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Wildernews

CPAWS-Yukon

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Yukon Government Rebuffs Recommended Peel Plan, Fails First Nations & Public

The Yukon government's vision for the Peel watershed hasn't improved at all. It sees no need for large-scale protection and insists the plan make way for mines and roads.

In late February, the Yukon and four First Nation governments - Na-cho Nyak Dun, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Vuntut Gwitchin and Gwich'in Tribal Council/Tetlit Gwich'in Council submitted their responses to the Peel Planning Commission on its Recommended Plan. The difference between Yukon Government and First Nations' views could not be greater. For the First Nations, the Peel Watershed is a cultural homeland and a unique area they want to see protected. This will contribute to balance in the Yukon as a whole, they say. The Yukon government, on the other hand, says the Peel Plan must allow for mines, roads and other industrial development throughout most of the watershed. Although claiming to recognize the unique values of the Peel, the Yukon government is calling for the same approach that has failed elsewhere - a multiple-use landscape with industry and road access. This is the same lack of vision which has degraded wilderness and cultural values wherever it has been applied. Despite years of work by the Commission, the Yukon government challenges it to provide further "rationale" for protecting areas in the Peel.

Photo: Theresa Gulliver

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Help Protect the Peel!

www.protectpeel.ca

What you can do to help save the Peel River Watershed for future generations.

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"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not."

— Dr. Seuss, from *The Lorax*

YG Rebuffs Plan

So far, the Yukon government has ignored the wishes of the affected First Nations and has dismissed public input calling strongly for protection.

The latest round of public consultations conducted in affected Yukon and Northwest Territory communities in 2010 showed overwhelming support for protection.

All of these comments are publicly available on the web at www.peelconsultation.ca.

Even a quick scan of them shows how clearly and strongly northerners spoke out for protecting 100% of the Peel from extractive industry and roads. After spending a lot of money on the planning process and further public money to gauge public sentiment, the government has chosen to turn its back on nearly all it heard and plunge ahead with a narrow economic vision. When the Yukon is experiencing the largest exploration and mining boom in its history, it's hard to understand why the non-renewable resource industry and the Yukon government feel they need to exploit the Peel as well. CPAWS-Yukon invites you let your MLA know that Peel protection is an important issue for you as we move forward in this election year.

You can read the Yukon and First Nation government responses to the commission at:

www.peel.planyukon.ca/downloads/input/RLUP_Review.html



Photo above: Theresa Gulliver
Photo below: Jill Panfman



Photo below: Peter Mather



Yukon Government response to the Peel plan

1. 80% protection is too much but doesn't say how much, if any, would be okay
2. Non-renewable resource development (mines, oil/gas) must be allowed
3. Ban on new surface access is unworkable; new roads must be accommodated
4. Simplify and consolidate – the plan is too complicated
5. Plan must be easy to implement, with clear distinction between Yukon and First Nation lands

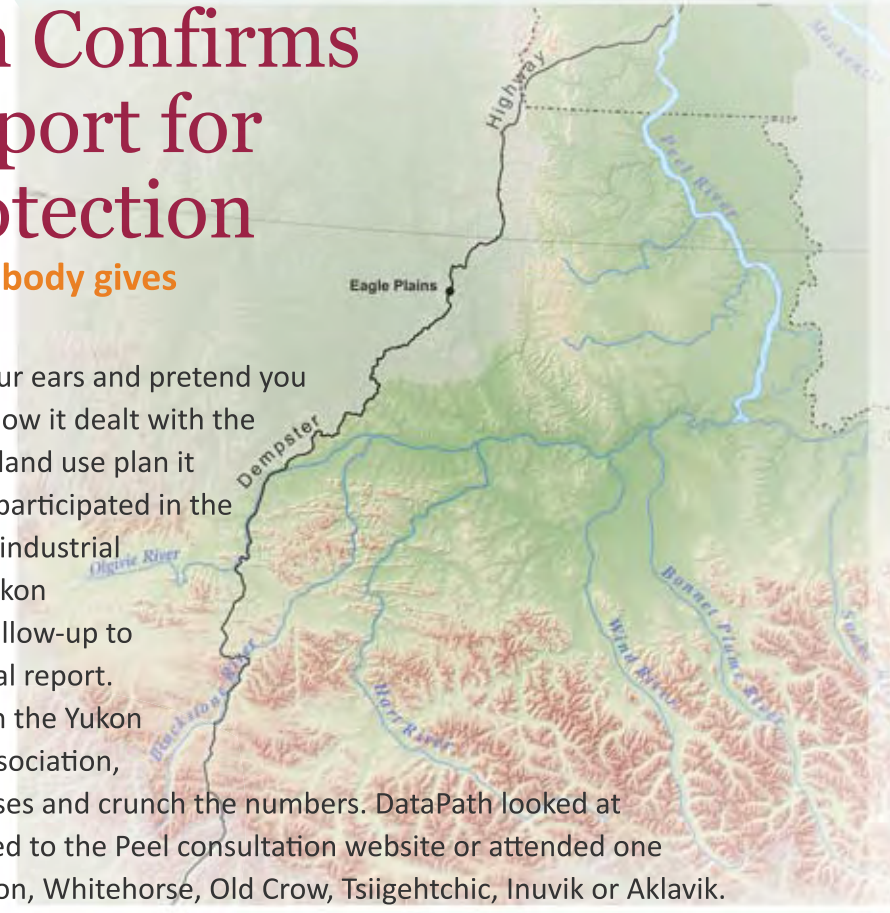
First Nations' joint response to the Peel plan

1. 80% protection from extractive industry and roads is not enough – the Peel needs to be 100% protected except for the Dempster corridor area
2. Non-renewable resource development should not be allowed, the region's wilderness is precious both culturally and ecologically
3. Ban on new surface access fully supported
4. Government needs to find creative way to solve the problem of existing mineral claims
5. Plan should encourage joint management of all Peel lands by Yukon and First Nation Governments

Public Consultation Confirms Overwhelming Support for Peel Watershed Protection

What if you ask a question and almost nobody gives you the answer you want?

If you're the Yukon government, you simply cover your ears and pretend you never posed it in the first place. That's more or less how it dealt with the extensive public consultation on the Peel watershed land use plan it conducted last fall. The vast majority of people who participated in the process strongly supported protecting the Peel from industrial development and roads. But that wasn't what the Yukon government wanted to hear. It never provided any follow-up to participants and it never provided any analysis or final report. To fill this information void, CPAWS-Yukon, along with the Yukon Conservation Society and the Wilderness Tourism Association, contracted DataPath Systems to examine the responses and crunch the numbers. DataPath looked at comments from more than 350 people who submitted to the Peel consultation website or attended one of the meetings in Mayo, Dawson City, Fort McPherson, Whitehorse, Old Crow, Tsiigehtchic, Inuvik or Aklavik.



DataPath's Findings

Between 80% and 90% of those who either spoke at a community meeting or submitted comments to the consultation website urged the Yukon government to protect at least 80% of the Peel from industrial development. Most supported the First Nations' call for 100% protection.

The findings were no surprise. They simply confirmed the results of an earlier 2009 poll which found 75% of Yukoners wanted to see more than half of the Peel protected.

The six-member Peel planning commission is now working on a final recommended Peel plan.

The Yukon and First Nation governments have asked it to finish the job by early July.

The public will get another chance to comment on what it wants to see in the land use plan before a final version is approved.

This next round of public consultations – including community meetings – are expected to take place in August/September with final plan approval by November 2011.

See www.protectpeel.ca for the consultation analysis and the 2009 poll results.

Level of Protection	Public meetings (n=82)	Online comments (n=201)	Solicited (Letters/Post cards)	Petitions
None (0)	2%	13%	37 post cards 6 Association letters	
Less than 80% as recommended in the plan, but more than 0	2%	4%		
At 80% or as stated in the plan	4%	7%	19 student letters 12 Association Letters	982
All or 100%	76%	71%		
Unknown/did not state	16%	5%		



Overall Sentiment for Protection Levels.
Review of Public Consultation: Peel Watershed.
DataPath Systems 2010

What you can do!

Final decisions about the future of the Peel will be made in late 2011. Our politicians need to hear your opinion loud and clear in the coming months leading up to the Territorial election to be held by mid-October.

If you care about the future of the Peel it is important to continue to make your wishes known by:

1. Writing letters to the editor expressing your opinion on the Yukon Government's response to the Recommended Plan: mostyn@yukon-news.com , editor@whitehorsestar.com, klondikesun@northwestel.net
2. E-mailing elected officials within the Yukon government and opposition parties
3. Asking friends and relatives to make their views about the Peel watershed known

The few minutes it takes to write or e-mail will be well spent.

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Wear your
"PROTECT The PEEL"
sticker this year!
Available at CPAWS,
YCS, Baked, Alpine
Bakery, or drop us a
line and we'll mail
one out to you.
They're not just for
car bumpers!

Photo: Jack Kobayashi



UPCOMING DATES

Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Planning Process Timeline 2011

	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October
Commission Review and Revisions (based on Yukon and First Nations' Independent and Joint Responses of February 2011)								
Commission to release Final Recommended Plan					↓			
Parties review of Final Recommended Plan								
Consultation (by YG as per UFA 11.6.2 : "...with any affected Yukon First Nation and any affected Yukon community...")								
Intergovernmental consultation (by YG as per UFA 11.6.2 and 11.6.4)								
Decision on Final Plan								↓

TOGETHER WE CAN PROTECT THE PEEL AND CHANGE THE WAY LAND USE ISSUES ARE DECIDED

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