

Interoffice Memo

To: Jesse Duke, Karen Pelletier
From: Danièle Héon
CC: Grant Abbott
Date: 14/01/98
Re: Current Issues regarding Protected Area Strategy

The first consultation phase for the PAS is now over. There has been much criticism about that deadline. RR refused to extend the deadline, even after public criticism by the chamber of Commerce and the chamber of Mines. There is a feeling in the community that the rapid pace of the process, obviously driven by political motives, makes the consultation effort a doubtful one. People don't believe in it and think RR is just going to push through what they want anyway. I think there would be a better community buy-in if it was felt that a proper pace was allowed.

There is a strong risk of having RR push their own agenda regardless of the results of the consultation. Ex: Bob Kuiper says there is a clear message to get on with the work and to move ahead, while he also says that people in the communities are advising caution and that the proper preparatory work be done. His overall take on it is that we must move ahead, even if people think the pace is too fast. Another example: discussion at the last PAS workshop in May clearly outlined that the main conservation effort should be focused towards protecting biodiversity and ecoregion representation. Wetlands were cited as a priority candidate for protection and I think everybody agreed. Now the message we are hearing is that special features and ecotourism opportunities have the same weight. **But that is not what was agreed on at the workshop and that is not what the governments and the mining industry committed to in the different commitments that they made.** Commitments have been made to work towards a network of protected areas to achieve ecoregion representation and protect critical wildlife habitat. The mining industry did not agree to have land withdrawn to create recreational opportunities. I think there is a fundamental difference and RR has to be held accountable and criteria need to be spelled out clearly.

Another conclusion of the workshop is that the PAS process should be community-based. But there is talk now of tabling a bunch of candidates that RR have ready in the wings, maybe even interim-protecting them right away before the regional plan is in place and before the technical work is done. We do not want to see a whole bunch of areas withdrawn from development without proper technical evaluation. The economic implications of such a move could be disastrous. I question how much influence the community will be allowed to have. There is a concern again, that RR will just push what they want. That and the fact that SMA's can be established through Land Claims without community consultation, and the fact that other projects are going ahead, such as wetlands, make that we could wind up with a significant number of protected areas without any community consultation. Not good.

How to make sure this is not a CPAWS-driven process? We need to see biological justification to these proposed candidates as well as incorporate the mineral resource information. The criteria for selection of these areas should be spelled out clearly, with ecoregion representation and biodiversity being at the top of the list. If the candidates don't meet these two criteria, they should go at the bottom of the list. And

we don't just want to take the CPAWS research and plug it in to the system. And we need to act on the mineral information. No clear mechanisms are proposed to resolve potentially conflicting issues.

It's not clear how SMA's fit in the PAS. But I think they should also need to fit the ecoregion/biodiversity bill to be considered.

There is a strong risk of winding up with an SMA, a park set up for ecotourism values, a wetland protected for biodiversity, A PA around a special feature, and still not have ecoregion representation, which would need to be sizeable if we believe the rhetoric. Where's the limit? How do we decide?

Roger Horner will be presenting something on interim protection. There will be a strong push for that option. Is it necessary? From a mineral perspective, if you select a study area and say that you wont compensate for any exploration expenses from now on, nobody is going to spend any money there. From a forestry perspective, the feds just don't issue timber cutting permits. So why withdraw? Sends a bad message.

There has to be a commitment to technical inventories, and to using them. We want to see a commitment to 2-phased approach to mineral resource values: phase 1 -the Yukon-wide mineral potential project, to help outline areas of interest (I was told by a biologist that there's no way that they're going to use that information to draw their areas of interest), a phase-2 is then applied to the individual candidates. Right now, there is no written commitment from government to do or use mineral potential studies. Let's see it written right in the strategy. Again, the biological reasons for supporting a candidate should also be spelled out. I'm calling it bio and geo-justification.

Concerns about facilitation during consultation: how much listening was out there? The facilitators were not impartial and I have seen an industry person actively "not being listened to" by a Parks person. It is important that good facilitators be hired during the next community consultation phase.

The push should be to establish a Strategy but we should give enough time for the selection of study areas. We need commitment from RR that this will be done. (I've heard it said in a pacifying tone, never seen it written down). These are important decisions, their impact will last a very long time and the process deserves doing it well. If this process is going to be community based as it advertised, we need more time to do it justice.

Keep land open for benefit of future generations, leave options open for future economy. Look at protection from a global perspective but look at economic development from a community perspective.

The working group is now working on preparing the focussed discussion workshop, to be held on February 5,6 and 7. Are we up to date on conservation biology? Do we know enough about the possible implications of decisions to come? The expectations are very high for this workshop. The research is just starting on some key issues. I think the workshop should be postponed by a few weeks to give more time to be well prepared on the issues and have more options to propose to the public (doesn't seem to be a chance in...). Since the deadline for the draft for the strategy has been postponed, we could use some of that time to be better prepared for this important workshop that's supposed to solve our our problems instead of just using that extra time to tabulate the results.

The focussed discussion was to be open to the RRC's, the steering committee, the advisory committee and the working group. RR is now saying that it would be very hard to refuse anybody that shows an interest to come so we can expect a strong contingent of environmentalists. We can alert people in the mining community to make sure there is proper representation, or we ask attendance to be restricted. I don't know.