

WRITTEN REPORT TO THE PEEL WATERSHED PLANNING COMMISSION

History and Interest in Area-

Yukon Outfitting Area # 6 is located within the extreme headwaters of both the Snake & Bonnet Plume Rivers. The enclosed map outlines the concession boundaries and about 5000 square kilometers lies within the Peel Watershed Planning area. This is a big game outfitting business and has been owned and operated by long time Yukoner, Chris Widrig since 1986. There has been continuous outfitting activity within this area since the early 1960's.

The Outfitting Concession has two base camps under lease; a 2.25 hectare lease at Bonnet Plume Lake and a .86 hectare lease at Goz Lake, near the Snake River. There is substantial infrastructure at both camps, with 14 cabins, docks, corrals, boats, etc (see enclosed photo's). In addition we utilize approximately 55 spike camp locations throughout the area, which are basic tenting sites with minimal development. We operate 26 head of horses and use about 500 miles of horse trails within the area. The Outfitting company has one aircraft and an Air Charter Service based at Bonnet Plume Lake for transporting clients within the area.

Our Outfitting business takes between 27-30 clients per season. We specialize in Dall sheep, moose caribou and grizzly hunting. We are on a limited quota for moose, caribou and grizzly. This is negotiated every five years with the Mayo District Resource Council and the Department of Environment. We offer a high quality, low volume, sustainable, wilderness hunting experience. Our economic contribution to the Yukon economy is in excess of 500,000.00 each year.

As the "hands on" owner of this business for 20 seasons I have acquired substantial knowledge of the entire Snake & Bonnet Plume River headwaters region. I have over 3500 hours of flying within the area and have also walked, ridden, climbed and camped within every drainage and mountain range. In the past I have submitted reports of wildlife habitat, including mineral licks, population estimates, recent fire killed areas, etc, to both the Department of Environment and the Mayo R.R.C. I would also be willing to share such information within the context of the Peel Watershed Management Plan.

CONCERNS AND ISSUES

The only major concern I have is that the "wilderness characteristics" of the Peel Watershed headwaters be maintained. I say this because my business is based on the unfettered use of wilderness, but also because I like most others who visit there have been profoundly struck by the unique natural beauty of the area. After spending many seasons out there I subscribe to a very simple equation; healthy wildlife, clean water, clear air, natural vegetation= wilderness = the lack of people. Therefore any human development such as roads, mines, large camps, gas wells or an influx of tourists above a saturation point, will have a negative impact on the wildlife, the water, the land and incidentally on my business. The Peel Watershed is true wilderness and deserves to be left largely in its present state.

Presentation: Wed. Oct 29

My name is Chris Widrig. I own an outfitting concession on the upper Snake and Bonnet Plume Rivers and have been there since 1986. I guess I should be considered a “stakeholder” in planning for the area after being there for 23 years. These watersheds are still complete, intact wilderness. The unique beauty of the area is hard to describe without experiencing it first hand.

I received a letter from a hunter and his wife who were with us last fall. I want to read you a part of it, because it explains the value of wilderness to people who rarely experience it. “Your hunting area is loaded with trophies, remote and so beautiful. When Sabine and I were sitting on a hillside above the Bonnet Plume River, waiting for our guide to return, we noticed the sound of silence. Serene beauty, with only the sound of the flowing river and wind. Some moments of time are so precious. Thank you for sharing your wilderness world with us.” Cliff & Sabine Price- Salmon Arm, British Columbia.

I believe the Peel Watershed should be shared. It should be shared between all those people and groups who are interested in keeping its wilderness integrity intact. It is also possible to earn a living by sharing the wilderness with others, I do. As wilderness in the rest of the world shrinks, the economic value of areas such as this grows. Making money by exploiting the wilderness and changing its physical characteristics, through roads or industrial development, uranium mines, coal bed methane, gas wells, etc is not sharing the land, it is stealing from it. I would hope that the final peel watershed plan will allow the wilderness to remain intact and those who make a living from the wilderness will still be able do so. Thank you.