TH should be at the table as well – so co-management
 - Protection areas without making it a Park
 - Use Chapter 10 to select the right tools to meet Management Objectives – leverage the management plan
- Precautionary principle
 - Set aside large areas (refugia)
 - Include corridors
- How to be flexible if large scale protection?
 - Use aerial info on areas that will stay safe
- There is more hunting pressure in the region, especially moose
 - There is increased hunter traffic in placer areas
 - Roads affect surrounding areas – can't keep people out
 - Can we use draws or permits to control harvest?
- Put aside land for wildlife that can't be staked or disturbed.
- Ecological needs need to supersede economic needs
- The perception of ISA 1 and 2 is that they are conservation areas
- Tombstone is a 'target' there is too much attention on the area and it is a problem for lambing

9 Economic Development

- Sustainable economic development (net zero)
 - Sustainable development should link to stewardship in the community.
 - There are opportunities in Tombstone, Yukon River Corridor area and in the Klondike Valley for sustainable eco dev.
- Currently only really 2 economies in Dawson: tourism and mining
 - Committee should expand economic diversity
- New TH community development corporation
 - Keep benefits local – community assets and people
 - NWT has good system (Over 50% NWT business ownership required)
- Locals should have a louder voice
- Agriculture seems to be managed in a silo – leases are being issued in poor land, 'land grab'

- Agriculture is constant and land will never return. Agricultural land use cannot be reclaimed.
- Fuelwood shortages in Dawson region
 - Wood cutter cooperative to address shortages?
- Mining & agriculture
 - Mining will eventually end, when finished reclamation
 - Sustainable economy?
 - Active vs. passive reclamation
- The plan is focused on mining, but needs more economic activities that accommodate existing mineral development interests
 - Climate change
 - Sustainable community development
 - Role of TH?
 - More links to THFA Ch. 22 on Economic Development
- Energy Projects, such as North Fork hydro project (Klondike River)
- Climate Change
 - Sustainable community development is needed
 - Focus more on renewable energy and resources
 - Should be a stronger focus of the plan
- Tourism is a major economic driver
 - LMU 6 is a good place for tourism and forestry values
 - People from the south will continue to come up here and more infrastructure will be needed.
- Agriculture
 - Every flat below the Pelly had farms. And along the Stewart, and Indian River
 - The flats of the Yukon River should be set aside
 - Food security is important
 - As a region we can be self-sufficient in root vegetables
 - It took 3 years for the approval of allowing Livestock on old claims. There should be a system to help facilitate something like that.
 - Post - Mining reclamation for agriculture
 - Flat Creek down the valley – that was an agricultural area – TH disapproved of it – it was cleared for ag and then sold
 - We should exercise caution with multiple uses on land – it has to be a partnership that helps the land recover.
- Carbon Credits. Northern Canada is a carbon sink and there are international agreements being discussed re carbon credits
 - economic development opportunities that the plan doesn't consider
 - In this sense, the land has to remain as it is to retain its value

- Also the intrinsic value of the land (Burger Reports)
- Outfitting – is an opportunity in the region
- Traditional Economy
 - Sustainable, needed for the long term (generations), can't necessarily be monetized, trapping, and healthy harvests
 - We mustn't let the other monetary economies 'upset' the traditional economy
- Wildlife has a place in the sustainable economy (viewing)
- Viewscapes – they are important (Dempster and Yukon River Corridor)

10 Water

- There should be stronger protection of rivers in the plan. The value of water should be upheld more. The Stewart River in particular.

11 Community Development

- Dawson is going to continue to grow whether we like it or not. Especially if/when the 'coffee' mine comes online. It will change the community drastically
- Use land that is already disturbed for development