

[All the Peel watershed tributaries still have intact landscapes and pristine waters. [JP]

potential threats to the ecological integrity of the peel watershed

[Little is known about the population of many wildlife species in the Peel region. [KM]
Tourism use of the Peel watershed is increasing. [CA]



Oil and Gas Development

In 1999 the Yukon Government issued a call to the oil and gas industry for nominations in the Peel watershed. The call area included a major part of the watershed in the traditional territory of all four First Nations. Parts of the Wind, Snake and Bonnet Plume watersheds were put up for oil and gas nomination, including part of the Bonnet Plume Canadian Heritage River. The first call for nominations was done prior to land use or protected area planning, and was done without public consultation or reference to the Canadian Heritage River Management Plan.

In 2000, the Yukon Government, in response to First Nation, Renewable Resource Council and CPAWS requests, reduced the area of the call for nominations, eliminating most of the overlap with the Canadian Heritage River. The government also took out lands that conflicted with a key Porcupine Caribou Herd winter migration route along the Richardson Mountains.

In 2001, YTG held a workshop to get advice on areas of high conservation value before the call for

nominations. The majority of stakeholders called for a reduced Call Area and recommended avoiding all areas of high conservation value, particularly east of the Dempster Highway. Later, the Yukon Government's 2001 Call for Nominations included the Turner Lake wetlands north of the Peel River, long considered important for Peregrine Falcon and migrating waterfowl. The wetlands have been identified as areas of interest for conservation, protection, and are part of the Yukon Waterfowl Management Plan. Clean-up efforts on two large exploration dump sites are still underway nearby. These were left over from previous hydrocarbon exploration work done in the late 1960s.

The 2004 oil and gas nomination excluded most of the Wind, Snake and Bonnet Plume tributaries of the Peel watershed.

New Industrial Development Proposals

In 2002, a Vancouver-based promoter proposed a

resource development project in the Peel watershed. The company proposes to build an all-weather road, mine coal and construct a coal-fired electrical generating plant and power line in the Wind River watershed as well as extract coal-bed methane and conventional oil and gas.

The promoter would also like to mine iron ore in the Snake River watershed and construct a steel-making plant to supply steel for future northern pipelines. While in its very preliminary stages, any single element of the project could have a major impact on the Wind River and Peel River watershed ecosystem.

Land Use and Conservation Planning in Advance of Development

Completing a land use plan, including a network of protected areas and conservation lands before industrial or other development, is the best way to prevent the degradation of ecosystems, wildlife, cultural and wilderness values.

