



United States Department of the Interior

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
1011 East Tudor Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199



In Reply Refer To:
FWS/IR11/NWRSK22-001

Dawson Regional Planning Commission
307 Jarvis Street, Suite 201
Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada Y1A 2H3

Dear Commissioners:

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the draft Dawson Regional Land Use Plan. The Canadian and U.S. governments have a long history of working cooperatively to conserve transboundary fish and wildlife and their habitats. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service administers several national wildlife refuges (Yukon Flats, Nowitna, Innoko, and Yukon Delta) in Alaska that are connected to the Yukon River downstream of the planning area.

We are very impressed with your planning approach to proposed zones of use intensity and criteria for linear density and surface disturbance. We applaud the consideration given to the environmental and social effects of climate change and ways to thoughtfully adapt and mitigate the effects.

We appreciate the recognition of the importance of Scottie Creek Watershed, and support its conservation. This area is upstream of Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge, which was established to conserve fish and wildlife populations and habitats in their natural diversity; to fulfill international treaty obligations of the United States with respect to fish and wildlife and their habitats; to provide the opportunity for continued subsistence use by local residents; to ensure water quality and necessary water quantity within the refuge; and to provide opportunities for interpretation and environmental education. The sustainability of the Nelchina caribou herd and its habitats are of importance.

Yukon River chinook are a species of conservation concern and important for achieving purposes for national wildlife refuges referenced earlier. Brown et al. (2017) documented “183 spawning areas in the Yukon River basin, 79 in the United States, and 104 in Canada” with the majority of spawning areas in tributary streams, not the main stem Yukon. Several of the Canadian spawning locations are within the planning area. In addition to spawning habitat, Yukon River Chinook juveniles spend one year in freshwater often in small tributaries. We encourage measures to protect water quality and quantity for both spawning and rearing areas, which also benefits resident fish species. Planners could also consider climate trajectories for warming stream temperatures and the value of identifying and protecting cold-water refugia.

If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Shane Walker, Chief, Conservation Planning and Policy Branch, at shane_walker@fws.gov, or Mr. Jimmy Fox, Refuge Manager, Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge, at jimmy_fox@fws.gov.

Sincerely,

Acting Regional Director

Resources:

Brown RJ, von Finster A, Henszey RJ, Eiler JH. 2017. Catalog of Chinook Salmon Spawning Areas in Yukon River Basin in Canada and United States. *Journal of Fish and Wildlife Management* 8(2):558-586; e1944-687X. doi:10.3996/052017-JFWM-045