

Walk Softly

Quarterly Newsletter of the
Yukon Conservation Society
Fall/Winter 2022



• Make DRLUP Better! • Biodiversity • Mining Morass • Winter Biking • Youth Climate Action •

Horse Creek Flood

This summer was memorable for many reasons but one of the ones that sticks out was when Horse Creek washed out Horse Creek Road.

Horse Creek travels between Mud Lake and Lake Laberge, crossing the Klondike Highway at km 212. Horse Creek has been dammed by beavers for a long time. One such beaver dam helped to create Mud Lake and another led to part of the creek swelling into a lovely pond that myself and many others have been fond of and enjoyed for years. An area of this beautiful place is easily seen and accessed from the road, with the majority of the pond hidden from view by a rocky outcrop.

It just seemed to be one of the many wonders that the Yukon holds for residents as well as tourists who would just drive through not knowing what sights awaited them. We took my niece and her boyfriend there this spring when they came for a visit.

A few weeks later, it was all gone



My niece was able to film and take pictures of the beavers swimming the clear waters of the pond. A special memory for all of us.

After a higher than usual snow pack last winter, followed by substantial snow melt and heavy rain in the spring, the beaver dam broke in early July. The water plunged through a gorge into the little pond I had admired for so long. It flooded the area beyond capacity, flowed over the highway, washed out the culvert and continued on to Lake Laberge, wreaking havoc along the way. All that was left was murky water, mud, uprooted trees and half a highway.

The pond was gone, and perhaps the beavers were too.

Gradually the water subsided. The creek still flows, cutting two new channels through the mud. Life seems to have returned to normal, as much as it can. But the scars of that flood still show on the downstream side of the highway and you can still see where the flood waters scraped through the gorge. Only time will tell if it will ever be a beaver-made pond again but I have hope they will come back in the spring.



Joan Norberg



Check out next edition of Walk Softly to find out more about Horse Creek's hydrological ways and the important ecological roles it plays.



Yukon Conservation Society respectfully acknowledges that we are settlers within the territories of the Ta'an Kwäch'an Council and Kwanlin Dunn First Nation, who have been stewards of these lands since time immemorial. We are ever-grateful to inhabit, play, explore, collaborate and advocate for the conservation and protection of the lands, waters and wild beings of the Yukon - the place we call home.

Walk Softly is a mosaic of environmental news and storytelling published by the Yukon Conservation Society for members.

We welcome submissions and letters to the editor. Reach out to Sarah-Juliet by tel: 867-668-5678 ext. 9 or email: membership@yukonconservation.ca

Note: Views expressed in Walk Softly are not necessarily those of YCS.

SUBMISSION DEADLINES

→ **FEBRUARY 01 / MAY 01 / AUGUST 01 / NOVEMBER 01**

To learn more about YCS' projects, press, programming, memberships, events and environmental advocacy:

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Editorial

Happy top of winter, dear readers,

My name is Martin. I am the new Executive Director at Yukon Conservation Society and am very excited to join the team.

I was born and raised in Colombia and have lived in the unceded Coast Salish Territory of the **łəkʷəŋən** and **WSÁNEĆ** peoples since 2015. I am a multidisciplinary engineer with over 15 years of experience collaborating on environmental projects in North, Central, and South America.

I have recently taken the Executive Director role at YCS, and I am excited to continue learning and advocating for healthy ecosystems and sustainable communities, this time in the Yukon. I have had the pleasure of meeting all the fantastic YCS team members, and their dedication and breadth of knowledge deeply humbled me. YCS staff has been extraordinarily busy with our ETS project, submissions and comments to mining and energy legislation, developing a new communication strategy, and so much more! I am excited to continue learning and guiding these efforts as we move into the end of the year and I transition into this position. I look forward to continuing to explore and learn in the traditional territories of the First Nations that have lived in the Yukon since time immemorial.

Looking forward to learning and working together,



 **Martin**
Executive Director

YCS STAFF

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Marie Hammje	Outreach & Communications Manager
Sarah-Juliet Nadler	Membership & Communications Coordinator
Lewis Rifkind	Mining Analyst
Sebastian Jones	Fish & Wildlife Analyst
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Tara Howatt	ETS Project Liaison
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What you need to know about the Dawson Regional Land Use Plan (DRLUP)

With some suggested comments...

December 20th is Solstice Eve... and... Dawson Land Use Plan Day... Wait? What?

Yes, the deadline for comments on the Recommended DRLUP is coming up soon.

It's a big deal.

Chances to change history, the future of the Yukon, of Canada – They don't come up very often, and this is definitely one of them.

You might be asking yourself: Isn't that a little over the top? Change history? Really?

Well, yes – Here is the why and the how:



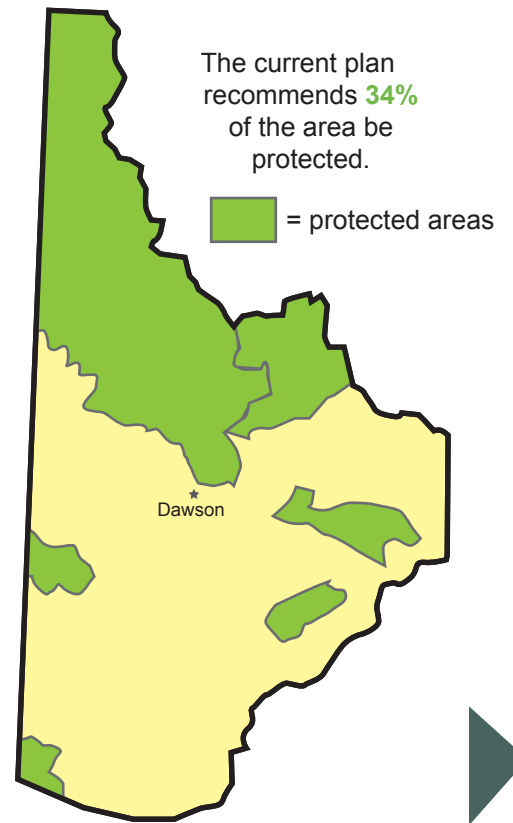
oriented and recommended that over half of the land should be legally protected (set aside for conservation). The Draft Plan only designated 4% for full legal protection, a far cry from what we expected. For the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, who had asked for 60% of their Traditional Territory be protected, it must have been a sore blow.

Over 5 months, the Commission received hundreds of comments on the Draft and did a staggering amount of work to consider all the input as they crafted the Recommended Plan that we see before us now.

The Recommended DRLUP released this June is MUCH better than the Draft – for one thing, **it designates 34% for permanent legal protection.** One of the protected areas within the region will become an Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA), which means the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in will manage it – just as they envisioned when their Final Agreement treaty was negotiated in 1998.

34% is not much compared to the North Yukon (50%) and the Peel (80%), and will only marginally contribute to YCS's scientifically arrived at goal of achieving more than 50% legally protected land in

the Yukon. However, this 34% is still substantial in comparison to Canada as a whole (currently 13% protected) and is consistent with the national target to protect 25% of Canadian land by 2025 and 30% by 2030. So, on a national level, 34% is pretty much the minimum required, which makes the Recommended Plan look much less ambitious.



Summary of the DRLUP so far

In the spring of 2014, the Yukon Government (YG) and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in nominated six people to form the Dawson Regional Land Use Planning Commission (DRLUPC) and thus began the planning process for the Dawson Region. After a couple of years of work, a major false start, a reconstituted Commission, and more years of work and input from hundreds of Yukoners, the DRLUP Commission produced a Draft Plan in June, 2021. A first stab at a plan, if you will. It looked very different to its predecessor Plans, the North Yukon and Peel Plans, both of which were very conservation-



Suggested improvements for the Recommended Plan

1) Increase the number of protected areas in the planning region to 60%, as the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in have been asking for.

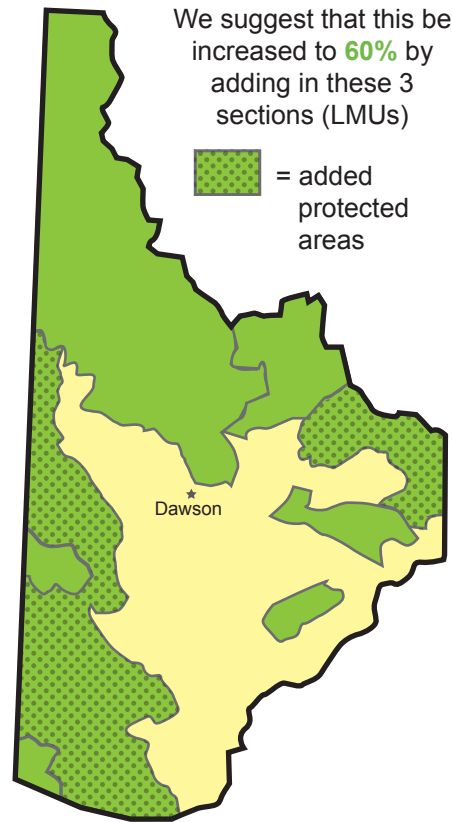
2) Push for increased connectivity of protected areas because:

- For protected areas to function well, they should form parts of a larger network of protected areas, this way as the climate changes, species adapted to a particular climate have space to move to where the climate is newly suitable from where it is no longer suitable.
- Some species simply need a lot of space, such as migratory caribou. The Forty Mile Caribou Herd needs lots of undisturbed space so it can access seasonal grazing areas.
- Only some of the protected areas are connected. By changing the status of only 3 Land Management Units (LMUs), we could achieve a high level of connectivity.

3) Rethink the approach to cumulative effects management:

We live in a society that places progress and growth at the core of our identity. The idea of stopping the clock of progress, turning it back or of 'de-growth' are difficult for us to visualize because we have very little practice with it – especially when it comes to plans. However, nature places limits on growth all the time; organisms reach a certain size and stop growing, populations of organisms only grow until they meet ecological limits. Ultimately, if we are to achieve truly sustainable societies, humanity too will need to acknowledge our limits, and live within them.

The Recommended Plan does not quite manage growth like nature does. It assumes that progress and more industrial disturbance is inevitable, and that it needs to plan for growth. To be sure, a plan certainly can plan for growth, but



it should do it consciously, towards a target, rather than passively, in reaction to what it sees on the ground.

This plan does come close to a sustainable, ecosystem-informed approach. It sets firm limits on development in protected areas, but it misses the mark with Integrated Stewardship Areas (ISAs), where industrial development is still allowed. It does recommend thresholds or maximum levels of disturbance, measured in % of area disturbed and the km per km² of linear disturbance (roads etc.). This is one way to manage the cumulative effects of disturbance.

So far so good?! The system looks less good when we consider how these thresholds are arrived at. In the North Yukon and Peel Watershed plans, the thresholds were set with caribou in mind – caribou are highly valued, and very sensitive to disturbance. However, thresholds in the Dawson Plan are set much higher – as much as four times higher.

These disturbance thresholds can be too high for caribou.

The Plan considered what level of disturbance currently exists, and projected forward under scenarios where there is a lot of extra impetus towards development over the next 20 years, or where there is a low level of development. It then set the thresholds to accommodate the level of development it envisions in 20 years' time.

There are two big problems with this approach, and YCS thinks the Final Recommended Plan needs to take them under consideration...

The first is that in some Land Management Units (LMUs), the most important values identified are natural ones, like caribou or wetlands, and yet when setting thresholds, the value used is industrial development. It's backward. This is another reason YCS wants to see some LMUs become SMAs, be protected. We want to see the plan consistent with the values it identifies.

The second is that this approach of projecting ahead and accommodating increased disturbance does not have any explicit limits – after 20 years, there is every likelihood that the thresholds will need to be ratcheted up further. This is the pattern we see in most of southern Canada. We see it in this plan where thresholds are set above ecological limits. We CAN decide to have development occur around natural values, rather than the other way around. We can set thresholds lower than current levels, meaning that developers would have to restore and reclaim previously disturbed land before more land can be disturbed.

**Now, let's change the world!
The deadline for contributing comments is December 20th.**

The Recommended Plan is much improved from the Draft Plan. With lots of great input, the Final Recommended Plan could be much better still!

YCS' suggestions summarized:

🍂 Increase the number of protected areas in the planning region to 60%, just as the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in have asked

🍂 Increase connectivity of protected areas

🍂 Rethink the approach to cumulative effects management

If the Dawson Plan achieves 60% protection, it will set a tremendous amount of momentum for the land use plans that follow. We could eventually protect more than half of the Yukon, which would set a great example to the rest of Canada, and maybe even change our attitude towards prioritizing infinite growth.

You can change history!

You can help the Dawson Land Use Plan be made even better!



Please email your concerns about how the (pretty good) Recommended Plan can be improved to:

Joseph Petch (the YG planner)
joseph.petch@yukon.ca

Katie Fraser (the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in representative)
katie.fraser@trondek.ca

Nicole Percival (the land use planner for the DRLUP)
nicole@planyukon.ca

You can also take a survey (as often as you like):

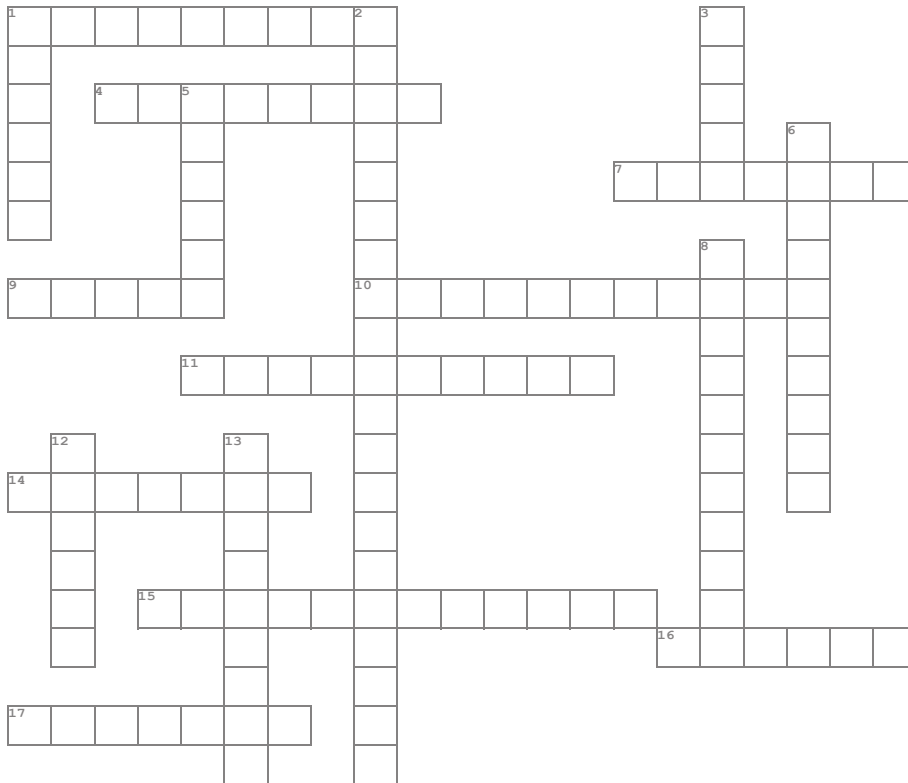
<https://www.onthelandwewalktogether.ca/survey>



Sebastian Jones
Fish, Wildlife & Habitat Analyst



Puzzle Zone



ACROSS

1. A winter sport in which a person on skis is pulled by a dog
4. The fruit of a rose
7. Berry of the honeysuckle plant
9. Northern bird
10. Often eaten with turkey
11. A town in the Klondike
14. Electric _____ Storage (ETS)
15. YCS' biweekly newsletter
16. They are falling from the tree tops
17. The average weather in a given area over a long period of time

DOWN

1. Cross country or down hill
2. Endangered bumblebee in the Yukon
3. Small dog-like animals that have taken to living in Whitehorse
5. King, Chinook, Chum
6. YCS' quarterly magazine
8. A way of making energy from the breeze
12. The act or instance of becoming different
13. Elements used in electrical & electronic processes





⚡ Electric Thermal Storage in the Yukon

The Yukon Electric Thermal Storage Demonstration Project is entering into its final heating season. The project is motivated by seeking solutions that **reduce Yukon's reliance on fossil fuels**. While Yukon generates most of its electricity through hydropower, there are times, particularly during winter mornings and evenings, when the hydropower produced is insufficient to meet the electric demand of the territory. Thus, fossil fuels such as diesel and liquefied natural gas (LNG) enter the scene to meet the electrical demand. Burning fossil fuels has its consequences: it releases greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change, and it comes at a higher financial cost by requiring the rental of a fleet of diesel generators. At times, it may seem hopeless to break our dependence on fossil fuels, but there are seeds of hope!

Electric Thermal Storage (ETS) can be used to strategically to heat homes in ways that don't contribute to the on-peak demand of the electric grid. ETS units range from room-based units, replacing electric baseboard heaters, to centralized units, replacing forced air furnaces. The underlying principle of these different ETS units is the same, that they are filled with bricks that are heated during off-peak demand times, that is, overnight and mid-day. The bricks then store heat that can be released later during on-peak demand times, that is, during mornings and evenings.

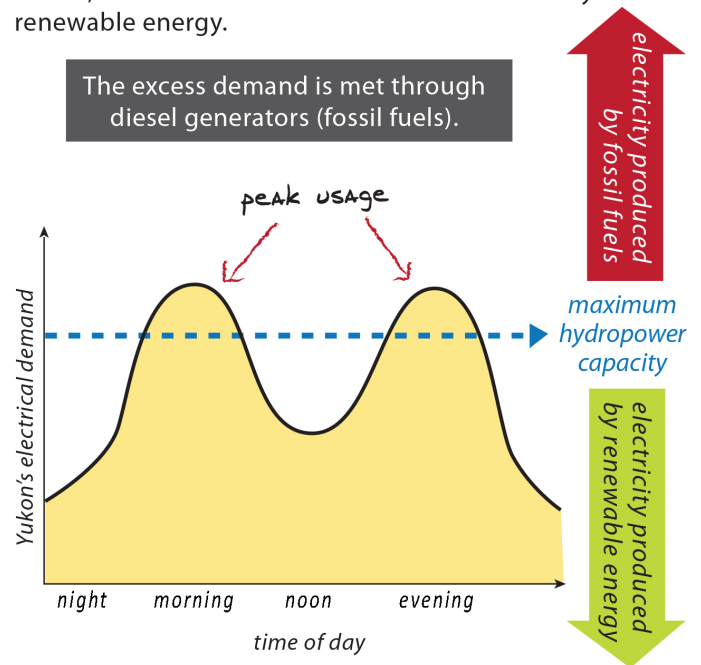
Coming back to the Yukon Electric Thermal Storage Demonstration Project, this is a project that consists of installing a series of ETS units in people's homes and monitoring the units and conducting surveys to evaluate whether the home occupants are warm enough and whether large-scale adoption of ETS units could reduce the on-peak electrical demand in meaningful ways that **reduce greenhouse gas emissions and provide cost savings to the grid**. To date, we have installed ETS units in 44 participant's homes, with two more homes being installed with ETS units this winter.

With the conclusion of the project at the end of March 2023, we will evaluate the potential benefits of ETS units in Yukon homes. We will then be **advocating that any cost savings made to the grid through homeowner adoption of smart heating, like ETS units, be passed onto homeowners through incentives which make the installation of smart heating more accessible and affordable**. It is exciting to see how technology is advancing and providing some solutions to remove our dependence on fossil fuels, and what is encouraging is how these options are becoming more within the homeowner's reach.

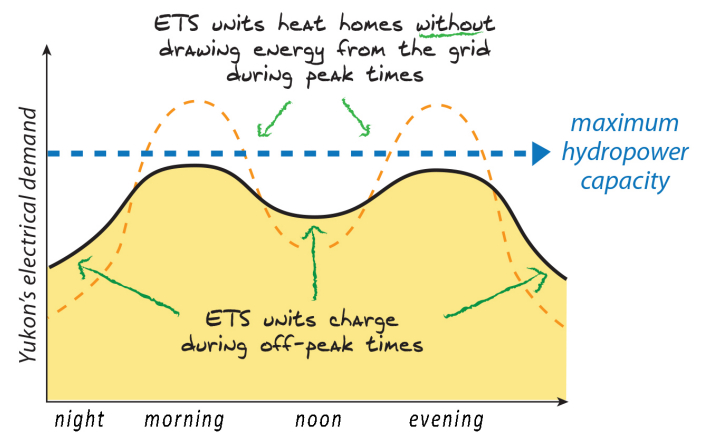
Tara Howatt
ETS Liason



The Problem: During on-peak times, especially during winter, Yukon electrical demand cannot be met by renewable energy.



The Goal: To reduce Yukon's dependence on fossil fuels, the electrical demand must become lower than the grid's renewable energy maximum capacity. This can be achieved by reducing the energy demand and/or by increasing the renewable energy on the grid.



Shifting the peaks: Electric Thermal Storage (ETS) can offer part of the solution by shifting the times when homes are using energy for heating. The ETS units can absorb and store heat during off-peak times and then release the heat during on-peak times without putting a demand on the grid at those times. Less energy demand from heating homes helps to reduce the peaks in energy use. **By reducing the on-peak energy demand through ETS, we are becoming closer to the goal of breaking Yukon's dependence on fossil fuels.**

25 by 25 and 30 by 30

These numbers have been floating about in recent years, but what exactly do they mean and where did they come from?

It turns out that Canada has committed to preserve at least 30% of its lands and waters for nature, in the form of parks and protected areas, by the year 2030, and has an interim goal of 25% by 2025- just a couple of years away.

Canada currently protects about 13% of its lands, and far less of its waters, perhaps as little as 1%, depending on how rigorously one defines preserved and protected.

These targets are part of a series of commitments we made when we signed the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) in Aichi, Japan in 2010.

For two weeks, starting on Dec 7th, Montreal is hosting COP15, not the more familiar Climate COP, like the one that just wrapped up in Egypt, but a Biodiversity COP. Hopefully it will achieve more than the rather disappointing Climate COP. Hopefully Canada will not invite dozens of fossil fuel lobbyists to this COP.

So, what's so special about 30%? How will Canada get there?

Well, the short answer is that there is nothing special about 30%; it is a political number, not a science number. It was the maximum number that could be agreed upon by politicians who prioritize economic growth, but acknowledge that we do actually need intact ecosystems to survive.

Canada can only reach the 30% on land with the cooperation of the Provinces, Territories, the Inuit and First Nations. In most of Canada, we are still a long way from 30%.

Some provinces are not keen on the idea of setting aside additional

land for nature, assuming that each hectare of land protected will take away from the livelihoods of future generations.

The Yukon, at 17% is a leader, but we too are still a long way off.

The best science (check out: <https://natureneedshalf.org/why-50/>) points out that at least 50% of land needs to be set aside for nature if we are to have a self-sustaining and resilient environment. Interestingly, this is about what Yukoners chose for our thus far completed Regional Land Use Plans- North Yukon and Peel Watershed (the latter is closer to 80% if one includes interim protected areas, however, interim protected areas don't count towards the 30% target).

The Recommended Dawson Plan is currently at 34%, with an additional 13.8% with some sort of partial or interim protection, so it approaches 50% too (YCS and others, including Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in are seeking something closer to 60%).

The Yukon could help Canada achieve additional Biodiversity targets, such as the 50% pesticide reduction target. We are blessed here with an absence

of significant agricultural pests; the Yukon could ban the use of pesticides and herbicides without any difficulty- in fact it would make our agricultural products more attractive.

So, what can we as individuals do to ensure that the Yukon plays its part in reaching our Aichi targets?

- ✎ Participate in the Dawson Regional Land Use Plan consultations- open until December 20th <https://www.onthelandwewalktogether.ca/survey>
- ✎ Write to your MLA asking for the Yukon to become a pesticide-free zone
- ✎ Contact your MP asking that Canada set science-based biodiversity targets, including a minimum of 50% of our lands and waters set aside for nature.

You'll be glad that you did!



 Sebastian Jones
Fish, Wildlife & Habitat Analyst

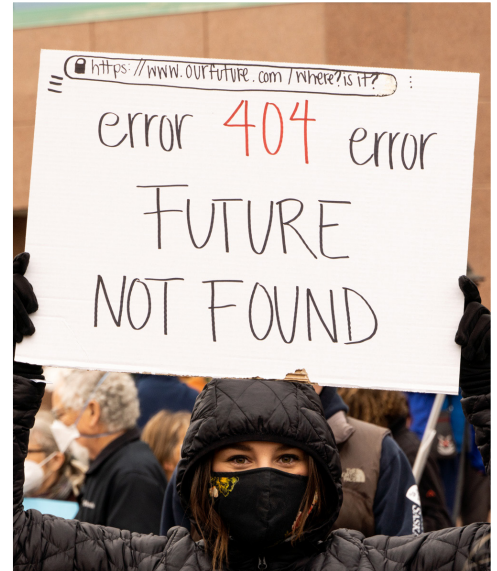
Yukon Youth for Climate Action

A youth-led protest for climate action took place in downtown Whitehorse in early fall. A community crowd of all ages gathered in support of the young and mighty Friday For Future activists. Signs in hand, we marched towards City Hall - all chanting as one. We paused for a few compelling speeches which were filled with passionate pleas and informed climate-related confrontations. Vehicles honked and passersby joined the mass as we moved towards the Government of Yukon Legislative Building. Their voices boomed with determination, beckoning decision-makers to reexamine environmental policy and industry regulations, to enforce GHG emission caps - asking that their climate concerns be addressed, asking for change, asking peacefully for a healthy and secure future. Keep an eye on @fffyukon (instagram) to join in future protests!

 Sarah-Juliet Nadler



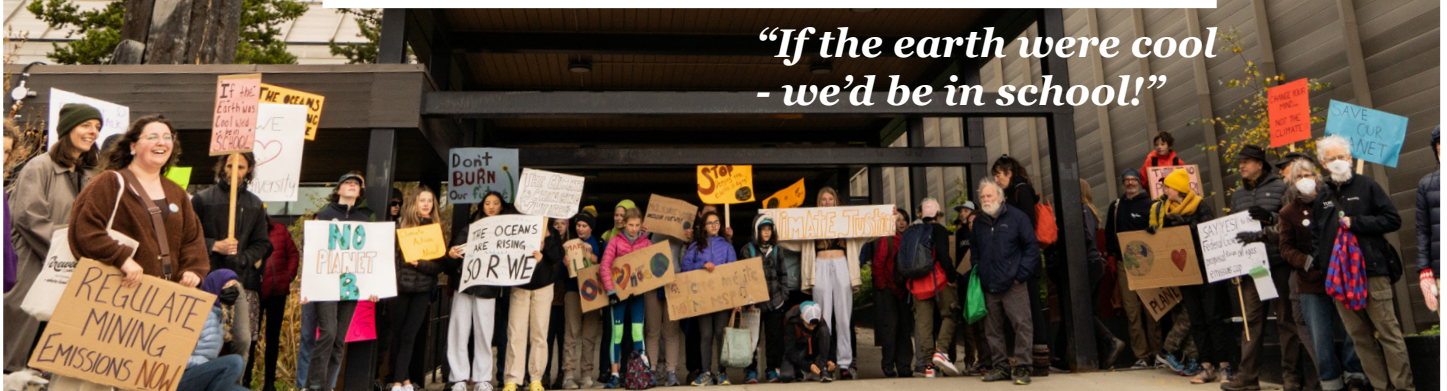
*“You’ll die of old age,
we’ll die of climate change!”*



**“ONE EARTH,
ONE CHANCE!”**



*“The oceans are rising,
and so are we!”*



*“If the earth were cool
- we’d be in school!”*

YCS Communications Update



My name is Sarah-Juliet and I'm the Membership & Communications Coordinator. I moved to the Yukon from Ontario to work with YCS as a communications intern this summer, covering Created at the Canyon and the Beaver Creek Bioblitz. Before then, I wrapped up a post-grad certification in Environmental Visual Communications, a BFA in Cross-Disciplinary Life Studies and a BSc in Biology. I'm really fond of fungi, film-making, creating sculptures or functional objects out of trash-treasure, connecting and learning with as many people as humanly possible, exploring new ecosystems, and advocating for the health and connectivity of the Yukon's natural expanses as well as those who inhabit and depend on them. Please email or call me with matters related to membership, events, social media promotion, Walk Softly submissions, and collaborative ideas!

I'll be bringing my energy, enthusiasm, creativity, passion and ideas to the YCS and Whitehorse community. Our team are cooking up some engaging and inspiring programming for you all in the coming months. Keep an eye on our social media and Tread Lightly for more info on upcoming winter workshops, events, gatherings, guest speakers, new merch offerings, and volunteer opportunities. If you're interested in arranging a meeting, casual chat, volunteering, or collaborating - be bold and reach out!

Warmly,
Sarah-Juliet



Roots and shoots:

*another successful
summer season*

My summer spent as the SIPC (Summer Interpretive Program Coordinator) for YCS has given me the opportunity to reconnect with my home. After spending a year away at school in interior British Columbia I found myself back in a familiar place but with a newfound appreciation.

Part of our Trail Guide training here at YCS is touring the local museums and listening to local experts talk about the flora, fauna, geology, and botany of Kwanlin. I found myself amazed at the cultural significance that Kwanlin held, not just the Gold Rush history that so many hear of, but of the fishing camps that provided life for people near the water many moons ago.

I think Kwanlin often gets forgotten as a place for locals to visit, because we so often label it a tourist destination. During our training, and through the summer season I would walk these ancient trails at least twice a day or once a week. I found myself amazed at the ever-changing landscape that held wild arctic lupines one day, and vibrant wild roses the next. With the rain and cooler temperatures came the spongy mushrooms that dotted the forest floor, and in the silence of the morning the river otters and I shared a sacred space.

As someone who spends a majority of her summer outside, I think I often forgot to look around. To truly listen to the birds sing, to learn the abundance of the forest, and the cultural significance of my home.

My time spent as SIPC allowed me to reconnect with my roots, and for that I am forever grateful.

Sierra Link
*Summer Interpretive
Program Coordinator*



Experiencing the Yukon with YCS has been, and will remain, a highlight of my guiding career. As someone new to professional guiding, I gained people skills, applied experience teaching and explored topics I was never taught at guiding school.



Thanks to my guiding school program, I was familiar with taking crash courses in a short time period. The way YCS facilitated the Trail Guide Training, supported by the direct passing of knowledge from field experts, made it easy. I felt all I had to do was show up and be willing to learn and teach.

During my guiding experience with YCS, I met so many interesting people from all around the world and expanded my social network. I hope we will meet again in the future!

I have learned a lot about Yukon's nature, land, wildlife and history. At the end of the summer, I felt sad to leave the Yukon. However, I'm very excited to go out and share my knowledge and experiences with others, encouraging them to come and explore this area for themselves.

Danial Kosarifar
Trail Guide



Throughout my time with the Yukon Conservation Society, I've experienced and expanded my knowledge on a variety of interesting topics such as geology, plants, history, spirituality and aboriginal culture. I've strengthened my guiding skills through listening to other tour providers within Whitehorse and Dawson City as well as learned that opening up and sharing my stories about ceremonies and my past enriched the experience for myself and tour-goers.

My co-workers Sierra and Deborah organized amazing opportunities for us during guide training. We really got a new perspective on Yukon's history when we went to the MacBride Museum and the Beringia Center. Following training, Sierra still organized special tours for us to really get to learn about the land. We got the chance to ask lots of questions to special guests (botanists, geologists, historians) who shared in leading the guided hikes.

This opportunity opened my eyes to the beauty and deep history of Miles Canyon and the Yukon and showed me how much I enjoy guiding and helping others. I've made so many connections around the Yukon and I'm really going to miss the staff, YCS, and Miles Canyon. This has felt like home for me and I'm going to remember this for the rest of my life. I will be coming back in the near future. I am really grateful for everything YCS helped us with and I will be using all this knowledge I've learned throughout my next journey. Thank you for everything!

Dorian Giesinger
Trail Guide



Mining Morass

It has been a busy summer and fall for the Yukon Conservation Society mining types.

Fall is typically the government consultation time, and various levels of government certainly did not disappoint in these regards.

Here is a rough synopsis of what the Yukon Conservation Society has been up to in regards to mining consultations and the comments we submitted.



Mining Intensity Targets:

Future (and current) Yukon mines are expected to be major emitters of Greenhouse Gasses (GHG), and likely to blow Yukon's GHG reduction targets out of the water. So the Yukon government has come up with a creative way of appearing to reduce emissions while not placing limits on emissions.

Mining emission intensity targets is an approach that means a mine's emissions are compared with a mine's output. For example, a mine producing 1,000 ounces of gold along with 100 tonnes of GHGs is better than a mine producing 1,000 ounces of gold with an associated 125 tonnes of GHGs.

Unfortunately, this approach will not result in reduced emissions going into the atmosphere if mining output increases...and more mines with more output is exactly what the Yukon government wants.

The atmosphere doesn't care about mining efficiency. The atmosphere needs a rapid reduction of greenhouse gases being emitted by human activity. What we need are mines that produce zero greenhouse gases. Unfortunately, the Yukon's mining future is still greenhouse gas intensive.

Over the next 15 years, the following mine (and mining-related projects such as the Faro cleanup) emissions could be added to the Yukon's

existing greenhouse gas emissions:

- 🔥 Newmont's Coffee Mine: roughly one million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions over its 12-year life
- 🔥 BMC's Kudz Ze Kayah mine: approximately 110 thousand tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions over its ten-year lifespan
- 🔥 Casino copper and gold mine: more than 13 million tonnes of emissions during its 22-year lifespan.
- 🔥 The Faro Mine remediation project: about 100 thousand tonnes per year, possibly for 15 years

Unless these mining projects implement non-fossil fuel-related energy sources, the Yukon is facing a major problem meeting its GHG emissions target of a 50% reduction by 2035 (or whatever it is...).

Critical Minerals Strategy:

YCS is concerned that in the quest for critical minerals environmental assessment, licensing, regulation, and enforcement will suffer. This must not happen. There is no point in pushing some future potential (or even mythical) green economy if it comes at the expense of today's environment. Critical minerals might well be critical, but much more critical to our wellbeing is what is left of our current functioning ecosystems.

Geothermal Resources Legislation:

Exploration for geothermal sources could potentially involve surface disturbances similar to that which occurs with mineral exploration and fossil fuel development. Linear disturbances (such as seismic lines, ATV trails, access roads etc.) and site specific disturbances (such as drill test pads, exploration camps, etc.) result in numerous negative habitat effects. This negatively impacts caribou and moose ranges, and if such disturbances associated with geothermal development are added on top of existing ground disturbances caused by other resource exploration and development activities, the cumulative impacts could be extremely negative. Geothermal Legislation must include strong regulations that ensure surface disturbances are carefully managed to avoid the impacts associated with linear disturbances and cumulative impacts.

New Mineral Legislation:

YCS continues to participate in meetings that include representatives of government and industry as various issues around the proposed new mineral legislation are discussed. It's a long slow process but replacing centuries old legislation takes time, and it is important to get it right.




Ongoing Legal Issues:

There's the old saying that the only people that got rich off the original Yukon gold rush were the inn keepers and the entertainers, and not the miners. While that might still be true today, it is perhaps time to add another category to those doing well off the Yukon mining industry and that's the legal community.

🍷 **Kudz Ze Kayah Mine:** The Ross River Dena Council have filed an application for the Yukon Supreme Court to quash the approval by the Territorial and Yukon Governments of the Kudz Ze Kayah mine.

🍷 **Victoria Gold Mine:** Also working its way through the Yukon Supreme Court is Victoria Gold and its appeal of a rather dramatic increase in its security imposed by the Yukon Water Board.



 Lewis Rifkind
Mining Analyst

A big shout out to the Mining Committee, composed of both YCS staff and volunteers, for all their hard work. If you would like to get involved with mining issues on behalf of YCS please contact either Sarah-Juliet at membership@yukonconservation.ca or Lewis at mining@yukonconservation.ca.

Becoming an Ex

I am now an ex-fisher.

I didn't even consider that it would happen to me. That I would be an 'Ex' something. Well, I knew from an early age that being an ex-lover/partner is part of life, but for one's identity to be ex, that now, is something else.

We know that progress marches on and that some skills become redundant- buggy whip makers, famously, became a dead-end career with the rise of the motor car. But producing food? That always seemed like its precarity would be more related to prices and demand than to supply.

I never minded learning anachronistic skills such as how to train a draft ox or which roove to select when repairing a clinker-built boat - one knows these abilities have limited utility, but helping to feed a community as it has been fed forever? Surely this skill would have legs.

It was not easy to get into salmon fishing - I fought and scrambled, starved and froze to establish myself as a fisher, but I didn't mind. It feels good when you are feeding yourself, and your friends and neighbours.

There was not much room for another fisher when I started, so I became a wandering fisher - moving from place to place with the seasons and reacting to the presence or absence of more established fishers.

The more valuable and established Chinook fishery was very much fully subscribed, so I became a chum specialist, which people considered to be less valuable. And I made it work. I became very, very good at it. I got so good at it that I was able to make a living at fishing after almost all the other fishers had become commercially extinct.

And a funny thing happened - the fish I brought in became more and more valuable, chum salmon were plentiful and for a while it was a dance with abundance. Some days I'd fish for 20 minutes and catch all I could process that day.

I never expected to become an ex-fisher because the fish are all gone, never. Yet, here we are, living beside an empty river, a river that sustained people for countless generations, a river that was in return nurtured by people for just as long. In just a generation, we have ruined it for the foreseeable future.

And now I'm an ex.



 Sebastian Jones



Getting your bike ready for snowy commutes

Emissions from road transportation account for over half of all GHG emissions in the Yukon. Electric vehicles and electrification of transportation will be a critical tool in decreasing emissions from transportation, but using all of the tools in the tool box to find the mobility option best suited to each individual will be necessary going forward. Those options include — but are not limited — to e-scooters, walking, kick sleds, carpooling, public transit, bicycles, e-bikes, one-wheels, to name a few.

In my opinion, biking is the best: fresh air cruising down the open bike path. However, the idealistic image you have conjured in your mind is only applicable for a few months of the year in Whitehorse.

A bike for all seasons

For a year-round bicycle, I ride an early 2000's hardtail mountain bike that has a small amount of front suspension. I like this style of bike because it does reasonably well with a variety of conditions, paved paths, gravel paths, potholes and mud. When I acquired this bike it was not fully adequate to be a year round commuter so here are some the steps that I took to get it winter ready.

Firstly, I purchased a pair of studded winter tires and swapped out the summer tires for the winter tires. Ice is the second scariest thing to encounter on a bike and having the studded tires with a good weight distribution between the tires leads to good traction in winter conditions.

Next, lights, as we all know the winters are dark, especially the mornings so good lighting is important to have on your bike. The lighting is not so much to see the road, but it is more to make yourself visible to the top scariest thing to encounter on a bike, a car. Lights on the front and back of the bike as well

as helmet lights and other reflectors and reflective gear are key to being visible to other traffic on dark days. In cold weather bike lights will drain their charge quickly, so get the ones that can easily be removed. Every time you park your bike outside you can snap the lights off and take them inside with you.


The appropriate layering, and most importantly keeping your hands warm, frozen digits can hinder your ability to brake and shift gears effectively. I vary the thickness of glove based on temperature. I have heard of individuals using snowmobile mitts and bar mitts to keep their hands warm on the coldest mornings.

Cold weather can cause chain oil and hub lubricant to go gummy and really slow a bike down. If you're not comfortable in changing it out yourself for lubricant that is good to at least minus 35, get one of the local bike shops to do it. It's surprisingly

affordable and given that it will extend your bicycling options to being year-round, certainly essential.

And there you have it a winter commuting machine ready to take on the bike paths. Make sure to give yourself lots of extra time if it snows more than 10cm, because I encountered some large snow drifts around the airport last winter.



 Scott Pressnail
Energy Analyst

If you have a story to share regarding your alternative transportation and your motivation, please reach out.



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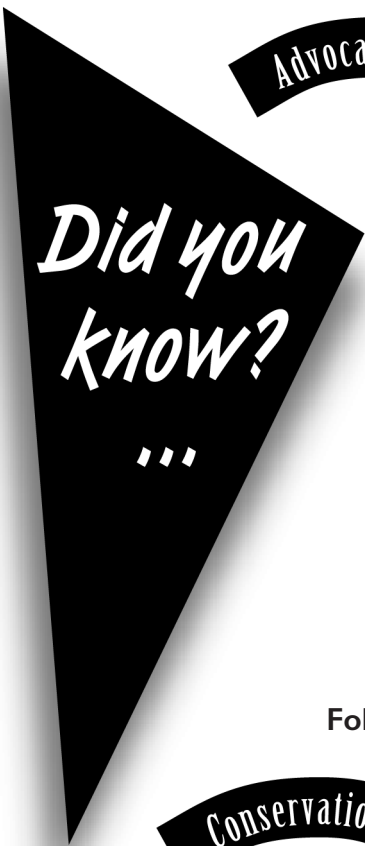




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Did you know?

...

Conservation Conversations: The biweekly event is back for 2023! We are working on creating a cozy space inside but the first handful of gatherings will be held around the warmth of our firepit, snuggled in blankets with hot beverages and snacks. Stay tuned for discussion themes and guest conversationalists!

December 20th: Deadline to submit comments on the Recommended Plan for the Dawson Region. Read the article inside to take part in ensuring that the Final Plan prioritizes the health and protection of Yukon's wildlife, waters and lands – and ultimately all Yukoners!

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