



Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee  
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August 30, 2011

Dawson Regional Planning Commission  
PO Box 8010  
Yukon, YOB 1G0

To Whom It May Concern:

Please accept this letter as our submission for the Dawson Regional Planning Commission process.

The Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee (YSSC) is a non-governmental, public advisory body established under the Umbrella Final Agreement (UFA), which provides formal recommendations directly to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and to Yukon First Nations on all matters related to salmon and their habitat.

Chapter 16 of the UFA recognizes the YSSC as a sub-committee of the Yukon Fish & Wildlife board, and established it as the main instrument of salmon management in the Yukon. The Yukon River fishery itself is governed under the 1985 Pacific Salmon Treaty and the associated Yukon River Salmon Agreement (YRSA).

We would like the Dawson Regional Planning Commission to consider the following:

Chinook and Chum Salmon Interest:

- The overall importance of Chinook and Chum salmon in the planning region. There are a number of distinct salmon-related users including First Nations subsistence fishers, commercial fishers, domestic fishers, recreational and sport fishers.
- For thousands of years salmon has played an important role in meeting the food, cultural, social and ceremonial needs of Yukon First Nations.
- Yukon River salmon are a healthy choice and nutrient rich (i.e. loaded with heart-smart oils Omega 3).

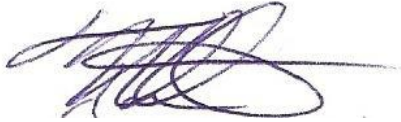
- The secondary benefits associated with Yukon River salmon are the wildlife viewing opportunities (especially spawning salmon), influence on Yukon arts and crafts (i.e. visual art, jewellery, story-telling) and general tourism related interest.
- Geographically, the Yukon River drainage extends broadly into the region, through the Yukon River main-stem and accompanying tributaries (including secondary creeks and streams).

#### Issues:

- The Yukon River Salmon Agreement of 2001 sets international treaty obligations. The Yukon River fishery is jointly managed by the US and Canadian governments with consistently set border escapement and harvest targets for Chinook and Chum salmon. A significant issue is the declining numbers of the Yukon River Chinook as a whole and the inability of the US to meet agreed upon escapement and harvest goals. The US has met their treaty obligations in only two of the last six seasons. This has resulted in fewer Canadian destination salmon reaching the spawning grounds. For example in 2010, the US harvested 180% of their agreed upon total allowable catch of Yukon River Chinook salmon. Canada continues to meet obligations in fisheries management and habitat protection/management and has been done at a significant cost economically and culturally.
- The low salmon runs are beginning to result in a loss of overall fishing capacity amongst the Yukon First Nations, commercial fishers and recreational anglers.
- Shifting baseline syndrome is beginning to take effect with the low numbers over the last decade becoming normal for the public and fisheries managers. There needs to be recognition of the historical numbers and the declining size of fish of this salmon run; not only the last few years.
- A specific issue within the planning region is the Holland America operated, *Yukon Queen II*. There have been concerns raised by Tr'ondek Hwech'in First Nation, commercial fishers and the Dawson RRC related to the entrainment of salmon, stranding of salmon from wave run-out, effects on salmon habitat and behavioural effects. The YESAB process is still active on this project and land use plans would be considered in any current assessment.
- Salmon issues often need to be considered on a site specific basis and protection occurs at a project level. Canada, through the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and Government of Yukon has specific management and enforcement regimes in place to protect and monitor salmon habitat. This regime is in place to mitigate potential effects as a result of "smaller scale" projects. The YSSC suggests that the Dawson Regional Planning Commission should focus on "large scale" projects that may have broad reaching impacts in the drainage area.
- Potentially negative effects on salmon habitat, particularly spawning habitat, from industrial development, hydro power generation, road access, and poor water quality.

We hope you will consider the interest in Yukon River Salmon and the issues in the development of the Dawson Region Land-Use plan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read 'Tara Christie', with a stylized, cursive script.

Tara Christie, Chair – Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee