

Jim Taggart

Dawson Region Land Use Plan

At this initial stage I wish to focus on some of the main issues and principles I'd like to see incorporated within the plan. These are in no particular order.

- The plan must place an emphasis on a comprehensive, accurate, and realistic cumulative effects study and recommendations. The "1%" limit in the North Yukon plan is totally ineffective when only the physical footprint is considered against the extent entire planning region. The plan should consider the wider 'sphere of influence' of activities within smaller and more local districts, and ensure sufficient data is available and/or collected to allow a robust and meaningful analysis.
- The Yukon River is vital to the region for a vast number of environmental, historic, cultural and economic reasons. A river corridor (or perhaps the watershed) should be identified and treated as a special case or management area within the realms of the wider plan. Important tributaries and creeks could similarly be managed in this manner.
- The Yukon River valley contains some of the most productive agricultural land in the territory. Food security and local production is becoming of increasing importance within the community, and the production potential of areas such as Sunnydale and Henderson's Corner should be acknowledged.
- While perhaps outwith the remit of the plan, the potential for renewable energy resources of the region could be identified and supported through plan policies or specific land use designations. There is enormous potential for hydro, geo-thermal, solar, wind etc to serve the regions communities and sectors.
- This region has historically been actively mined, primarily for gold, with a considerable number of mineral claims staked over the past three years. Legislation interpretation and recent examples in Yukon shows us that once land is staked it presupposes its use and makes land use planning even more challenging. For this reason, the solution outlined in the Peel region plan should be introduced, and a staking and exploration moratorium should be imposed in the planning region until the Plan is complete. At minimum,
- There is a case for restricting further developments in areas like the Indian River, where the natural river valley has been obliterated by mining development. These areas have reached, and mostly exceeded, their natural ability to regenerate and desperately need to be allowed to recover. These are areas where a comprehensive cumulative effects analysis will be vital.
- Climate change will inevitably impact the region. The expected effects will be widespread, many of which are already supported by science, or indeed currently occurring. Plan policies and land designations should acknowledge the likely impacts and seek to assist regional adaptation strategies.

- Economic diversity is key to the region's prosperity. Dawson City in particular and the wider region in general, are currently susceptible to commodity prices, in particular gold and oil. Reversals of recent market activity would seriously affect the region's ability to sustain mining and short-stay tourism and erode this limited economic base. Land use policies can play an important role in defining and enhancing the range and types of economic development and activities in the region.