

Pickhandle Lakes Habitat Protection Area - Open House

Whitehorse – Yukon Inn

December 8th, 2011

Attendees: Irene Winzer • Travis Breithaupt • Stuart Breithaupt • Teena Dickson • Dave McCullen • Jim Boyd • Marilyn Sanford • Darren Nieman • Freda Nieman • Janet Vandermeer • Dave Mossop • Jim Cook • Dorothy Cook.

Steering Committee members: David Johnny (WRFN) • Bob Kuiper (YG, EMR) • Karen Clyde (YG, ENV)

Staff: Tess McLeod (YG, ENV) • Troy Pretzlaw (YG, ENV) • Lorne Laroque (YG, ENV) • Kym Rempel (KFN).

The following summary sets out key points discussed at an evening open house hosted by the Pickhandle Lakes Habitat Protection Area (HPA) steering committee at the Yukon Inn, in Whitehorse.

The discussion focused on what the public would like to see included in the Pickhandle Lakes HPA management plan and any issues or concerns they have regarding the area and the planning process.

The importance of Pickhandle Lakes HPA – wildlife, culture and education

- Pickhandle Lakes is a beautiful rest area along the Alaska Highway, used by many people travelling.
- The pull-out at the lake lets people view wildlife and learn more about the history and culture of the area.
- Pickhandle Lakes HPA is an area with rich biodiversity and an abundance of wildlife.
- The viewing area is great for travelers but should be kept at the size it is with some maintenance on the wildlife viewing panels and structure.
- The viewing area is a great place to watch waterfowl and is enjoyed by many people.

- Muskrat and culture camps take place at Pickhandle Lakes as the area is a great place for youth to get out on the land.
- There are concerns about moose populations in the area regarding harvest and calf recruitment.
- People want to see the area protected from any detrimental effects of mining.
- Pickhandle Lakes has six species of whitefish.
- Outfitters do not hunt in this area; residents from other areas are the majority of people who hunt in the area.
- More information on harvest in the area is needed to fully understand the ecological of the area.
- High helicopter activity from exploration, surveys and transportation in the area disturbs wildlife.
- This area would be a great place to get youth out to learn about trapping.
- Water quality baseline data would be very valuable in detecting changes in this wetland, as increased development occurs in the region.
- Mining should not be allowed in the HPA
- Keep the HPA pristine
- The area is clean, wonderful, a place to rest
- Area heavily used for hunting moose
- There has been decline in moose in last 4 years
- Dickson (outfitter) doesn't hunt in the area. They only use it for landing float plane and picking up clients.
- Need to have more accurate statistics on moose harvest
- Wolves will prey on the cows and calves
- People enjoy watching the wildlife (ducks)
- Keep the use by people low. The area can't handle more tourists.
- No more development
- Need baseline water quality studies
- Helicopter traffic disturbs wildlife and wilderness tourism outfitting businesses
- Mining exploration is active in area south of HPA
- Motorized traffic (land & water) can disturb the habitat and wildlife
- The Pickhandle Lakes area is an ecologically unique area and is rich in traditional knowledge. This area could be valuable for students to learn about all aspects of the environment; from effects of climate change to trapping.
- This area could be included in grade 8-10 science curriculum; could great way to get youth out on the land.

The planning process and management plan: A considerable amount of time was spent on discussing the HPA planning process. Comments included:

- More communication is needed so everyone is informed about the process and upcoming meetings and has access to all information being gathered during the management planning process.
- People feel there has not been enough communication during the planning process so far and the process may be moving too quickly.
- There is confusion about the process and what it means for future of the area.
- An email list was started for more direct communication to people with an interest in the planning process.
- There should be more community engagement; meetings, open houses, and notices about the planning process.
- Suggestions on more effective communication between the steering committee and the public include: starting an email list and giving updates on the process and allowing for easier feedback, contacting Janet Vandermeer and Marilyn Sanford to assist with organising community events and getting information out to the community in Beaver Creek.
- Many people feel they have not been consulted adequately.
- Land Claims and the overlap issue is critical.
- WR lacks the capacity and resources to engage.
- Time needs to be taken for proper consultation.
- Information needs to be brought back to the community.
- People didn't find out about the meeting until yesterday.
- There is a need to describe what has been done already.
- Need to involve White River First Nation people more. Have a person come to the community, put notices on the bulletin board. Need more personal contact.
- There was some discussion on whether or not this meeting was considered to be "consultation". Concerns were raised about the need for proper consultation with First Nations.
- At the end of the meeting, SC members agreed to make all technical information on the HPA available to the public, and participate in a public meeting early in the New Year in Beaver Creek and Burwash Landing, to display and review the technical information gathered, and discuss where to go from here.