

4. Land Use Designation

The recommended land use designation for the region is summarized in Table 4.1 and shown in Map 1, Appendix 1. The two major land use categories are the Integrated Management Area (IMA) and Protected Area (PA).

Within the IMA, each landscape management unit (LMU) has been assigned to a specific land use zone (Zones I-IV). A Community Area (CA) around Old Crow is also identified. The North Yukon Land Withdrawal is an existing land designation. IMA zone designations and management considerations for individual LMUs are discussed in Section 6.

Table 4.1. Land use designation summary.

LAND USE CATEGORY	AREA (km ²)	AREA (% of region)
Protected Area		
Old Crow Flats SMA ¹	12,122	22
Ni'iinlii'njik (Fishing Branch) ²	5,524	10
Whitefish Wetlands ³	468	1
Summit Lake – Bell River ⁴	1,525	3
Total	19,639	36
Integrated Management Area		
Zone I	2,406	4
Zone II	4,484	8
Zone III	9,602	17
Zone IV	11,911	21
Total	28,403	50
Fishing Branch Habitat Protection Area ⁵	980	2
North Yukon Land Withdrawal ⁶	6,526	12

¹ Old Crow Flats SMA, including Vuntut National Park.

² Ni'iinlii'njik (Fishing Branch) Protected Area is composed of the Ni'iinlii'njik Wilderness Preserve, Fishing Branch Ecological Reserve and VGFN R-05A.

³ Recommended new protected area (0.8% of region), including portions of VG R-02A and Yukon public land.

⁴ Recommended new protected area (2.7% of region), approximately half is within the existing North Yukon Land Withdrawal (i.e. lands north and west of Bell River).

⁵ The Fishing Branch Committee of Managing Agencies may consider an appropriate Land Use Category for the Fishing Branch Habitat Protection Area at the next management plan (Yukon Department of Environment and Vuntut Gwitchin Government, 2004a) review.

⁶ North Yukon Land Withdrawal area excluding portion of recommended Summit Lake – Bell River Protected Area within the existing land withdrawal.

4.1 Integrated Management Area

Fifty percent of the region is within the IMA, or working landscape, where applications for industrial land uses and other activities will be considered. Most (80%) of the IMA has a relatively high development focus (Zone III or IV), including areas with some of the highest potential for significant oil and gas and mineral resources.

4.2 Protected Area

Existing Protected Areas represent 32% of the region. These are Old Crow Flats SMA (including Vuntut National Park) and Ni'iinlii'njik (Fishing Branch) Wilderness Preserve, Ecological Reserve and VGFN land selection R-05A. Two new PAs are recommended: 1) Whitefish Wetlands, and 2) Summit Lake – Bell River. Creating the new PAs would add approximately 4% of lands to the Protected Area category.

4.2.1 Whitefish Wetlands

The Whitefish wetlands complex is an area of conservation concern for residents and land users. Five previous conservation assessments identified the wetlands as a significant ecological and cultural area. The VGFN land selection (VG R-02A) within Whitefish wetlands was selected for conservation purposes with the intent to protect the central Whitefish Lake, the surrounding wetland, and the waters flowing into it.

Key issues with respect to the conservation and management of Whitefish wetlands complex include:

- The area is within a portion of the Eagle Plain oil and gas basin, and has received substantial historical exploration effort;
- The area contains some of the highest ecological values in the region within a sensitive wetland environment. Land use activities have a high risk of causing significant impacts to wetland habitats and wildlife and fish populations; and,
- The wetlands are an important subsistence and cultural use area for the Vuntut Gwitchin and Tetlit Gwich'in First Nations.

RECOMMENDATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>LMU 8A, Whitefish – Porcupine Lakes, a sub-unit of Whitefish Wetlands, should be designated a Protected Area category (see Figure 4-1 for location). This area includes part of VG R-02A in the central portion of Whitefish Lakes and YG public land around Porcupine Lakes on the west bank of Porcupine River.</i>
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Further detail related to LMU 8A is provided on page 6-20.

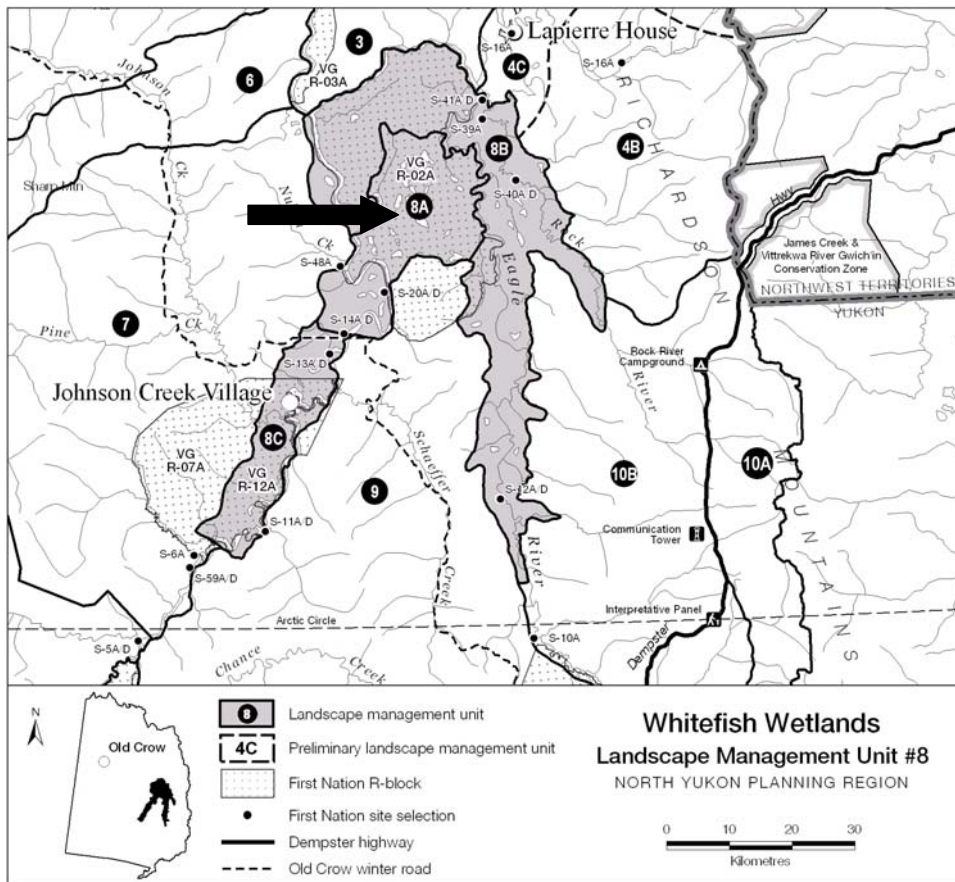


Figure 4.1. Location of LMU 8A, Whitefish – Porcupine Lakes, within the Whitefish Wetlands landscape management unit.

4.2.2 Summit Lake – Bell River

Summit Lake – Bell River is an area of conservation interest for local community residents, Yukoners and other Canadians. Approximately half of the proposed area lies north of the Bell River within the North Yukon Land Withdrawal. The remaining portion is YG public land and VGFN settlement land (VG R-14B and VG S-16A, Lapierre House). Both VGFN land selections were chosen for conservation purposes.

Four previous conservation assessments identified the Bell River-Summit Lake-Rat River area as containing significant conservation values. The area identified by NYPC is confined to the North Yukon Planning Region, but consideration was given to the Yukon portion of the Rat River watershed and the adjacent land status of the Inuvialuit Settlement Region and Gwich'in Settlement Area.

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 (Gwich'in Land Use Planning Board, 2003).

Key issues with respect to the conservation and management of Bell River-Summit Lake include:

- The area contains some of the highest wildlife, fish, cultural, and heritage values in the region, including important concentrated use areas for the Porcupine Caribou Herd;
- Protected Area designation is consistent with the management intent for the Rat River Gwich'in Conservation Zone, currently under land withdrawal;
- Protected Area designation is consistent with adjacent Inuvialuit Settlement Region Aklavik Community Conservation Plan (Category D and E);
- Much of the proposal is within the Tetlit Gwich'in Secondary Use Area and is an important subsistence and cultural use area for Vuntut Gwitchin, Tetlit Gwich'in and Inuvialuit residents;
- The area has high wilderness tourism and recreation value and potential;
- A portion of the Rat River Watershed overlaps the Inuvialuit Settlement Region. The Inuvialuit must be consulted before any decisions are made with respect to this land;
- The proposed boundary for LMU 4C, Summit Lake – Bell River, is currently conceptual and represents a general area of interest. Further boundary refinement/delineation will be required; and,
- Future planning for Summit Lake – Bell River should consider potential Yukon North Slope transportation corridor options.

RECOMMENDATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>LMU 4C, Summit Lake - Bell River, a sub-unit of the Northern Richardson Mountains and Foothills, should be designated a Protected Area category (see Figure 4-2 for location). This area is centered on Summit Lake-McDougall Pass and the lower Bell River corridor around Lapierre House, including portions of the upper Bell and LaChute river watersheds.</i>
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Further detail related to LMU 4C is provided on page 6-13.

4.3 Community Area

A 5 km area around the Community of Old Crow, between the Porcupine River and Old Crow Flats SMA, is prioritized for community development requirements. The designation recognizes the requirements for economic development and infrastructure within the vicinity of Old Crow. This small area is not a major land use category, and is not represented in Table 4.1.

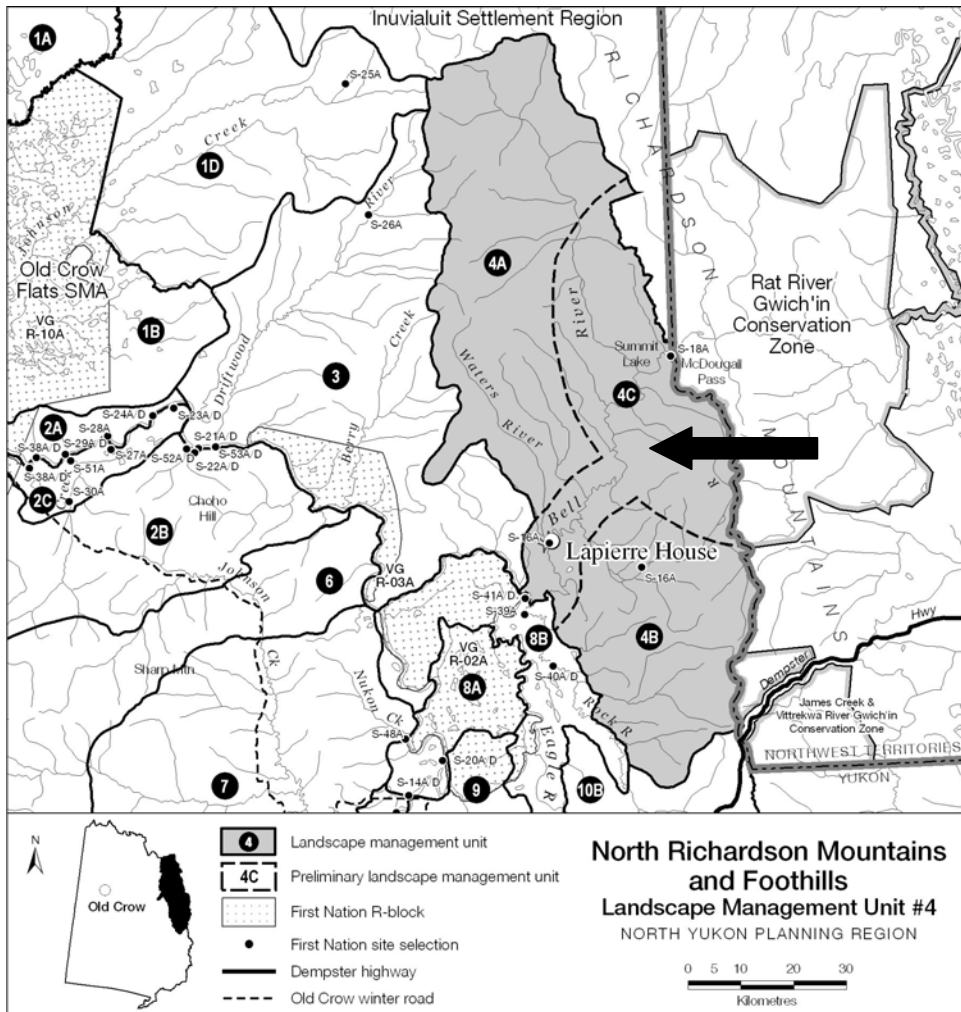


Figure 4.2. Location of LMU 4C, Summit Lake – Bell River, within the Northern Richardson Mountains and Foothills landscape management unit.

4.4 North Yukon Land Withdrawal

The North Yukon Land Withdrawal was established in 1978 during negotiation of the Inuvialuit Final Agreement, and has no specific term. Within the planning region, the land withdrawal applies to all lands north of the Porcupine and west of the Bell rivers, affecting 12% of the planning region. These lands are not available for mineral and oil and gas disposition and exploration.

The Parties to the Plan, the Yukon and Vuntut Gwitchin governments, requested that the NYPC provide land use designation recommendations for the area affected by the land withdrawal. These recommendations do not represent a proposal by NYPC to lift the land withdrawal. Rather, the following recommendation provides land use designations for consideration should the applicable authorities decide to lift the land withdrawal at a future date. Several governments and land claim boards/committees have management responsibilities and interests in the withdrawal area. A portion of the land withdrawal area, Summit Lake – Bell River (LMU 4C), has been recommended for Protected Area designation by this Plan (see 4.2.2, above).

Key issues with respect to the status of the land withdrawal include:

- The area contains some of the highest wildlife, fish, cultural, and heritage values in the region, including important concentrated use areas for the Porcupine caribou herd;
- Adjacent lands in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Yukon North Slope and Gwich'in Settlement Region have a strong conservation management focus; and,
- The area is not currently available for rights issuance or non-renewable resource land uses, potentially impacting future economic opportunities in the region.

RECOMMENDATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Should the applicable authorities decide to lift the North Yukon Land Withdrawal at a future date, LMU 2A (Old Crow – Rampart House, LMU 3 (Driftwood River), and LMU 4A (Bell - Waters River) should be considered for Integrated Management Area Zone II designation (see Map 1, Appendix 1 for locations).</i>
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