

SUMMARY MEETING NOTES

Tagish River Habitat Protection Area
Steering Committee Meeting
Tagish Community Centre
August 8, 2017

Attendees|

Steering Committee Members:

Mark Wedge CTFN · Georgianna Low CTFN · Nathalie Lowry CWS · Margaret Campbell CWS ·
Todd Powell ENV

Observers|

Paul Dabbs TAC · Randy Taylor CTRRC

Other Staff|

Tess McLeod ENV

Regrets|

Albert James CTFN · Matt Clarke ENV · Frank James CTFN

Welcome

Opening Prayer

Agenda

- Agenda was approved
- July 11, 2017 meeting minutes were approved

Updates

- Work is ongoing to create a map showing a wildlife corridor across the Tagish River. This corridor will be within the planning boundary for the Tagish Local Area Plan (TLAP) and the Tagish River Habitat Protection Area (HPA).
 - A letter was sent from the Tagish River HPA Steering Committee to the TLAP Steering Committee regarding coordination between the planning processes on a map showing a wildlife corridor polygon for caribou and other wildlife in the Tagish area.

- This corridor would be established to maintain wildlife, specifically caribou movement across the river and beyond. The direction is for minimal or no development in the area.
 - The rationale for the wildlife corridor should highlight the importance of maintaining corridors like the Tagish River for movement of animals, particularly caribou throughout their ranges.
 - An updated version of the map will be provided for review before September.
 - Residents are starting to see caribou summering lower down in the valleys.
 - Education and signage may be the best approach to addressing human disturbance to wildlife along the entire river. Respect and education is needed for people to understand that wildlife have the right of way on the river and people need to keep a healthy distance from wildlife.
- The Carcross/Tagish Renewable Resources Council (CTRRC) submitted recommendations to Yukon government-Department of Environment regarding not issuing future commercial cisco licences until the population in the Tagish River (and Southern Lakes system) is known to be healthy and sustainable. The CTRRC also recommended that if the marina is sold, the commercial fishing license should not automatically be carried over to the new owners; which has happened in the past.
 - A response was received from the Minister indicating that a review for sustainability of all commercial licenses in Yukon will need to be completed. Recommendations from CTRRC would be reviewed after this.
 - Cisco is a critical part of the aquatic ecosystem in the Southern Lakes. Local knowledge has indicated that numbers have been decreasing.
 - There are a lot of questions about cisco: Are numbers low because they are moving? If they are moving will other species follow? Could movement be related to insects etc.
 - Further understanding of the changes taking place in this system are needed to understand what may happen in the future. Changes could redefine where popular fishing spots are located.
 - A recommendation on research opportunities may be added to the management plan. We should encourage/inform students and researchers that there are interesting questions that could be addressed within the Tagish River HPA plan.

Tagish River HPA plan drafting

Legal framework -

- An inter-governmental working group may be established. This group would be tasked with drafting an options paper on joint legislation between Government of Yukon (YG), Government of Canada and Carcross/Tagish First Nation (CTFN).
 - Joint legislation would allow for all managing partners to have responsibility and accountability to implement recommendations from this management plan.
 - CTFN is looking into the possibilities of joint legislation on a broader scale for other work they are doing; indigenous land use planning and transboundary agreements.
- The planning process will proceed concurrently with the potential working group and options paper.

Tagish River boat launches

- Relevant departments of the YG involved with managing territorial boat launches have been discussing options/ideas to address the Tagish Local Advisory Council's concerns about safety at the Tagish River Recreation Site.
- The perspective of the Tagish River HPA Steering Committee should be incorporated into this discussion.
 - The amount of boat traffic currently seen on the river is high and increasing. Enhancing the Recreation Site to allow for easier access to the Tagish River is problematic in regards to maintaining ecological integrity.
 - Alternative access is required, as there is limited access to Tagish Lake and access to Marsh Lakes is far away. Assessing where potential sites for a new boat launch could go need to be looked at on a regional scale.
 - Reeds Good Bay may be an option for a new recreation site or boat launch on Marsh Lake, but would need to be fully assessed at a regional scale. Reeds Good Bay is an important area for hunting and fishing and impacts would have to be considered.
 - CTFN is looking into re-developing traditional trails from Carcross to Tagish (similar to the trail project at Montana Mt). This may provide more opportunities to access the river.
 - The Steering Committee will send a letter to the YG working group discussing the Tagish River Recreation Site to provide the values and interests of the HPA Steering Committee.
 - Further discussions on how to address the issue should involve the CTRRC, LAC, LAP, Community Services, Highways and Public works, Yukon Parks, Energy,

Mines and Resources, Environment Yukon, CTFN (CTFN Land Management Branch).

- The Steering Committee discussed options for implementing a speed limit for boats on the river through the *Vessel Operation Restriction Regulations (VORR)*, established under the *Canada Shipping Act, 2001*.
 - These regulations allow any level of government (federal, provincial, municipal, and territorial government authorities) to ask the federal government to restrict the use of all boats, either pleasure craft or commercial vessels on any body of water in Canada.
 - This option may allow for the managing parties to put up signage on the river reminding users to be aware of their speed and wake along the Tagish River.
 - The Steering Committee is interested in exploring this option as a recommendation to address concerns about boating.

Traditional stories & cultural information

- CTFN will continue to work on gathering traditional and cultural information and stories to be included in the management plan.

Review of re-drafted sections

- The Steering Committee reviewed further layout ideas for the management plan.
- Elements to be included are:
 - the story of the Tagish River – cultural, historical and current use/interactions.
 - recommendations for governmental/administrative use and rationale on why the objectives were reached.
 - an implementation plan which would describe possible pathways to reach objectives.

Next Steps and Closing Thoughts

- The next steering committee meeting is planned for September 12, 2017.

Closing prayer