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Governments Establish Old Crow Flats Habitat Protection Area

OLD CROW – The Yukon and the Vuntut Gwitchin governments are pleased to announce the creation of a 1.21 million-hectare Habitat Protection Area (HPA) that will safeguard one of the most important wetland complexes in Canada.

“By designating these lands as the HPA, the Yukon government is doing its part to protect the ecological integrity of the wetland complex,” Environment Minister Elaine Taylor said.

Old Crow Flats (Van Tat K’atr’anahtii) is located on the Old Crow River system north of the Arctic Circle. The wetlands contain more than 2,000 ponds and marshes, ranging in size from 0.5 to 4,700 hectares. The area is an important breeding and moulting ground for half a million water birds.

“With the creation of this HPA the Vuntut Gwitchin ancestral homeland is now fully protected,” Vuntut Gwitchin Chief Joe Linklater said. “This is the final land issue to be dealt with in our Final Agreement with Yukon and Canada, and we appreciate the Yukon government coming through in this regard. It is to the credit of the three orders of government involved that the ecological integrity of the area will be preserved through this complementary conservation regime.”

The United Nations has recognized Old Crow Flats for its ecological significance through a RAMSAR Convention designation. Home to the Porcupine Caribou Herd, muskrat, moose and other wildlife, the lands protected by this new HPA, the adjacent Settlement Lands and the national park are a critical part of the Vuntut Gwitchin Traditional Territory.

The Government of Yukon's *Wildlife Act* allows for HPAs to be established in areas where disturbance to wildlife, or to the plants on which they depend, could lead to the decline of a species or population. An HPA may be an area where a wildlife species is concentrated at certain times of the year, a habitat type that is rare in Yukon, or a site that is particularly fragile.

Through the Old Crow Flats Special Management Area Management Plan, the federal, territorial and Vuntut Gwitchin governments work together to sustain the traditional way of life the wetland supports. The management plan is available on the Environment Yukon website, under [publications](#).

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Attachment: A map of the Old Crow Flats wetland complex and management responsibilities

Contact:

Emily Younker
Cabinet Communications
867-633-7961
emily.younker@gov.yk.ca

Dennis Senger
Communications, Environment
867-667-5237
dennis.senger@gov.yk.ca

Chief Joe Linklater
Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation
867-996-3261 ext. 226
chieflinklater@vgfn.ca