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OLD CROW FLATS TO BE PROTECTED AS A SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREA

WHITEHORSE – The Yukon and Vuntut Gwitchin governments have agreed upon an approved Management Plan for the Old Crow Flats Special Management Area (SMA).

“The joint planning process carried out by our governments demonstrates our administration’s commitment to developing meaningful and effective partnerships with Yukon First Nations,” Premier Dennis Fentie said. “These partnerships will allow us to make real progress towards fully implementing land claim agreements and getting on with other government business.”

The Old Crow Flats are located just north of Old Crow. This diverse lake network is home to major populations of waterfowl, the Porcupine Caribou Herd, muskrat, moose and other wildlife. This area is of major cultural and economic importance to the Vuntut Gwitchin, and is one of the most important wetland complexes in Canada. The United Nations has acknowledged its ecological significance through the *Ramsar Convention*.

“The Old Crow Flats, or ‘Van Tat,’ has been and remains a critical part of the Vuntut Gwitchin traditional territory,” Vuntut Gwitchin Chief Joe Linklater said. “We have lived in the Flats for thousands of years. We refer to the area as ‘our bank’, and we are committed to protecting this valuable resource for all time. This achievement is particularly satisfying as it is the last important land issue to be resolved in our Final Agreement.

“I would like to also acknowledge that we achieved agreement with the current Yukon administration on our other outstanding major land issue – the protection of the Fishing Branch watershed,” Chief Linklater added. “The protection of both of these areas is hugely important for our people.”

The Old Crow Flats Special Management Area was established by the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Final Agreement to protect the ecological integrity and to protect traditional and current use of the area. The Final Agreement requires the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and Yukon government to jointly prepare and approve a Management Plan for this SMA.

The management planning process took place over the past year and included public consultations in Old Crow and Whitehorse. The Yukon government has protected the interests of future generations to access resources, by withdrawing its lands outside the wetlands for a period of 20 years.

The two governments would also like to acknowledge the long-standing contribution of previous and present Vuntut Gwitchin elders and leaders who, with the Yukon and federal governments, provided the framework for the implementation of this SMA in the Vuntut Gwitchin Traditional Territory.

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