

**Dawson Region Workshops Summary**  
**August 4-5, 2021**  
**Topic: Future Planning Areas**

On August 4 & 5, 2021, the Dawson Regional Planning Commission hosted public workshops on topics including conservation Zones, wetlands, and future planning regions. This included in person meetings held in Dawson City and online meetings.

The following are a summary of the comments received, as recorded by Commission staff members during these meetings on the topic of Future Planning Areas. Notes from the meeting about wetlands and conservation zones are provided in a separate document.

Note that these comments represent input from a wide variety of participants. Each session had an average of 25 participants from a broad spectrum of backgrounds.

Future planning areas discussions included:

- Klondike Valley
- Dempster Highway
- Yukon River Corridor

## 1. Klondike Valley

### Approach to Subregional Planning

- There needs to be clear expectations and timeframes set out in the Draft Plan for future Klondike Valley planning.
  - Uncertainty about what happens in the interim, at the moment it is 'business as usual' in this area. There is no OIC in place and no limitations placed, besides spot land applications being paused.
  - There need to be more Special Management Directions for this Land Management Unit (LMU / unit).
  - The Dawson Region is different to other planning regions so far in terms of level of activity. Subregional planning needs to happen now.

## Dawson Region Draft Plan Engagement

- YG don't seem keen on Commissions continuing after a plan is completed, but in this case it would be good, as they could continue with the current momentum.
- YG Local Area Planning could work, but concerns about their ability – Sunnydale has been ongoing for years and still not completed.
- Uncertain the subregional plan will happen if YG left to develop it. Subregional plan should be done under Chapter 11. There is more trust in an independent Commission.
- Can the Commission continue? Need to lobby the Parties to allow this as it would be good.

## Water

- Water is important for the Klondike Valley is a major drinking water source and important for wildlife.
  - Klondike River headwaters aren't currently protected and so it is business as usual until sub-regional planning takes place.
  - Flooding is likely to increase with climate change, so when sub-regional planning happens, need to identify at-risk areas and remove from development; not sustainable (e.g. Rock Creek is always at risk).
  - Spawning habitat needs to be protected.
  - Drinking water protection is paramount. Currently, the City of Dawson dump runs-off into the watercourse. Sewage disposal and lagoons at the edge of the Dempster are also a concern.
  - Significant wetlands in the Klondike Valley. How will these be protected, if at all?

## New Ideas for Land Use

- Subregional planning offers a lot of opportunity to trial new ideas – there's lots of creativity that could be tapped into for the Klondike Valley
  - Sub-regional planning should focus on diversification and allow multiple uses on land where possible. Will insulate industry from future shocks and be more sustainable.

## Dawson Region Draft Plan Engagement

- More partnerships between mining and other industries such as farming e.g. Lastraw Ranch. At the moment impossible to do due to rigid existing legislation. However, also need to ensure mining cannot abuse these kinds of loopholes.
- Lots of opportunity for pilot programs e.g. could 'reclaim' the dredge tailings and other areas that were mined in the past, but not restored to current standards. Could make it a 'gold standard' for reclamation and serve as a training opportunity for miners.
- Tourism opportunities exist in this area that haven't been tapped into. E.g. the new swimming hole that is based on a water license and so there is no guarantee it will be a permanent feature.

### Protect Conservation Values

- Conservation values in the Klondike Valley need to be considered carefully. There are many values in this LMU that are not protected.
  - We should consult Elders and work with them to identify areas that need protection, especially those that have high cultural, social and spiritual values.
  - Need to be aware of and mitigate invasive species.
  - There are important Lynx refugia in this LMU that should be protected.
  - How can we preserve and protect if it's 'business as usual' in Future Planning Areas?

### City of Dawson Considerations

- Consideration of the City of Dawson's future is very important and sub-regional planning will need to consider this
  - Should the City apply to expand the municipal boundary? Who would fund this?
  - Housing is needed – release of future residential lots by YG timelines.
  - What does the City of Dawson want to be?

- Should look at the availability of recreational trails along the highway and overall connectivity to encourage more sustainable transport options into Dawson.
- Could identify development nodes for outside the City – areas that could be easily developed and zoned

## 2. Dempster Corridor

### Plan Scope

- There needs to be a single plan that applies to the entire route.
  - Would a sub-regional plan replace the Development Area Regulations?

### Environmental Impacts

- Disturbance and changes to the environment should be limited.
  - Should test soil quality along the highway.
  - Manage like an SMA 2.
  - Invasive species is an issue.

### Traffic Increases

- There has been a significant increase in traffic and it is anticipated that the future will see even more.
  - Tourism is increasing along the corridor and is having an impact.
  - Increased littering and other uses.
  - Need long term management of visual quality.
  - Oil and gas exploration and development could lead to increased traffic levels.

### Off-Road Access

- Need management of off-road access.
  - Access is a big issue as it impacts other values as identified in the regional plan.

- Control of ORV use in the area is needed. In North Fork, ORVs are disturbing sheep and impacting the vegetation. ORV use is out of control.
- Limit off-road use – it causes environmental damage.
- Should only permit access for those with tenure.
- Various research needs to be conducted, with sampling along the highway.

### First Nation Use

- The Dempster Highway is extensively used by First Nations.
  - Many First Nations families live along the highway.
  - There are significant cultural history and values along the highway.
  - Leave the land clean.

## 3. Yukon River

### Mineral Development

- Mineral development along the Yukon River corridor is likely to be impacted by the designation in the plan.
  - The SMA 2 designation is too restrictive and access to claims will become very difficult. This will negatively impact the placer industry.
  - Access for industry is important, especially to a large quartz mine in the south.
  - There is concern that increased access will expose previously ‘untouched’ areas.
  - There is active placer mining in the corridor representing huge economic value.

### Climate Change

- Climate change is a major issue for this corridor and poses many risks that should be considered.
  - Will affect the salmon populations and climate change should be factored into their management in the corridor.

## Dawson Region Draft Plan Engagement

- More thought should be given to the size and shape of the corridor and what it does / does not account for from perspective of climate change. E.g. what would the effects of climate change be on endemic species?
- How will climate change affect water levels, temperature, salmon, slumping etc?
- Dawson may become the 'bread basket' for the north and water for irrigation may come from the river – need to be forward thinking.

### Conservation

- Conservation and monitoring is important for the Yukon River Corridor.
  - Salmon is an important value and is tied closely to many traditions for people in the Territory. From cultural uses (potlatches, fish camps, funerals) to food.
  - Salmon mismanagement is a topic of concern. Often pegged on placer practices, but mismanagement is far deeper than this. Jurisdictional issues.
  - There is potential to raise the profile of the river. Some examples discussed were Personhood, heritage river status, UNESCO. There would be grants associated with these.
  - The river holds immense cultural / historic value with many cultural sites and landmarks.

### Access and Transportation

- Access and transportation along the corridor need to be addressed.
  - Canoe and boat use.
  - Barge landings.
  - 1042 claims exist in the corridor. How will they be accessed?
  - Should it be encouraged as a transportation corridor with proper education and stewardship guidance?
  - In addition to water vessels, winter travel should be considered, especially considering intersection between transportation corridor and tourism (e.g. Yukon Quest, River Quest, leisure tourism etc).

## **Planning Considerations**

- Timelines for the sub-regional plan are an important consideration and should be outlined in the Recommended Plan.
- Tourism management should be considered in the planning. Put a plan in place for the better management of tourism facilities and use on the river. I.e. Tourism management plan.