

DRAFT 2018

THE CH'IHILII CHÌK HABITAT PROTECTION AREA

RECOMMENDED MANAGEMENT PLAN





Ch'ihilií Chik, flying around Berry Creek
(© VGFN 2009 -04-226)

FINAL RECOMMENDED MANAGEMENT PLAN

Prepared by the Ch'ihilií Chik Habitat Protection Area Working Group

For additional copies of this report contact:

Fish and Wildlife Branch
Environment Yukon (V-5A)
P.O. Box 2703
Whitehorse, YT Y1A 2C6
www.env.gov.yk.ca
fish.wildlife@gov.yk.ca

Natural Resources Department
Vuntut Gwitchin Government
P.O. Box 94
Old Crow, YT Y0B 1N0
www.vgfn.ca

Executive Director,
North Yukon Renewable Resources Council
P.O. Box 80
Old Crow, YT Y0B 1N0
nyrrc@northwestel.net

This report may be cited as:

The Ch'ihilií Chik Habitat Protection Area Working Group. 2017. The Ch'ihilií Chik Habitat Protection Area Final Recommended Management Plan. Department of Environment, Whitehorse, Yukon.

ISBN: 978-1-55362-798-2

Cover photo: Ch'ihilií Chik, caribou antlers full set in moss (© VGFN 2009-04-12)

Disclaimer: This management plan shall not create any commitments or obligations that are legally binding on the planning participants. Without limiting the generality of the foregoing, this management plan shall not create, affect, define, interpret or apply any roles, responsibilities or interests under Final or Self Government Agreements.

Acknowledgements and Special Thanks

The Ch'ihilií Chik Habitat Protection Area Working Group: Rosa Brown, William Josie, Joel Peter, Bruce McLean and Jim Bell would like to thank the many community members who shared their knowledge and wisdom through the planning process.

A special thanks to: Megan Williams, Jason Van Fleet, Mike Sutor, Tess McLeod, Neil McGrath, Lance Nagwan, David Frost, Ella LeGresley, Brandon Kyikavichik, Mary Jane Moses, John Miller, Brendan Mulligan, Michelle Sicotte, Erin Linklater, Erika Tizya-Tramm, and Darius Elias

Ch'ihilii Chìk

a gathering place of the Gwich'in

Ch'ihilii Chìk is a long ago place, lake of plenty, land of our ancestors, the Dagoo people from Vuntut Gwitchin, Teetl'it Gwich'in, Dawson areas who had once inhabited this area with its rich resources in a vast country now known as Vuntut Traditional Territory. Their relatives; us, who have come here today to visit their homelands and rediscover and reconnect to our past.

It is the place to be, in upper Yukon, the lake that flows into Tizya Creek into Porcupine Lake which is a part of the Porcupine River with its still waters.

Ch'ihilii Chìk a small eroding island in the middle of a huge lake that is drying out slowly, filling up with the beautiful water lilies; the fish are there no more. Once a rich caribou hunting area shared by Teetl'it Gwich'in, Dagoo Gwich'in and Vuntut Gwitchin. The long ago stories speak of that. The close connections that was had between all Gwich'in of this vast area.

Ch'ihilii Chìk is the pristine wetlands with the many species of ducks and birds, the wildlife, now a protected area.

Ch'ihilii Chìk; remembered by our elders from along time ago as a place of sustenance for traditional foods, the fat caribou, the drymeat, the blood soup, the itsuh and bone marrow and the tasty whitefish for which the lake is named.

We came here to connect with the past, to hear the stories from our elders of today of their travels and activities in the early 1900s, so we in turn could pass those stories to the younger generation to help them in their future deliberations, to know their true heritage going forward. Mahsi'

We came here to learn about where our roots lie, our identity, our connections to this rich land and our history; it makes one proud to have known we came from strong people, a strong nation. Their travel routes criss-crossed a huge area, travelled only by dog team in winter and walking long distances to Fort McPherson in NWT with dog packs and rafts/boats in the summer time. Hai'

Ch'ihilii Chìk is a special gathering place for the Dagoo who shared their resources off of the land with their neighbors, the Vuntut Gwitchin and Teetl'it Gwich'in kat.

Mahsi' Choo that we were able to connect with this land, to see the vast distances that have been travelled in the past between Ch'ihilii Chìk, Kàachik, Chuu Tl'it, and Jak Chyahnjik Vadzaih Tthał, [Berry Creek Caribou fence] a caribou fence, a spiritual place where hunters and families gathered for caribou, their markings still seen on the land, just seeing it meant so much, made by strong hands and strong minded people and all

other places where our people lived strictly off of the land for their livelihood. Their imprints, their markings on trees are still on the land to see with our own eyes.

Mahsi' for those happy times shared by our elders and the ancestors, of gathering together, laughing, sharing food, telling stories, celebrating but for a short time before they had to go back out on the land to survive which sometimes happened when there was hardly food around, still they moved on and survived so that we could be here today, a testament of their courage and determination.

Mahsi' Choo our Gwich'in people from long ago worked so hard together to make things work amongst themselves and visitors, working with happy hearts, helping each other so that we could be here today to reconnect, rediscover and carry on those stories, carry on the teachings and traditions and the practices of the Gwich'in. We are to be so grateful, Hai'. We are of the Gwich'in Nation, we have much to be proud of; we need to carry forth the teachings and skills handed down through the generations. Mahsi' Cho.

I am grateful for experiencing the White Fish Lake – Ch'ihilii Chik oral history project trip, a once in a lifetime experience for me personally. I felt happy for the first time, so relaxed knowing deep down my roots are from this area, my mother is a Dagoo, from Dawson area, an elder from Old Crow told me once that I am “real Dagoo”. I am Dagoo and proud of it. I had come home. I felt such a closeness to the land as never before, envisioning our ancestors in tune with the land and animals and all of nature. I left the Whitefish Lake - Itilii [my Teel'it Gwich'in dialect] with a happy heart.

Mary Jane Moses, July 23/09



Ch'ihilii Chik, island, Labrador Tea (*ledum palustre*) unusual pink
(© VGFN 2009-04-133)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Ch'ihilii Chik (Whitefish Wetlands) Habitat Protection Area	6
Vision for the Ch'ihilii Chik Habitat Protection Area	7

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of this Management Plan	8
Management Objectives	8
How This Plan Was Developed.	9
Legal Framework.	9
Natural Setting & Area Description.	10
Why Ch'ihilii Chik is Important.	11

MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Cultural Resources	
Traditional and Contemporary Use.	12
Environment	
Wetland and Water Resources.	15
Fish.	17
Wildlife	
Porcupine Caribou	18
Moose	19
Furbearers	19
Bears	20
Waterfowl and Other Birds	20
Biodiversity – Species at Risk	22
Renewable Resources	
Forestry and Wildfire Management.	23
Non-Renewable Resources	
Oil and Gas Resources	24
Mineral Resources	25
Land Use	
Land Dispositions and Land Use Activities	26
Access.	27
People	
Recreation and Tourism	28
Research and Public Awareness	29

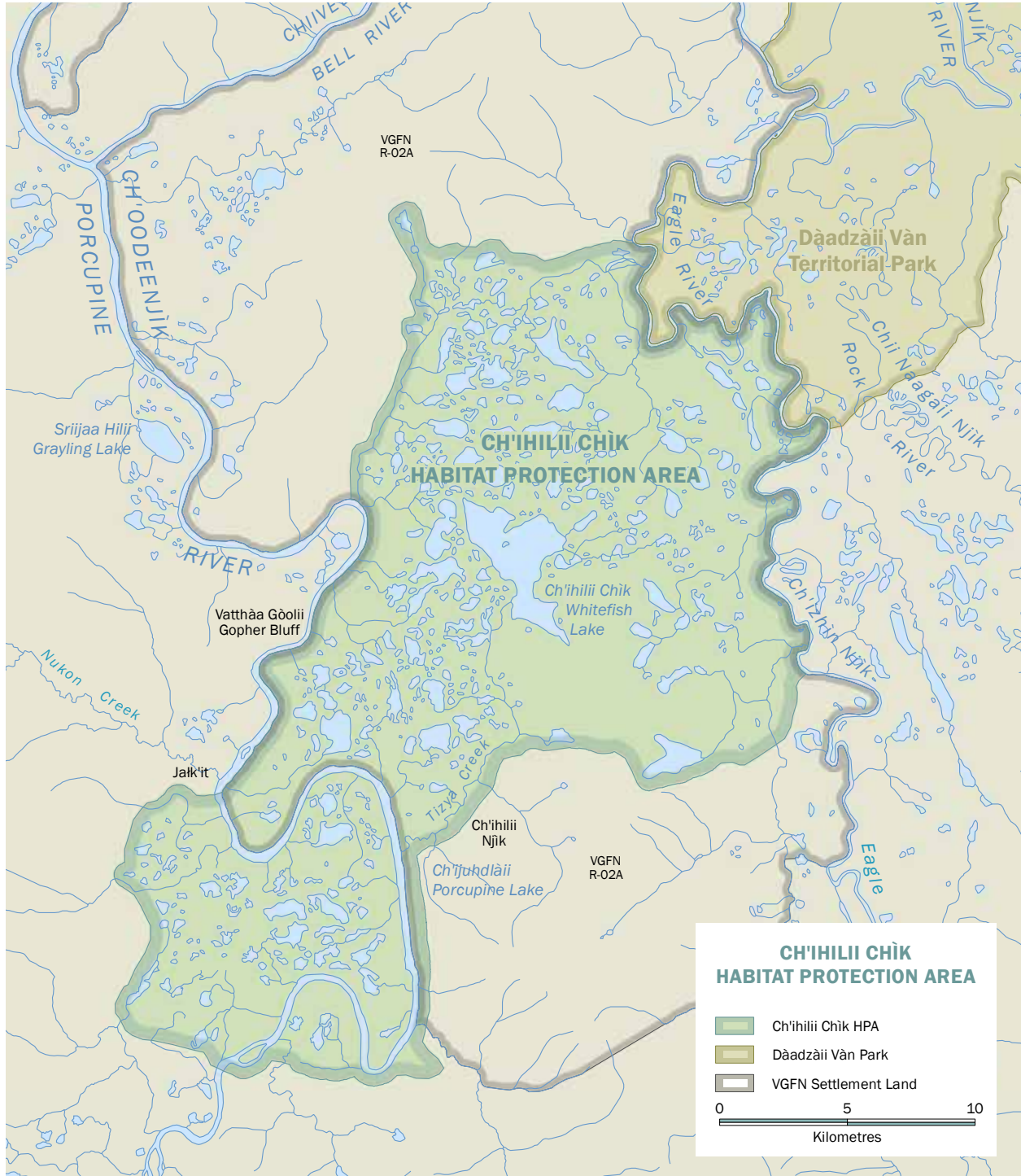
NEXT STEPS

Plan Approval.	30
Plan Implementation	30
Plan Review	30

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Working Group Terms of Reference.	32
Appendix B: Maps.	37
Appendix C: Detailed List of Working Group Meetings.	45

Map 1: Ch'ihilii Chik Habitat Protection Area



Vision for the Ch’ihilii Chìk Habitat Protection Area

From time immemorial, Gwich’in have used the Ch’ihilii Chìk Habitat Protection Area to fulfill their cultural and subsistence needs and values. Water to the Gwich’in, as in many indigenous societies, has immeasurable importance. The Gwich’in have a keen sense of the cycle of life and how water connects all living things together. The Gwich’in value system has at its core, an uncompromising respect and reverence for all living things, and since all living things need water to exist, water is viewed as the most important resource on earth. Van Tat Gwitch’in Elders identified the Ch’ihilii Chìk Habitat Protection Area (HPA) as an important area to be protected for future generations, and managed as one ecological unit with other protected area in the VGFN Traditional Territory, including Vuntut National Park, Van Tat K’atr’anahtii, Ni’iinlii Njik Territorial Park and HPA, and Dàadzàii Vàn Territorial Park.

MANAGEMENT OF THIS AREA INCLUDES:

- recognizing the use of the area by Gwich’in for hunting, trapping, fishing, and gathering plants, and the importance of maintaining trails, access, and resting spots for people to use during their travels;
- conserving important fish and wildlife populations and their habitat for the benefit of all Yukoners;
- preserving and carefully considering water quality for aquatic and terrestrial health, and ecosystem function;
- encouraging public awareness and appreciation of the natural resources of the area;
- understanding the impacts of past industrial land uses, particularly oil and gas exploration and to allow for current land uses and activities that are compatible with the objectives of this management plan; and
- gathering information about fish and wildlife and their habitats, and other resources through studies and research to assist with management decisions.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

HPA – Habitat Protection Area

VGG – Vuntut Gwitchin Government

VGFN – Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation

YG – Government of Yukon
(Yukon Government)

NYRLUP – North Yukon Regional
Land Use Plan

NYRRC – North Yukon Renewable
Resources Council

PCMB – Porcupine Caribou
Management Board

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of This Management Plan

Special management of Ch'ihilii Chik (Whitefish Wetlands) was recommended in the North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan (NYRLUP) which was approved by the Vuntut Gwitchin Government (VGG) and the Government of Yukon (YG) in 2009. In the NYRLUP, the area is referred to as Whitefish Wetlands. For the purpose of this management plan, the area will be referred to only as the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA, though both names describe the same area. The VGG and the YG (the parties) further agreed to designate the area as an HPA under the Yukon Wildlife Act. Designating the area as an HPA requires a management plan be developed and approved by both parties. A working group representing both parties was established in January 2013 to develop a management plan.

This management plan describes important values and provides recommendations to the parties for the long-term management of the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA (Map 1). The ecological and cultural importance of the area to the Vuntut Gwitchin was the key principle driving the working group and this management planning process.

During the NYRLUP planning process Vuntut Gwitchin Elders voiced their vision for ecological connectivity throughout the traditional territory and that all protected areas should not be considered in isolation but rather on a regional scale and as one connected unit (Map 2).

This plan recognizes that the different land ownership and management regimes will require a cooperative effort to jointly manage this important area.

Management Objectives

The management objectives are based on values reflected in the North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan (2009) and outlined in the working group's Terms of Reference (Appendix A).

THEY ARE:

1. to conserve important fish and wildlife habitat in the area for the benefit of all Yukon residents;
2. to recognize the traditional, current and future uses of the area by Vuntut Gwitchin citizens;
3. to preserve and carefully consider water quality and quantity in the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA for aquatic and terrestrial health and ecosystem function;
4. to protect the fish and wildlife populations and their habitats from activities which are likely to reduce the area's capability to support fish and wildlife;
5. to encourage public awareness and appreciation of the natural resources of the area; and
6. to allow for other activities compatible with these objectives and the management plan.

How This Plan Was Developed

The VGFN Settlement Lands VG R-02A, S-14A/D, and S-20A/D within the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA were carefully chosen during land claim negotiations as important areas for conservation and as stated in the North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan (2009) "with the intent to protect the central Whitefish Lakes, the surrounding wetland and the water flowing into it".

In the fall of 2013, the parties agreed to develop a management plan, which will lead to the designation of Ch'ihilii Chik as an HPA. A working group was established to create a recommended management plan; with two delegates from the VGG, two delegates from the YG, and one delegate from the North Yukon Renewable Resources Council (NYRRC). Terms of Reference for the working group were signed by the parties in January 2014.

The steps in the development of this management plan included identification and review of the important ecological and cultural resource information; discussion of options for protection of the area and its values; and consideration of land designation options. Many of the outcomes of this plan were determined by local input during community meetings, as well as from technical information collected throughout the planning process. Community meetings were held in Old Crow in July and October 2013 and February 2017. Refer to Appendix C for a detailed list of all Working Group and public meetings held throughout the planning process.

This management plan documents the current ecological conditions of the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA, its historical and cultural use; and identifies potential opportunities and risks from current and potential future land use, development and climate change.

Legal Framework

Multiple legislation from each of the parties regulates activities within and adjacent to the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA. These include:

Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Final Agreement

Yukon Legislation

Yukon Wildlife Act

Yukon Historic Resources Act

Yukon Waters Act

Yukon Environmental and Socio-Economic Assessment Act

Yukon Forest Resources Act

Yukon Oil and Gas Act

Yukon Territorial Lands Act

Yukon Placer Mining Act

Yukon Quartz Mining Act

Yukon Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act

Yukon Scientist and Explorers Act

Federal Legislation of Canada

Fisheries Act

Migratory Birds Convention Act

Species at Risk Act

Development of the Vuntut Gwitchin Lands and Resources Act is currently underway and anticipated to be completed by the first review of this management plan.

Natural Setting and Area Description

The Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA is an important part of the homeland of the Dagoo Gwich'in and was also used by the Van Tat Gwich'in and Tetlit Gwich'in. The area is situated on the travel route over the mountains between Old Crow and Fort McPherson, close to other well-known areas such as Kaachik (Johnson Creek Village) and LaPierre House. The Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA is approximately 115 km southeast of Old Crow, in the Traditional Territory of the VGFN. The area is 468 km² and encompasses Whitefish Lake and the surrounding wetlands (Map 1). VGFN Category A Settlement Land parcel VG R-02A, and Site Specific parcels S-14A/D and S-20A/D account for the majority of the land (358 km²) within the boundary and YG public lands makes up the remainder (110 km²).

The Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA is most easily accessed by snow machine in winter and by boat in summer. When the Old Crow winter road is maintained it runs adjacent to the south east border of the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA.

The Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA is comprised of three ecoregions within the Taiga Cordillera ecozone: the British-Richardson mountains, Eagle Plains, and the Old Crow Basin. The majority of the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA is within the Old Crow Basin. It is said the HPA is the most significant wetland in this ecoregion and is more similar to the Old Crow Flats than to the rest of the ecoregion. The area is at the confluence of three major river systems: the Eagle, the Bell, and the Porcupine. The Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA is situated at the end of the area known as Van Tat Gwich'in territory, and the beginning of the Upper Porcupine region, also known as Dagoo country. The Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA is

directly east of Chiiveenj'ik ("Grey Rock River" – Bell River). It is connected by Tizya Creek to a stretch of river called Ch'ijuhdl'ài ("Part of the river where the current is dead" – Porcupine Lake).

The wetland complex has a similar natural history to that of Van Tat (Old Crow Flats).

The area was unglaciated during the Pleistocene. Much of the lower elevations were submerged under glacial lakes underlain by fine-grained, ice-rich lake sediments, and continuous permafrost; as such the sediments are highly vulnerable to surface disturbance. The major river valleys represent changing habitat types, from aquatic vegetation through various shoreline types to upland shrub and forest communities, with many associated oxbows at various stages of succession. The Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA contains wet or riparian shrub, wet herb, and wet forest vegetation communities. Black spruce lichen heath communities dominate the peat plateaus and floating mats of sedge and mosses are also common. There are approximately 1,000 lakes, ponds, creeks, peat bogs, swamps, fens and marshes that make up the wetland complex; the central Whitefish Lake being the largest at 14 km². The lakes and ponds are thermokarst in origin, usually small and shallow.

The Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA abuts Dàadzàii Vàn Territorial Park along the boundary of the Eagle River. Dàadzàii Vàn will be a Natural Environment Park with a permanent withdrawal on mineral and oil and gas staking. Dàadzàii Vàn Territorial Park was also a recommendation of the NYRLUP. Combined with Rat River Conservation

Zone (in NWT), these protected areas provide important ecological continuity from the wetlands, up the Bell and Little Bell rivers to Summit Lake — straddling the Yukon River and Mackenzie River watersheds — for a total area of 5,068 square kilometres. The NYRLUP states that “the land designation concept for this area

would create a Protected Area network connecting Whitefish wetlands with Summit Lake-Bell River and the NWT Rat River Gwich’in Conservation Zone.” (Section 4.2.2) (Map 2).

Why the Ch’ihilii Chìk Habitat Protection Area is Important

The Ch’ihilii Chìk HPA is well known for abundant whitefish, beaver and muskrat trapping, and caribou hunting. The area is the most significant wetland complex in the VGFN Traditional Territory outside of Van Tat (Old Crow Flats). The ability of the Ch’ihilii Chìk HPA to provide subsistence and cultural nourishment to the Van Tat Gwich’in is economically and culturally

important, and the foundation upon which this management plan is based.

During consultations for the NYRLUP (2009), Elders repeatedly expressed interest in protecting the wetland complex, stressing the importance of this area for maintaining strong fish stocks, healthy wildlife populations, and clean water.



How the Dagoos Used Ch’ihilii Chìk

You know that Whitefish Lake, there’s a creek that runs into Porcupine River – Tixya Creek. We used to stay [Chuu Tl’it] Whitestone Village. We stay further up from Johnson Creek. Right after break-up we hunt beaver and then we come down to [Káachik] Johnson Creek Village. John Charlie, Peter Charlie, that’s where they stay, Johnson Creek, and them, they leave a load there for my Dad. They say they’re going to go down to [Ch’ijuhdlàii] Porcupine Lake. [Where] Whitefish Lake runs into Porcupine [River], they say they are going to stop there for fishing. They leave a note there for my Dad in Loucheaux writing. No English, just Loucheaux.

So they told us, John Charlie, Peter Charlie they’re going to go down Itilii (Dagoos/Peel dialect for Ch’ihilii) that’s that Whitefish Lake. Fish run into Porcupine Lake right after break-up. Fish come down steady, big whitefish. That’s where they stay. We got there - fishing same time we were around the lake. John Charlie, Peter Charlie, my Dad. Me, I never go, I was kid then. They hunt beaver around that lake, muskrat. They stay there for a week. I was with my Mom. Peter Charlie and John Charlie, Lazarus and Charlie Peter were [big kids]. Just steady whitefish - cut it up, smoke it. They make one cache and just do everything just like one family. And then after we finish, we divide it up. Yeah, [in spring, fish] come down to Porcupine [Lake]. In fall they go [back] up [the creek] again. All kinds of fish. Even Baalam, Old Baalam, used to stay there too. Right at the Whitefish Creek that’s where he stayed.

Dick Nukon, January 1995

Interviewed by Agnes Charlie and Colin Bearisto

MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS:

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Traditional and Contemporary Use

Historically the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA was part of the traditional area of the Dagoo Gwich'in. The Dagoo are recognized as a unique group within the greater Gwich'in Nation, now dispersed between Old Crow, Fort McPherson and other Gwich'in villages. The Ch'ihilii Chik HPA was a frequent stopover along a heavily used Gwich'in travelling route (Map 3). The area is ecologically rich and continues to be a place where local residents of Old Crow spend time hunting, fishing and trapping, and bringing youth onto the land for traditional activities — to learn about and practice cultural values.

Traditionally, large camps would be erected near Whitefish Lake where people travelling from both Old Crow and Fort McPherson would gather to build fishing weirs in Tizya Creek to catch whitefish (Map 4). The area was used as a base in the spring for hunting the Porcupine caribou herd. In times when caribou were scarce, people would hunt moose in the area. Families would spend time in the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA trapping beaver, muskrat, mink and lynx. Stories recorded from Gwich'in Elders clearly depict an important and diverse area used not only for traditional harvest practices, but also as an area where people congregated socially.

The Ch'ihilii Chik HPA remains an important area today. It has significant ecological value to fish species such as whitefish, jackfish, grayling and salmon. The area supports the Porcupine caribou

herd on their biannual migration. Many subsistence hunters use the area around Ch'juhdlàii (Porcupine Lake) for hunting caribou and moose, and trapping beaver. While the traveling routes are no longer used to the extent seen in the past, the area is used frequently for shorter hunting and trapping trips. There are two actively used cabins in the area, and two older cabins that are no longer used.

Archaeologists spent time within the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA in the 1960's and during that time identified a historical camp site on the Ch'juhdlàii (Porcupine Lake), on the north side at the mouth of Tizya Creek. A copper trade kettle, cut bone and bone fragments were collected. Also, two historical fish traps were identified, both on Tizya Creek. Given the importance of the area for hunting and fishing it is likely further surveys would identify additional archaeological sites within the wetland complex.

The Ch'ihilii Chik HPA also contains a well preserved record of Ice Age animals and environments in deposits of frozen silts that are now being exposed as modern rivers cut through the sediments. The Ch'ihilii Chik HPA is at the eastern edge of the Beringian region and likely contains fossil evidence of Pleistocene flora and fauna. Fossil sites have been identified on the Eagle River near the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA.



RECOMMENDATIONS

<p>1. Recognize where opportunities exist for the VGG and the YG to collaborate on heritage and historical resource projects within the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA.</p>	<p>Who: VGG, YG</p>
<p>2. Create and maintain opportunities for VGFN citizens to use the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • making the area accessible from the Porcupine River (mark and cut) trail; • establishing a cabin along the river for public and researcher use; • establishing a camping area on Ch'ihilii Chik Island; • recognising contemporary personal camps in the area; • including local youth on site visits; and • exploring opportunities to work within the existing trapper incentives, and traditional pursuits programs to encourage trapping and subsistence harvest within the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA. 	<p>Who: VGG, NYRRC</p>
<p>3. Establish a research cabin/base on the Ch'ijuhdlàii (Porcupine River) or at Whitefish Lake, to encourage research and create an opportunity for VGFN citizens and youth to participate in research.</p>	<p>Who: VGG, NYRRC</p>
<p>4. Recognise opportunities to increase awareness, and encourage educational and cultural opportunities that promote the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA for VGFN citizens, community members and visitors.</p>	<p>Who: VGG, NYRRC, YG</p>



A Story About Whitefish Lake

I'm going to speak of Whitefish Lake. When I was ten years old, between Whitefish Lake and LaPierre House – White Creek Mountain – my father lived there, hunting for caribou. Whitefish Lake was also important to people, Van Tat Gwich'in people and Fort McPherson people. The Fort McPherson people come over and go to LaPierre House to trap and hunt in that area. The Van Tat Gwich'in and McPherson people used to hunt together in the LaPierre House area. They dry meat at [White] Fish Lake and get meat prepared. When the warm weather comes, the Fort McPherson people return back to their community and the Van Tat Gwich'in move back to Old Crow or to LaPierre House for the spring break up. When I was 30 years old, that time, Johnson Creek and Whitestone people, when the caribou is at [White] Fish Lake everybody move from there to [White] Fish Lake to dry meat. And this is the way they live [White] Fish Lake. From there, not too far to river. One old man stay there around September through the winter. The reason he goes there is before freeze up, he gets fish. He get lot of fish, [and] caribou [too] and dry it and put it on the cache. Different people from different places come and visit that old man. He gives them fish. That old man's name is Old Baalam. I remember he lived there in 1950. He got there before freeze up and he got a lot of fish. I know Old Crow people went there hunting and he gave fish away to people who had dog teams - even people from Fort McPherson. That's how much [White] Fish Lake was important. Below there is an area called Porcupine Lake [Ch'ijuhdlaii]. They lived also at [White] Fish Lake. Everything around that area was used, that's why people go there every year. Lots of muskrat and beaver there, mink - all this is used. People live there, they live good.

What I talk about before, McPherson people and Old Crow people gather at [White] Fish Lake. What they do, they stay there winter. They get caribou [and] moose, before they split and do what they're doing, they get moose and make feast with it and they join together. They have their supper. After supper, they play Indian games, many different games. My father told me about this. That is what they do for one week. And then people around there, strangers also come and they do their drum dances. 1930, my father told me, first time he said he seen a drum dance, 1930 and he didn't know what was going on. They share their drum music and they join the dancing. In North Yukon all kinds of different games and dancing during holidays. ...That's what old people used to do in our country, old people. So we still carry on what we do today. ...

[White] Fish Lake I'm talking about. In the past, people lived there and they used it. And they lived there many years. There is always caribou there. McPherson people come over the mountain, and Vuntut Gwitchin go up to there and they get some [caribou] together. Berry Creek and LaPierre House, around these areas they dry meat and set traps for marten, for mink, for wolverine [and] otter; what animal lives in the area, ptarmigan [and] rabbits [too]. That's the reason they travel around this area. McPherson people come to Johnson Creek, Whitestone; they also live in that area sometimes. They trap in those areas. Everything they do, they work together. When we live on this land, we look after it.

John Joe Kyikavichik, January 26, 1995
Interviewed by Agnes Charlie

Wetland and Water Resources

Water resources within the the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA are considered to be relatively undisturbed. The conservation of fish, wildlife, and their habitats within the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA depends on the health of the wetland. Throughout the planning process, community members voiced concerns about potential changes to water quality, and quantity and the need for a better understanding of how water moves through the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA.

Community members also voiced concerns about impacts on the land from past oil and gas exploration in the area, specifically barrels located at the confluence of Tizya Creek and Porcupine River. In 2001 the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs found over 100 empty barrels at the Tizya Creek site and in 2003 Ducks Unlimited Canada discovered more barrels at Whitefish Lake. In 2005 a barrel recovery project was completed and 168 barrels were removed. The VGG completed a contaminated sites research and documentation project to record known contaminated sites between 2000 and 2015. Sites documented include, but are not limited to abandoned oil tankers trucks, buildings, oil drums, and other debris from abandoned seismic camps throughout the VGFN Traditional Territory. A number of these sites are located within the boundary of the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA. There is an ongoing need to determine if these sites are in fact contaminated and require clean up and which agency is responsible for this work. Furthermore, there is a need to

improve communication on past and future clean up work with community members.

Further understanding of baseline conditions in the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA will be necessary in the event of future development in areas adjacent to the HPA. A study was conducted in 2016 to complete a water resources evaluation for the HPA. Results determined that there was no water resources data available specifically for the HPA. Additional studies were suggested to fill these data gaps for hydrology, surface and groundwater quality, meteorology, and aquatic organisms. Examples of beneficial information could include: water isotope studies, wetland and watercourse digitization and watershed delineation, water chemistry sampling, algae/diatom studies, land cover classification, and fisheries studies. There are more details of what future studies could include summarized in the report: EDI Environmental Dynamics Inc. 2016. Whitefish Wetlands: Water Resources Evaluation. Whitehorse, Yukon.

Recommendations >

The working group discussed potential future areas of work that could assist in furthering our understanding of water in the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA, which included:

- potential impacts on water from activities occurring outside the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA boundary (e.g. oil and gas, and mineral exploration);
- water flow through the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA (e.g. sub-surface, surface and deep groundwater);
- changes to the wetland as a whole (e.g. surface water area and vegetation as indicators of change over time, as well as changes due to climate change);
- changes to permafrost (e.g. some ponds or wetlands may drain due to permafrost melting);
- how wetland functions or the changes listed above may influence fish and wildlife populations.

While some of these concepts are addressed in this plan, as well as by coordinated efforts by the managing parties when responding to environmental assessments, others may be more difficult to quantify.

The impacts of climate change being experienced in Yukon, especially in the north include: thawing permafrost, changes in water quality and quantity, changes in temperatures and precipitation trends; and changes in the diversity, health and distribution of wildlife. Recently, people travelling through the area are seeing more and more signs of climate change with dramatic slumping of west facing slopes. As the future effects of climate change on Ch'ihilii Chik HPA are uncertain, understanding potential impacts, and the strategies and tools that enable successful adaptation to these changes are necessary when considering long term management of this ecologically important area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

5. Consider the objectives and recommendations of this management plan in all appropriate environmental review processes of land and water-based disturbances outside the boundaries that may influence the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA.	Who: VGG, NYRRC, YG
6. Recognise and seek opportunities to coordinate and collaborate on water-related studies or monitoring activities in the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA within existing programs. There are a number of initiatives in the current Yukon Water Strategy that create the opportunity for such collaboration.	Who: VGG, NYRRC, YG
7. Continue to record potential contaminated sites and other sites that may need clean up within the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA; including number of sites, what reclamation work may be needed and which other agencies should be involved. Communicate this information to community members.	Who: VGG, NYRRC, YG
8. Complete a climate change risk and vulnerability assessment to further the understanding of biophysical changes that may occur within the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA as a result of climatic change and identify options and opportunities for adaptation.	Who: VGG, NYRRC, YG

Fish

The lakes, streams and rivers of the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA provide important year-round habitat for freshwater fishes. Of particular importance are the overwintering habitats provided by Whitefish Lake, Tizya Creek and the Ch'ijuhdlàii (Porcupine River), where river flow and groundwater input provides sufficient volumes of oxygenated water for fishes' winter survival.

Historically, the area has been an important location for subsistence fish harvest, with several Van Tat Gwich'in families operating fish traps at Whitefish Lake and Tizya Creek (Map 4). Chinook, Chum and Coho salmon, migrating upriver to spawning areas, pass through the Porcupine and Eagle Rivers in the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA, with adult salmon in the rivers from July to December.

In Gwich'in, Ch'ihilii Ch'ik translates loosely to "where fish come out of the lake" and refers to the whitefish that migrate out of Whitefish Lake at certain times of the year. The term encompasses a much broader concept, as do many Gwich'in words. Lake and/or broad whitefish spawn in the lakes of the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA and stay for a year or

two while they grow big enough to migrate. They start to move out of the lake in the spring when the ice thaws. They migrate to non-natal streams, lakes and smaller tributaries to continue rearing until they have reached their full size. They move back into the lakes of the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA to spawn in the late fall or early winter.

During the planning process, concerns were brought forward by community members regarding the effects of outside pressures from development and climate change on the water resources within the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA and the possible impacts on fish and their habitats.

VGFN citizens have the right to fish for subsistence purposes within their Traditional Territory. Local residents continue to use the area for fishing, and maintaining this tradition is a central aspect to this plan. Fishing pressure by licenced resident and non-residents is not of concern at this time.

[Recommendations >](#)



The Meaning of Ch'ihilii Ch'ik

Whitefish Lake name is Ch'ihilii Ch'ik. Ch'ihilii is Whitefish. Lots of Whitefish in that big lake and then there is a creek right to Porcupine Lake (Ch'ijuhdlaii) so the fish go down that creek to Porcupine [Lake]. Ch'ihilii vee lit [means] fish go to river. So if you hear about [Ch'ijuhdlaii], that creek [that comes from Ch'ihilii], right there is where it runs into Porcupine [River].

Alfred Tetlichi, 1995

RECOMMENDATIONS

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| 9. No commercial fishing or fish farming licences shall be issued within the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA. | Who: VGG, NYRRC, YG |
| 10. The cultural importance of the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA fishery should be carefully considered in the planning, assessment and regulation of development within the Porcupine watershed. | Who: VGG, NYRRC, YG |
| 11. Recognise opportunities to coordinate work with partners (industry, governments, universities, and others) to further our understanding of over-wintering areas and migration routes for freshwater fish in Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA. | Who: VGG, NYRRC, YG |

WILDLIFE

Porcupine Caribou

Values and concerns related to the Porcupine caribou herd that were raised and discussed during the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA planning are summarised here, while recognizing concerns will be addressed through the Porcupine Caribou Management Board (PCMB). The PCMB is an advisory board established under the Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement (1985) mandated to communicate information about the herd and to provide recommendations to the agencies responsible for management of the herd. PCMB membership includes federal, territorial, and First Nation governments.

The Porcupine caribou herd is the most significant and culturally important wildlife resource in northern Yukon. The Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA sees concentrated use by the Porcupine caribou herd (Map 5). Rutting

(fall) activity is concentrated in the south end of the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA, with winter activity focused in the north and south. Adequate winter habitat, with relatively low snow depths and sufficient lichen forage, is particularly important for pregnant cows, who must receive adequate winter nutrition to migrate to their calving grounds, and give birth to and nurse their calves. The seasonal migration corridors are critical habitat for the Porcupine Caribou herd. This herd is vital to the Van Tut Gwich'in culture and lifestyle for food and sustenance.

The Native User Communities listed in the Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement, have rights to hunt the Porcupine caribou herd for food without a Yukon hunting license. Yukon First Nations who are not recognised as one of the Native User Communities must have

written consent from the VGG to hunt Porcupine caribou within the VGFN Traditional Territory. Licensed hunters must hunt under the laws of general application and hunt under Yukon Hunting Regulations set out by the Government of Yukon. Licensed hunters require written consent

from the VGG to hunt on First Nation Settlement Land. For more information refer to the Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement and Harvest Management Plan. More than 75% of the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA is VGG Settlement Land.

Moose

The Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA is valuable year-round moose habitat, with river valleys and wetland complexes that are especially important in spring, summer and early autumn (Map 6). Abundant aquatic, emergent and terrestrial vegetation in the area provides plentiful forage. River and creek valleys, which feature relatively low snow depths and abundant willow forage, also serve as important winter habitat.

There is local harvest of moose in the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA, and while residents of Old Crow have raised concerns with the amount of harvest pressure on the Porcupine River, no management actions regarding sustainability of harvest are recommended at this time. There is interest from local community members to gain a better understanding of moose populations that frequent the area and in particular seasonal movement patterns. Recently, moose seasonal migration and related habitat use was studied in the Van Tat (Old Crow Flats) area, which is considered physically and ecologically similar to the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA. Results of that study suggested that there may be a potential effect of landscape change due to climate on moose habitat.

Furbearers

The Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA has abundant furbearer populations including: marten, mink, lynx, beaver, muskrat, otter, wolverine, wolf and fox. Trapping has been, and continues to be, an important activity in this area and the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA is part of the VGFN group trapline. The Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA is identified in the Wildlife Key Areas by the YG Department of Environment as a key area for muskrat, and traditional knowledge indicates that beaver and lynx are also plentiful across the entire the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA. During the planning process, concerns about beaver overpopulation and their potentially negative impacts on the wetland were voiced. Wolves are also considered an integral part of the ecosystem. Much work has been done to study wolves in Yukon. The Yukon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan (2012) provides a territory-wide strategy for managing wolves.



How Ch’ihilii Was Used by Multiple Gwich’in Communities for Caribou, Moose, Fish, and Beaver

I don’t trap around [Ch’ihilii Chik] but I hunt there lots of times. That’s our caribou area. So we always come down and hunt around there for caribou. That’s pretty good country there, you know. There’s a few beaver there all winter. We trap around Johnson Creek, up around Eagle Plains across the south. After breakup we come down and we stop to hunt beaver. So we just come down here and there and hunt beaver. That’s good beaver country, that Whitefish Lake. That’s a good lake around there ... for beaver and muskrat. Not only us, sometimes some people from Old Crow go up there and hunt beaver. Everybody used that area.

Alfred Charlie, January 19, 1995
Interviewed by Agnes Charlie and Colin Bearsto

Bears

Traditional knowledge indicates that the Ch’ihilii Chik HPA, and the Porcupine River valley provide regionally significant habitat for bears (Map 7). Grizzly bears use the area mainly in spring and fall. Currently there are no concerns about the health of local bear populations within the Ch’ihilii Chik HPA. There is interest from local community members to gain a better understanding of how bears at the Ch’ihilii Chik HPA may be influenced by impacts in other areas such as the Dempster Highway and Fishing Branch River.

In 2012, when considering grizzly bears specifically across all of Canada, the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife Canada (COSEWIC) designated grizzly bears as “Special Concern”. Grizzly bears are sensitive to human disturbance and subject to high mortality risk in developed areas. In Yukon, grizzly bears are considered Vulnerable (S3). YG and the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board are developing a Yukon Grizzly Bear Conservation and Management Plan that will consider all aspects of grizzly bear management and will be used to guide decisions related to grizzly bear management in the territory.

Waterfowl and Other Birds

The Ch’ihilii Chik HPA provides an important stopover on the spring waterbird migration (Map 8). In early spring, before wetlands have thawed, migrating waterbirds congregate in sections of the Porcupine River in the Ch’ihilii Chik HPA, where currents create areas of open water. Once the ice melts, birds either move into nearby wetlands to breed, or they continue migrating to breeding sites in Van Tat (Old Crow Flats).

Thousands of waterbirds — over twenty different species — use shallow lakes and ponds of Ch’ihilii Chik for staging, feeding, nesting and moulting throughout the spring, summer and autumn. Ducks Unlimited Canada has conducted various studies within and near the Ch’ihilii Chik HPA including; Waterbird Reconnaissance Survey (2004), Porcupine River Spring Staging Surveys (2005), Wetland and Waterfowl Values of the Lower Bell River (2010), and a Waterfowl Values of the Whitefish Wetlands (2010). Surveys have recorded daily use of the area by 6,000 individual waterbirds. The dense aquatic

vegetation typical of the shallow waterbodies provides important food for migrating and breeding ducks, geese, swans and other waterbirds. The YG Department of Environment has identified this area as a key area for ducks, geese and swans during their moulting and breeding periods. Scaup and scoter, species experiencing continental declines, are either stable or increasing in this area.

Van Tut Gwich'in First Nations harvest waterfowl as part of a subsistence diet; historical and current information on harvest of waterfowl within the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA is limited.

The Ch'ihilii Chik HPA has been identified as a key nesting area for raptors (Map 8). Breeding by two federally-listed species at risk, Short-eared owls (Special Concern) and Peregrine falcons (Threatened) has been documented within this area. Another federally-listed bird, the Rusty blackbird (Special Concern) is locally abundant in the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA. Gyrfalcon, listed as "Specially Protected" under the Yukon Wildlife Act, have also been observed breeding in the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA.



Ch'ihilii Chik: small black bird called Tsilch'uu (Copyright VGFN_2009_VG2009-04-289)

RECOMMENDATIONS

12. Recognise opportunities to coordinate work with partners (industry, governments, universities, and others) to further our understanding of moose movement patterns and habitat use in the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA.	Who: VGG, NYRRC, YG
13. Explore opportunities to work within existing trapper incentive programs and traditional pursuits programs to encourage trapping and subsistence harvest within the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA.	Who: VGG, NYRRC
14. Maintain an accurate and current record of subsistence harvest of all wildlife species within the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA.	Who: VGG, NYRRC
15. Encourage the monitoring of waterfowl and other bird populations by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services and Ducks Unlimited Canada, so that population changes can be detected and addressed if concerns arise.	Who: VGG, NYRRC, YG

Biodiversity – Species at Risk

Specific information on federally-listed species at risk within the Ch’ihilii Chik HPA is minimal as there has been no inventory work completed specific to the Ch’ihilii Chik HPA. There is information on use of the Eagle River portion of the Ch’ihilii Chik HPA by Peregrine falcon (Threatened), Rusty blackbirds (Special Concern), and Short-eared owls (Special Concern). There has been a recorded finding of a freshwater mussel known as the Yukon floater (Special Concern) on the west side of the Porcupine River, and an orchid (*Malaxia paludosa*) (Special Concern) just southeast of the HPA.

Other species at risk found within the Eagle Plains ecoregion include the Olive-sided flycatcher (Threatened), grizzly bear (Special Concern), wolverine (Special Concern), and dolly varden (Special Concern). There are also ten species of global conservation concern in the ecoregion; six moths/butterflies, three vascular plants and grizzly bear.

Other species at risk found regionally in the north Yukon include Horned grebes (Special Concern), Red-necked phalarope (Special Concern), and Bank swallow (Threatened). Although undocumented it is likely these species are present in the Ch’ihilii Chik HPA.

RECOMMENDATIONS

16. Recognise opportunities to coordinate work with partners (industry, governments, universities, and others) to collect inventory information on species at risk within the Ch’ihilii Chik HPA. The Yukon Conservation Data Centre is a valuable tool for this coordination.

Who: VGG,
NYRRC, YG

RENEWABLE RESOURCES

Forestry and Wildfire Management

The majority of fuel wood and forest harvesting for residents in Old Crow occurs within a 20 to 30 km radius of the community in the winter. During summer, locations as far upstream as the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA are accessed by boat and logs are floated down to Old Crow. Timber within the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA is limited to small diameter trees and is restricted to riparian sites. Because the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA is remote and has limited merchantable wood in the area it is unlikely that commercial harvesting would be practical. It is expected that personal use of forest resources within

the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA will continue in accordance with applicable forest management practices in the area.

Wildfires are monitored by the Wildland Fire Management Branch, Department of Community Services. A zoning system for response to fires is in place. The Ch'ihilii Chik HPA is in the Wilderness Zone, meaning that fire will be monitored but action to suppress the fires may only take place to protect valuable assets such as camps and cabins.

RECOMMENDATIONS

17. Any future development of a forest resources management plan for Settlement Land and Yukon public lands within the VGFN Traditional Territory will recognise the objectives of this management plan.

Who: VGG, NYRRC, YG

18. The VGG will continue to manage forest resources on Settlement Land in the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA on a case by case basis, recognizing the objectives of this management plan.

Who: VGG

NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCES

Oil and Gas Resources

The North Yukon contains a large portion of Yukon’s total estimated natural oil and gas potential, specifically in the Eagle Plains area. As described in the North Yukon Planning Region Resource Assessment Report (2007), most of the energy sector activity anticipated in this region would be focused in the southern portion of the Eagle Plain oil and gas basin south of the Ch’ihilii Chik HPA. Under the NYRLUP (2009) the management direction for Eagle Plains (Land Management Unit 9) is an Integrated Management Area Zone 4 which allows for the highest level of land use activity and change in the planning region.

Approximately twenty seismic survey lines, cut prior to 1975, are located within the Ch’ihilii Chik HPA. The lines have re-vegetated but are still visible from the air, likely due to the methods used at the time

and the resulting damage to the soil layer. There are two abandoned dry gas wells (J-70 and I-05) within the Ch’ihilii Chik HPA. Both wells were inspected in 2010 and both were shown to be overgrown and clean with no visible concerns. An exploration permit is located adjacent to the southern border of the Ch’ihilii Chik HPA. These permits were renewed in August 2016, with an expiry date of August 30, 2019 (Map 9).

The potential impacts associated with oil and gas activities within the HPA are considered incompatible with the objectives of this management plan. This is consistent with the management direction provided by the NYRLUP, which identified the Ch’ihilii Chik area as a proposed protected area where oil and gas development should be prohibited.

RECOMMENDATIONS	
<p>19. The VGG will permanently prohibit surface and subsurface entry for oil and gas exploration and extraction on VGFN Category A Settlement Land portions of the Ch’ihilii Chik HPA. The objectives and recommendations of this management plan should be considered in all appropriate review processes of land- and water-based disturbances outside the boundaries that may influence the Ch’ihilii Chik HPA.</p>	<p>Who: VGG</p>
<p>20. The YG will permanently prohibit the disposition of oil and gas rights on Yukon public land located within the Ch’ihilii Chik HPA. The objectives and recommendations of this management plan should be considered in all appropriate review processes of land and water- based disturbances outside the boundaries that may influence the Ch’ihilii Chik HPA.</p>	<p>Who: YG</p>



Ch'ihilii Chik, island, Irwin Linklater
(© VGFN 2009-04-32)

Mineral Resources

Mineral assessments were conducted to create a mineral deposit model of North Yukon for the NYRLUP (2009). Mineral assessments measure the potential areas with similar geological characteristics to contain mineral resources that are economic. This assessment indicated that the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA has low mineral potential based on the regional geology.

There are no mining claims (active, pending, or expired) within the boundaries of the

Ch'ihilii Chik HPA, however, there are a few groups of expired quartz mining claims located approximately 70 km northwest and 50 km southeast (near the Dempster Highway) of the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA boundary.

The potential impacts of mineral exploration and development activities are not compatible with the objectives of this management plan or with the recommendations of the NYRLUP (2009).

RECOMMENDATIONS

21. The VGG will permanently prohibit surface and subsurface entry for mineral exploration and extraction on VGFN Category A Settlement Land portions of the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA.

Who: VGG

22. YG will permanently prohibit surface and subsurface entry for mineral exploration and extraction on Yukon public land portions of the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA.

Who: YG

LAND USE

Land Dispositions and Land Use Activities

Historically there have been no land dispositions in the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA and there are no private land parcels. The VGG is responsible for managing surface and sub-surface land use activities and land dispositions on Category A Settlement Land.

No land tenure will be granted in the Ch'ihilii

Chik HPA for the following activities: gravel extraction, agriculture, grazing leases, or for any other commercial activity. There is support for the VGG's future plans to build new cabins within the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA on Category A Settlement Land for use by the community for cultural activities and research purposes.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| 23. Non-commercial land use activities on VGFN Settlement Lands within the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA will be regulated through the VGG and must be consistent with this management plan. | Who: VGG |
| 24. Non-industrial land use activities on Yukon public land within the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA will be regulated under the Yukon Territorial (Lands) Act and must be consistent with this management plan. | Who: YG |
| 25. The objective and recommendations of the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA Management Plan should be considered in all land use activities permitted within the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA. | Who: VGG, NYRRC, YG |

Access

The Ch'ihilii Chik HPA is remote and access is currently restricted to winter trails (snow machine and dog teams) and by river (boat, canoe) in the summer months. The area is also accessible by air.

When the winter road to Old Crow is maintained it runs adjacent to the southern boundary of the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA. This road is built on an as needed and when weather/ conditions permit basis considering the community of Old Crow's needs for the shipment of goods for larger-scale projects. The road was last constructed in 2004 and 2014; it is expected a winter road will be maintained as often as every three years in the future.

The VGG completed a project in 2014 to map traditional trails and routes. A network of traditional trails are located in the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA, with segments heading east towards the Richardson Mountains, and to the southwest towards Whitestone Village,

which connects to a trail heading northwest to Old Crow. A winter trail between Fort McPherson and Old Crow does not overlap the HPA, however people may occasionally still use the trail to access the HPA (Map 3).

The Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act applies to access or surface land use activities on Yukon public land. Any new access routes wider than 1.5 m are subject to a land use authorization through the Territorial Land Regulations and are assessed through the Yukon Environmental and Socio-Economic Assessment Act process. The VGG administers access on Settlement Lands, subject to the access provisions of the VGFN Final Agreement.

Development of new access routes or the levels of current access is not a concern at this time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| 26. Monitor use of existing trails and access and develop guidelines for access into the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA, if necessary. | Who: VGG, NYRRC, YG |
| 27. Traditional routes within the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA should be maintained and recorded. | Who: VGG |
| 28. The objectives and recommendations of this management plan should be considered when evaluating and permitting construction of the Old Crow winter road. | Who: VGG, NYRRC, YG |

PEOPLE

Recreation and Tourism

People travelling on the Eagle, Bell and Porcupine Rivers and camping along their shores make up the majority of summer tourism activity within the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA. This typically occurs in the earlier part of the summer when water levels are higher. In the winter, snowmobilers and dog mushers travel in the area.

There are currently no commercial tourism ventures within the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA. Tourism opportunities will need to be carefully considered to ensure they do not impact the traditional use and ecological values of the area and respect the objectives of this management plan.

Possible tourism ventures in the future could include boat tours, wildlife viewing and dog mushing. An important aspect to

any tourism venture involving the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA would be the incorporation of education about First Nation culture and traditional practises. Any approved tourism ventures should be beneficial to the people of Old Crow, and where appropriate, shall be in accordance with the provisions of the VGFN Final Agreement.

Unmanaged tourism and recreation could affect wildlife behaviour and habitats, environmental values and traditional uses. It is important that ways to effectively manage and control visitor use be in place before increasing tourism opportunities. Public awareness of the area and cooperation from tourism operators can help minimize recreation and tourism effects at this time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

29. Tourism developments within the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik HPA should benefit the community of Old Crow, rely on traditional knowledge, and respect the traditional and cultural uses and values of the area.

Who: VGG, NYRRC, YG

30. The objectives and recommendations of this management plan should be considered when evaluating and permitting any tourism operation in the area.

Who: VGG, NYRRC, YG

Research and Public Awareness

VGG conducted a cultural technology project in the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA between 2007 and 2011. This project was completed with the aim of providing a distinctive Gwich'in perspective by drawing on Van Tat Gwich'in oral history.

VGG has guidelines for visitors or researchers on Settlement Lands and administers access on Settlement Land. A Yukon Scientist and Explorers Act permit is required for researchers on Yukon public land. Researchers are encouraged to meet with Old Crow residents prior to conducting any research within the VGFN Traditional Territory and research results

must be shared with the VGG and local community members once completed. All organizations conducting any research within the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA will be encouraged to employ and/or mentor community members as a way to build capacity and skills in the community.

The Ch'ihilii Chik HPA should be promoted as an area to learn about traditional use and cultural activities for VGFN citizens, local residents and visitors; this may be done through initiatives already in place by the Chief Zzeh Gittlit School, VGG, or the NYRRC.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- | | |
|---|----------------------------|
| <p>31. All research or projects conducted within the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA should be coordinated by the parties. Research results must be shared and made available to the VGG and local community members. Information should be provided in a format that is compatible with other data used by the VGG.</p> | <p>Who: VGG, NYRRC, YG</p> |
| <p>32. Identify a process for all parties to review proposals for research and monitoring and results from such studies completed within the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA.</p> | <p>Who: VGG, NYRRC, YG</p> |

NEXT STEPS

Plan Approval

This management plan requires approval by the parties (VGG and YG) who may develop co-operative ways to implement and monitor the recommendations in the management plan.

Plan Review

The parties will jointly review the management plan and its implementation no later than five years after the plan's initial approval. Thereafter, the need for reviews will be considered every five years, with joint reviews performed at least every ten years. There is also opportunity to have the management plan reviewed in coordination with the Dàadzàii Vàn Park Management Committee once established.

Plan Implementation

By approving the management plan, the parties commit to plan implementation. In developing recommendations, the working group has tried to ensure there is reasonable integration with existing programs and activities of the parties.

The management planning process was intended to lead to an integrated management regime for the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA. The area will be co-managed by the VGG and YG. As per the VGFN Final Agreement, laws of general application will continue to apply to VGFN Settlement Land until such laws are replaced by laws enacted by the VGG. It is anticipated that the VGG will have a Lands and Resources Act in place by the date of the first review (2021) of this management plan. If this is the case, the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA Management Plan will be amended to reflect any new designation of the portion of the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA that is Settlement Land. The Yukon public land portion would remain as an HPA.

In order to implement plan recommendations, adequate funding sources need to be identified by the parties. The working group acknowledges that resources required for implementation are allocated annually based on management priorities by the parties. When appropriate, managers of the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA will coordinate management decisions with the Dàadzàii Vàn Territorial Park Management Committee.

Local participation and employment opportunities in all fieldwork and off-site interpretation and education is considered important to the success of the implementation of this management plan. These opportunities should be considered by the parties.

Through implementation of this plan, the intent is the Ch'ihilii Chik HPA will continue to have a healthy ecosystem and wildlife populations, and encourage local use of the area, while providing clarity and certainty for land users in the area.



Patterned ground/marsh by Ch'ihilii Chik between Whitefish Lake and Bell River
(© VGFN 2009-04-290)

APPENDICES

- Appendix A: Working Group Terms of Reference 32
- Appendix B: Maps 37
- Appendix C: Detailed List of Working Group Meetings..... 45

APPENDIX A: WORKING GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE

Ch'ihilii Chik (Whitefish Lakes Wetland) Habitat Protection Area Management Planning – Terms of Reference

1.0 Purpose

The Purpose of this Terms of Reference is to identify the background related to the establishment of Whitefish Wetlands as a Habitat Protection Area (HPA) and describe the structure and process that will be used to undertake management planning for the area.

2.0 Background and Rationale

The North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan (NYRLUP) was approved by Yukon government (YG) and the Vuntut Gwitchin Government (VGG) in 2009. In section 4.2.1 of the NYRLUP the Parties (YG and VGG) recommended that Whitefish Wetlands (Unit 8A) should be designated as a Protected Area category. The area includes the central portion of Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation (VGFN) Settlement Land R-02A as well as a parcel of Yukon Crown Land (Figure 1). VGFN identified that R-02A was selected for conservation purposes with the intent to protect the central Whitefish Lake, the surrounding wetland, and the waters flowing into it.

The Parties agreed to proceed with creating a management plan for the area as a Habitat Protection Area (HPA) under the Yukon government's *Wildlife Act*. The *Wildlife Act* provides the Yukon government with the mandate and authority to create Habitat Protection Areas. Specifically, Section 187 allows for the designation of an area as an HPA where YG is of the opinion it is necessary to do so because of the sensitivity to disturbance, the likelihood of disturbance and the importance of the area as habitat for any species, population or type of wildlife.

The management planning process is intended to lead to an integrated management regime for Whitefish Wetlands. The planning process will allow for the area to be managed collaboratively by YG and VGG including the implementation of their respective legislation. As per the VGFN Self-Government Agreement, laws of General Application will continue to apply to VGFN Settlement Land until such laws are made inoperative by laws enacted by VGFN. It is anticipated that VGG will have a *Lands Act* in place by the date of the first review of the management plan. If this is the case, the Settlement Land portion of the Whitefish Wetlands would be amended to become a VGG designation. It is noted that VGG would intend to create a special designation for the Settlement

APPENDIX A: WORKING GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE

Lands that reflect the Approved Management Plan. The YG portion would remain as a HPA.

3.0 Boundaries

The boundaries of the Whitefish Wetlands area are shown on the attached map (Figure 1).

The Working Group will limit its management plan recommendations to this area, while recognizing it may need to consider factors beyond the boundary that may affect the Whitefish Wetlands HPA.

4.0 Working Group

A Working Group will be established to prepare a management plan for the Whitefish Wetlands HPA. The Working Group will be comprised of five members, two appointed by YG, two appointed by VGG and one appointed by the North Yukon Renewable Resources Council (NYRRC).

The Working Group will develop operating procedures as may be necessary.

5.0 Management Objectives

The management objectives for the Whitefish Wetlands HPA are:

1. To conserve important fish and wildlife habitat in the area for the benefit of all Yukon residents;
2. To recognize the traditional, current and future uses of the area by Vuntut Gwitchin citizens and other residents of Old Crow;
3. To preserve and carefully consider water quality and quantity in Whitefish Wetlands for aquatic and terrestrial health and ecosystem function.
4. To protect the fish and wildlife populations and their habitats from activities which are likely to reduce the area's capability to support fish and wildlife;
5. To encourage public awareness and appreciation of the natural resources of the area; and
6. To allow for other activities which are compatible with these objectives and the management plan.

APPENDIX A: WORKING GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE

6.0 Preparation of the Management Plan

The Working Group shall:

1. Prepare a work plan with identified timelines and budget requirements for the management planning process, for review and approval by the respective planning partners (YG, VGG, NYRRC);
2. Prepare a management plan that considers available traditional, local and scientific knowledge, and;
3. Include a process for public review and input, which for greater clarity will include outreach with Vuntut Gwitchin citizens and other residents of Old Crow.

The management plan will be guided by the above management objectives (See Section 5.0). In preparing the Recommended Management Plan, the Working Group shall consider recommendations pertaining to:

1. Fish and Wildlife management and protection;
2. Habitat management and protection;
3. Strengthening the understanding of hydrological systems within the wetland to assist with management decisions.
4. The need for essential baseline data of fish and wildlife, fish and wildlife habitats and other resources in the area to assist with management decisions.
5. Harvesting in the area by VGFN citizens and others;
6. Traditional and current uses of the area;
7. Other potential land, water or resource uses in the area;
8. Measures to enhance public awareness and appreciation;
9. Permitting or other methods of regulating activities and land uses in the area in accordance with the management plan and current legislation;
10. An initial implementation plan and subsequent review process.

APPENDIX A: WORKING GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE

7.0 Roles and Responsibilities

The Parties and NYRRC are responsible for the costs incurred by their respective members of the Working Group.

The Parties and the NYRRC will make available all necessary information to support the management planning process.

The Working Group will be responsible for:

1. Making best efforts to operate on a consensus basis;
2. Bringing forward the respective issues of their Parties or NYRRC to the Working Group and represent their Parties;
3. Communicate and coordinate matters that arise from the Working Group back to their respective Party or the NYRRC.

The Department of Environment (ENV) will provide the services of a Fish and Wildlife Planner to coordinate the planning. ENV will also cover the administrative costs of public meetings and all printing costs of the Approved Management Plan and its drafts.

8.0 Management Plan Approval

The Working Group will make best efforts to recommend a management plan to the Parties within 18 months from the sign off of the Terms of Reference. In this regard, the Working Group members will seek feedback and preliminary approval-in-principle from their respective parties for the plan components and any other issues that require further review.

Where the Working Group cannot resolve any outstanding provisions or disagreements the matter shall be referred to senior officials or principals of the parties. Upon final receipt of the recommended management plan from the Working Group, VGG and YG will each decide whether to approve the management plan.

When a recommended management plan is accepted by VGG and YG, the Plan will become the "Approved Management Plan".

APPENDIX A: WORKING GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE

9.0 Implementation of the Approved Management Plan

The Parties will each manage their lands within the Whitefish Wetlands HPA in accordance with the Approved Management Plan (See Section 8.0) and their respective mandates.

The management plan will identify a date or period when the next review of the plan contents will occur collaboratively by the Parties.

Any changes to the management plan shall first be approved by VGG and YG.

10.0 Other

Nothing in these Terms of Reference shall create, affect, define, interpret, or apply any roles, responsibilities, rights or interests under the First Nation of Vuntut Gwitchin Final or Self-Government agreements or create any legally binding commitments or obligations on the planning participants.

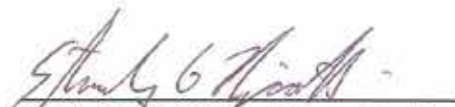


Director, Fish & Wildlife
Environment Yukon

Director, Natural Resources
Vuntut Gwitchin Government

And

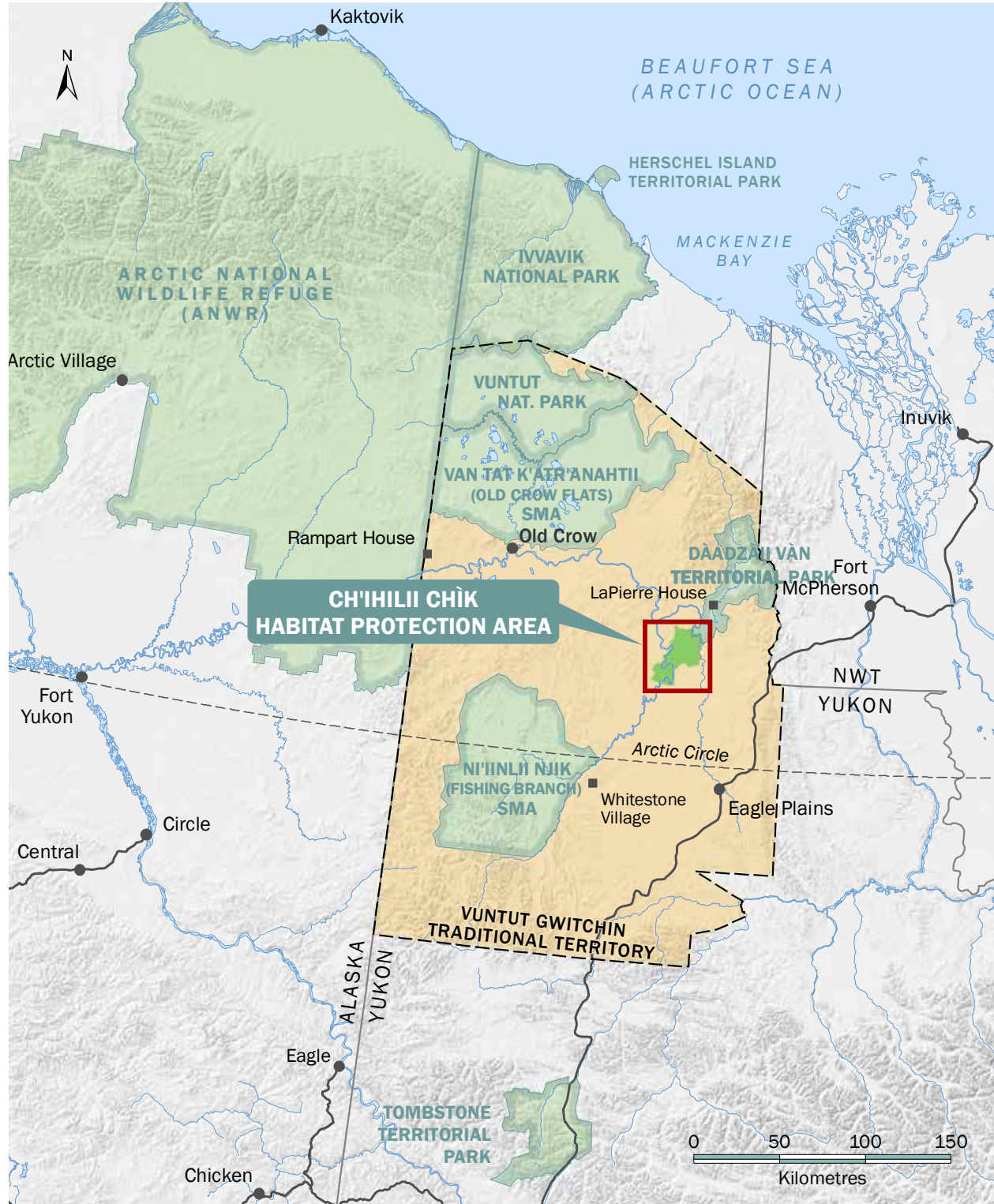
Acknowledged by:



Chair, North Yukon Renewable Resources Council

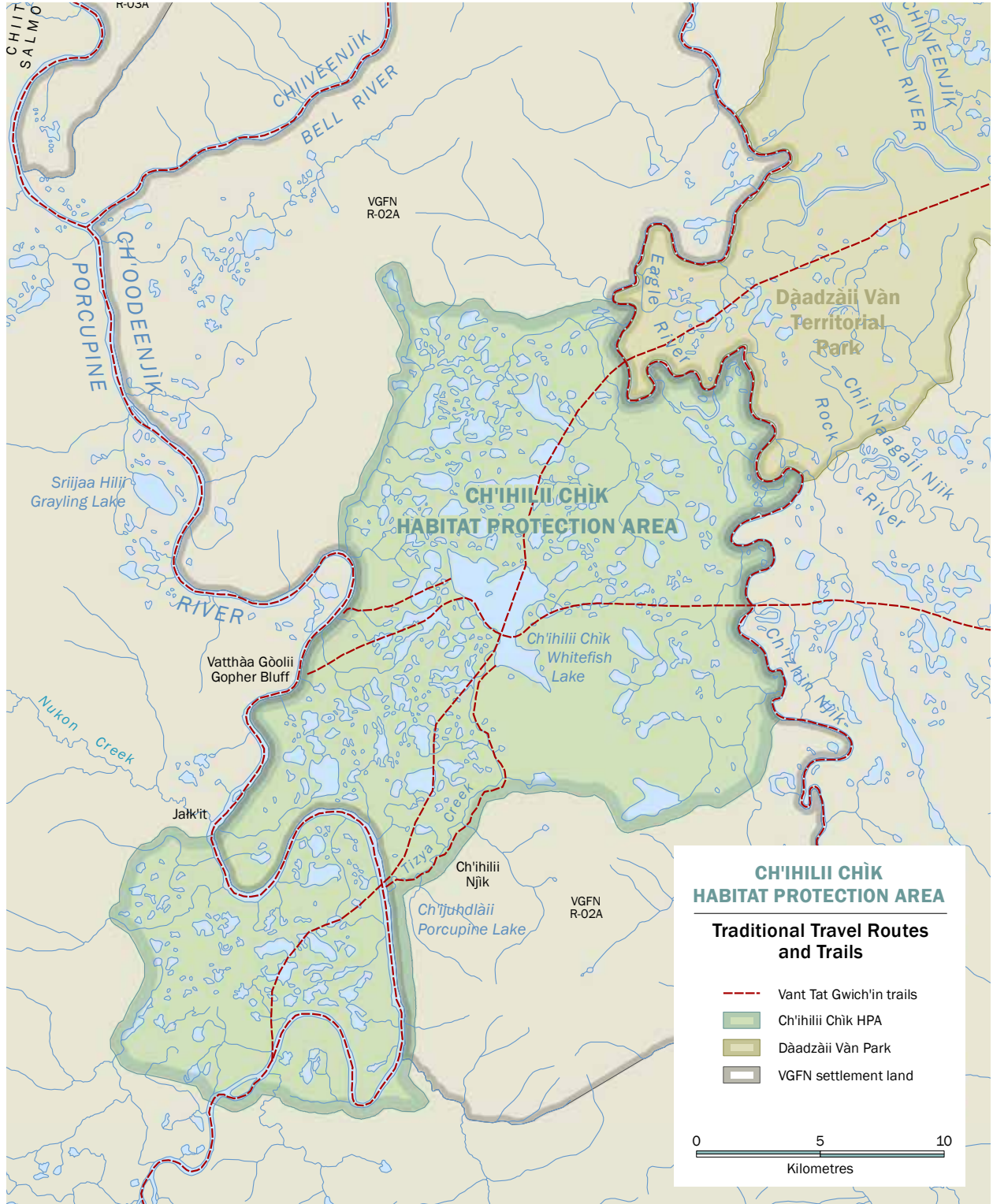
APPENDIX B: MAPS

Map 2 – Ch’ihilii Chìk Habitat Protection Area within the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Traditional Territory



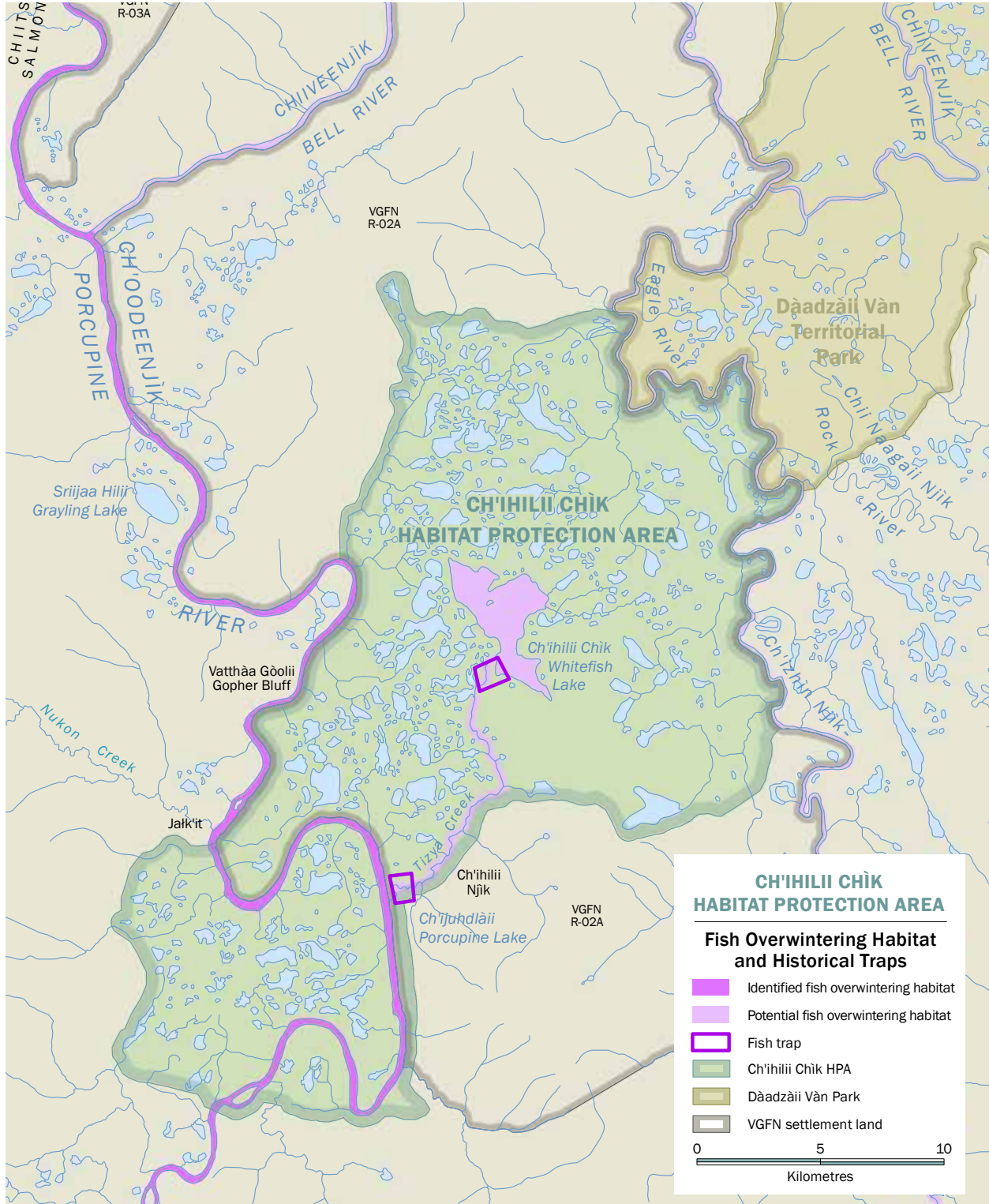
APPENDIX B: MAPS

Map 3 – Ch’ihilii Chik Habitat Protection Area: Van Tat Gwich’in Trails



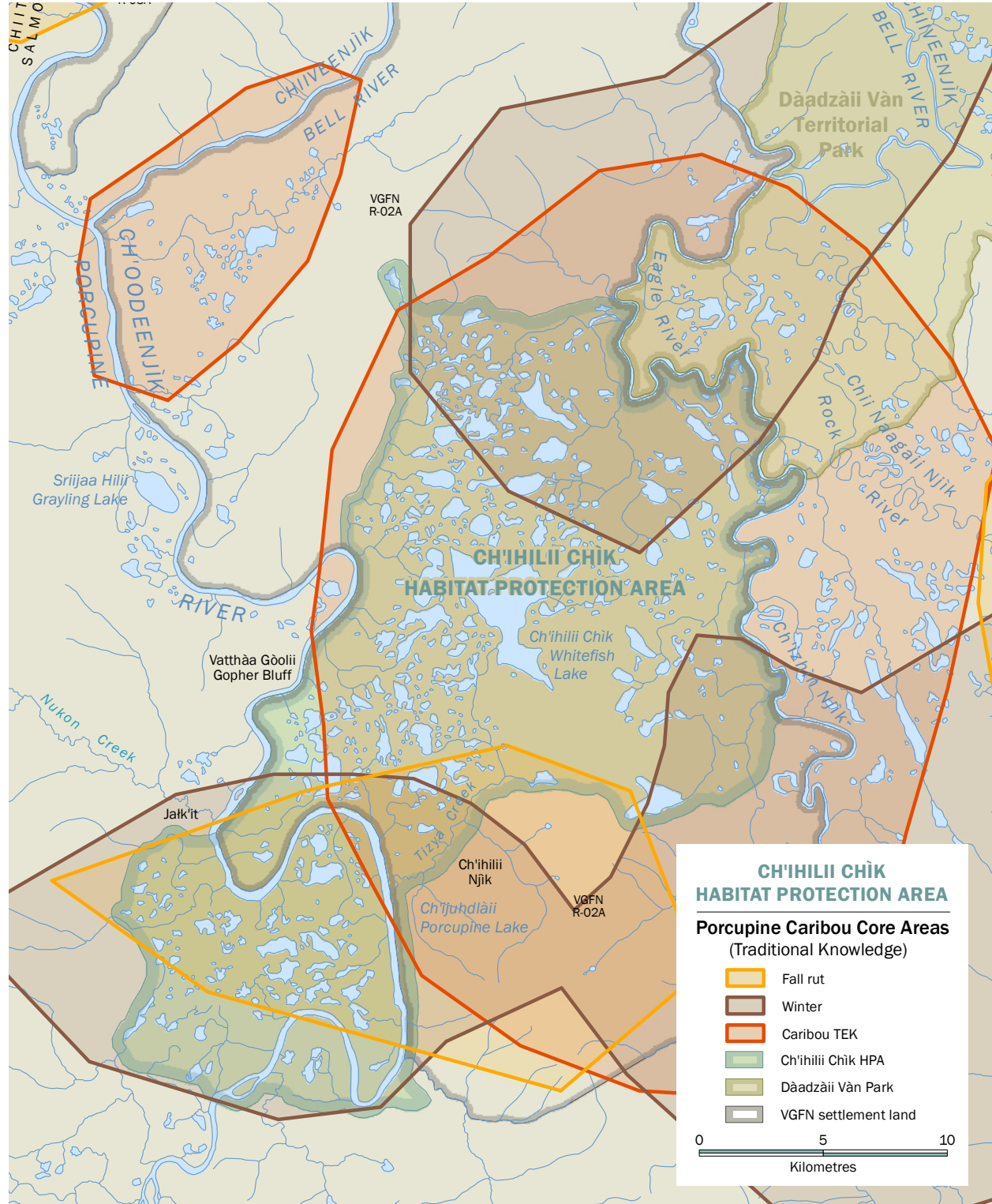
APPENDIX B: MAPS

Map 4 – Ch’ihilii Chìk Habitat Protection Area: Fish Overwintering Habitat and Historical Traps



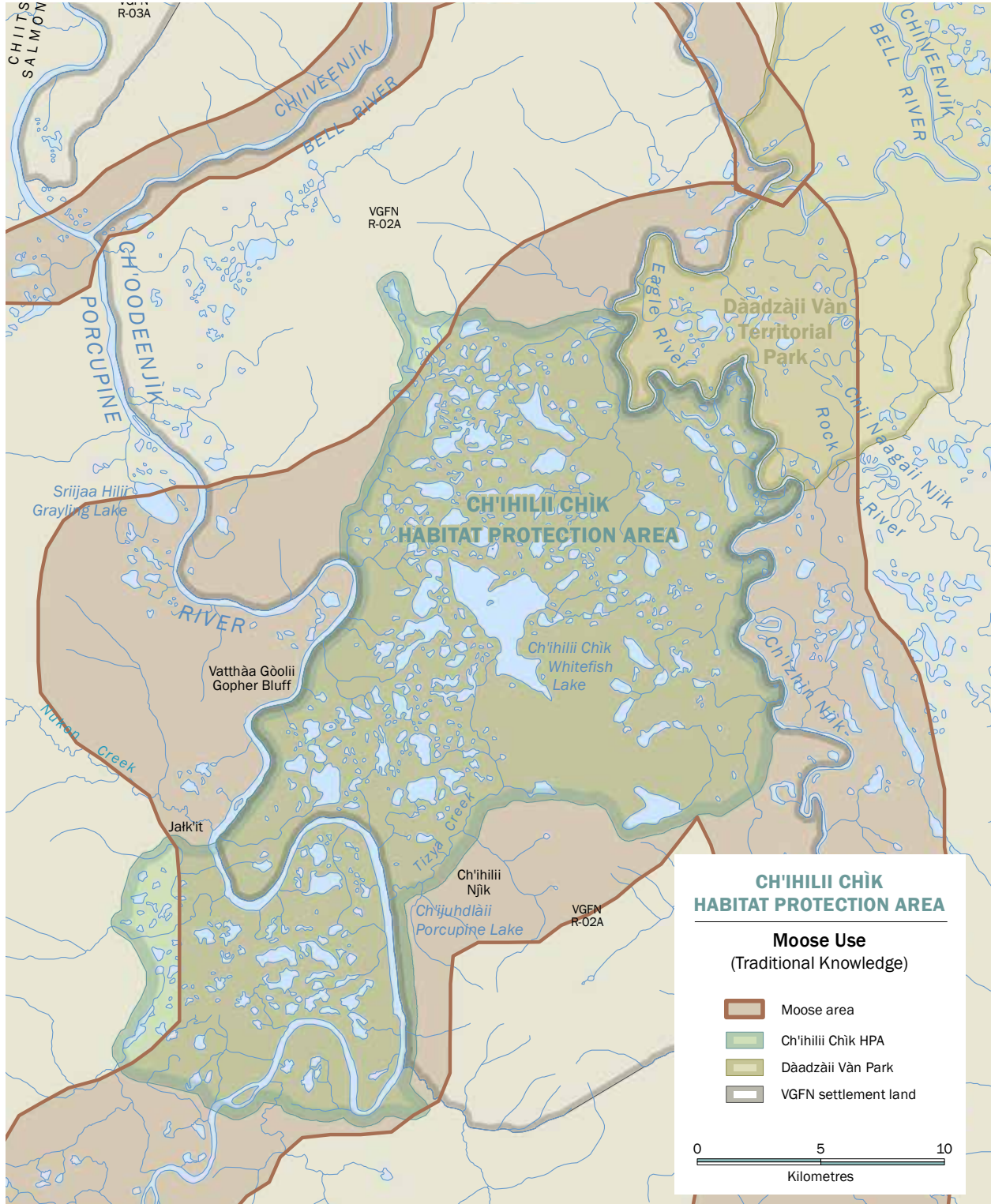
APPENDIX B: MAPS

Map 5 – Ch’ihilii Chìk Habitat Protection Area: Porcupine Caribou Core Areas (Traditional Knowledge)



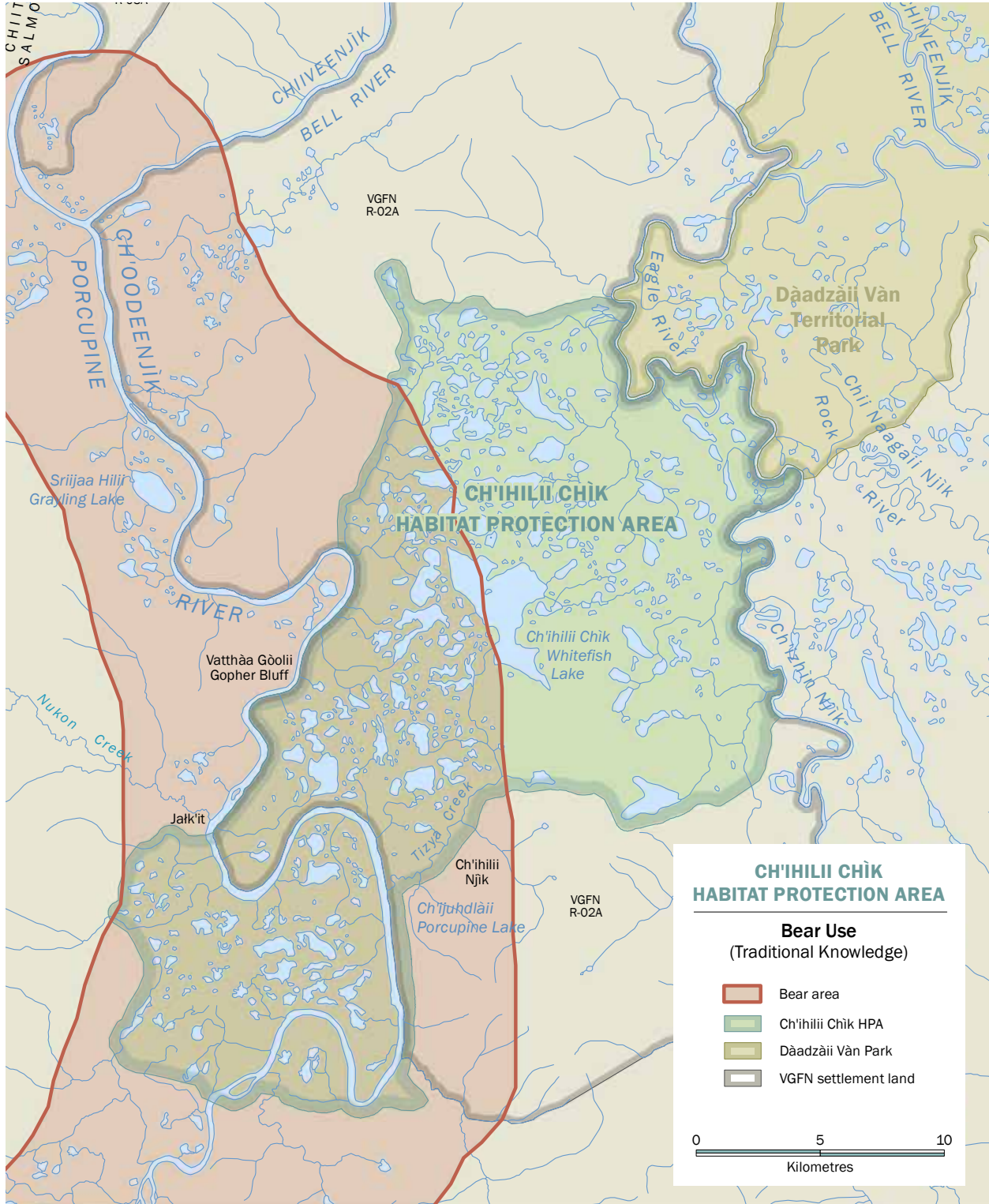
APPENDIX B: MAPS

Map 6 - Ch'ihilii Chik Habitat Protection Area: Moose Use (Traditional Knowledge)



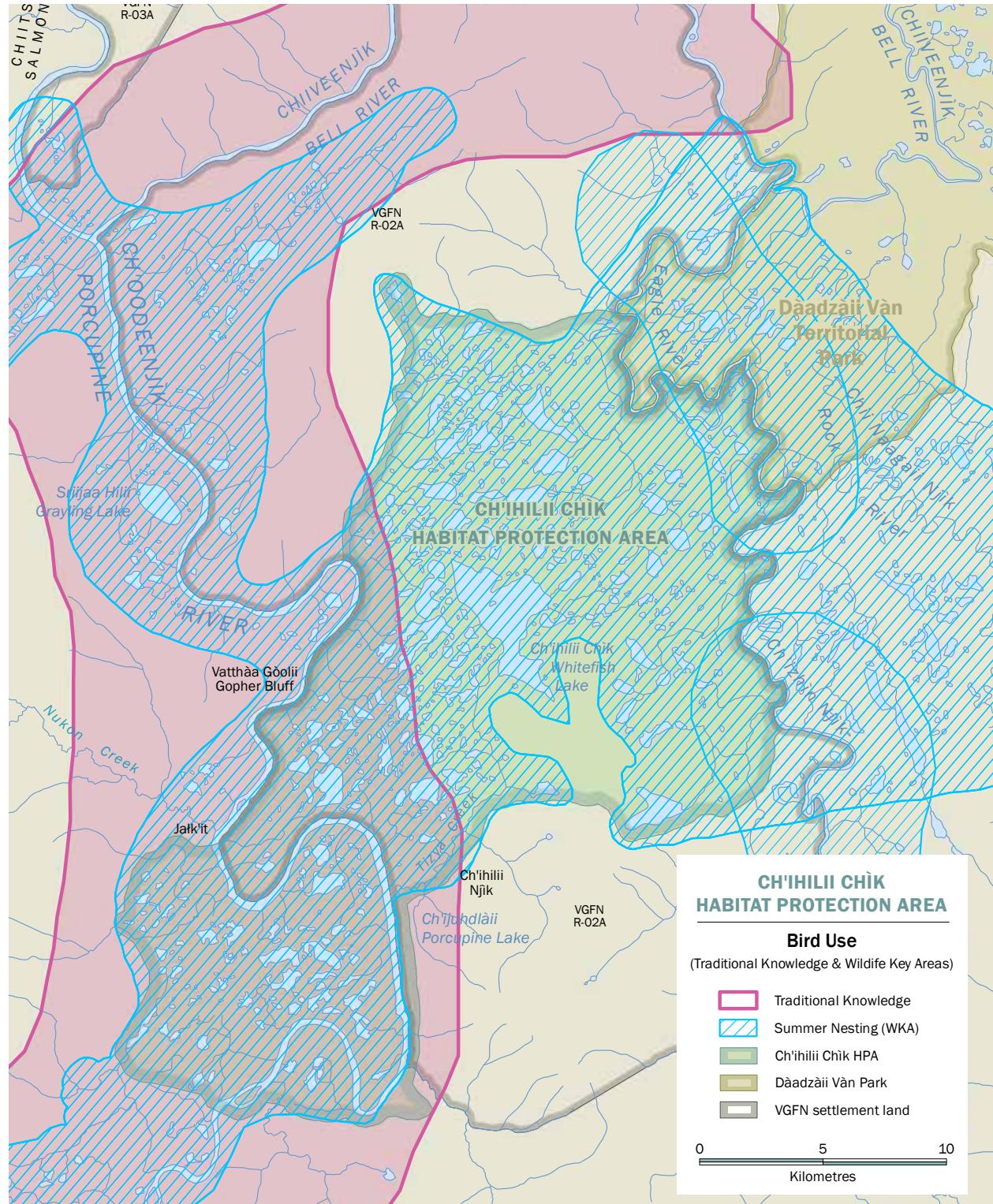
APPENDIX B: MAPS

Map 7 – Ch’ihilii Chìk Habitat Protection Area: Bear Use (Traditional Knowledge)



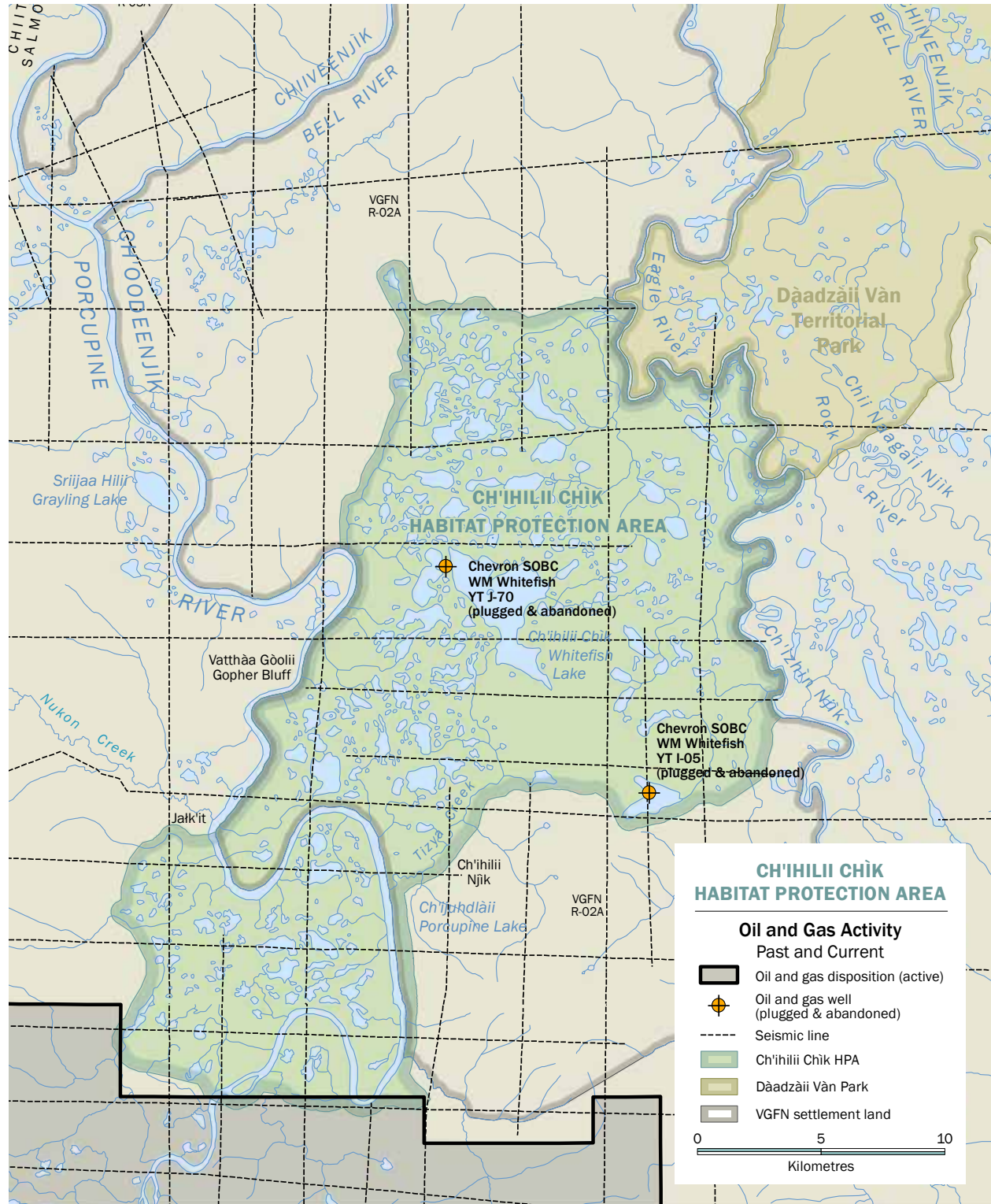
APPENDIX B: MAPS

Map 8 – Ch’ihilii Chik Habitat Protection Area: Bird Use (Traditional Knowledge and Wildlife Key Area Data)



APPENDIX B: MAPS

Map 9 – Ch’ihilii Chìk Habitat Protection Area: Oil and Gas Activity (Past and Current)



APPENDIX C: DETAILED LIST OF WORKING GROUP MEETINGS

Dates of Meeting	Topics Covered	Working Group Members Present and Attendees
March 21, 2013 Working Group Meeting, Whitehorse	Establishing the working group, budgets, and work planning	William Josie, VGG Bruce McLean, YG Ella LeGresley YG Tess McLeod YG
April 29 & 30, 2013 Working Group Meeting, Old Crow	Discussion on what was heard through the North Yukon Regional Land Use planning process; drafting of Terms of Reference and Operating Procedures; and work planning.	William Josie, YG Ella LeGresley, YG Tess McLeod, YG Nick Gray, NYRRC Lance Nagwan, VGG Erika Tizya, VGG Mike Suitor, YG Joel Peter, NYRRC Robert Bruce, VGFN Elders Council
July 3, 2013 Working Group Meeting, Old Crow	Review of Terms of Reference. Oil and Gas Bidding process. Preparations for community meeting and potential field work.	Ella LeGresley, YG Erika Tizya, VGG Bruce McLean, YG Joel Peter, NYRRC Dennis Frost, VGG William Josie, VGG Tess McLeod, YG Nick Gray, NYRRC Robert Bruce, VGFN Elders Council
July 3, 2013 Community Meeting, Old Crow	Dinner to engage with community members on the planning process and to introduce the Working Group and to hear feedback on values of the Ch'ihilii Ch'ik Habitat Protection Area	Working Group and Community Members.
October 29 & 30, 2013 Working Group Meeting, Old Crow	Discussion on historical information collection project. Working planning and public communications. Management plan visioning. Water Resources presentation.	Ella LeGresley, YG Erika Tizya, VGG Bruce McLean, YG Joel Peter, NYRRC Mike Suitor, YG Stan Njootli Jr., NYRRC Tess McLeod, YG Erin Linklater, NYRRC Robert Bruce, VGFN Elders Council Heather Jirousek, YG
March 17, 2014 Working Group Meeting, Conference Call	Updates and preparation of historical information collection project.	William Josie, YG Erika Tizya, VGG William Linklater, VGG Erin Linklater, NYRRC, Bruce McLean, YG Ella LeGresley, YG

APPENDIX C: DETAILED LIST OF WORKING GROUP MEETINGS

Dates of Meeting	Topics Covered	Working Group Members Present and Attendees
May 12, 2014 Working Group Meeting, Conference Call	Updates on historical information collection project, preparation for engagement with community and for the VGFN General Assembly in August.	Erika Tizya, VGG Erin Linklater, NYRRC Bruce McLean, YG Ella LeGresley, YG Mike Sutor, YG Marcel Barrault, YG
December 10, 2014 Working Group Meeting, Whitehorse	Review of the heritage information report. Updates with the Summit-Bell Park Working Group. Administrative plan. Discussion on working planning and plan content.	Erika Tizya, VGG Rosa Brown, VGG Ella LeGresley, YG Bruce McLean, YG Marcel Barrault, YG Brian Johnston, YG
February 16, 2015 Working Group Meeting, Conference Call	Discussion and review of the baseline change detection project. Work planning for 2015 and completing plan drafting.	Ella LeGresley, YG David Frost, VGG Rosa Brown, VGG Bruce McLean, YG Joel Peter, NYRRC Mike Sutor, YG Jason Van Fleet, NYRRC Tess McLeod, YG Melissa Valja, YG
June 16, 2015 Working Group Meeting, Conference Call	Meeting preparations for July meeting in Old Crow.	David Frost, VGG Rosa Brown, VGG Bruce McLean, YG Joel Peter, NYRRC Jason Van Fleet, NYRRC Tess McLeod, YG Erika Tizya, VGG
July 14, 2015 Working Group Meeting, Old Crow	Planning Process overview and updates. Review of draft plan recommendations. Further work on the heritage collection project. Working planning for 2015/16.	David Frost, VGG Rosa Brown, VGG Bruce McLean, YG Ella LeGresley, YG Joel Peter, NYRCC Erika Tizya, VGG Michelle Sicotte, YG Mike Sutor, YG Jason Van Fleet, NYRRC Brandon Kyikavichik Stanley Njootli Sr. Frances Ross James Itsi
October 20, 2015 Working Group Meeting, Conference Call	Discussion on further needs on information on water resources to better inform the recommendations.	Rosa Brown, VGG Bruce McLean, YG Ella LeGresley, YG Jason Van Fleet, NYRRC Tess McLeod, YG William Josie, VGG

APPENDIX C: DETAILED LIST OF WORKING GROUP MEETINGS

Dates of Meeting	Topics Covered	Working Group Members Present and Attendees
November 25, 2015 Working Group Meeting, Conference Call	In depth discussion with the YG Water Resources Branch on water resource values in the area.	Rosa Brown, VGG Bruce McLean, YG Ella LeGresley, YG William Josie, VGG Tess McLeod, YG Jean Beckerton, YG John Millar, YG Richard Janowicz, YG Justin Lemphers, YG Stanley Njootli Sr., VGG Paul Josie, VGG Mike Sutor, YG
March 4, 2016 Working Group Meeting, Conference Call	Management plan drafting.	Rosa Brown, VGG Bruce McLean, YG Jim Bell, YG Joel Peter, NYRRC Jason Van Fleet, NYRRC Tess McLeod, YG Erika Tiyza, VGG
February 22, 2017 Community meeting, Old Crow	Presentation on planning process and question and answer period.	Working Group and community members ~40 attendees.
September 21, 2017 Working Group Meeting, Conference Call	Final edits to the management plan draft.	Rosa Brown, VGG Bruce McLean, YG Jim Bell, YG William Josie, VGG Jason Van Fleet, NYRRC Tess McLeod, YG Darius Elias, VGG

2018

**THE CH'IHILII CHÌK HABITAT PROTECTION AREA
RECOMMENDED MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Prepared by the The Ch'ihilii Chìk Habitat Protection Area Working Group

