

2020

Dawson Planning Region Resource Assessment Report Executive Summary

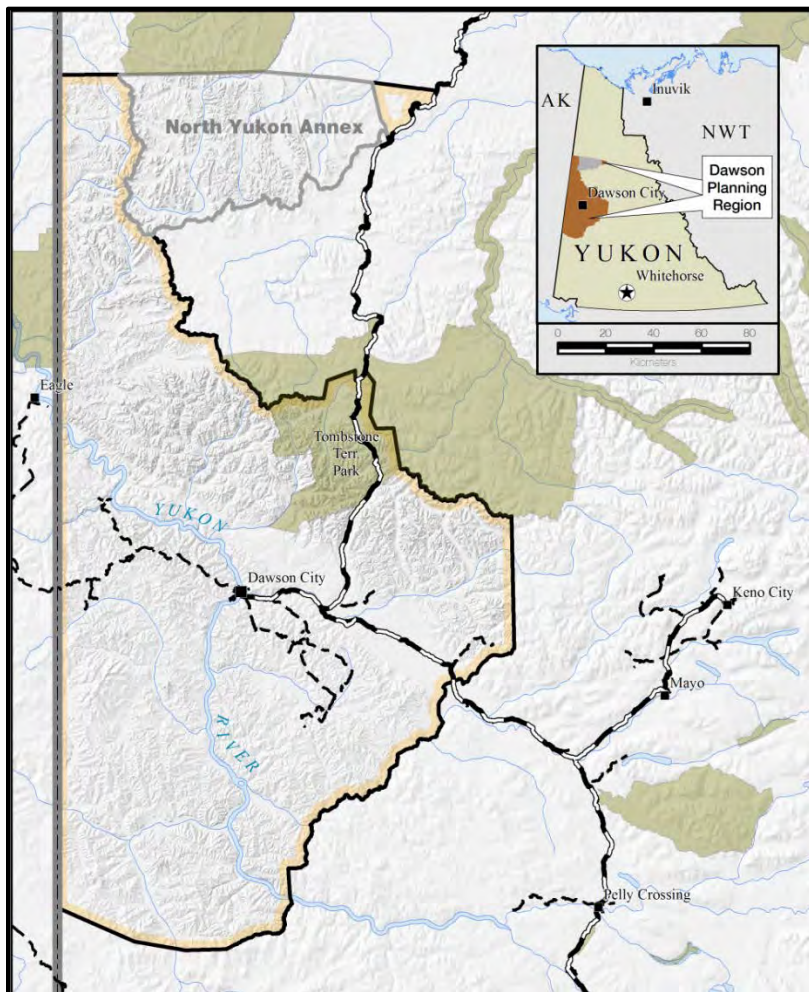


Executive Summary

Overview

The Resource Assessment Report (RAR) is intended to describe the natural, human, and economic resources in the Dawson Planning Region. This report is one of the key foundational planning products outlined in the Commission's Terms of Reference (TOR). The document is not an exhaustive description of every resource and their associated values, but rather it is intended to be a snapshot of the current state of knowledge – both scientific and traditional. The RAR is an informational document and does not attempt to assess land use conflicts or offer specific management strategies for the region.

The original RAR was developed and approved by the previous Commission in October 2013 and recently updated by the Parties (Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and Government of Yukon) and the Yukon Land Use Planning Council (YLUPC).



Dawson Planning Region Boundary

Objectives of the Resource Assessment Report

The RAR has the following objectives:

- To document and describe the natural, human and economic resources of the region;
- To describe the historical, current and potential future land uses and land use patterns; and
- To describe the potential issues relating to current and future land uses.

The RAR is a reference document that provides information to support the development of a draft regional land use plan for the Dawson Region. It is important to note that the RAR is not intended to be the only source of information for the Commission. The report is a comprehensive, but not complete, compilation of existing data and information informed by the Parties, plan partners, and with input from the public. It is not an exhaustive description of every resource and their associated values, but rather it is intended to be a snapshot of the current state of knowledge – both scientific and traditional. The RAR is one of many sources of information (i.e. technical reports, government policy and studies, public submissions etc.) to support the Commission’s decisions in writing the Draft Regional Land Use Plan.

How this Report Was Updated

This edition of the RAR has been updated from the original 2013 version with the assistance of the Commission’s Technical Working Group (TWG). The mandate of TWG is to provide coordinated technical information and support to the Commission. TWG is composed of technical experts from YG, TH and YLUPC that provide input and advice to the Commission regarding relevant information, issues, policies and initiatives from both governments.

In 2018, the Parties and select federal departments were asked to submit comments and updates to the RAR, including any new or updated spatial data. With technical assistance from TWG, YLUPC updated the RAR to reflect the submitted comments and best available data. Every effort has been made to validate the accuracy of information and interpretations with contributing partners. The Commission is expected to review, modify if required, and adopt the report in accordance with the Commission’s TOR.

In summary, resource assessments are dynamic and change over time in response to new research, information and understanding. For example, land use and land status change over time. Natural disturbances such as wildfire can also radically alter landscapes and habitats. In addition, climate change may alter existing land use conditions. Since the RAR is a snapshot in time, it is known that further information may be necessary to consider as the Commission’s work on planning issues advances. While this report will not be continuously updated as part of this planning process, information sharing between the

Commission and the Parties will be ongoing to ensure that the Commission is incorporating the most contemporary and relevant information into the planning process.

Report Format

This report is organized into four major sections:

- **Section 1 – Framework and Regional Context**
An overview of the region from the perspective of relevant legislations and policies, socioeconomic landscape (e.g. economy, population), biophysical attributes (e.g. geological history, climate) and current land status.
- **Section 2 - Regional Resource and Land Use Descriptions**
Regional resources are identified and described in terms of their value (traditional, socio-cultural, economic and environmental), resource management (legislation and policy), and the risks and uncertainty associated with them.
- **Section 3 – Resource Summary Maps**
Twenty-seven resource summary maps were prepared to reflect the abundance, diversity and distribution of resource values across the regional landscape.
- **Appendices**
Key technical documents are included as appendices to this report.

Section 1

Chapter 2 - Vision Statement

Our Vision...

For the Region

The Dawson Region encompasses a unique landscape that enables our community to build a diverse economy while maintaining a rich cultural legacy and a healthy environment.

For the Process

Shared and respectful use of natural resources is guided by the principles of sustainable development, respect for heritage and culture, and conservation of fish and wildlife habitats. Ongoing community stewardship, based on consensus building, will achieve significant and lasting social, economic, and ecological benefits for all Yukoners.

For the Plan

Our regional plan will be crafted to reflect community values and will guide the integrated use and management of land, water, and resources.

Vision Statement ratified by the Dawson Regional Planning Commission on September 25, 2019

Chapter 3 - Relevant Legislation and Policies

In the Yukon, regional land use planning originates from the land claims and is established under Chapter 11 (Land Use Planning) of the Final Agreements, which specifies how land use planning shall be carried out. The Umbrella Final Agreement (UFA) and First Nation Final Agreements (FAs) between the Government of Canada, Government of Yukon (YG), and Yukon First Nations (YFNs) establish a policy framework and objectives for regional land use planning in the Yukon.

Resource sectors relevant to land use planning are administered and regulated, in some cases jointly, by the Federal, Yukon and First Nations governments. Regional land use plans must have regard for the regulatory environment while providing guidance on land and resource management in the planning region.

In this chapter of the report, a comprehensive list of relevant Federal, Territorial, and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in legislation is highlighted and briefly described. The chapter also provides a listing of relevant policies, management plans, and best management practices (BMPs) that are in place or in development that pertain to regional planning and land use activities in the region.

Chapter 4 - People, Settlement and Economy

This chapter presents an overview of settlement patterns and the economy of the region. In addition, a description is provided of the historic and contemporary presence of the three self-governing First Nations (Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Vuntut Gwitchin and Na-cho Nyak Dun) whose Traditional Territories, as defined in the Final Agreements, are located within the region and an overview of historic and contemporary settlement patterns.

In summary, the Dawson region has a relatively small population that has seen a gradual increase of 22.4% over 10 years, with most residents residing in and immediately around Dawson City. As of September 2019, there was an estimated population of 2,350 people residing in Dawson and the immediate surrounding area, representing about 6% of the Yukon population

Chapter 5 - Biophysical Setting

This chapter provides a landscape scale description of physiography, geology, climate, glacial history, landscape types and natural disturbance regimes in the planning region. The details in this chapter also set the foundation for understanding the resource chapters in Section 2 of the report. In summary, key points in this chapter include:

Geology: The planning region is characterized by a diverse geology and is transected by the Tintina Trench. Geology is the foundation for the region's energy, mineral and water resources and also influences planning issues such as climate change and natural hazards.

Glacial History: As part of a greater ice-free landscape known as Beringia, most of the Klondike Plateau and the North Ogilvie Mountains remained ice-free for much of the last three million years. This extended unglaciated period has had a major influence on the landforms and ecology of the region.

Climate: The climate of the planning region is continental (i.e. little temperature moderation by oceans) with long, cold winters and relatively warm summers.

Ecozones and Ecoregions: The two ecozones (Taiga Cordillera and Boreal Cordillera) located in the planning area include six distinct ecoregions: Eagle Plains, Mackenzie Mountains, North Ogilvie Mountains, Yukon Plateau – Central, McQuesten Highlands and the Klondike Plateau.

Hydrology: The Yukon River is the largest river in the planning region and its significant tributaries include the White River, Stewart River and Klondike River. Wetlands also form an important part of the regional ecosystem covering about 10% of the planning region.

Climate Change: Average annual temperatures are increasing in the planning region and are predicted to increase by 4.7°C to 5.3°C by the end of 2100. Geographically varying increases in annual precipitation from +3cm in flatter terrain to +36cm in more mountainous areas are also expected by the end of this century.

Chapter 6 - Land Status

This chapter summarizes the current use and designation of land within the planning region. The chapter describes the Traditional Territories, Settlement Lands, protected areas and land use activities found in the region. In addition, the existing land use footprint is discussed including the potential implications of these disturbances on the landscape. In summary, key points in this chapter include:

- Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in has 135 parcels of settlement land within the region totaling 2,550.85km². This count does not include settlement land within community boundaries (e.g. Tr'ochëk).
- Protected areas in the planning region include nationally designated lands (e.g. Discovery Claim National Historic Site), lands designated by territorial legislation or Final Agreement (e.g. Tombstone Territorial Park) and lands designated by an adjacent planning process (i.e. the Peel Watershed and North Yukon planning regions) and adjacent international jurisdictions (e.g. Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve in Alaska).
- The disposition of Crown land in the planning region may occur by way of fee simple title, leasehold interest, resource use concession (e.g. trapping, outfitting) and/or land use permit.
- Key human activities contributing to the existing land use footprint in the region include linear features (e.g. roads), developed areas (e.g. settlements) and resource development (e.g. gravel pits, quartz exploration and mining, placer mining). These activities have the potential to create cumulative effects on ecological, cultural and socioeconomic values in the planning region.

Section 2

Chapter 7 - Resource Values

A key objective of Chapter 11 (Land Use Planning) in FN Final Agreements is “to ensure that social, cultural, economic and environmental policies are applied to the management, protection and use of land, water and resources in an integrated and coordinated manner so as to ensure Sustainable Development”. In addition, the FN Final Agreements state that the land use planning process must take into account First Nation traditional values. Accordingly, this chapter defines how resources in the planning region are described in the RAR in terms of their contribution to, and impact on, natural, traditional, socio-cultural and economic values.

The five values identified and defined in this chapter have been used to provide context to each resource described in the report:

**Natural Value | Traditional Value | Socio-Cultural Value | Traditional Economy
| Economic Value**

These five values relate to each other and the intention is not to hold them separate but rather create a holistic picture of each resource to assist the Commission when considering land use decisions that ensure for sustainable development.

Chapter 8 - Heritage

Due to its history and unique geological landscape, the region is rich in heritage resources including, but not limited to, historical, archaeological, and paleontological records. This section describes the inventory of heritage resources that are found in the Dawson Planning Region, and identifies areas of heritage artifact potential in the region that remain undisturbed. This section also highlights the interpretation of heritage from a First Nations’ perspective, broadening the definition to include an understanding of heritage as a way of life that is rooted by a strong relationship with the land.

Heritage resources are defined and interpreted differently by the Government of Yukon and the First Nations governments of the region. Key points in this chapter include:

- First Nations in the region have a broader interpretation of heritage resources than what is defined in Government of Yukon legislation.
- First Nations view their traditional territory as a holistic cultural landscape, with land at the center of culture. Heritage is understood as a way of life that is alive and changing.

- Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in have traditionally occupied, travelled or harvested in virtually every corner of the planning region. Traditional use sites, spiritual and story locales, harvest areas, as well as long ago sites all contribute to the cultural fabric of the TH landscape.
- The region holds the highest concentration of historic sites in the territory, relating to gold mining from the late 19th century to the 1960s, First Nations' history and early fur trade in the region.
- Prehistoric and archaeological sites in the planning region span the period from the end of the last Ice Age to historic times.
- Placer mining activity has been one of the principal discovery mechanisms of ice age fossil remains with exceptional preservation. Virtually every creek with intact frozen silts and gravels in the unglaciated parts of the planning region has potential for paleontological resources.
- Heritage resources are an important attraction for the region and provide substantial economic benefits through heritage tourism.
- Large areas of the planning region have not been surveyed for heritage resources. Increasing land access and human activities, particularly land clearing and disturbance of sediments, has the potential to create adverse impacts on resources. Heritage resource assessments and the use of best management practices can help in mitigating potential impacts.
- YG has identified specific areas that are expected to have high concentrations of heritage resources that are at risk of loss due to increased demand for land access and human activities.
- The proposed Tr'ondëk—Klondike World Heritage Site region is on Canada's shortlist to be nominated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The proposed property submitted to UNESCO in January 2017 comprised 38,251.26 hectares of lands and water, including the Bonanza Creek valley and parts of the Klondike and Yukon River Valleys. In 2018, the nomination was withdrawn by Canada for reassessment, to be resubmitted for UNESCO's consideration in the future.
- The effects of climate change have the potential to impact heritage resources through thawing of permafrost, rising water levels, accelerated erosion and sedimentation, and more frequent storms and wildfires.

Chapter 9 - Water

Water resources in the region (e.g., rivers, lakes and wetlands) are highly valued for their role in supporting economic development; providing important fish and wildlife habitat, food, and drinking water; and facilitating transportation connections. In addition, water has spiritual and aesthetic values and provides opportunities for traditional economic activities. However, relatively little is known about the region's water resources. This chapter characterizes water resources in the region, identifies gaps in knowledge and provides an understanding of the regulatory processes concerning its use. The chapter also emphasizes the importance of water to the health and productivity of region's ecosystems, people and economy. Key points in this chapter include:

- Water's location and availability is never static and each phase of the hydrologic cycle plays an important role in supporting ecosystems.
- The Yukon River is a major contributor of water and solutes to the Bering Sea and Arctic Ocean ecosystems. Changes in the Yukon River, to either flow or water quality, could also influence these ecosystems.
- Few lakes or large open water wetlands exist in the region and all are significant to waterfowl.
- Water resources of the region are highly valued for habitat, sustenance, transportation, economic activity, recreation and spiritual qualities.
- Limited data on water resources exists in the planning region. As of January 2019, the region has two active hydrometric stations, three active snow survey courses, one long term water quality monitoring station and three long-term groundwater monitoring stations. These facilities are managed by the Water Resources Branch.
- Break-up of the Yukon River at Dawson has advanced by a week in the last 30 years.
- Stresses on watersheds from increased development pressure and climate change can compromise the health and productivity of aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems and affect their ability to provide ecosystem services.
- Future industrial demand for water is expected to increase.
- A large number of industries in the region utilize water, rely on the availability of water for their operations and have the potential to impact water resources.
- Placer mining dominates the allowable licensed use by a substantial margin, accounting for 93% of the gross allowable water use.
- Water use and protection are considered during assessment and regulatory processes. Water licenses contain operating conditions, discharge standards and requirements for monitoring, sampling and reporting.

- Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Elders and community members have identified water as of utmost importance, essential for the health of every part of the land and for every aspect of survival.
- The Government of Yukon is developing a wetland policy for the territory and, depending on timing, could be used to help guide the land use planning process in the Dawson Region.
- Potential impacts to water resources associated with climate change include changes to soil moisture and runoff regimes, shifts in vegetation, changing drainage from permafrost loss and altered fire cycles.

Chapter 10 - Forests

The region's forested areas are important from environmental, economic and sociocultural perspectives. The forested areas in the planning region are an extension of the boreal forest zone that spans the continent from Yukon to the Atlantic coast in Labrador. Of the 26,223 km² of the planning region that lies within the Boreal ecozone, approximately 75% is covered by either coniferous (60%) or mixed (15%) forest. Most of the planning region north of the Ogilvie Mountains lies within the un-forested Taiga Cordillera ecozone.

Many connections can be made in this chapter to other resource values discussed in the RAR, such as transportation and access, wildlife habitat, and tourism and recreation. Key points in this chapter include:

- The forested areas of the region are part of a large circumpolar boreal region and these forest ecosystems are complex and dynamic.
- The boreal forest provides essential habitat for many of the region's flora and fauna, including moose and caribou. It also helps mitigate climate change as the boreal forest processes and stores carbon.
- Wildfire is an important driver of diversity in forest type, seral stage and age class, which in turn provides a variety of habitats for birds and wildlife, cultural landscapes and harvest opportunities.
- Forests boast a number of important values including:
 - Environmental: Ecosystem services such as fresh water, carbon storage, and erosion control; fish and wildlife habitat.
 - Economic: Timber and other harvested forest products, tourism opportunities, trapping and hunting, and traditional economic activities.
 - Social and Cultural: Cultural and historic resources, traditional arts, outdoor recreation opportunities, and natural beauty.

- The *Forest Resources Act* provides a comprehensive planning, tenure, compliance and enforcement regime to support the sustainable use and management of forests in the region.
- As per Chapter 17 of the THFA, forest management in the region is guided by the Dawson Regional Forest Resources Management Plan which was developed in partnership between Government of Yukon and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in.
- Government of Yukon and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in have recently established a monitoring program with indicators to assist forest managers in making informed decisions about best management practices.
- During the first Dawson Regional planning process, Land Management Units identified in the Plan Alternatives package were generally based on the Dawson Forest Land Use Zones.
- The Dawson Forest Resources Management Plan must be consistent with the Dawson Region Land Use Plan in accordance with the THFA.
- There are currently 12 Timber Harvest Plans (THP) that have been developed in the Dawson Region and there is interest in developing a THP for the gold fields area.

Chapter 11 - Fish and Wildlife Habitat

Relative to other parts of Canada, the planning region is remote and largely undeveloped. The region supports a variety of wildlife species including moose, caribou, sheep, furbearers, freshwater fish and salmon. This chapter focuses on fish and wildlife habitat in the region with emphasis on focal species and their habitat requirements. Wildlife and habitat information for focal species, fish and birds in the planning region was taken from a variety of research and local knowledge sources. In addition, more recent species information was provided by Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and Government of Yukon through review of this report. Key points in this chapter include:

- Focal Species are identified at a landscape scale due to the fact that they are widely dispersed and their habitat requirements also encompass many other species' habitats. For example, a healthy grizzly bear habitat not only benefits the grizzly bear, but many other species that live within the same landscape.
- There are many species that occur in the region that have been assessed by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) and subsequently listed on *Schedule 1* of the Species at Risk Act (SARA), including grizzly bear, wolverine and caribou.
- There are 46 mammal species in the planning region and mammalian biodiversity is higher in the southern portions of planning region.

- Moose populations appear stable within the TH traditional territory, however there are a few 'Game Management Sub-Zones' that are experiencing over-hunting pressures likely due to the ease of access.
- Key areas for waterfowl include wetlands, riparian areas adjacent to rivers and creeks and the flyway along the Tintina Trench.
- Due to the migratory habits of salmon and caribou, there are additional transboundary management considerations both nationally and internationally.
- Mineral licks, lakes and wetlands, riparian zones, grassland slopes, unglaciated mountains, springs, old growth forest and rare plants all represent important habitat requirements for the animals of the region.
- Wetlands are considered ecological hotspots and are considered to have a high threat magnitude in the region.
- For most species, late winter habitat is most critical for survival although it may not be used every year.
- The Tintina Trench is a major migration route within the planning region, and the diversity of habitats within it sustains a wide range of birds.
- Fish and wildlife habitat are a valued resource in the region both for direct (e.g. hunting, trapping) and indirect (e.g. wildlife viewing, tourism) use values.
- It is largely recognized that reducing habitat fragmentation and maintaining landscape and habitat connectivity is an important consideration for regional planning.

Chapter 12 - Protected Areas and Conservation Opportunities

Within Yukon, regional land use planning under Chapter 11 of the Final Agreements is one of the primary tools used to identify new protected and conserved areas. These areas can serve to protect fish and wildlife habitats, areas of cultural and historic significance and the traditional economy. This chapter describes the site selection elements and site/network design elements of conservation planning. It also highlights differences in approaches between the indigenous and western perspectives in conservation planning. Key points in this chapter include:

- When planning for protected and conserved areas, key considerations include an understanding of ecological representation, areas important for biodiversity and focal species.
- Landscape connectivity is integral to healthy, sustainable, and resilient ecosystems.
- The Dawson planning region includes one existing protected area (Tombstone Territorial Park) and three directly adjacent protected areas (Kit Range / North Cache Creek SMA, Yukon-Charley National Preserve and Fishing Branch Habitat Protection Area).

- Land use planning in the north should plan for the impacts of a changing climate. For example, changes in vegetation, shifting wildlife habitats and an increase in disturbance regimes (e.g. fire).
- Areas of broad conservation interest in the planning region include intact subwatersheds, river corridors, wetlands and the Tintina Trench flyway.
- Protected area planning must equally consider western science and traditional/community knowledge and interests, while respecting indigenous values and perspectives.
- The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in are currently working on a Land Stewardship Framework (LSF) that will help inform the regional planning process. The overall purpose for the LSF is to enable TH to take strong stewardship actions over the lands and waters in TH Traditional Territory.

Chapter 13 - Minerals

For over a century, economic development in the planning region has been closely linked to its mineral deposits. This chapter discusses various aspects of placer and quartz (hard rock) potential, mineral exploration and production activities and regulations that apply to the mining industry. Key points in this chapter include:

- Hard rock (quartz) mining and placer mining are distinct and different land use activities; each has its own unique pattern of exploration, development, production and reclamation.
- As of September 2019, there are 39,466 active quartz claims in the planning region covering an area of 7,778.9 km², or 19.5% of the region.
- Hard rock mineral exploration is a significant economic activity within the planning region. In 2018, exploration expenditures in the region reached a record high of \$147 million.
- As of July 2019, there are 14 active mineral exploration projects in the planning region being undertaken by nine companies (or individuals). These projects employ over 400 workers (both full-time and temporary) of which 13% are First Nations people and 11% live in the Dawson area.
- The Coffee Gold Project is a proposed open-pit gold mine that is expected to be in operation for 8-10 years with potential for expansion. The mine is expected to contribute \$251.1 million to the Yukon economy annually during production and contribute \$427.5 million to government revenues, in the form of taxes and royalties, over its lifetime.
- In 2017, placer gold production in the Yukon was an estimated value of \$120 million.
- The Dawson Placer Mining District is by far the most productive placer mining district in the territory.

- As of December 2018, there are 18,291 active and pending placer claims in the planning region covering an area of 2,556 or 5.6% of the region. Claims are primarily located within the watersheds of the Klondike, Indian, west Yukon (Fortymile, Sixtymile and Moosehorn Range rivers) and lower Stewart rivers.
- Mineral claim and lease staking can impact ecological and cultural values.
- Mineral exploration is an extensive activity with potential for adverse cumulative effects on ecological and cultural resource values.
- Hard rock mine development occurs on a very small footprint, but with potentially significant and enduring environmental and socio-economic impacts.

Chapter 14 - Energy

Economic and population growth in the region is increasing the demands for energy. With a growing population and increasing resource development, governments and industries are actively seeking new sources of energy, including potential new sites for hydroelectric and other projects. Continued development in the mining sector is placing additional pressure to identify adequate and cost-effective local sources of energy production. Key points in this chapter include:

- Transportation, commercial, residential, and industrial are the major sectors for energy consumption in the Yukon.
- The northern section of the planning region includes portions of two sedimentary basins with identified potential for oil and natural gas resources: the Eagle Plain and Kandik basins.
- Government of Yukon is not proceeding with the development or regulation of unconventional hydrocarbons (i.e. extracted by means of hydraulic fracturing) at this time.
- Hydrocarbons continue to be a major source of energy.
- Demand on existing hydroelectric infrastructure continues to rise with new construction and major mining projects.
- Exploration of a hydro generation facility is underway for the North Fork area.
- Biomass energy (fuelwood) is an important resource for heating in the region and there will likely be increased demand for wood energy over the short and long term.
- Solar energy for heating and electricity is a viable seasonal option.
- There has been limited assessment of sources and options for wind and geothermal energy in the region.
- There are potential negative impacts to the natural value of the region associated with development of renewable and non-renewable energy resources.

- Future energy requirements in the planning region will depend on population trends, energy efficiency of municipal and territorial infrastructure, and the level and type of economic development activities.

Chapter 15 - Agriculture

The Dawson Planning Region contains some of the most productive agricultural land in the Yukon. High quality agriculture soils are associated with the flood plains and lower terraces of major river valleys. In this region, there are extensive suitable agricultural areas along the Yukon (both upstream and downstream of Dawson), the lower Stewart River as well as along the Indian River and the Klondike River. This chapter summarizes agricultural potential in the region including soil capability; climate; water considerations; existing and future potential production; and strategic planning considerations. Key points in this chapter include:

- The areas of West Dawson, Sunnydale, Henderson's Corner, and the Klondike Valley contain large areas of suitable agricultural land.
- As of 2018, there are approximately 40 titled lots derived from agriculture land programs (i.e. Spot Land Program). However, spot land applications for agriculture have caused land use conflicts with YFN and individuals who apply in the region.
- TH has noted several Settlement Land parcels that are suitable for agriculture in the region.
- Current agricultural production in the Dawson region is geared towards the local market with an emphasis on direct sales, either at the farm gate or at the weekly farmers' market in the summer. The majority of sales are for fresh vegetables and eggs, although bedding plants, dairy, and meats are increasing.
- Agricultural development may impact traditional activities and disturb heritage resources.
- Improper management practices can result in adverse impact to wetlands and wildlife habitat.
- Yukon's agriculture policy states that no significant loss of key wildlife habitat will occur as a result of new agricultural land development.
- Some activities on agricultural land are assessed by the Yukon Environmental and Socio-Economic Assessment Board (YESAB).
- The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Teaching and Working Farm is a valued cultural and economic resource.

Chapter 16 - Tourism and Recreation

The Dawson region is an important destination for visitors to the Yukon. Well-known historical and cultural attractions, along with wilderness destinations such as the Yukon River and Tombstone Territorial Park and road-accessible tundra landscapes, continue to attract visitors. People visit the region to explore history, cruise and paddle historic and wild rivers, hike through sub-arctic landscapes, and learn about the cultural heritage of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. Dawson City is a critical component of the region's tourism sector with its well-established tourism opportunities. This chapter highlights tourism and recreation infrastructure within the region, discusses the current state of the tourism industry and presents potential opportunities for the future. Key points in this chapter include:

- Scenery, wildlife viewing, Klondike gold rush history, and historical attractions are identified as key tourism attributes of the region.
- Historic resources and attractions tied to gold rush history are concentrated in and around Dawson City.
- Linear heritage features, particularly the Ridge Road Trail and Yukon Ditch are popular for motorized and non-motorized recreational use.
- Tourism provides seasonal and year-round jobs for local residents, as well as seasonal jobs for transient summer workers.
- Dawson residents are primary users of the recreation resources in the region.
- Opportunities for growth include winter activities, lodge-based tourism, First Nation cultural interpretation tours, and ecotourism.
- Areas with high potential for new and expanded recreation activities include the Yukon River Corridor and Forty Mile area; Ogilvie Mountains and Dempster Highway Corridor; the Yukon Ditch trail network; and the Top of the World Highway.
- The Regional Economic Development Plan for the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Traditional Territory identifies opportunities for growth including FN cultural heritage sites (e.g. Tr'ochëk) and Tombstone Territorial Park (including the Dempster Highway).
- Another major tourism opportunity for the region is the potential Tr'ondëk-Klondike UNESCO World Heritage Site. The bid for this designation is currently on hold but may be resubmitted in the future by the project partners.
- Visitation data shows significant increases in visitor numbers and tourist spending. New attractions such as the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk highway may continue to contribute to this rise in the region.
- Tourism operators note that land use and access are potential barriers to business growth. There is limited access to land for infrastructure and uncertainty about land tenure.

- Increased resident and visitor use of popular routes and destinations may impact environmental and cultural values and resources in the region.
- Best management practices and cross-industry cooperation are key to maintaining a quality wilderness and/or cultural tourism experience.

Chapter 17 - Transportation and Access

Regional access and transportation networks are vital for the movement of people, food, freight, construction materials, fuel, and other goods and supplies. Transportation networks and infrastructure also have a major influence on land use patterns and economic development. This chapter provides an overview of land, water and air-based access in the planning region. Aggregates are also included in this chapter because their primary purpose is as a key resource vital for construction and maintenance of transportation networks. Key points in this chapter include:

- Major transportation assets of the region that allow for economic, traditional and recreational activities include: three highways, a community airport and airstrips, an international border crossing, the Yukon River Corridor, a traditional trail system, and numerous secondary roads and trails.
- The Yukon River is the major navigable waterway in the region and one of the most valuable resources to TH and many others. It is a key transportation corridor and essential to traditional economic activities.
- Shared corridors provide economic and ecological advantages. However, route selection for new all-season corridors is difficult without full cost accounting and consideration of potential environmental, social and cultural impacts.
- Increased access in the region can have positive and negative effects on traditional, socio-cultural and economic Values. However, the impact of increased access on natural values of the region is generally negative.
- The impact of access on ecological integrity and wildlife varies with:
 - size and extent of access features,
 - level of activity associated with those features, and
 - success of mitigation measures designed to minimize these impacts.
- Limits to access affect the ability of resource users to pursue economic, recreational or cultural activities.
- Aggregate resources are limited in the Dawson Region and their availability must be taken into consideration when planning large infrastructure projects and access routes.
- Yukon Government is currently developing a Resource Road Regulation and an Off-Road Vehicle Regulation which will guide access decisions in the territory.

- The proposed Northern Access Route (NAR) involves upgrading existing roads and will require a total of approximately 20% (37km) of new road construction to connect existing portions, along with various upgrades to existing road and stream crossings, starting from the Klondike Highway near Dawson City and extending south to the proposed Coffee Mine project.
 - Climate change presents risk to the stability of transportation infrastructure and uncertainty in route planning to avoid permafrost areas.
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Section 3

Resource Summary Maps

Twenty-seven resource maps were created to accompany the Resource Assessment Report. For online access of **Section 3: Resource Maps**, please visit <https://dawson.planyukon.ca/index.php/the-dawson-region>