

In Your Words Report

A Summary of Draft Regional Land Use Plan Engagement and Feedback

August 2022

Executive Summary

Produced by



Dawson Regional
Planning Commission

*On The Land We Walk Together
Nän käk ndä tr'ädäl*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In June 2021 the Dawson Regional Planning Commission released a Draft Regional Land Use Plan for the Dawson Region. A public engagement campaign was launched on June 15, 2021 and ran until November 1, 2021. It was the second major engagement campaign the Commission have undertaken as a part of the planning process. The main objective for this round of public engagement was to gather information, reactions, and thoughts on the Draft Plan to inform the development of the Recommended Plan.

WHAT DID WE DO?

During the roughly 5-month engagement period, the Commission and staff put extensive effort into reaching a variety of community members, stakeholders (Plan Partners), First Nations, and other organizations to ensure a broad spectrum of input on the Draft Plan was received, and people were able to easily express their thoughts and concerns.

Recognizing the difficulties of community participation due to the constraints of work seasons, COVID-19 restrictions and other barriers to accessibility, the Commission held a wide range of events and opportunities for participation. This included meetings and workshops that were designed to promote small group conversations; these were offered in-person and online on multiple dates and at different locations. Meetings varied in style: some were sometimes technical, or topic-focused, while others were more focused on Traditional Knowledge or community gathering. In addition, staff and Commission held individual meetings with stakeholders and First Nations, provided a survey (both online and paper), accepted written and oral submissions, and used social media, household mailers, and an engagement-specific website to connect with people.

RESULTS

Overall, the Draft Plan was received well. It was acknowledged that the Commission was trying to create a plan that offered compromise and balance in the Planning Region. The Commission received:

- Over 250 letters and emails from the public, including 60+ submissions from Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in citizens.
- Over 20 submissions from Plan Partners
- 80+ survey responses
- 40+ meetings with stakeholders

Parties

Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Government

The main priority expressed by the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Government was to ensure that the Recommended Plan align with Chapter 11 of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Final Agreement. The feedback was centered around six themes they want to see addressed further in the Recommended Plan.

Government of Yukon

The Government of Yukon's feedback was also centered around six themes: the designations of land management units and their boundaries, cumulative effects management, wetlands, culture and heritage, MMIWG2S+, and implementation.

Engagement Highlights

Implementation of Plan: Feedback indicated a need for more clarity and direction, including processes for monitoring, adaptive management and measuring plan success.

Key Species: Caribou, moose, and salmon were raised as an ongoing concern for their cultural and ecological importance.

Mineral Development: The importance of the mineral industry to the Regional and Territorial economy was emphasized. The main comments received were in relation to the potential for critical minerals, access to claims, lack of certainty for operators, the need for reclamation guidance, and available land for exploration.

Protection and the Special Management Area 2 (SMA 2) land designation:

Many were concerned that the SMA 2 designation did not offer enough protection and therefore it was not an effective tool to achieve protection objectives. The amount of protection was the predominant theme in the feedback, and opinions varied widely. Many suggested there was too much land 'off-limits' to industry, while others believed the Draft Plan did not do enough to protect the land, water and animals.

Stewardship: The concept of stewardship and 'On the land we walk together' / Nän kāk ndä tr'ädäl, was met with overwhelming positivity. The need for the distinction between stewardship as an ancestral responsibility and as a broader community concept was highlighted.

Sustainable Economy: The importance of the agricultural and tourism economies was discussed, especially surrounding issues of food security, and coordinated mixed land use (e.g., farming and mining).

Traditional knowledge and values: The importance of including traditional knowledge and values was broadly expressed. This inclusion not only refers to the Recommended Plan, but also in the ongoing monitoring and assessment activities and research recommended in the Draft Plan, and in any further subregional planning that is recommended by the Commission.

Wetlands: Feedback centered on the need for absolute protection of wetlands, and concerns surrounding thresholds of development in some wetlands and wetland types. Wetland thresholds in particular were a huge concern for the placer mining industry.

NEXT STEPS

The Recommended Plan will be released by the Parties in Fall 2022. Chapter 11 of the First Nation Final Agreements provides direction as to how the Parties must proceed with Consultation following the submission of a Recommended Plan by a Planning Commission.



Commission members Alice McCulley and Angie Joseph-Rear at the Draft Plan launch