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YUKON PLACER SECRETARIAT PROGRESSES TOWARD CONSULTATION

WHITEHORSE – The newly-established Yukon Placer Secretariat has made significant progress during the three months since it was established.

The secretariat was formed in December as a result of a partnership between the Government of Yukon, Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Council of Yukon First Nations. The secretariat's main responsibility is to complete and implement a new Yukon placer mining regulatory regime by 2007.

“Good progress has been made on a number of fronts,” Energy, Mines and Resources Minister Archie Lang said. “Staff are in place and working out of the new offices of the secretariat in Whitehorse. A draft consultation plan has been developed, which sets out a three-phase consultation process which will begin in May. It will give Yukoners approximately one year to consider the regime that is being proposed, to become familiar with its details and to provide meaningful input.”

As part of its preparation for the consultation phase, the secretariat has been holding introductory meetings with every First Nation in the territory.

“This has provided an opportunity to speak with each First Nation about how best to carry out the consultation and about how to work together to gather and use traditional knowledge in the regime,” Lang said.

The introductory meetings with First Nations are scheduled to be complete by the end of March.

The secretariat has also organized a workshop this week on Adaptive Management, the approach being used in the regime. Participants include working groups and stakeholders. In addition, a free public session on the principles of Adaptive Management is being held Tuesday evening, March 28, at 7:30 p.m., at the Westmark Whitehorse Hotel.

Adaptive Management is a systematic practical approach to improving resource management policies and practices over time.

A new, integrated regime framework to manage Yukon placer mining was cooperatively developed by the Yukon government, the Council of Yukon First Nations, Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Klondike Placer Miners' Association. It was announced in May 2005.

The framework is the result of a unique process, in which the Yukon, First Nation and federal governments agreed in 2003 to develop a regime that would “recognize the importance of a sustainable placer industry to the Yukon and the importance of conservation of fish and fish habitat supporting fisheries.”

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