Environmental Assessment Screening Report:
Fire Salvage Project for False Canyon Creek Fire- 2004

Prepared by:

Government of Yukon
Forest Management Branch
July 2005

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This environmental assessment screening report has been completed for the proposed forest harvesting salvage in the False Canyon Creek area that was burned in 2004. The area for the False Canyon Creek fire was approximately 8,950 ha. (with an estimated volume of 918,000 m^3 within the burn boundary). With net downs and a connectivity corridor, the potential operational timber harvest planning area is approximately 3,975 ha. (sawlog volume of 446,000 m^3). With further applied net downs, the sawlog volume of the False Canyon Creek fire area is approximately 302,000 m^3.

The Director of the Yukon Forest Management Branch is delegated as the representative of the Responsible Authority (the Minister) for purposes of carrying out environmental assessments under Section 4.1 of the *Environmental Assessment Act* for forest management projects. Given the mitigations provided in this screening report, the Responsible Authority is satisfied that this project is not likely to cause significant adverse environmental effects. Accordingly, the *Environmental Assessment Act* determination is that, subject to the mitigation requirements contained in this screening report, this project is hereby authorized and may proceed.

1. TOMBSTONE DATA

Proponent Name	Yukon Government Forest Management Branch
Contact Information	Gary Miltenberger, Director, Forest Management Branch Box 2703 (K-918); Whitehorse, YT Y1A 2C6 Phone: (867) 456-3838 Fax: (867) 667-3138
Project Title	Environmental Assessment Screening Report: Fire Salvage Project for False Canyon Creek Fire-2004
Physical Work or Activity	Timber harvesting and all associated activities
Multiple Activity	No
E. A. Start Date	May 9, 2005
E. A. Finish Date	July 12, 2005
E. A. Determination	This project is not likely to cause significant adverse environmental effects (s. 16) of *EAA*.
Subject Descriptor	Forestry
Project Category Code	Point

2. RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY IDENTIFICATION

Lead Responsible Authority	Department of Energy, Mines and Resources
Responsible Authority Contact Information	c/o Gary Miltenberger, Director, Forest Management Branch Box 2703 (K-918) Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6 Ph: (867) 456-3838 Fax: (867) 667-3138
Other Responsible Authority	None identified
Date EAA Coordination Regulations Triggered	Not applicable
Project Trigger	(s. 8) Inclusion List Regulations; timber volume >1000 m^3
Lead Type of Approval	Commercial Timber Permits
Status of Approval	Ongoing
Integrated Screening	No
Other Triggers	None
Other Types of Approval	None
Project File Location	Forest Management Branch, Whitehorse, YT.

3. PROJECT LOCATION

Region	Watson Lake
NTS Map #s	105A11
Geographic Location Name	False Canyon Creek
Latitude/Longitude	Approximately 60°41'N., 129°3'W.
Watershed/Drainage Region	False Canyon Creek/Frances River; flows into the Liard watershed.
Nearest Community	Watson Lake, YT
First Nation Traditional Territories	Kaska Dene, Liard First Nation, Daylu Dena, Ross River Dene, Kaska Tribal Council
Surrounding Land Status	Crown
Special Designation	None

4. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In 2004, 44 fires within the Kaska Traditional Territory (KTT) burned an estimated 390,000 ha. One of these fires was located south of False Canyon Creek, YT (approximately 60°41'N., 129°3'W.), approximately 80 km north of Watson Lake, YT. The estimated area of the False Canyon Creek fire was 8,950 ha. (89.5 km^2) with an estimated sawlog volume of 918,000 m^3 within the burn boundary. After net downs for sensitive terrain and potential connectivity corridor, the potential operational planning areas total 3,975 ha. (sawlog volume of 446,000 m^3). With further applied net downs, the sawlog volume of the False Canyon Creek fire area is approximately 302,000 m^3.

A Fire Salvage Technical Working Group was formed in 2005 to plan potential forest harvesting salvage operations in the KTT. The False Canyon Creek fire was one of two fires in the KTT that was chosen for potential salvage harvesting and development planning. The steps (initial reconnaissance, development planning and operational planning) involved in the timber salvage planning process are outlined in section 3.0 (pg. 4) of the *Fire Salvage Project for the False Canyon Creek Fire-2004* (Appendix 1; Fire Salvage Technical Working Group 2005).

In the initial stage of the development planning process, project objectives and criteria were proposed. These objectives included:

- Identifying an economic wood supply and opportunity while ensuring that the social and environmental values of the area are respected. The planning objective would be met if the options were economically viable socially accepted and environmentally sound.
- Consider fire and the landscape surrounding it. This is important to ensure habitats, key features and linkages are maintained in terms of the environmental and future economics of burned forest and adjacent unburned forest.
- Identify areas for Operational Planning (site plans).
- Complete Environmental Assessment of Forest Development Plan.

The criteria included:

- Best growing sites first
- Prompt regeneration strategies
- Soil conservation strategies
- Protection of wetlands and riparian areas
- Avoidance of sensitive terrain (complex and steep areas)
- Operable land base identification
- Minimize roads
- Winter logging preferred season of operations

The following general principles were considered during the planning process:

- Forest fuels burn at differing rates and intensities producing a complex mosaic. On large fires, the mosaic provides opportunities to maintain natural areas and some of the original fire attributes while identifying potential areas for salvage.

- Fire is a natural disturbance event that has to be considered along with the proposed harvesting which is an additive human caused disturbance.
- Fire Skips are not the only key habitat features in a fire - but they are perhaps the most easily identified. All areas of the fire will likely be valued habitat as successional processes occur.
- Residual trees can be isolated in a patch or scattered over an area as a matrix.
- Connectivity Corridor, the operating areas as well as the adjacent remaining forested and non-forested areas should positively interact for forest ecosystems to exist and function. The connectivity corridor is designed to help strengthen this relationship.
- Generally, the salvage opportunity for lumber will decease over a 3 year period. If the interest is fiber, the loss of value is much more gradual and therefore fiber harvest can occur over much longer time frames.
- Access planning requires a vision or considerations beyond the time span required for fire salvage. An initial access into the area will have implications on forest harvesting in the adjacent forested areas as well as potential impacts on other values.
- The land base has been used by other people and care must be taken to protect past values and integrate present and future uses. An archeological potential assessment was undertaken to identify potential heritage sites.

5. DESCRIPTION OF ENVIRONMENT

The project area is in Liard basin, an ecoregion that spans the British Columbia/Yukon border to incorporate the Liard Plain, a broad, rolling, low-lying area mantled with glacial drift and outwash deposits in which the Liard River is entrenched (National Ecological Framework for Canada 2005).

The ecoregion is characterized by extensive stands of boreal forest composed of lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta*), white spruce (*Picea glauca*), black spruce (*Picea mariana*) and trembling aspen (*Populus tremuloides)*. Dry sites support lodgepole pine; moist sites have black spruce and larch (*Larix* spp.) with Labrador tea (*Ledum groenlandicum*) and horsetail (*Equisetum* spp.) (National Ecological Framework for Canada 2005). The forest associated with the False Canyon Creek fire include a variable species mixture of lodgepole pine, white spruce, black spruce, alpine fir (*Abies amabilis*) and white birch (*Betula papyrifera*) with either a poor (10-14 m) to moderate (15-19 m) site class.

The Frances River is west of the project area, while False Canyon Creek is to the north, northeast (Appendix 3). False Canyon Creek flows into Frances River, a tributary of the Liard River. According to the Fisheries Information Summary System (Fisheries and Oceans 2001), Arctic grayling (*Thymallus arcticus*), slimy sculpin (*Cottus cognatus*), Arctic char (*Salvelinus alpinus*), round whitefish (*Prospium cylindraceum*) and burbot (*Lota lota*) have been documented in False Canyon Creek. Dolly varden (*Salvelinus malma*), round whitefish (*Prospium cylindraceum*), Arctic grayling (*Thymallus arcticus*), northern pike (*Esox lucius*), lake chub (*Couesius plumbeus*), slimy sculpin (*Cottus cognatus*), mountain whitefish (*Prospium williamsoni*), lake whitefish (*Coregonus clupeaformis*), longnose sucker (*Catostomus catostomus*) have been documented in the Frances River (Fisheries and Oceans 2001).

Characteristic wildlife in the greater Liard Basin includes moose: (*Alces alces*), black bear

(*Ursus americanus*), wood bison (*Bison bison)*, caribou (*Rangifer tarandus*), marten (*Martes americana*), beaver (*Castor Canadensis*), muskrat (*Ondatra zibethica*), Snowshoe hare (*Lepus Americanus*), ruffed grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*) and various owl, raptor, passerine and waterfowl species.

6. PROJECT CONSULTATION/REFERRAL OF PROJECT DESCRIPTION

An email was sent to various interest groups, stakeholders and First Nations on May 6, 2005. The purpose of this email was to make the groups aware of the upcoming environmental assessments for the False Canyon Creek fire and the Barney Lake fire area and to ask the groups whether they would like to review the project descriptions.

The Forest Management Branch received ten requests to obtain the project description. Although the Watson Lake District Office, the Council of Yukon First Nations the First Nations whose Traditional Territories lie within proximity to the project area did not request to review the project descriptions, they received project descriptions in the mail.

The review period was from May 9-June 9, 2005 and comments were provided to the Forest Management Branch by Government of Yukon-Archaeology/Heritage Resources, Canadian Wildlife Service, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society-Yukon Chapter, Southeast Proper Land Use Society, Yukon Conservation Society and Yukon Forestry Association (section 7 and 8; Appendix 2).

7. DISTRIBUTION LIST

Organization	Contact Person	Incoming Comments
FEDERAL GOVERNMENT		
Environment Canada/Canadian Wildlife Service	Scott Herron	Received June 13, 2005.
YUKON GOVERNMENT		
EMR-Client Services and Inspections	Richard Potvin	No response.
EMR-Land Use	Marg White	No response.
Community Services	Ken Colbert	No response.
Economic Development	Lise Farynowski	No response.
Environment-Environmental Affairs Section	Ken Kiemele	No response.
Tourism and Culture-Yukon Archaeology	Ruth Gotthardt	No response.
INTEREST GROUPS		
Terry Wilkinson	Box 228 Watson Lake, YT Y0A 1C0	No response.
Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society	Theresa Gulliver	Received June 9, 2005.
Yukon Conservation Society	Karen Baltgailis	Received June 10, 2005.
Yukon Forestry Association	Jean Francois Nantel	Received June 6, 2005.
FIRST NATIONS		
Daylu Dene	Lower Post, BC	No response.
Liard First Nation	Watson Lake, YT	No response.
Council of Yukon First Nations	Whitehorse, YT	No response.
Kaska Dene Council	Watson Lake, YT	No response.
Kaska Tribal Council	Watson Lake, YT	No response.
Ross River Dene Council	Ross River, YT	No response.

8. STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS RECEIVED BY THE FOREST MANAGEMENT BRANCH

GROUP	COMMENTS ON PROJECT DESCRIPTION	RESPONSE TO COMMENTS BY FOREST MANAGEMENT BRANCH
Yukon Government Archeology and Heritage Resources	Archaeological impact assessment is required if any ground disturbance is planned in areas of high archeological potential.	An archaeological impact assessment shall be conducted if any ground disturbance is planned in areas of high archeological potential.
Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society-Yukon Chapter	Revise the way retention ranges are chosen. Rather than basing retention ranges on unmerchantable wood that cannot limit potential salvage operations, develop an ecological rationale for retention design. Percentage of reserves should not be <25% (including full burn areas in False Canyon Creek burn) as per FSC certification.	There are several different retention ranges for the operating unit prescriptions. Once site plans have been developed, retention specifications will be discussed in more detail. The total operational planning areas are approximately 44% of the entire burn (56% of the entire burn will not be salvage harvested); therefore, retention shall be >25% of the entire burn area.
Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society-Yukon Chapter	Apply specific, appropriate-sized buffers (including reserve and management zones) around all watercourses and bodies and wetlands within the entire burn areas and ensure OUs are orientated around all buffers.	According to THPOG (DIAND 1999), the riparian management area consists of a riparian reserve zone and a riparian management zone. The riparian reserve zone is a zone where no logging shall be permitted, while logging may occur in the riparian management zone as long as the integrity of the reserve is protected; windthrow in the reserve zone is protected; wildlife attributes are identified and protected and visual screening for wildlife is maintained.
Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society-Yukon Chapter	Survey potential OUs on the ground during the summer months or by aerial photos with qualified biologists and hydrologists to accurately determine stream, RRZ and RMZ locations based on ecological considerations. Do not allow any logging within the RMZ or RRZ.	The reaches of streams that are within or adjacent to the blocks shall be classified. According to THPOG (DIAND 1999), the riparian management area consists of a riparian reserve zone and a riparian management zone. The riparian reserve zone is a zone where no logging shall be permitted, while logging may occur in the riparian management zone as long as the integrity of the reserve is protected; windthrow in the reserve zone is protected; wildlife attributes are identified and protected and visual screening for wildlife is maintained.

8. STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS RECEIVED BY THE FOREST MANAGEMENT BRANCH continued…

GROUP	COMMENTS ON PROJECT DESCRIPTION	RESPONSE TO COMMENTS BY FOREST MANAGEMENT BRANCH
Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society-Yukon Chapter	Prior to operational planning, consider the impact of proposed salvage logging on wildlife connectivity corridors that are scientifically based. Minimize wildlife impact with this corridor, rather than focusing on optimizing timber extraction.	The purpose of the connectivity corridor is to provide wildlife movement and connectivity between habitat types across a landscape. Prior to the development of operational plans, the design and rationale for the connectivity corridor shall be determined.
Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society-Yukon Chapter	Reduce road density of the OUs so the proposed mainline and spur roads do not exceed a density of 0.45km/km^2.	References to 0.45 km/km^2 have been identified as associated to special management areas in other jurisdictions and national parks. It would be very unlikely that 0.45 km/km^2 as a road density could be applied for a fire salvage project; however, access shall be minimized as much as possible, with <5% of the operating unit area for the 3 units containing roads or landings.
Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society-Yukon Chapter	Consult with appropriate Liard First Nation members and Chief regarding proposed OUs for the False Canyon Creek fire area.	The Kaska Forest Stewardship Council has accepted this forest development plan. The Liard First Nation was sent a copy of the forest development plan.
Southeast Proper Land Use Society	No logging in riparian management zones.	According to THPOG (DIAND 1999), the riparian management area consists of a riparian reserve zone and a riparian management zone. The riparian reserve zone is a zone where no logging shall be permitted, while logging may occur in the riparian management zone as long as the integrity of the reserve is protected; windthrow in the reserve zone is protected; wildlife attributes are identified and protected and visual screening for wildlife is maintained.
Southeast Yukon Proper Land Use Society	All salvage logging should be done in the winter season to minimize damage to the forest environment.	The site plan will determine the season of harvest based upon soils, access constraints, etc.

8. COMMENTS RECEIVED BY THE FOREST MANAGEMENT BRANCH continued…

GROUP	COMMENTS ON PROJECT DESCRIPTION	RESPONSE TO COMMENTS BY FOREST MANAGEMENT BRANCH
Southeast Yukon Proper Land Use Society	25% retention and the retention must be representative of size, species and condition (burnt; unburnt) of the trees in the stand.	Once site plans have been developed, retention specifications will be discussed in more detail. The total operational planning areas are approximately 44% of the entire burn (56% of the entire burn will not be salvage harvested); therefore, retention shall be >25% of the entire burn area.
Yukon Conservation Society	Provide more information about in-block retention requirements, block size limits, a substantial set-aside, what information goes into designing wildlife travel corridors, etc.	At the operational planning phase, specific information regarding in-block retention, block size limits, wildlife corridors, etc. shall be provided. The purpose of the connectivity corridor is to provide wildlife movement and connectivity between habitat types across a landscape.
Yukon Conservation Society	Remove OUs that are mapped to illustrate < 25% consumption (OUs 1, 2, 3, 4). Remove OUs that are close to the edge of the fire and close to the Frances River and other significant riparian areas (OUs 1, 5, 13, 14).	OUs that illustrate <25% fire consumption will not necessarily be removed from the plan since this is a plan to salvage harvest fire killed wood. At the operational phase, the Frances River will be classified and an appropriate riparian management area (THPOG) will buffer the Frances River and the edge of the operating units.
Yukon Conservation Society	Each harvest block should have a minimum of 25% retention that is representative of the species, size and condition of pre-logged/post-fire stand.	Once site plans have been developed, retention specifications will be discussed in more detail. The total operational planning areas are approximately 44% of the entire burn (56% of the entire burn will not be salvage harvested); therefore, retention shall be >25% of the entire burn area.
Yukon Conservation Society	Identify the extent of unburned forest on Map 6. Produce another map that shows the burn severity that occurred in the riparian areas.	The extent of the unburned forest shall be identified. During the operational planning phase, burn severity will be mapped.
Yukon Conservation Society	Is there documentation that the Frances River will freeze sufficiently hard and for long enough for an ice bridge to be practical?	Frances River ice condition information from the Water Survey of Canada stream gauging station was forwarded to the EA Coordinator. Although information was not provided on the thickness of the ice, according to the data, frozen conditions generally occur from December-April.

8. STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS RECEIVED BY THE FOREST MANAGEMENT BRANCH continued…

GROUP	COMMENTS ON PROJECT DESCRIPTION	RESPONSE TO COMMENTS BY FOREST MANAGEMENT BRANCH
Yukon Conservation Society	To allow reviewers to effectively evaluate the connectivity corridors, provide information related to the objective of the corridor and what is the corridor is supposed to be connecting. To confirm the effectiveness of the connectivity corridor, speak to people who live in the area. The Department of Environment has a trappers' focus group that could provide valuable information into the final design of the connectivity corridor. The local Land Steward and Yukon Government Depart. of Environment will also provide valuable information.	A representative from the Yukon Government Department of Environment was a member of the Fire Salvage Technical Working Group and valuable information was provided from the Department of Environment for this plan. The connectivity corridor will be planned at the operational phase (i.e. after the fieldwork has occurred).
Yukon Conservation Society	Clarify item 3 on page 6.	An initial review of forest inventory, riparian areas and landscape (specifically slope) was used to net down the land base to include as potential operating planning areas.
Yukon Conservation Society	Clarify who will determine if a stand has enough dead trees to be logged and if a tree will live at least another 10 years and remain wind firm. How will this determination be made? How will you account for the fact that any harvesting trees in a stand will affect the wind firmness of the remaining trees?	Field truthing by FMB and Client Services and Inspections staff will be conducted to determine whether trees are considered windfirm or not. It is recommended that FMB and Client Services and Inspections staff are referred to wildlife tree classification manuals such as Wildlife/Danger Tree Assessor's Course Workbook: Forest Harvesting and Silviculture Manual (Wildlife Tree Committee 2001), Forest Practices Code Biodiversity Guidebook (British Columbia Ministry of Forests 1995), etc.
Yukon Conservation Society	Design and implement a series of objective-driven landscape connectivity corridors for the False Canyon Creek burn. Maintain 25% retention in each block. Retention should be representative of the size, species and condition of the post-fire, pre-logged stands.	Prior to the development of operational plans, the design and rationale for the connectivity corridor shall be determined. Once site plans have been developed, retention specifications will be discussed in more detail. The total operational planning areas are approximately 44% of the entire burn (56% of the entire burn will not be salvage harvested); therefore, retention shall be > 25% of the entire burn area.

8. STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS RECEIVED BY THE FOREST MANAGEMENT BRANCH continued…

GROUP	COMMENTS ON PROJECT DESCRIPTION	RESPONSE TO COMMENTS BY FOREST MANAGEMENT BRANCH
Yukon Conservation Society	Operators should be given explicit instructions to respect the riparian buffers in THPOG (DIAND 1999) at all times.	According to THPOG (DIAND 1999), the riparian management area consists of a riparian reserve zone and a riparian management zone. The riparian reserve zone is a zone where no logging shall be permitted, while logging may occur in the riparian management zone as long as the integrity of the reserve is protected; windthrow in the reserve zone is protected; wildlife attributes are identified and protected and visual screening for wildlife is maintained.
Yukon Forestry Association	Members are not in favour of being forced to a fire-killed salvage area when applying for green saw logs. Let the operator decide whether he requires green wood or savage wood and to make sure that salvage wood is available.	Whether operators are told to go to a fire-killed salvage area or a green wood area is not an environmental assessment issue. This comment has been passed onto the Manager of Forest Operations.
Yukon Forestry Association	Stumpage and reforestation recommendations.	Stumpage and reforestation fee policies are not environmental assessment issues; these comments have been passed onto the Director of the Forest Management Branch.
Environment Canada Canadian Wildlife Service	The environmental assessment should include discussion of how the environmental assessments of the projects address conservation of and impacts on biodiversity and species at risk.	According to the Canadian Biodiversity Strategy (CBS), "biodiversity refers to the variety of species and ecosystems on earth and the ecological processes of which they are part." Within the Fire Salvage Project for Barney Lake Fire-2004, several sections are within the CBS (such as stakeholder participation and agreements between government and indigenous communities or wholly, etc.).

8. STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS RECEIVED BY THE FOREST MANAGEMENT BRANCH continued…

GROUP	COMMENTS ON PROJECT DESCRIPTION	RESPONSE TO COMMENTS BY FOREST MANAGEMENT BRANCH
Environment Canada Canadian Wildlife Service	Provide clarification as to the relation between the Interim Wood Supply AAC and the proposed volumes contained in the 2 salvage logging proposals.	The Interim Wood Supply Plan is $\leq$ 128,000 m^3/yr of green wood for 3 years. The SE Yukon Forest Management Committee shall decide the best blend of green and fire salvage wood based on that volume/yr until a regional plan is completed. Potentially 300,000 m^3 of green wood and potentially 300,000 m^3 in fire salvage wood could be available and implemented by the SE Yukon Forest Management Committee.
Environment Canada-Canadian Wildlife Service	No planned harvesting should be allowed to occur during May 1-July 31.	No harvesting shall be allowed to occur from May 1-July 31.
Environment Canada-Canadian Wildlife Service	Clarify the term "unreasonable" or switch terminology contained in the applicable environmental legislation in section 1.0-Introduction.	The word significant shall replace the word unreasonable. The sentence shall read "Harvesting from fires requires planning to ensure that the products can be economically extracted without significant environmental or social impacts."
Environment Canada-Canadian Wildlife Service	Environment Canada requests that all stream riparian areas, with the exception of ephemeral draws, received a minimum riparian management area width of 100m, including a reserve zone width of 40 m based upon concerns for impacts from sediment on stream quality and to maintain the regeneration capacity of stream riparian areas for creation of successional habitat for migratory birds which exhibit mixed or neutral responses to burns and are anticipated to recolonize the areas.	According to THPOG (DIAND 1999), the riparian management area consists of a riparian reserve zone and a riparian management zone. The riparian reserve zone is a zone where no logging shall be permitted, while logging may occur in the riparian management zone as long as the integrity of the reserve is protected; windthrow in the reserve zone is protected; wildlife attributes are identified and protected and visual screening for wildlife is maintained. The riparian reserve and riparian management widths shall be determined according to the THPOG (DIAND 1999).

8. STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS RECEIVED BY THE FOREST MANAGEMENT BRANCH continued…

GROUP	COMMENTS ON PROJECT DESCRIPTION	RESPONSE TO COMMENTS BY FOREST MANAGEMENT BRANCH
Environment Canada-Canadian Wildlife Service	Environment Canada requests that riparian areas of all wetlands within the project areas are managed as the THPOG (DIAND 1999), regardless of stand and site conditions.	Riparian reserve zone width and riparian management zone widths for wetlands shall be determined according to the THPOG (DIAND 1999).
Environment Canada-Canadian Wildlife Service	Leave $\geq$ 50% of standing dead trees in each diameter class; leave all trees >20 inches DBH or older than 150 years; and generally leave all live trees.	The fire boundary is considered the opening area and the gross areas for the salvage operations is approximately 44% of the burn; therefore approximately 56% of the standing dead trees will be retained. Generally all live trees will be retained. Since 20 inches is approximately 50 cm, (greater than the average DBH associated with this project), this issue is adequately addressed.

9. POTENTIAL ADVERSE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF THE PROJECT

The project, fire salvage harvesting in the False Canyon Creek area, will cause changes to the environment. Changes to the environment may include, but are not limited to: changes in wildlife habitat and use, post-fire stand structure, as well as an increase in roads, soil disturbance, erosion, drainage disruption, public access to the area, etc. Riparian management areas, connectivity corridor and harvesting a small percentage of the burn area will mitigate some of these changes to the environment.

10. CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

A cumulative environmental effect is defined as the effects on the environment (i.e. Valued Ecosystem and Cultural Components; VECC) which result from effects of a project when combined with those of other past, existing and imminent projects and activities, occurring over a certain period of time and space (Government of Canada 1994). The cumulative effects evaluation considers past and proposed activities that have occurred, are occurring or are forecasted to occur in relation to the fire salvage. For this project, valued ecosystem and cultural components include: wilderness values (e.g. recreation, visual quality, tourism, etc.); maintenance of traditional and community lifestyle and uses; forest bird populations; ungulate populations; furbearer populations and carnivores.

a. Scope

The purpose of defining the scope of the cumulative effects section is to identify the environmental effects considered in regards to a project and identify the likely cumulative environmental effects and set appropriate geographic and temporal boundaries. The scoping of the cumulative effects section has been divided into: spatial and temporal boundaries; availability of existing data and knowledge; relevant ecological boundaries; other actions that may affect the same VECCs and uncertainty.

b. Spatial and Temporal Boundaries

The purpose of the spatial and temporal boundaries section is to establish a frame of reference for assessing cumulative environmental effects and facilitates their identification (CEAA 2003). This section will discuss the spatial and temporal bounds of this project, the availability of existing data and knowledge and the relevant ecological boundaries.

Regarding the spatial scope of this assessment, this project is bounded on the west by the Frances River, by False Canyon Creek to the north, northeast. The Robert Campbell Highway is west of the project area. This project encompasses approximately 89.50 km^2.

The temporal scope of this cumulative effects assessment includes the environmental effects of any past projects within the False Canyon Creek area, the environmental effects caused by the current project for up to 10 years and any future projects forecasted for the False Canyon Creek area.

c. Availability of Existing Data and Knowledge

The availability of existing data is important in assessing the cumulative effects. There are knowledge gaps for the False Canyon Creek area. These data and knowledge gaps include: field assessments, overview fisheries and wildlife inventory and habitat assessments. An office-based archeological assessment was carried out in March 2005 (Thomas Heritage Consulting 2005). At the operational level, the level of field assessments will be determined.

However by being conservative and using precautionary measures and the existing data and knowledge, there is sufficient data and knowledge of the False Canyon Creek area to effectively assess the cumulative effects of this project. The precautionary approach has been taken in relation to mitigative measures prescribed. These measures include: riparian management areas, connectivity corridor, retention, etc. It is believed that the mitigations proposed are conservative enough to overcome these gaps.

d. Relevant Ecological Boundaries

Currently there are no known ecological boundaries (such as physiographic, vegetation, land use, habitat, soil and surface materials) that are limiting to this project. The Rancheria Caribou Herd's range is not within the bounds of this project.

e. Other Actions That May Affect the VECCs

Other actions that may affect the VECCs are listed below:

- Ungulate populations- increase in noise, increase in road access, increase in hunting
- Forest bird populations increase in noise- decrease in cover and habitat
- Old forest species- increase in noise, access, decrease in cover and habitat
- Maintenance of traditional and community lifestyle and uses- increase of access may cause an increase of usage
- Wilderness values (e.g. recreation, visual quality, tourism)- increase of usage, affect to visual quality

f. Uncertainty

Some uncertainty will be always associated with environmental assessments (CEAA 2003). According to CEAA (2003), uncertainty can be related to scientific methodology, data availability and accuracy, new or unproven technology, new or unfamiliar environmental setting, or the uncertainty of future projects. In the preparation of this environmental assessment screening report, the most up to date information and professional knowledge and judgment was used.

11. SCREENING REPORT AND/OR DECISION REPORT

Upon the finalization of this environmental assessment screening report, an email announcing the completion of this environmental assessment will be sent to all of the groups that provided comments on this assessment. Copies of this environmental assessment screening report will be available for viewing at the Energy, Mines and Resources Library (300 Main Street) and the Forest Management Branch (918 Alaska Highway) in Whitehorse and the Client Services and Inspections office in Watson Lake (KM 1007 Alaska Highway). Also, all finalized environmental assessment screening reports will be available for downloading and viewing on the Government of Yukon, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources website http://www.emr.gov.yk.ca/forestry/info/publications.html#ea.

12. AUTHORIZATION

On April 1, 2003, the Director of the Yukon Government Forest Management Branch (Director FMB) was delegated as representative of the RA (the Minister) for purposes of carrying out environmental assessments under the Section 4.1 of *Yukon Environmental Assessment Act* by the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources Minister (for matters relating to forest management for the Yukon Territory). Accordingly, it is the responsibility of the Director of the FMB to render a decision on this environmental assessment.

a. Decision Options

Section 16.1 (pg. 18) of the *Yukon Environmental Assessment Act* requires that:

> "*The responsible authority shall take one of the following courses of action in respect of a project after taking into consideration the screening report and any comments filed pursuant to subsection 14(3): a) subject to subparagraph (c)(iii), where taking into account the measures that the responsible authority considers appropriate, the project is not likely to cause significant adverse environmental effects, the responsible authority may exercise any power or perform any duty or function that would permit the project to be carried out and shall ensure that any mitigation measures that the responsible authority considers appropriate are implemented;*
> *(a) where, taking into account the implementation of any mitigation measures that the responsible authority considers appropriate, the project is likely to cause significant adverse environmental effects that cannot be justified in the circumstances, the responsible authority shall not exercise any power or perform any duty or function conferred on it by any other Act that would permit the project to be carried out in whole or in part; or*
> *(b) where:*
> - *the project, taking into account the implementation of any mitigation measures that the responsible authority considers appropriate, is likely to cause significant adverse environmental effects and paragraph (b)does not apply, or*
> - *public concerns warrant a reference to a mediator or review panel, the responsible authority shall refer the project to the Minister for a referral to a mediator or a review panel in accordance with Section 25.*

b. Screening Decision

Having reviewed and considered the likely environmental effects of this project, the issues raised in the referral responses by individuals and agencies and after due consideration, the RA has concluded that the final screening report for this project accurately and appropriately addresses the significant and/or potentially significant environmental effects that have been identified.

Given the mitigations provided in the screening report, combined with the analysis and mitigations provided above, the RA is satisfied that this project is not likely to cause significant adverse environmental effects. Accordingly, the *Environmental Assessment Act* determination is that, subject to the mitigation requirements contained in the screening report and in the Reasons for Decision as per above, this project is hereby authorized.

Site plans and timber permits must be consistent with the intent of the *Fire Salvage Project for the False Canyon Creek Fire- 2004*. A final review of the site plans and timber permits will be conducted by the Responsible Authority to ensure that the intent of the project has been captured. The final review will be posted with this document once completed.

Authorization: **_____original signed_____** **____July 12/05____**
Gary W. Miltenberger, R.P.F (BC) **Date**
Director, Forest Management Branch

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