
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2019FLNR0098-001655
Aug. 27, 2019

Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations
and Rural Development
Tahltan Nation

Protecting the Sacred Headwaters of the Klappan Valley

ISKUT – The B.C. government and Tahltan Nation have signed a land-use plan that advances reconciliation and embraces the Klappan Valley’s significant social, cultural, environmental and economic values.

A ceremonial signing and celebration took place with Tahltan Central Government President Chad Norman Day, Iskut Band Chief Marie Quock, Tahltan Band Chief Rick McLean and Doug Donaldson, Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development. The signing has cemented the Klappan Plan, which guides where resource management activities can occur in the area and protects the Sacred Headwaters — the headwaters of the Skeena, Nass and Stikine rivers — from industrial development for a minimum of 20 years.

“I live in the northwest and fundamentally understand the significance of this milestone for creating land use certainty in the plan area, which contains such an abundance of vital ecological values for the watersheds involved,” Donaldson said. “Congratulations and thank you to all of the Tahltan Nation Elders, members, provincial government staff and countless others who have worked steadfastly together to realize this vision. Meduh.”

“The signing of the Klappan Plan has been many years in the making and I commend all the people and partners who have tirelessly advocated and worked alongside the Tahltan Nation to make this historic day a reality,” Day said. “The Klappan area and Sacred Headwaters are culturally significant to our people, and one of the most ecologically important areas in the world, so we are truly excited to see this area protected for all future generations.”

“I am proud to stand united with our Tahltan Leadership and our communities, the Province of B.C. and all those who have dedicated their time to make the Klappan Plan a reality,” Quock said. “The Klappan Plan is a very important step to permanently protect the Klabona (Sacred Headwaters), an area of immense cultural, spiritual and environmental significance to our people. I would like to thank past Tahltan Leadership for their support on protecting the Klabona. I would like to honour our Elders for always supporting us, teaching us, putting themselves on the line and showing us the way.”

“The Klappan is an area of significance to the Tahltan people and requires long-term protection from development and collaborative management,” McLean said. “The plan we worked out is a great start for the long-term vision of this area.”

The plan defines three distinct zones with varying acceptable land uses covering more than 620,000 hectares.

- Zone A: Major industrial activity in the Sacred Headwaters zone’s approximately 287,000

hectares is deferred for a minimum of 20 years, but the plan includes flexibility for amendments should consensus be reached by both the Tahltan and the Province on adjusted land-management objectives in the future. While industrial activities are not considered generally acceptable activities in this zone, other land uses and forms of tenure, such as recreation and guide outfitting, are considered generally acceptable.

- Zone B: An area with a high concentration of Tahltan values, proposed project designs for economic development in this more than 49,000-hectare zone will need to account, in advance, for all relevant cultural information collected, with consideration of ways to address, avoid, minimize or mitigate potential impacts.
- Zone C: At more than 284,000 hectares, this zone provides predictability for proposed economic development that is environmentally and culturally responsible and conforms to regulatory processes and agreements between the Tahltan and B.C. government. Economic development, including potential industrial activities, is viewed as appropriate and acceptable in this zone and will generally be supported.

“The Klappan Plan is a tangible milestone in B.C.’s reconciliation discussions with the Tahltan and delivers on our commitment to reach land-use solutions through a collaborative process,” said Scott Fraser, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation. “This is a milestone that will make a real difference for Tahltan Nation and benefit the entire region.”

“The Klappan Plan demonstrates how First Nations and the Province can work together to champion environmental stewardship while ensuring the region’s cultural and economic values remain intact,” said Michelle Mungall, Minister of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources. “This plan is a big step forward and we look forward to further collaboration that will benefit both the Tahltan Nation and all British Columbians.”

As the culmination of several joint provincial and Tahltan initiatives in the Klappan, the Klappan Plan contents have undergone extensive stakeholder and community engagement.

Additionally, the B.C./Tahltan Klappan Decision-Making and Management Board will be responsible for plan implementation and monitoring. After the first year of implementation, the board may also develop consensus recommendations for additional pilot projects and initiatives within the Klappan Plan area.

The Klappan Plan and other B.C. agreements with the Tahltan are available online, including a map of the three zones (page 18, map 1): www.gov.bc.ca/tahltan

Learn More:

Tahltan Central Government: <https://tahltn.org>

Iskut Band: <https://iskut.org/nation>

Tahltan Band: <https://tahltn.ca>

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