



White River First Nation Conservation Priorities for the Dawson Regional Land Use Plan



Submitted by White River First Nation to the Dawson Regional
Land Use Planning Commission

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

White River First Nation (“WRFN”) has put together this report to identify our conservation priorities in the overlapping area of the Dawson Regional Land Use Plan (“DRLUP”) and WRFN Traditional Territory (Appendix A, Map 1 and 2) (“Overlap Area”). The Overlap Area contains places that are imperative to preserving our way of life and culture. This area encompasses pristine and unique habitat that our members relied on for exercising our Aboriginal Rights. We recognize the importance of identifying these areas of significance to WRFN early on within the planning process to preserve our way of life and culture. We are sharing our information with the Commission early on in the planning process to ensure our perspectives and views are afforded full consideration by the Commission. Moving forward, we remain open to meeting with the Commission to provide any clarity needed on our submission.

1.2 Overview

This Report will provide a brief history of WRFN in the Overlap Area, a timeline of events for our involvement in the planning process, limitations to the Report, and our conservation priorities within the Overlap area.

The Report is organized into five sections:

- Section 1 provides a brief introduction of the purpose of the Report, an overview of the Report, and limitations
- Section 2 provides background information on WRFN and a description of our involvement thus far in the DRLUP
- Section 3 provides information on the methods used to determine our conservation priorities in the Overlap Area
- Section 4 provides a description and discussion of our conservation priorities in the Overlap Area
- Section 5 summarizes the findings and recommendations to the Commission

1.3 Limitations

COVID-19 Pandemic

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was not possible to conduct in-person interviews. Normally when working with our community members, we would host workshops and conduct in-person interviews. All interviews occurred over Zoom, which was cumbersome to set up as many members do not have a personal computer at home or knowledge on how to join a Zoom meeting. To help overcome this limitation, younger members were paired with elders to help with Zoom for interviews.

Timeframe

The goal is to have this Report completed before the Draft Plan is released. As the Draft Plan was set to be released in March 2021, the Report needs to be completed well in advance to provide time for the Commission to consider the Report. If given more time, we would have the opportunity to complete an in-depth study/analysis, however this is not possible with the limited timeframe before us.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Relevant WRFN History in DRLUP Planning Region

Hän and Tanana people

During the Gold Rush, there was a surge of miners and outsiders into the Dawson area. The Hän Chief at that time, Chief Isaac, knew that these people could impact their way of life, culture and traditions. In order to protect and preserve his culture and traditions, he made the decision to send their songs and dances to the Tanana people at the Tanacross Village in Alaska. The Tanana people actively kept these songs and dance safe for many years, until the Hän people were ready to take them back. Today, this is celebrated annually at the Moosehide Gathering where people from all over come together to celebrate indigenous culture.

During interviews with our members, they told this important story that ties WRFN and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in together. We share this story to remind us that we are all connected, and not so long

ago our relatives lived harmoniously and shared traditions with the Hän people. Using this story as a guide, it should be remembered that as Yukon First Nations people, we have the ability to work together to protect our way of life into the future.

Traditional Territory

The WRFN Traditional Territory has been a long-standing issue from the land claim negotiation process. During the UFA based process, Traditional Territories were determined for the purposes of Final Agreements. During the negotiation processes for the Final Agreement, WRFN tabled many different versions of our Traditional Territory that are much larger than the WRFN Traditional Territory within the UFA. WRFN could not come to an understanding with Yukon Government and Government of Canada regarding many aspects of the Final Agreement including the Traditional Territory line; in the end it was determined it was not in WRFN's best interest to sign. In 1990, when WRFN officially became a First Nation Government, a group of WRFN elders came together to map our Traditional Territory based on our history and occupation of areas that comprise our Traditional Territory shown in Appendix 1. This map accurately encompasses areas that are integral to maintaining the way of life that sustains us. This map was rejected by government at the time; however, this map was re-asserted by WRFN in 2013. Knowing that this was the wish of WRFN elders that had now passed on, WRFN completed the Northern Boundary Report to verify and confirm the assertion of this Traditional Territory in 2013 (Easton et al., 2013) . This assertion caused tension and conflict with neighbouring Yukon First Nations as it was assumed this map was asserted for economic reasons. We would like to reiterate that this assertion was not done from an economic standpoint, but rather as a way to honour and respect WRFN elders and ensure that WRFN history was being told accurately and historical occupation captured adequately.

Interim Protected Lands

By not signing the Final Agreement, WRFN did not receive settlement land. During negotiations, WRFN, YG, and Government of Canada could not come to a common understanding on settlement land locations. During the 2002 Final Agreement negotiations, WRFN had selected 23 Site Specific Blocks and 5 Rural Blocks along the Yukon River, Coffee Creek, and the Ladue River. During negotiations, Yukon Government and Canada rejected all of these parcels, and the only parcel that remains in the Dawson Planning Region is S-147B, which is located in the

Moosehorn Range. The lands that were identified as potential settlement parcels, are now set aside as Interim Protected Lands (“IPL”) in the case that WRFN decides to negotiate a land claim agreement.

Knowing the history of the Land Claim negotiation process, it should not come as a surprise that WRFN has a long-standing interest in key areas within the Dawson Planning region. WRFN selected these parcels with the intention for our future members to use these areas, and this is one of the reasons we have a vested interest in being apart of the planning process.

2.2 WRFN Representation in DRLUP

The DRLUP process and the DRLUP Commission was formed back in 2010, however the process was temporarily suspended in 2014 due to the ongoing Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan Court Case. In January 2019, the Dawson Regional Land Use Commission formed once more to begin working on the DRLUP.

In June, 2019 we sat with the Senior Planner, Tim Van Hinte to discuss our involvement in the plan. After Tim spoke to the Commission, he expressed that we were welcome to make comments on planning materials and attend public meetings. We felt as though this was no different than any other member of the public being consulted, and was not acceptable for a First Nation with constitutionally protected rights. Without being afforded a more involved opportunity to participate in the planning process (aside from public comment), we requested to be equally represented on the Planning Commission. On November 19, 2019, we sent a letter to the Senior Liaison Committee requesting representation on the DRLUP Commission. In April of 2020, we received a response from Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in (TH) and Yukon Government (YG) declining our request to be represented on the DRLUP Commission on the basis that WRFN’s Traditional Territory as defined by the TH Final Agreement does not overlap with the planning region.

3. METHODS

3.1 WRFN Membership Interviews

We conducted interviews over Zoom with our membership. Each interview consisted of guiding questions that helped our members explore their connection to the DRLUP area. Members were asked to share their past, current, and future uses of the Overlap Area, and where they would like to see conservation efforts. The notes from the interviews were summarized, paired with information contained within our past Traditional Land Use Studies (“TLUS”), and compiled to determine important areas

3.2 Mapping and Literature Review

We performed a comprehensive review of relevant Traditional Land Use Studies and other historic documents. Included in these documents were ethnographic reports, the Northern Boundary Document, WRFN Land Use and Occupancy study, TLUS studies completed for projects etc. During this review, we looked for stories or mentions of places within the Overlapping Area, and the importance to WRFN membership. All of the places that were identified during this literature review were reconfirmed by the Zoom interviews.

4. CONSERVATION PRIORITIES

During the interviews, it was clear that our members had a different view of conservation and planning than the western model of zoning areas. Our members view the overlap area holistically and struggle to draw distinctions between important areas and unimportant areas. Our members expressed the idea of interconnectedness and how development in one area can affect the next, especially within a watershed. It was difficult for our members to identify any particular areas in need of protection or conservation but in general, we were able to identify regions or areas that should be considered for protection and integrated management.

4.1 Naadzah Niig (UT) / Nat 'azhu Tú (NT) / White River Landscape Management Unit

Protection Recommendation:

From the interviews, we were able to identify an extremely important region to us within the Dawson Planning Area. As mentioned previously, it was difficult for our members to see areas in a silo, but rather they identified regions needing protection. The area that was identified encompassed the White River Landscape Management unit, which includes the southern extent of the Scottie Creek Wetlands, north to the Ladue River and east to the White River watershed (See Appendix A, Map 3). It is our recommendation that the Commission should protect this entire Landscape Management Unit. We believe this is an excellent opportunity to protect an area that contains intact watersheds and sub watersheds, wetlands, has limited third party interests, and has numerous cultural and heritage values. Our protection recommendation is based on the following information:

1. Limited Third-Party Interest

Within the Dawson Planning Region many of the LMU's already have considerable levels of mining activity. Within the White River LMU, there are few existing mining claims in comparison to other areas in the Dawson Planning Region (See Appendix A, Map 4). We see this as an excellent opportunity to avoid competing interest when protecting this area. Within the DRLUP Resource Assessment Report, it is recognized that large intact ecosystems with minimal human disturbance have more intact ecological functions and processes, and therefore is key for biodiversity conservation. This area was also recognized in the Resource Assessment Report as broad conservation importance as it contains two intact sub watersheds, the North Ladue and Scottie Creek. Intact watersheds and areas with limited disturbance are vital in protecting wildlife, as well as providing ecological benchmarks in a changing landscape (Dawson Regional Planning Commission, 2020).

2. Ecological Values

As mentioned above, the southern portion of the Dawson Planning Region has been identified in the Resource Assessment Report as having broad conservation interest. We believe this area also contains high ecological values for the following reasons:

Wetlands

There are few wetlands in the Dawson Planning Region, and even less that are completely intact. The Scottie Creek Wetlands is an intact wetland ecosystem that provides vital habitat for mammals, birds, fish, and plants. Scottie Creek has been identified by experts such as Ducks Unlimited and CPAWS as needing to be protected due its important ecological functions. During the Fall migration of waterfowl, the Scottie Creek wetlands were found to have the highest bird use days within the region (Ducks Unlimited, 2014) (CPAWS, 2020). Wetlands are known for being biodiversity hotspots and provide the energy needed to sustain our fish, birds, and mammals to survive. Wetlands also play an extremely important role in supporting the lowest levels of the food chain, which allows for our larger wildlife to exist (CPAWS, 2020). It has been reported by our members that Scottie Creek supports a thriving and healthy bird, moose, and muskrat population.

Wildlife Key Areas

This entire region we have identified contains many Wildlife Key Areas. The Yukon Government has recognized these key wildlife areas:

- Muskrat are found in abundance within the Scottie Creek Wetlands
- Moose winter range is found along the Ladue River, Lesaux Creek, and White River
- Bald Eagles use the Scottie Creek Wetlands for reproduction in the summer (June-Aug)
- Golden eagle and Peregrine Falcon use White River corridor for reproduction during the summer (June-Aug)
- Moose winter range is found along Mount Baker near the White River

Interconnectivity

Contamination is not limited to one area. There are downstream effects of contamination which our members are concerned about in this area. Members specifically talked about the Ladue River region and the Moosehorn Range having potential for contamination. We are concerned that if there were to be contamination, for example in an area such as the headwaters of Scottie Creek in the Moosehorn Range Mountains, this would then flow into the Scottie Creek Wetlands. Therefore, it is not enough to just protect one area such as the Scottie Creek Wetlands, but there is a need to protect the region due to the connectivity of the waterways. It essential that the entire sub watershed is protected such as the North Ladue and Scottie Creek so that conservation efforts are not wasted by contamination in other areas. In addition, by protecting this area there would be some connectivity to the Tetlin Wildlife Refuge across the border in Alaska. This would create further connectivity to intact ecosystems, and the positive outcomes of protecting this area would be much greater.

“The mining is an issue in the Moosehorn Range. It’s the headwaters of Scottie Creek, so if there is a large mining operation in the Moosehorn Range and they have leach pits and all that stuff, and if it breaks... The water then flows from Scottie Creek, down across the border, and down into Chisana, and down into the Tanana River. If pollution was going to happen, it would impact this whole area.”

3. WRFN Rights, Title, and Interests

This region we have described contains important places to our heritage. These areas connect our members to their past, their present and their future. We have used the Scottie Creek, Moosehorn Range, Ladue River, and White River area since time immemorial and continue to do so today. Members express a deep cultural connection to this area with stories of trails, cabins, hunting, trapping, fishing, gathering, and sacred areas.

Many of our elders have a strong desire to return to these places, but with declining health these trips are not always possible. When interviewing younger members, they expressed their identity being tied to these places. The younger generation explained how they have grown disconnected physically to these areas, but their identity is deeply entangled within them:

“I hear Coffee Creek, I hear Donjek, I hear Nabesna, I hear Pepper Lake... These are the places I’ve heard growing up. I may not be able to get there, but the thing is I feel connected to those places. I feel culturally connected; I feel like its part of my identity. We need these places to be preserved. What are we if we don’t have those places? We won’t have home anymore. Beaver Creek isn’t necessarily our home, its Scottie Creek and its all these different places we’re from. That’s home.”

Hunting, Fishing, Trapping, and Gathering

Traditionally, this area was travelled and used for hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering by our people. There were many travel routes that connected the villages around Scottie Creek to the Ladue River, the White River, and Alaska. During our interviews, members described trails headed north from Scottie Creek to reach the Ladue, trails from Northway to the Ladue, and trails from Scottie Creek along Katrina Creek to reach the White River. Life was lived on the trails, and therefore members describe their families camping, hunting, fishing, and trapping all over this region. Chief Sam, an upper Tanana man interviewed in 1959 describes how his people traditionally traveled in the Ladue Creek and White River area:

“In the old days the people seldom stayed in the village. Always they were on the trail, hunting and camping. In July whitefish were dried and cached at the Fish Camp. Then the people went moose hunting, caching the meat. In the winter they visited the caches and then when the caribou came they killed caribou. After the moose season the people went up to the head of the Nabesna to secure sheepskins for winter. Then they would return to the village; make their clothes; and then take the winter hunting trails to Ladue Creek, the Chisana, basin, and the White River. In the spring when the leaves were coming out they returned to the village. They would take birch bark and sew it together to make new tents and then wait for the caribou to come back again.” (Easton et al., 2013).

This connection to this area remains today, and our members continue to use this area for exercising rights. As described by Chief Sam, the fall moose hunt and winter Caribou hunt are integral to our way of life and culture. Each Fall, members visit these areas to hunt moose, hunt caribou in the winter, and fish for white fish throughout the year. These year-round harvests sustain WRFN families, elders, and community all year. The harvesting of moose in our traditional areas allows for members to connect to their families and traditional ways. For example, during the interviews with members, they explained that their family has cabins in the Scottie Creek area and would hunt up into the Moosehorn Range. This member is now working at rebuilding these cabins and opening up these traditional travel routes in order to hunt moose as their late parents once did. Members continue to choose these areas to revitalize their cultural connection due to the limited disturbances and pristine habitat that allows for moose to thrive. Our members also actively trap a concession within the Scottie Creek area, and trap wolves in efforts to increase moose population growth.

At the confluence of the Ladue River and the White River there is a fish camp that has not been used for a number of years now but there is a strong desire amongst members to reconnect with this area. Several members shared stories of their families living in cabins situated along the mouth of Ladue and gathering here to harvest fish every year. There were numerous access points to this fish camp; there were trails coming from Alaska down the North Ladue River, trails coming north from Scottie Creek, and people even built rafts and floated down the White River. In 2019, our members flew over this area and looked for past cabins and the fish camp. From the feedback we received from members following these flights, WRFN intends to host a fish camp for our members this coming summer.

Interim Protected Land

WRFN has one Interim Protected Land in this area in the upper Scottie Creek region (S-147B). This small parcel was selected for being a Village Site of the Upper Tanana people. This is a very important family area to WRFN and the families still use this area today.

Sacred Areas

During our interviews, members disclosed that the Scottie Creek headwaters are sacred to Upper Tanana people. This knowledge has been passed on from generation to generation, and remains central to WRFN spiritual connection to the land. Members describe that they must drink the

water because it is sacred, and therefore it must remain uncontaminated. Scottie Creek originates from the Moosehorn Range Mountains that has already seen industrial activity. A member described the importance of this area:

“If you get to the head of Scottie Creek, you will go nowhere. It comes out of the ground. It’s the start of Scottie Creek. From what my sister told me, you go up there and drink that water. It’s a sacred water. Scottie Creek is a sacred river.”

4.2 Tagé Cho (NT) / Yukon River Corridor LMU

Protection Recommendation

We recommend that the Commission considers designating the Yukon River Corridor as an integrated management area with strict management directions and an emphasis on preservation/conservation. This area is overrun in placer and quartz claims with large scale mines being proposed. With the existing interest and the damage already done to this area, we would strongly encourage the Commission to recommend a cumulative effects assessment done of the area, and create a recommendation using a threshold-based approach that would allow the Yukon River Corridor to remain healthy and preserve its ecological integrity.

1. Existing Third-Party Interests and Cumulative Impacts

We recognize the already existing damage done by mining activities along the Yukon River Corridor. There are existing access routes, thousands of claims staked, multiple large-scale exploration projects occurring, active mines, and proposed mines. This area has seen a lot of development, and is expected to see more in the coming years. We would encourage the Commission to consider how much development the Yukon River Corridor can sustain. In the Issues and Interest report, the Commission suggests using a threshold approach for determining allowable levels of specific disturbances. We would encourage the Commission to explore what the allowable thresholds of change should be for this area considering the existing activities. In addition, the ecological threshold needs to be determined for the Yukon River Corridor before allowing more development to occur. If we continue to allow open season on development in this area, the Yukon River Corridor could surpass its ecological threshold and no longer be able to return to its original state.

“When we flew over a mine, we saw the big huge hole in the ground. I wish our elders could fly over and see that. In their days, our land was so clean and pure. Everything was so good to eat and drink. With mining things are different, because things are going to change drastically.”

2. Ecological Value

The ecological value of the Yukon River is undebated. The Yukon River is known for being the third longest River in North America and home to a diverse array of species. This river supports larger species such as grizzly bears, black bears, wolverines, moose and many others, but it also supports a thriving aquatic ecosystem. The Yukon River is the longest salmon run in the world, and each year salmon spawn in the river and start their life in the Bering Sea.

There has been extensive work done on the health of the Yukon River. This work was completed by WWF Canada and the Yukon River Inter Tribal Watershed Council (WWF, 2020). In 2017, the Yukon River Health was determined to be good, but in a more recent update completed in 2020 it was determined that the overall health was poor due to changes in flow and water quality. They found the water to contain high levels of aluminum, copper, iron, arsenic, lead, zinc, nitrite, nitrate and phosphorus. WWF also determined that the largest threats to the Yukon River Watershed were climate change and habitat loss. Habitat loss was rated as being very high or high in the upper section of the Yukon River due to deforestation from industrial activity. It is clear that these trends are showing a decline in our Yukon River Watershed health with increased industrial activity. The Commission has the ability to limit habitat loss by having strict management directions for this LMU.

3. WRFN Rights, Title, and Interests

Historic connection

The Yukon River Corridor was a lifeline for travel for Yukon First Nations people. It connected people across the territory and allowed for people to travel great distances easily. Our members talk about rafting the Yukon River Corridor all the way to Dawson. Access to the Yukon River was usually gained through Fort Selkirk, Coffee Creek, or the White River. People lived their

lives on the river, sharing stories about births, deaths, gathering, hunting, fishing, and trapping all along the river. The Yukon River also allowed nations to come together to celebrate and gather each year. Members speak about other Nations using the Yukon River to meet at Coffee Creek for an annual gathering.

Current Connection

The river still allows for connection to important places. We have been working to revitalize our connection with the Yukon River. Each year, WRFN has been hosting a moose hunt camp at Coffee Creek. During the camp, we hunt up and down stream on the Yukon River from Coffee Creek. During these trips, members have seen industrial activity increasing. Members have reported non-stop flights, barges, power boats, and noise that impact the way they use the area. On these trips, members have expressed concerns about contamination of the moose from this area and the drinking water. Our members know that as the health of the Yukon River declines, so will the ability to drink water from the river and harvest wildlife safely.

4.3 Ts'i Deten Tú' (NT)/ Gaathaay Niign (UT) / Coffee Creek LMU

Protection Recommendation

We recommend that the Commission zones this as an integrated management area with very strict management directions and a conservation focus. We think it may be valuable to explore the use of a threshold-based system for disturbance as a way of limiting future development within the entire LMU. With the proposed mine and Northern Access Route (NAR), we are concerned that Newmont and other companies will expand their exploration projects or start exploring new areas, which could potentially lead to additional mine projects being proposed.

WRFN Rights, Interest, and Title

In partnership with the Firelight Group and Calliou Group, our Nation has completed 4 Traditional Land Use Studies (TLUS) for the Coffee Creek area (Bates, Deroy & Firelight Research Inc, 2014, 2017; Firelight Group Research Cooperative, 2015; Janssen & Calliou Group, 2012). The TLUS are available to be shared with the Commission if there is an interest in reading them. This wealth of information for this area regarding our rights, interests, and title founded on three overarching value components in the area:

Habitation and Travel

Our members are concerned that with increased industrial activity at Coffee Creek there will be negative changes to character of the landscape in terms of appearance, peaceful enjoyment, and decreased safety. There is also a concern that there will be destruction of trails and our camp at Coffee Creek by projects and roads in the area. If these areas were to be disturbed, for example roads behind our camp, our members would be less likely to return to these areas since the character of the area would be fundamentally changed. This would create a further disconnection to the traditional way of life that we are revitalizing. It is important that there are limits to development at Coffee Creek, so this area is not overrun with exploration projects/mines, roads, boat/barge traffic, and outside users.

“When I think about Coffee Creek. It’s that—it’s going to be always beautiful because we have that history there. But we’ll hear, you know, a mining truck go by, you know? We’ll be there camping, and for many years, potentially—many, many years, we’re going to hear that in the distance. Look at the location. There should never be a vehicle in that location, ever.” (WRFN Knowledge and Use Study for Kaminak Gold Corporation Coffee Gold Project, 2014)

Subsistence Harvesting

Each year, we use this area for subsistence harvesting during the fall moose hunt and fishing during the summer. It is concerning that with increased industrial activity animals such as moose may choose to avoid this area due to habitat reduction, noise, and disturbances. As mentioned previously, during our most recent trips our members have seen flights, barges, and mining staff at Coffee Creek.

Our members also quite concerned about pollution potentially entering the waterways that may impact their ability to feel safe eating fish from the river, harvesting moose, or drinking the water. Industry has assured members in the past that there should be no concern of contamination, however our people remain unconvinced. Whether the contamination is real or not, the impact is still the same. The perceived contamination deters members from feeling safe

in carrying out their traditional practices, which ultimately leads to the disconnection from their traditional area.

“And it’s just, like, freaky when I see people, humans, tampering with areas of land that—they might be, like, “Oh, yeah, no, that’s OK. It won’t affect the water over there.” But it’s, like—that’s a major river right there. If you spill anything, that stuff’s going to be messing up the entire ecosystem around there. So, like, I just don’t like seeing that.” (WRFN Knowledge and Use Study for Kaminak Gold Corporation Coffee Gold Project, 2014)

Increased access to the area is an ongoing concern, as our members believe there will be an increase in licensed hunting in the area due to ease of access. The proposed Northern Access Route was highlighted by members as potentially having large impacts on subsistence species such as moose due to outside hunters being able to travel right to Coffee Creek. Our members have experienced this situation before such as the overharvesting that occurred during the construction of the Alaska Highway or the military construction and use of the Snag road. Considering these past infringements on our ability to subsist, our members are therefore not supportive of a potentially permanent road that will bring people to another traditional area with no promises of decommissioning the road.

“Well, my concern is, for me would be hunting. ... Now that’s a big open door for people to start travelling up there and driving in there and hunting. (Knowledge and Use Study for Goldcorp Inc.'s Proposed Road to The Coffee Gold Project, 2017)

Cultural continuity

Cultural continuity relies on members being able to and wanting to access the land in highly important cultural areas. Passing on traditional knowledge is not a formal way of teaching and it is usually done through watching, listening and learning from our elders. This way of teaching requires important cultural areas and natural resources to be available and intact. As the character

of these areas such as Coffee Creek are altered, our members lose this ability to share and pass on their teachings. Moving into the future, our members may continue to experience more disturbances at this site, and in turn they may choose not to return because these areas are no longer what they remember or do not have the resources needed for these teachings.

“It’s just that the areas my dad travelled, he always said, ‘I walked these trails for your kids, for my grandkids, and they’re places that someday maybe you will travel. Go look for these places where I talk about, because it will always be there’. He said... Go look at it. You will see how beautiful the country is.”

(Knowledge and Use Study for Goldcorp Inc.'s Proposed Road to The Coffee Gold Project, 2017)

5. CONCLUSION

Mesē cho, Tsin’jī choh for taking the time to read our submission. This Overlapping Area is important to both Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in and White River First Nation. We believe that we both have the best interest for the land and our people, and by working together we can move forward in a way that’s beneficial for everyone. This submission is intended to highlight areas of conservation and show our top priorities. Questions and comments from the Commission are welcomed, and we are open to discussing this submission at any time.

Summary of Recommendations

- Designate the White River Landscape Management Unit as a protected area. There should be absolutely no industrial development in this area.
- Designate the Yukon River Corridor Landscape Management Unit as an Integrated Management Area with strict management directions and a conservation focus. Conduct a cumulative effects assessment for the Yukon River Corridor and determine existing impacts and the ecological threshold for this area. The Yukon River needs to return to a healthy watershed and the Commission should set limitation on development to bring it back to that level.

- Designate the Coffee Creek Landscape Management Unit as Integrated Management Area with strict management directions and a conservation focus. Coffee Creek is an important cultural area to us. Recognizing the impacts that exploration has already had and the possibility of an operating mine, we would suggest the Commission explore a threshold-based approach to limit future development in the area.

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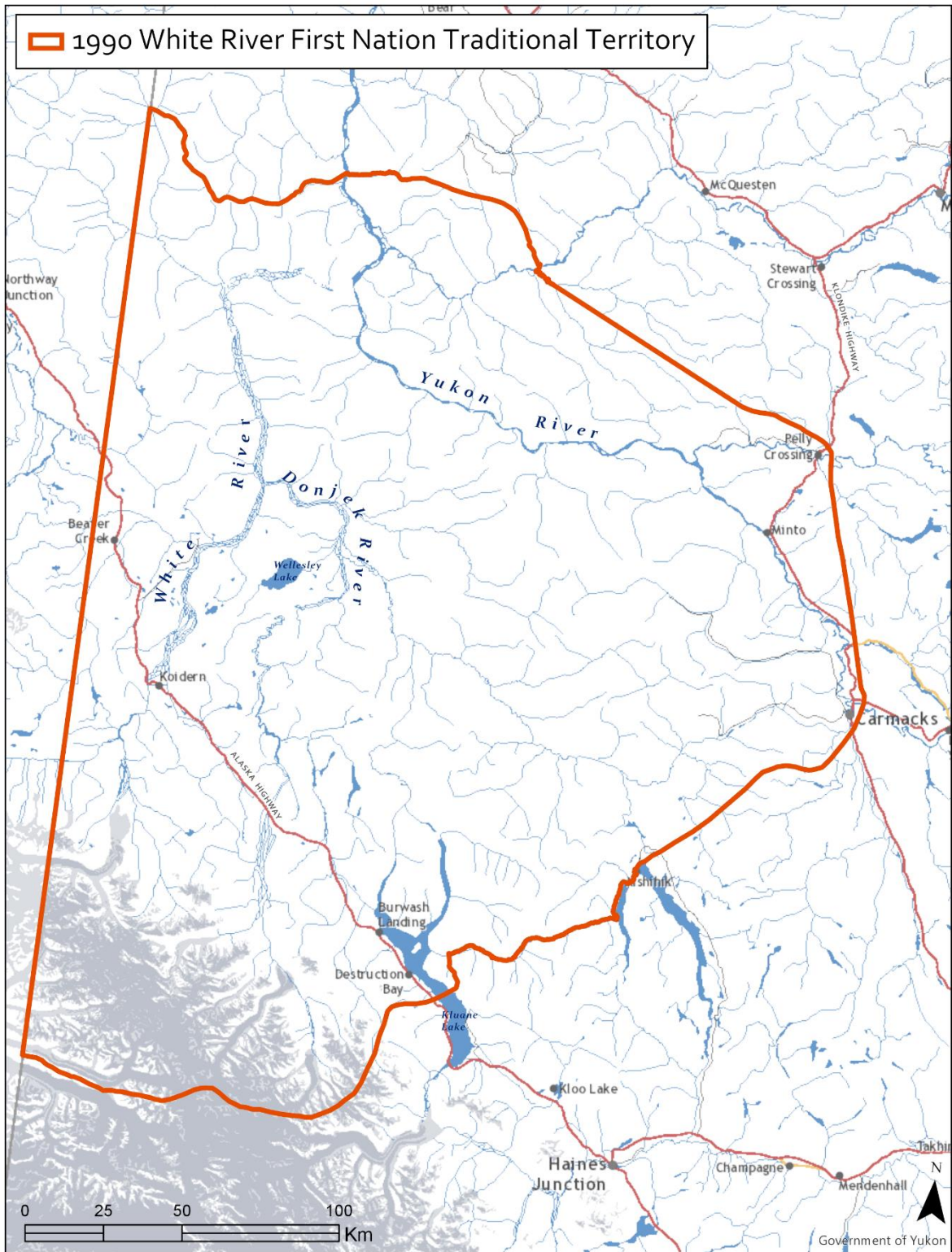
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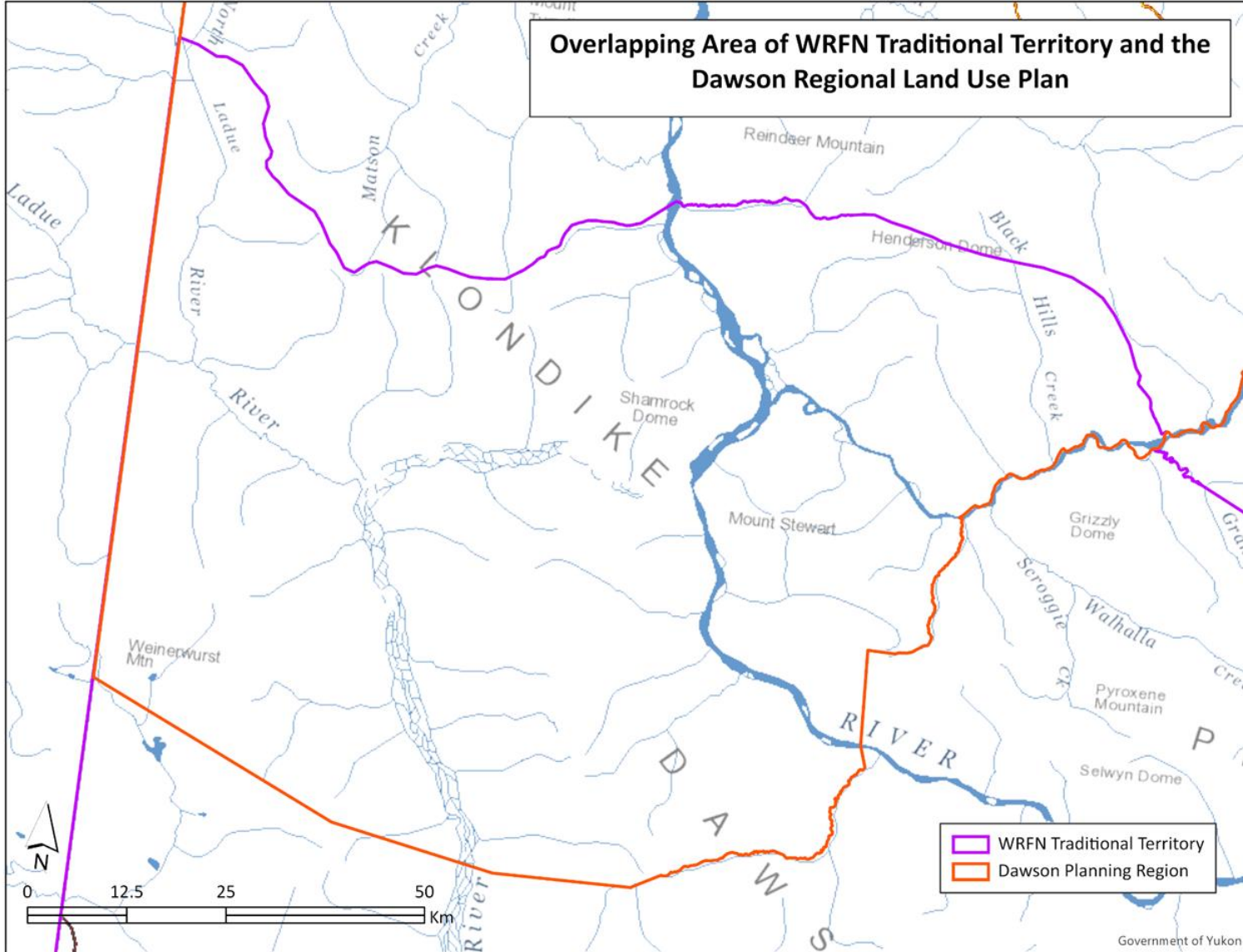
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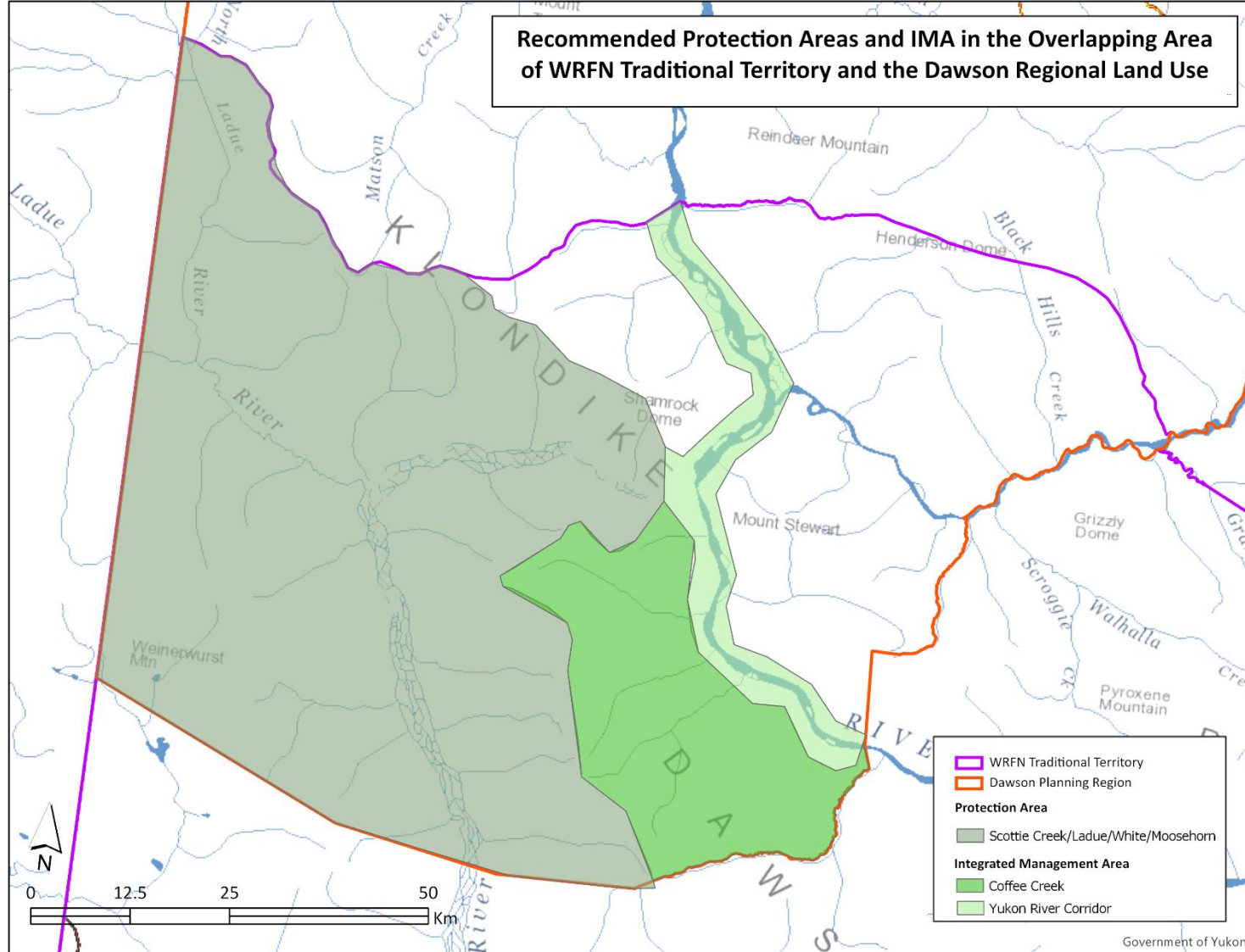
Appendix 1: Maps



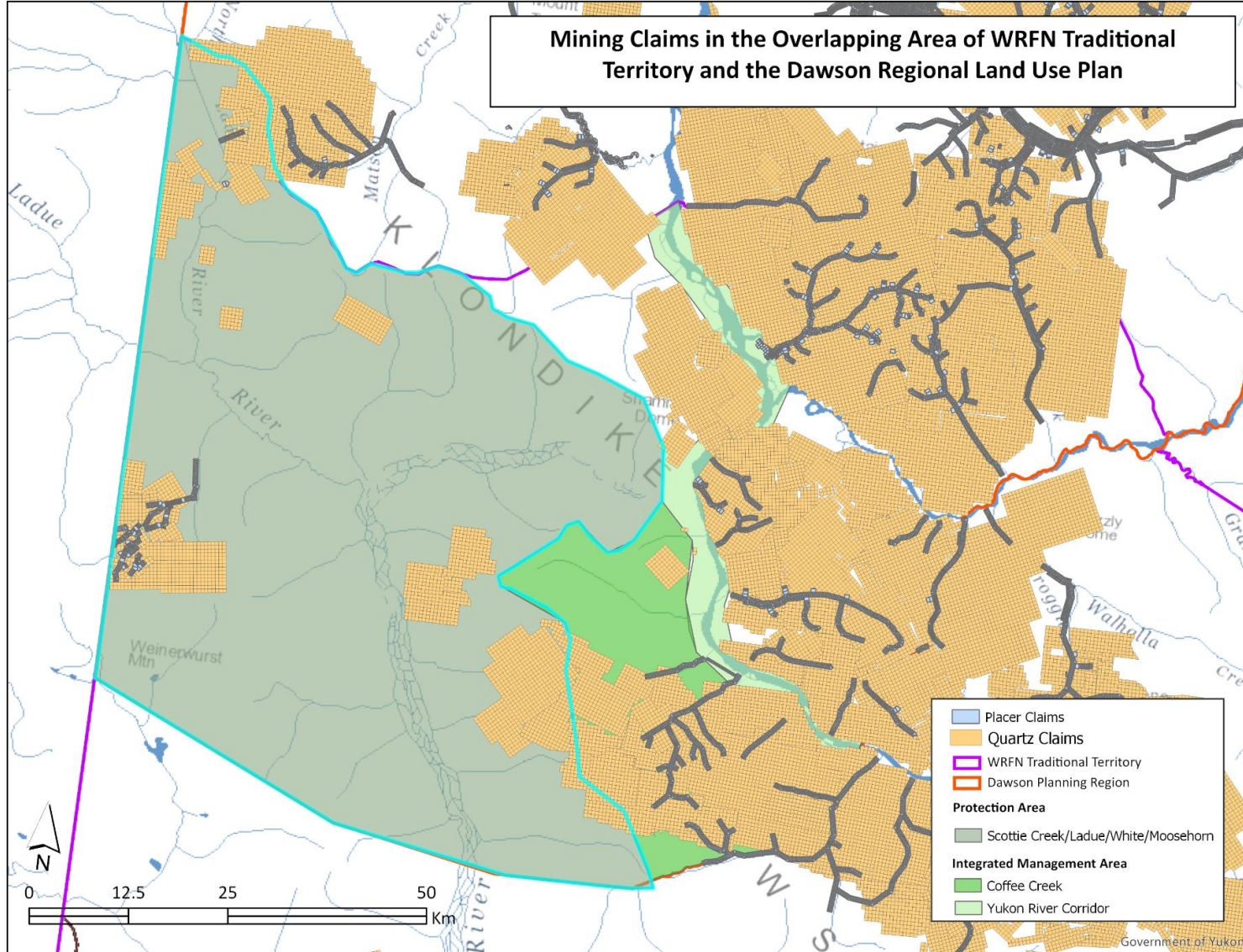
Map 1. White River First Nation asserted Traditional Territory.



Map 2. White River First Nation Traditional Territory and Dawson Planning Region Overlap Area.



Map 3. WRFN recommendations for protected areas and integrated management areas within the Dawson Planning Region.



Map 4. Quartz and Placer claims within the Overlapping Area of White River First Nation Traditional Territory and the Dawson Planning Region