

Maintaining clear, clean water in the Peel River watershed for people and wildlife was one of the key concerns identified in previous land use planning processes.

important natural & cultural areas identified by previous Land Use Planning Processes



A number of different commissions, committees and councils have identified specific areas within the Peel River watershed that they feel require some sort of protection or further investigation. These land use planning processes have all involved input from the communities. The map shows areas highlighted by the Mackenzie Delta – Beaufort Sea Land Use Planning Commission (MDBS LUPC), the Peel River Watershed Advisory Committee (PRWAC), and the Mayo Renewable Resources Council (RRC).

The MDBS Land Use Planning Commission recommended a system of protected areas for the Mackenzie Delta and Beaufort Sea Region. Some of the areas recommended by the Commission fall within the Peel River watershed. The Commission, with input from each of the eight communities in the region, identified areas, highlighted their values and recommended different types of legislation or protection status. Protected areas identified by government agencies and non-government groups were also included.

The Peel River Watershed Advisory Committee was set up in 1994 by government as a result of the Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement and the First Nation of Nacho Nyak Dun Final Agreement. The committee consisted of members representing the Gwich'in Tribal Council, the First Nation of Nacho Nyak Dun, the territorial governments of Yukon and Northwest Territories, and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. Among other things, the committee was mandated to make recommendations regarding the establishment of Special Management Areas or Protected Areas in the watersheds of the Peel and Arctic Red Rivers. At a workshop in 1996, the committee identified a list of areas within both watersheds that they felt should be considered for protection (MacDonald Environmental Sciences Ltd., 1996). Actual boundaries of these specific sites were not developed, so most of these areas are identified on the map by circles, indicating a general area only. For the sake of readability, the larger general areas are outlined by dashed lines.

In 1998 and 1999, the Mayo RRC conducted a community-based project to identify areas in the traditional territory of the Nacho Nyak Dun that were important to local people for their wildlife, social and environmental values. Based on the information provided by local people, discussion areas were then identified. Four of these discussion areas fall in the vicinity of the Peel River watershed.

The following are descriptions of some of the areas on the maps. Descriptions for areas 1 through 5 come from the Mackenzie Delta – Beaufort Sea Land Use Planning Commission (1990) and for areas 25 through 28 from the Mayo District Renewable Resources Council (2000). No descriptions were available for the areas identified by the Peel River Watershed Advisory Committee.

1. Central Peel River Area

This area has important furbearer, moose, caribou, waterfowl, bear, fish and raptor habitat. The Tetl'it Gwich'in have used the area for thousands of years and currently use it as a travel route from seasonal camps in the Mackenzie Delta to hunting and trapping areas further upriver. The conservation goal is to protect wildlife and habitat and protect water from contamination if iron ore extraction in the Snake River area ever takes place. The area was recommended by the Fort McPherson community to receive protection through ecological reserve or wilderness area type legislation.

2. The Forks

This region is rich in habitat for all wildlife species used by the Gwich'in, such as waterfowl, moose, bears, furbearers, caribou, sheep and fish. The area is important for subsistence use year-round, especially moose-hunting and



There are few places in the world left where people can still safely drink water straight out of the river. The Peel River watershed is one of those places. [JP]

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trapping in fall and winter. The area was proposed by the community from Arctic Red River as an Aboriginal Conservation Area or Tribal Park.

3. Caribou River Area

This area includes most of the Caribou River watershed and includes important furbearer, moose, caribou, sheep, bear, and fish habitat as well as valuable timber. The area includes a heritage trail as well as a site where cooking rocks are found. The area has been used for thousands of years by Gwich'in people and currently several families trap, fish and hunt here. This area was identified by the Fort McPherson community as requiring protection from potential future industrial development. The community wants to see the area remain in its natural state and be a community use area. Protection was proposed in the form of an Ecological Reserve or Wilderness Area.

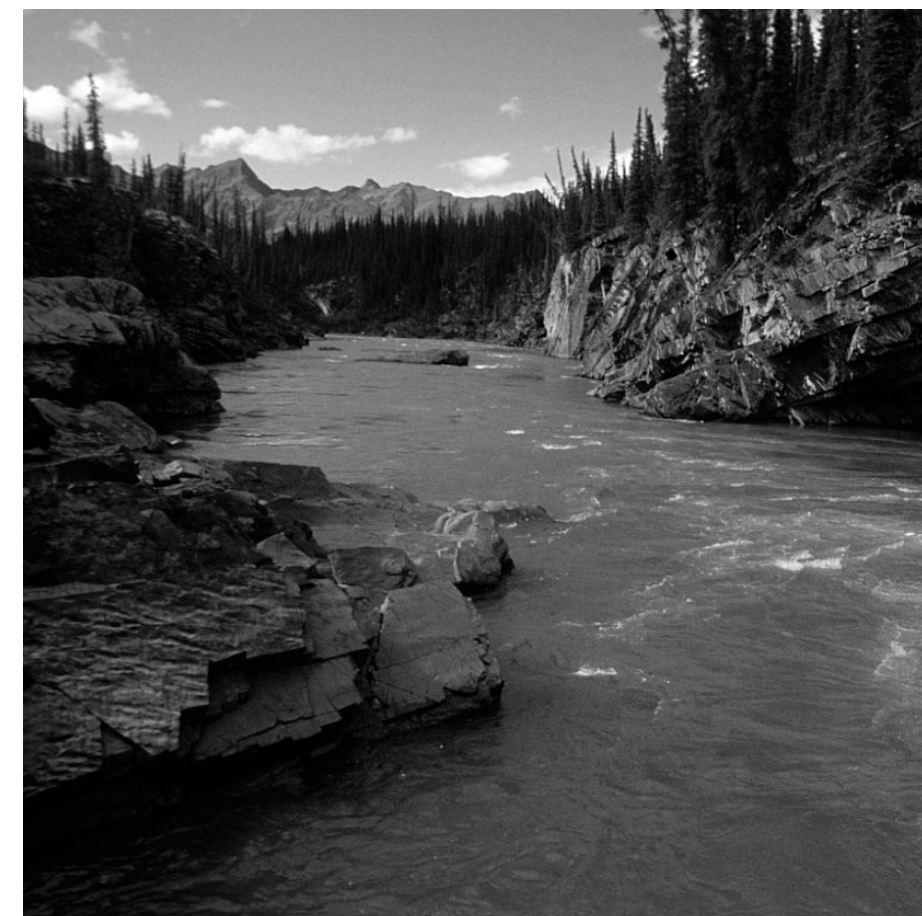
4. Big Eddy Region

This area was identified by the community of Fort McPherson as being important for trapping and subsistence fishing. As well, there are some stretches of timber stands along the river that have been used by the Gwich'in. The area is also part of the traditional travel route from Fort McPherson to Dawson/Mayo. The community is concerned about hydrocarbon and mining activities in the region and in the headwaters of the Peel River further upstream that may contaminate the water and affect the important fish spawning areas. To protect the water and fish habitat, they have recommended that no hydrocarbon or mining development take place in the area and that special management plans for fish in the area are developed. Management plans for other wildlife such as black bears, grizzly bears, beavers, muskrat and wolf were also recommended.

5. Headwaters of the Peel River

This vast area includes parts of the watersheds of the main tributaries of the Peel: the Ogilvie, Blackstone, Hart, Wind Bonnet Plume and Snake Rivers. The Tetl'it Gwich'in have used this country for thousands of years for traditional subsistence activities including hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering. The region includes important travel routes to trading places in Dawson and Mayo and cultural sites such as burial places, old meeting places and camps. The Fort McPherson community wishes to protect all species and their habitat in the area from interference by potential industrial development and conflicting land uses; they also wish to maintain and preserve the region in its natural state as a critical community use area.

The Bonnet Plume is a Canadian Heritage River set up through the Nacho Nyak Dun land claim. [JP]



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The joy of the clean clear waters of the Snake River touches everyone on a CPAWS community trip. [CA]



May Andre on the Wind River during the Three Rivers Journey, 2003. [FM]



25. Peel River Discussion Area

This area consists of part of the Peel River valley and includes Aberdeen Canyon. It is of interest to both the Tetl'it Gwich'in and the Nacho Nyak Dun and contains a number of traditional use sites. Local people identified the importance of whitefish that live in this part of the Peel River. As well, the importance of the pristine nature of the Peel River with respect to tourism was also identified. The council concluded that the goal for this region should be to ensure that the watershed and the river do not become degraded because of commercial activity or overuse while at the same time protecting the unique ecosystems and fish habitat.

26. Wernecke Mountains Discussion Area

This is a vast area encompassing three major rivers, the Snake, Wind and Bonnet Plume rivers, and parts of the rugged Wernecke

Mountains. Some of the important features of the region, as identified by community people, include extensive big game habitat, critical mineral licks, numerous fish species including rare forms of trout, and good water quality. Some concerns raised revolved around the impacts of industrial development on these values, as well as the impacts of increasing numbers of canoeists and outfitters. The RRC identified that a major goal for this discussion area is to ensure that the tremendous quality and beauty of this area and the purity of the rivers is protected.

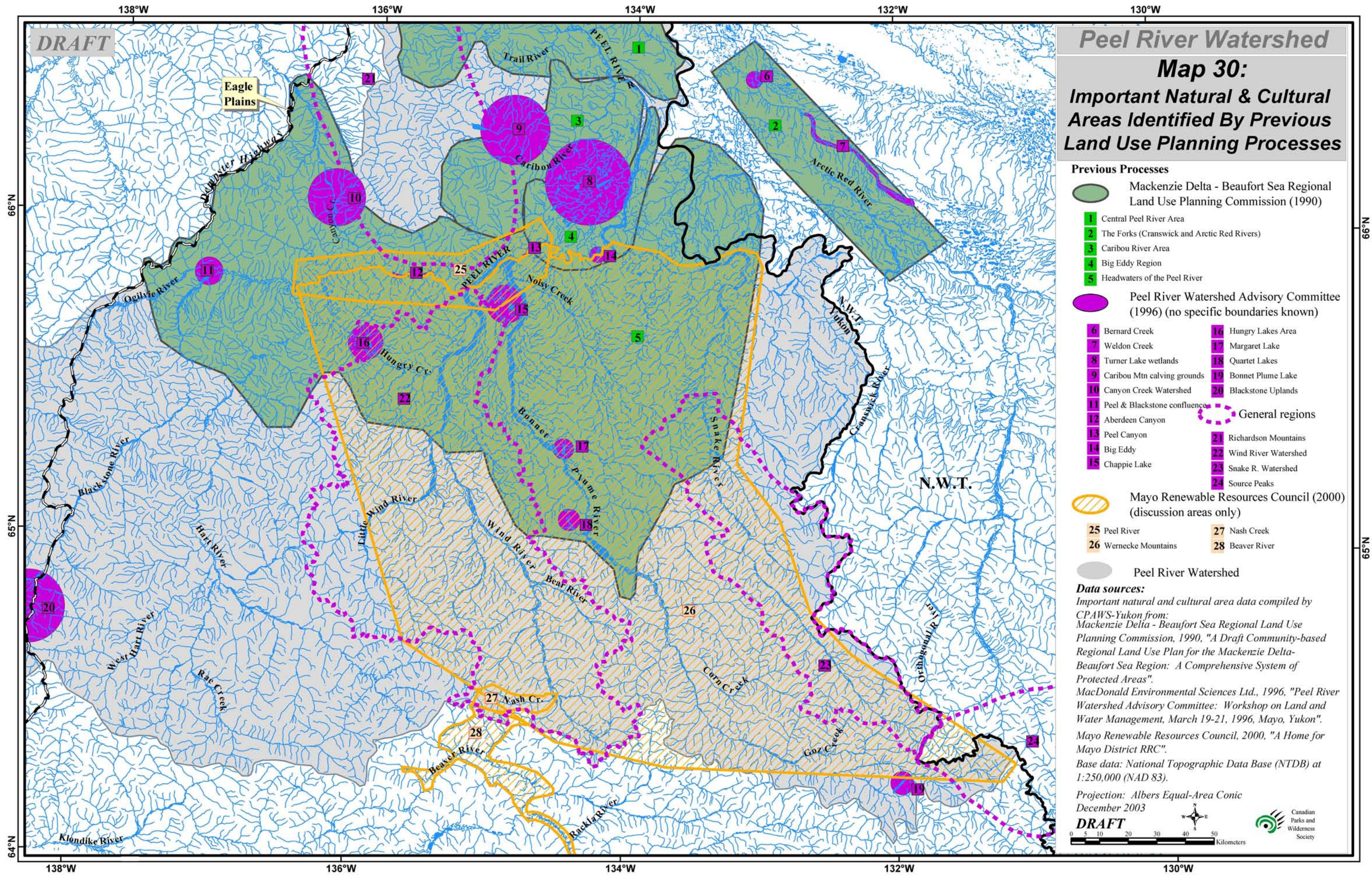
27. Nash Creek Discussion Area

This discussion area includes Nash Creek Hot Springs and Braine Pass. Some of the features include important mineral licks, stocks of very large grayling and Dolly Varden, and unique vegetation around the hot springs. The hot springs area is considered to have great spiritual and healing significance and as such was used

extensively by first nations peoples in the past. Concerns revolve around the effects of industrial development on the stability of local wildlife populations and their ability to access important mineral licks. Goals set up by the RRC include the monitoring of the area to ensure that the hot spring's vegetation is not disturbed and that fish stocks are not depleted.

28. Beaver River Discussion Area

This region is part of a traditional subsistence harvesting route of the Nacho Nyak Dun. The area is rich in fish and wildlife, and includes an important big game migration route. Mineral licks in the area are essential to a number of wildlife species. Today it is also extensively used by recreational canoeists. Concerns revolve around development of a hydro facility that would affect fish stocks. Goals include ensuring that wildlife migration patterns remain intact and that development does not have negative impacts on wildlife habitat.



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Peel River Watershed

Map 30: Important Natural & Cultural Areas Identified By Previous Land Use Planning Processes

- Previous Processes**
- Mackenzie Delta - Beaufort Sea Regional Land Use Planning Commission (1990)
 - 1 Central Peel River Area
 - 2 The Forks (Cranswick and Arctic Red Rivers)
 - 3 Caribou River Area
 - 4 Big Eddy Region
 - 5 Headwaters of the Peel River
 - Peel River Watershed Advisory Committee (1996) (no specific boundaries known)
 - 6 Bernard Creek
 - 7 Weldon Creek
 - 8 Turner Lake wetlands
 - 9 Caribou Mtn calving grounds
 - 10 Canyon Creek Watershed
 - 11 Peel & Blackstone confluence
 - 12 Aberdeen Canyon
 - 13 Peel Canyon
 - 14 Big Eddy
 - 15 Chappie Lake
 - 16 Hungry Lakes Area
 - 17 Margaret Lake
 - 18 Quartet Lakes
 - 19 Bonnet Plume Lake
 - 20 Blackstone Uplands
 - General regions
 - 21 Richardson Mountains
 - 22 Wind River Watershed
 - 23 Snake R. Watershed
 - 24 Source Peaks
 - Mayo Renewable Resources Council (2000) (discussion areas only)
 - 25 Peel River
 - 26 Wernecke Mountains
 - 27 Nash Creek
 - 28 Beaver River
 - Peel River Watershed

Data sources:
 Important natural and cultural area data compiled by CPAWS-Yukon from:
 Mackenzie Delta - Beaufort Sea Regional Land Use Planning Commission, 1990, "A Draft Community-based Regional Land Use Plan for the Mackenzie Delta-Beaufort Sea Region: A Comprehensive System of Protected Areas".
 MacDonald Environmental Sciences Ltd., 1996, "Peel River Watershed Advisory Committee: Workshop on Land and Water Management, March 19-21, 1996, Mayo, Yukon".
 Mayo Renewable Resources Council, 2000, "A Home for Mayo District RRC".
 Base data: National Topographic Data Base (NTDB) at 1:250,000 (NAD 83).
 Projection: Albers Equal-Area Conic
 December 2003

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0 5 10 20 30 40 50 Kilometers

Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society