


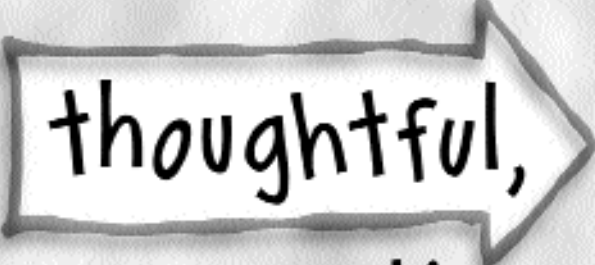


Walk Softly




Newsletter of the Yukon
Conservation Society
March 2000

 "Never doubt  
that a small group of




 thoughtful,

 committed

citizens can

  change the world; 

indeed, it's the only thing
that ever has."

   - Margaret Mead

INSIDE: Placer Mining ♦ Residential Energy Consumption ♦ Volunteer Initiatives

What's Happening at YCS?

Katimavik Continues...

We said goodbye to Mike Smorong and said hello to our next Katimavik-tim, Devin Yuke in January. Devin has been helping out in our crazy office doing everything from cataloguing our library to assisting in our Wetlands campaign, and anything and everything else we have been able to find him to do. Thanks for your help Devin.

YCS AGM

YCS will be holding its Annual General Meeting on Tuesday, March 28th at 7:00 pm at the Whitehorse Public Library. Come and meet YCS' new faces including board and staff, enjoy some munchies, and hear about the past year and what's ahead. This will be a low-key event this year, as we are saving our energy for our big 32nd birthday bash. Everyone is welcome.

It's YCS' Birthday!

It's our 32nd birthday in April and we will be celebrating 32 years of volunteers. Big plans are in the works and involve a lot of music and a lot of dancing! Stay tuned for more info.

City Committee

Are you interested in getting active on the Quartz Road wetland and other city issues? Phone YCS to find out about joining our City Committee.

Tombstone Park

The 18 month Management Planning Phase of Tombstone Park is just beginning. If you have any

thoughts or comments about this issue, please contact Julie Frisch at YCS.

Goodbye Tanis

Sadly, it is time to say goodbye to Tanis Davey, our Volunteer Programs Coordinator. Thanks for all your hard work, good ideas, and great energy. (Everytime we eat chocolate we will think of you!)

Celebrate Earth Day

An Earth Day Celebration will be held in front of Kishwoot Island on April 22nd. It will be a family event with activities for both adults and kids. Local artists will be painting the scenes of the Yukon River and Quartz Road wetland. Bring your art supplies! Art will later be shown around town at the Blackstone Café, Midnight Sun and Captain Martin House. Stay Tuned!

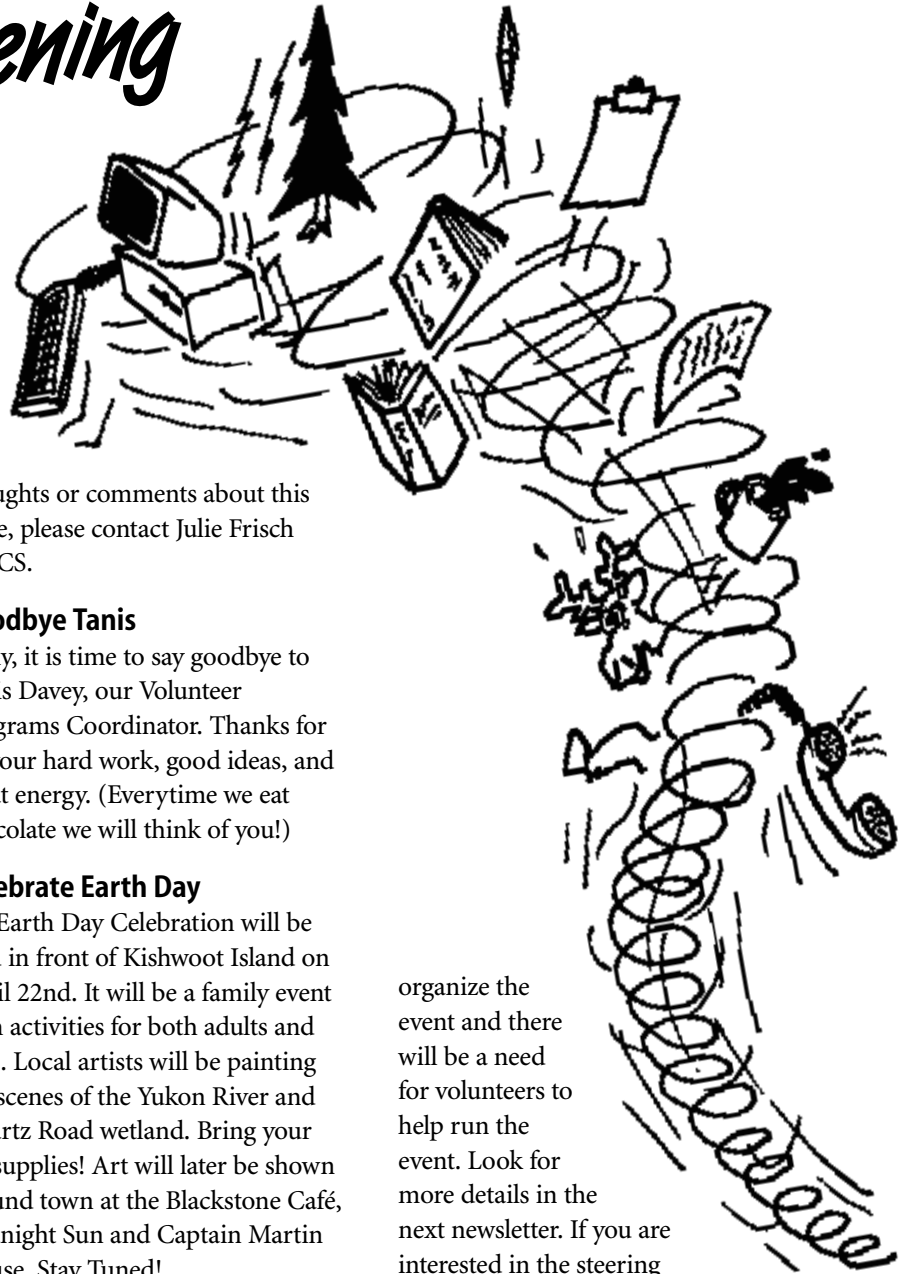
Arctic Science 2000 Conference

The American Association for the Advancement of Science will be having their Arctic Science 2000 Conference in Whitehorse, September 21-24, 2000. The theme will be Science and Communities: Crossing Borders. There may be an opportunity for YCS to have input into sessions and workshops or do a presentation. A steering committee is seeking members to help plan and

organize the event and there will be a need for volunteers to help run the event. Look for more details in the next newsletter. If you are interested in the steering committee or would like more information contact Bob Van Dijken or Craig Olsen at YCS and check out the website at www.taiganet/top/events.

Walk Softly Wants Your Submissions

Want to put in your two cents? YCS encourages newsletter submissions and letters to the editor. Our deadlines are the first of February, May, August, and November. Here's your chance to be heard!





Wetland Protection a Struggle

Public Outcry Disregarded by City Council

The Yukon Conservation Society's efforts to see the Quartz Road wetland protected have been quite the struggle. Since our last newsletter, YCS launched a campaign against the Second Avenue extension which is proposed to follow along the waterfront from Kishwoot, through the Quartz Road wetland and join up with Quartz Road with a 4-way intersection.

The proposed road is in conflict with the City's own Yukon River Corridor Plan which designates the Quartz Road wetland as a Highly Sensitive Environmental Area. According to this plan, it is a site with low tolerance to human disturbance and shall be kept substantially free from disturbance.

The proposed road location is 30m from the Yukon River's edge while the Corridor Plan specifies that any development within 100m of the Yukon River, stream or wetland should be subject to site-specific examination, detailed plans and desirable setbacks.

In just over a week 900 signatures were collected in opposition to the road and over 25 letters/emails from community members were sent to the City. Despite the awareness of their own plan and public opposition to the road, the City Council made the decision to allocate \$350,000.00 of this year's budget to the purchase of waterfront land for the proposed road. This is compared to cities across Canada such as Thunder Bay who are putting millions of dollars into the rehabilitation and naturalization of land. Thunder Bay is spending \$60 million to rehabilitate their waterfront and wetlands.

I'm not sure how many of you put time into the Yukon River Corridor Plan or the Waterfront Development Plan, but I did. A result of our input was that 84% of respondents indicated

the importance of maintaining the natural setting of the river corridor. What is the purpose of \$120,000 going into a plan, when the next step is to go against the plan and disregard public outcry.

Throughout our campaign we have found a great ally in the business community who are upset at the extent to

which the City is going to provide Argus with a four lane road flowing directly into and out of the mall property. In addition to the road, and the \$1.5 million in infrastructure, the City and YTG also donated Argus 30% of the property which was supposed to return to Commissioners Land as part of an agreement from the early 1900s.

YCS continues to demand that the City uphold its own land use plan, respond to the interests expressed by the public and do something positive for the waterfront by purchasing the Quartz Road wetland area for a nature trail rather than a road. Thank you to all of you who have sent letters to the City, volunteered time and input and signed our petition.

angela walkley

Mayor and Council

Please do not put a road next to the Yukon River.

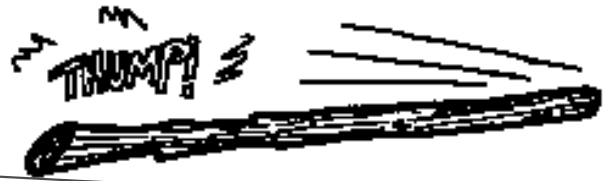
I and my family like nature walks and we don't want this beautiful wetland between the river and Boston Pizza paved.

I remember that last year this Council voted to drain Eerie Lake. Now it is all gone and looks like a moon landscape.

I would like this Council to protect our environment.

We would like to live in a green world.

aubin tuzlak



JOIN YOUNG AUBIN in voicing your opposition to the road. Letters can be sent to:

City of Whitehorse
2121 Second Avenue
Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 1C2
Fax: 668-8639
Email: mayor@city.whitehorse.yk.ca



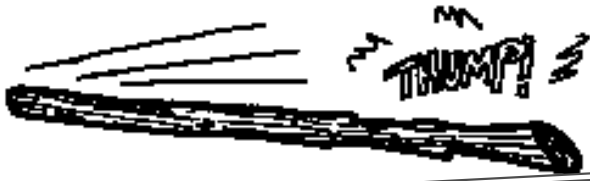
Tombstone Park Update

On December 9, 1999, the Yukon Government announced its agreement with First Nations on the boundaries of the Fishing Branch and the Tombstone Territorial Parks. YCS is happy with both boundary decisions but not with the lack of resolution about the mining claims in both areas. While it looks like

a private compensation agreement will be reached for the Fishing Branch, just the opposite is happening in Tombstone.

Early in February, Canadian United Minerals (CUM) applied to the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) for a permit to do advanced mining exploration that includes drilling, trenching and blasting on their gold claims in the heart of the new park. (They withdrew an application for a 46 km all-weather road up the Blackstone River but may reapply for it later.)

DIAND will make its decision on the CUM application after a public hearing that is tentatively scheduled for Dawson City in mid-April. So once again YCS will be asking the members to remind the federal politicians that mining in Tombstone Park is not acceptable. Stay tuned for that campaign. In the meantime write, fax or phone Piers MacDonald and tell him again that we expect him to live up to his campaign promises (in this election year) to create a wilderness park at Tombstone. Call the office if you want more information and thanks for being part of the YCS lobby on this precedent setting issue.



Letters can be sent to:

Piers MacDonald
Government Leader
Gov't of Yukon
Box 2703
Whitehorse, Yukon Territory Y1A 2C6
fax (867) 667-8424 phone 667-8415
or toll free 1-800-661-0408

What's Up With DAP?

The new Development Assessment Process is still in the making, and YCS is hanging in there through the many drafts, discussions and negotiations that have to occur to make DAP a reality. We are participating in an NGO advisory group that helps the Yukon Territorial Government determine their position on issues prior to core table negotiations.

The flavour of the month for February at the NGO advisory group is timelines. Our major concern is that no timeline begins until the information has been put on the public registry. As a project moves through the assessment process, different timelines apply. For example the public has a minimum of 14 days to comment on a project at the initial stages of assessment. We think that the clock should not start running on this 14 days until

all project information is accessible to the public. It would be very difficult to effectively comment when new information surfaces on day 12. We also believe that timelines should begin and end with a specific action and there should be a responsible party for each timeline. For example, if a decision body has 10 days to issue a decision, it should be held accountable to that timeline.

While timelines may not be the most exciting aspect of DAP, they are one part of the puzzle which will come together to create the new assessment process. Clear timelines demonstrate that accountability and transparency are important to all three governments who signed the Umbrella Final Agreement.

christine cleghorn



Editorial

Walk Softly

is published by the Yukon Conservation Society for members and subscribers. Memberships and information about the Society can be obtained by phoning the YCS at (867) 668-5678, (fax 668-6637), by writing to Box 4163, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 3S9, or by visiting the YCS office at 302 Hawkins Street, Whitehorse.
email: ycs@polarcom.com

We welcome newsletter submissions and letters to the editor. Deadlines for submissions are Feb 1, May 1, Aug 1, and Nov 1.

Views expressed in *Walk Softly* are not necessarily those of the Society.

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Last night a few friends and I were in a hurry to eat before catching a movie. A certain golden-arched fast food chain was suggested as a dining option for fast food (in the truest, fastest sense). It was discarded as quickly as it was suggested, for various environmental, food quality, and vote-with-your-consumer dollar reasons. While I was happy to avoid fast food, the discussion caused me to pause and reflect for a moment about how my actions reflect my values.

When I hit my late teens I read *Diet for A New America* and became a vegetarian. Two years after embarking on this meatless journey I still held to my meatless beliefs but was troubled at other people's reactions to my food habits. I was not an in-your-face vegetarian; I just quietly didn't eat meat. Nevertheless, this was not enough for some: they either sneered at my leather shoes and the "hypocrisy" of my vegetarianism or pushed me to go vegan. But who's standards am I living up to here? Aren't I supposed to be intelligent enough to make my own choices?

These days I happily eat wild meats and continue my love affair with vegetables. As an environmentalist I also understand that every action has a consequence. Taking the bus instead of driving to work, carrying my coffee cup, using cotton grocery bags etc. while important, only take you so far. How do I save the planet on a daily basis? A big part of this is setting my own standards and then living up to them. I try to teach by example and hope others will follow my actions. In the same vein, I try to learn from those whose environmental ethics I respect. I am the first to admit that I have a long way to go before my footprint on this planet is as small as I would like. This week take a minute and think about how your actions reflect your values. It might be an educational experience.

christine cleghorn

Placer Mining in the 21st Century?

With Mining Land Use Regulations now applying to placer operations and a review of the Yukon Placer Authorization scheduled for 2001, one could assume that placer mining will be dragged into the 21st century. This however is not the case.

The Yukon Placer Authorization was signed in 1993. Government and industry got together to develop the Authorization which allows "the harmful alteration, disruption or destruction of fish habitat." The basis for the entire Authorization is a 1964 paper done in Europe which examines the effects of sediment on fish. This paper concluded that sediment concentrations of less than 25 mg/l present a very low risk to fish and fish habitat.

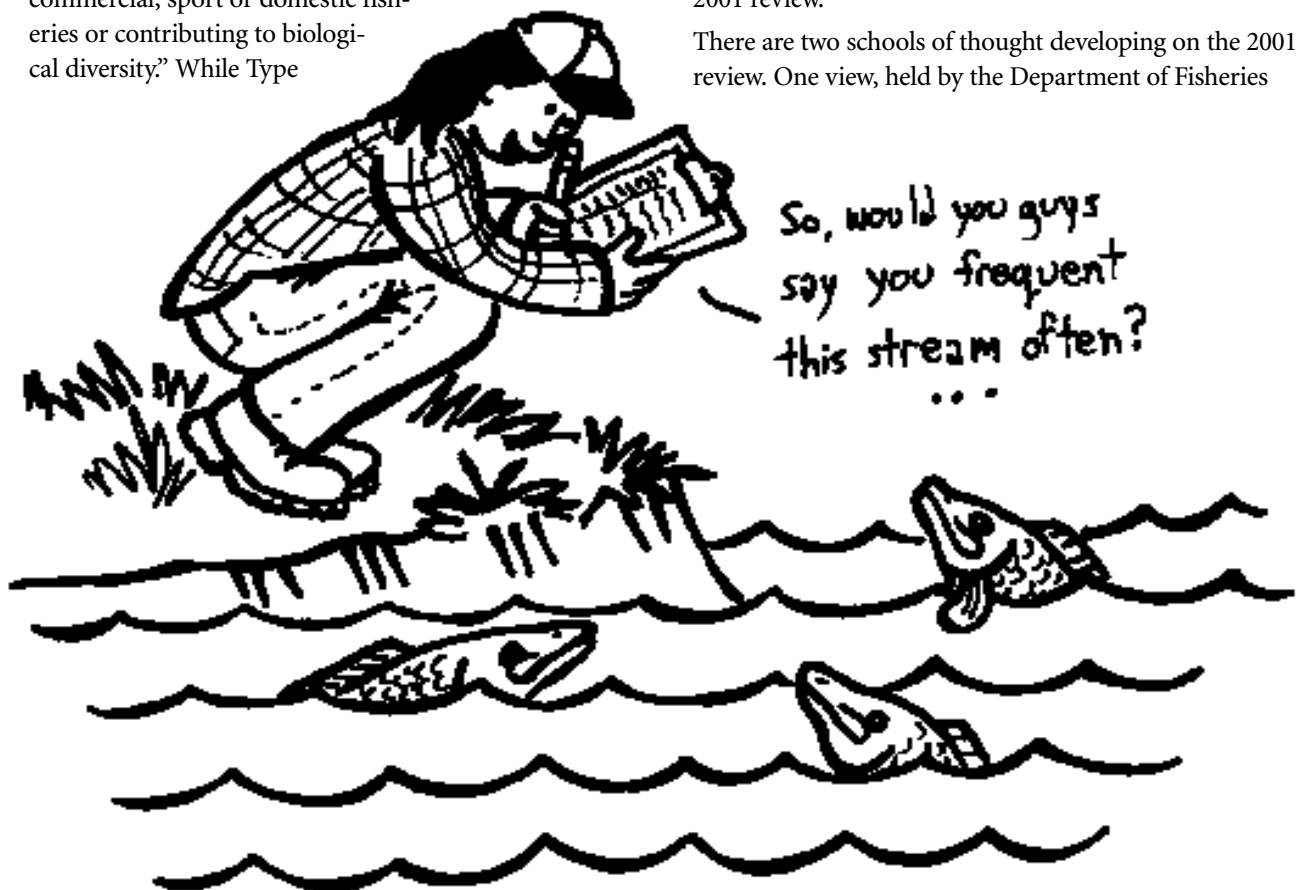
Each placer mining stream in the Yukon is given a classification based on the fishery resource resident in the stream. The level of sediment allowed is based on fish utilization. Type I streams are salmonid spawning streams with no discharge of sediment allowed. Type II streams are salmonid rearing streams. Type III are "streams with fish having significant use by First Nations, commercial, sport or domestic fisheries or contributing to biological diversity." While Type

IV streams are "streams with no fish or streams with fish having no significant use by First Nations, commercial, sport or domestic fisheries or not contributing to biological diversity." A fifth classification, Type V streams, applies to all Yukon streams which have not been categorized for placer mining purposes.

Since the Authorization was signed the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (CEAA) has replaced the Environmental Assessment Review Process (EARP) as the environmental review process for activity in the Yukon and the Umbrella Final Agreement and seven individual First Nations Final Agreements have been signed.

The Council of Yukon First Nations and the Yukon Conservation Society were invited to participate in the Yukon Placer Committee after the Authorization was signed and had no role in developing the Authorization. The role of the committee is to examine and make recommendations on individual stream classifications, deferments of fish habitat and requests for reclassification. The committee will also play a large role in the 2001 review.

There are two schools of thought developing on the 2001 review. One view, held by the Department of Fisheries





and Oceans (DFO) and the Yukon Conservation Society, is that a full review of the Authorization is required including the fundamental principles of the Authorization. The Yukon Salmon Committee is participating as an observer to the Placer Committee and is seeking full membership. The Salmon Committee supports a full review of the Authorization.

The second school of thought, held by the Klondike Placer Mining Association (KPMA), the Yukon Territorial Government (YTG) and the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) is that the Authorization only needs some fine tuning. The Council of Yukon First Nations has not yet developed a position on the review. The question of public review versus an internal committee review is also being discussed. There is currently a commitment from DFO for a full public review but there is considerable pressure from certain members to limit the public process. The scope of the review and process will be determined this year and YCS will continue to press for a full, public review.

The new mining land use regulations require that each operating placer operation have an operating plan in

place and approved before production begins for the 2000 season. There were 307 valid placer water licenses as of November 1999; each of these licensed operations requires an approved operating plan. These plans are being reviewed and approved in a piecemeal manner as they are received, with no attempt to review cumulative impacts. YCS believes that there is a need for a co-ordinated, watershed based review of cumulative terrestrial impacts of placer mining. YTG Renewable Resources should be conducting reviews of impacts on terrestrial riparian habitat, small riparian mammals, migration corridors and vegetation. The environmental screenings which were done by the Water Board on these operations concentrated on water and fish, not terrestrial impacts and the federal government is relying on these screenings as complete.

The coming year promises to be an active one on the placer mining front and YCS will continue to press for a full review of the effects of individual placer operations as well as the cumulative impacts on watersheds. The fight to require best practices from placer operators will also continue.

bob vandijken

Yukon Environmental Training Trust Fund — 1999 Report

The Yukon Environmental Training Trust Fund (YETTF) was initiated on March 3, 1999 and signed off by the Yukon Conservation Society and the Department of Education. An amount of \$150,000 was made available for training in a fairly broad range of activities to support people working on environmental issues by improving their occupational skills.

A committee was created to set up a training plan which included establishing criteria for the eligibility of projects and activities that the fund would be used for, and to review applications for funding and to manage the business of the fund. The committee members are Teresa Earle from YCS, Natalie Edelson from Nornet, Dave Hayley from Raven Recycling and Rob McClure, chair, from Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS). All members are volunteers, of course. YCS was chosen to administer the fund.

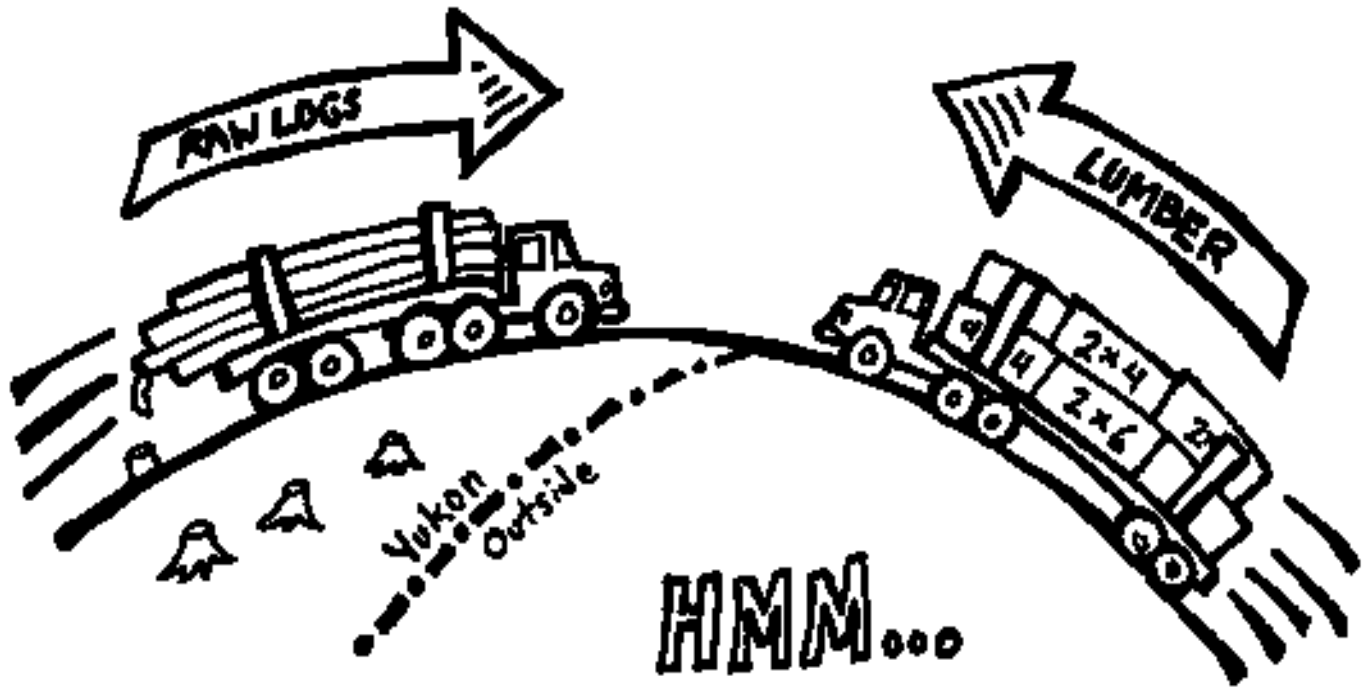
The committee met seven times in 1999. Several meetings were spent ironing out the criteria and creating an appli-

cation form that would capture the information needed for the training proposals. One of the requirements is that there are in-kind or other sources of funding for proposals. The first request was approved in June and many followed in the fall.

Teresa worked with YCS to consolidate their training needs. YCS and CPAWS co-operated on two workshops. Several requests were approved for individuals to get a grasp of current mining issues. A GIS course was being considered for partial funding but at the time there were no enviros ready to make a six-week commitment. We expect that this course will come back to the Yukon with more lead time available for people to register and for YETTF to help out.

Total expenditure for the year was \$ 21,998.02, involving 73 participants. The fund is still actively searching for good training opportunities. In particular, we are interested in those that can be brought to the Yukon.

rob mc clure, Chair YETTF



Timber Regulations Update

Stumpage Fees and Strange Bedfellows

You may have been puzzled in January, hearing in the media that YCS was supporting loggers' and millers' criticism of the federal Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development's (DIAND) proposed stumpage fee hike. (Stumpage fees are the price that loggers pay the government per cubic meter for the wood they cut.) This might seem inconsistent as one could argue that driving loggers out of business might be a good way to protect the forest. However, YCS has always supported small-scale, local, sustainable forestry businesses. And, by driving local sawmills out of business, the higher stumpage fees would likely create a boom and bust situation with logs flowing south when prices are high, and no forestry employment at all when prices are low.

The changes to stumpage fees are in the proposed revisions to the Yukon Timber Regulations. Originally, the revised stumpage fees were meant to be a two-tiered system, with higher fees for raw log exports, and lower fees for wood that was locally milled. However, the lawyers in Ottawa decided that under NAFTA we are not allowed to

give our local processors this kind of advantage, and so the higher rate was applied to all wood logged in the Yukon.

A problem with the proposed new stumpage fees is that they are based on open market log sales in northern British Columbia. This is not appropriate because the Yukon's forest industry is so different from BC's. Not only are our trees different, we don't have the economies of scale that result from the vast amount of wood cut in BC. Perhaps most importantly, most of BC's wood is allocated in long term tenures. Since companies get deals on the wood in their tenures, they can afford to pay more for open market wood.

This is not to say that YCS is advocating that stumpage fees should go down from current rates! Local industry has obviously adjusted to these rates — there is currently far more demand for cutting permits than there is wood. In the short term it would probably make sense to keep stumpage fees where they are while a longer term strategy is worked out. There is more than enough capacity in the Yukon to mill every stick of wood that is cut. This means



that it should be possible to establish stumpage fees based on Yukon market conditions. It also means that there is no reason for any wood whatsoever to leave the territory as raw logs. If NAFTA prevents us from limiting raw log exports through differential stumpage fees, we'll just have to ban log exports directly. BC does it, so it's obviously possible.

'Priority Harvest' — a Scary Concept

DIAND has been justifying raising stumpage fees on normal wood, by the rock bottom prices they want to charge for 'priority harvest' areas. The revised Timber Regulations propose to have loggers bid on 'priority harvest' wood, which is fine. But the upset, or starting price, is only 25 cents per cubic meter.

What exactly are priority harvest areas? Actually, the Timber Regs aren't clear on that. In the past, 'salvage logging' or 'priority harvest' has been an excuse to log volumes over and above the annual allowable cut, in order to recover wood affected by fire, blow-down, bug kill, etc. before it loses its economic value. The implication of this policy, is that dead and dying wood has no ecological value, which of course is far from true. Standing dead and coarse woody material play vital roles as habitat for birds, insects and small mammals, as well as preventing erosion, providing sheltered micro-sites for plant regeneration, storing moisture and returning nutrients to the

soil. While it is probably not harmful to remove some of the dead trees after a natural disturbance, we should not be encouraging stripping these areas, through low stumpage fees. And we should certainly not allow volumes from disturbed areas to be over and above the annual allowable cut.

Perhaps the scariest thing is that the definition of 'priority harvest' in the revised Timber Regulations, includes so-called 'over-mature' stands, which are at least 30% dead or dying. Old growth forests are typically about 30% dead or dying — that's what gives them their diversity of age classes and richness of habitat. DIAND representatives have told us that the '30% dead or dying' definition will not be used as an excuse to log old growth, but as the revised regulations stand, there is no guarantee that this will not occur.

As a result of the huge objections that have been raised over the revised Timber Regulations, DIAND held public meetings in Watson Lake and Whitehorse. From what the DIAND representatives said at the Whitehorse meetings, they seem to intend to have meetings shortly to discuss the amendments. Hopefully this will happen, and hopefully it won't just be window dressing. We'll keep you posted.

karen baltgailis

Forest Management Planning in Haines Junction

Community Representative Needed

The first forest management planning process in the Yukon is happening in Champagne and Aishihik First Nation (CAFN) traditional territory. The planning team will make recommendations regarding where, how much and what kind of logging will be allowed in CAFN traditional territory. Logging in the beetle kill area will be on the agenda.

YCS is at the table, but the forest management planning team has requested that we find a local person to represent us. YCS' Forestry Coordinator, Karen Baltgailis, would work closely with this person, and would attend most of the meetings with her/him. A small per diem is being considered to help compensate for the time commitment. You do not need specialized knowledge to fill

this position, but an interest and a willingness to be a regular and active participant.

If we are unable to find a local representative YCS is still welcome to be part of the process to contribute knowledge and ideas, but will not be among the decision makers.

This is an exciting opportunity for someone who lives in the Haines Junction area — to have a voice in the future of their local forests. Please pass the word along to conservation-minded friends and acquaintances. If someone is interested and hasn't gotten around to becoming a YCS member, we can always sign 'em up!

For more information, please contact Karen Baltgailis at the YCS office.

Energy Efficiency House Calls

Pilot Project Summary Report

In the fall of 1999 The Yukon Conservation Society formed a partnership with the Yukon Energy Corporation to implement a pilot project to reduce residential energy requirements and enhance climate change knowledge in 125 homes in the Yukon. Funding for the pilot project was provided as part of the Yukon government investment in energy efficiency in response to the Final Report of the Cabinet Commission on Energy. Of the 125 homes visited during the pilot project, 99 were in Whitehorse and 26 were in Dawson City.

During the House Calls Pilot Project, many participants expressed an interest in finding out more about the results of the project. We have prepared the following summary in response to your requests.

Recruiting Participants

There was a tremendous response to advertising in Whitehorse. The target of 100 homes was reached within four days of the first newspaper ad. In total, advertising resulted in 170 individual applications as well as interest from the executive of a 95-unit condominium association. People were still calling to sign up for the project for two months after the application deadline.

A Quick Snapshot of Participants

In response to a self-defined question included in the project survey, participants ranked their household electrical energy consumption as follows: low consumption: 9, medium to low: 35, average: 42, average/high: 9, and high consumption: 5. Participation was evenly distributed between old and young, male and female, single people and families. Just over half the households had children.

Out of 100 homes visited, almost half of the respondents indicated they had participated in previous energy efficiency initiatives.

How Does the House Calls Project Save Energy?

The House Calls Project was designed to 'help people help themselves.' People were shown a variety of energy saving devices and given a high quality demonstration compact fluorescent energy saving light bulb. People's hot water tanks were wrapped with extra insulation and in some cases the hot water temperature was reduced. A package was also handed out with further information on

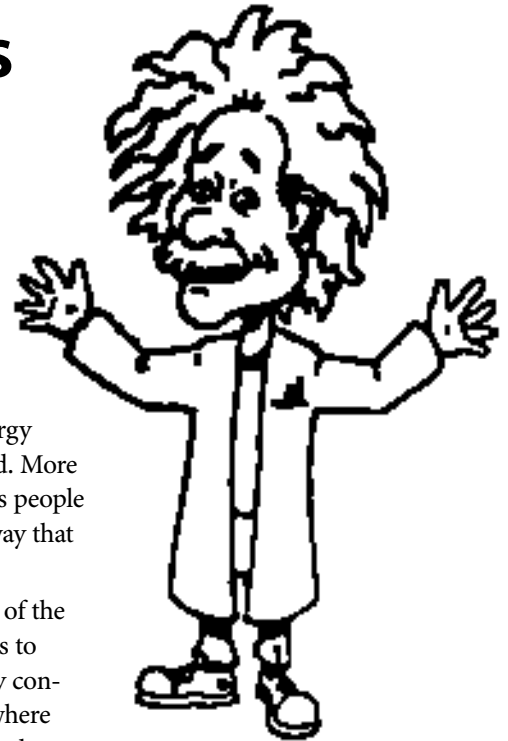
how to alter behavior for additional savings. At least initially, the only savings we can quantify were from the actual wrap on the hot water tank and the energy saving bulb we replaced. More savings may show up as people have time to alter the way that they use energy.

One large-scale benefit of the House Calls Project was to reduce electrical energy consumption specifically where diesel fuel is used to produce electricity. The "WAF" (Whitehorse-Aishihik-Faro) electrical system has considerable hydro (water) capacity. Diesel fuel is only used to meet peak demand, so the savings for Whitehorse houses (see results below) include only the energy created by diesel generation. Other Yukon communities rely on diesel generators exclusively, so wrapping hot water tanks and using compact fluorescent bulbs results in year round savings.

For Whitehorse homes, we calculated annual savings for 180 days during the winter months when the WAF system might need to meet peaks with diesel. For Dawson City, where diesel is used for electricity production all year round, annual savings are calculated for 365 days. In both communities, estimates for lighting only include winter months due to lights not being necessary in summer months. Additional savings will accrue if people replace other lightbulbs as well, or switch to lower wattage bulbs for lights that are on for an extended time.

Savings Calculations

We based our savings calculations on information from the product manufacturers combined with participants estimated consumption or energy use. In the following summary, please note that one 100 watt bulb burning for 10 hours uses 1 kWh (kilowatt hour). One MWh (megawatt hour) is 1000 kWh. An "average" Yukon home uses about 1000 kWh (or 1 MWh) of electricity per



Professor Enerstein helping us use energy wisely



month. Total energy savings from the pilot project are estimated at 34.2 MWh.

Savings in Whitehorse

Hot Water Tanks: Out of 99 house calls, 11 homes already had wrapped hot water tanks. Savings from the 88 newly wrapped tanks will amount to 19 MWh.

Light Bulbs: According to participants' estimated use of each light, compact fluorescent replacements installed during the project save 3.6 MWh.

Savings in Dawson City

Hot Water Tanks: Annual energy savings from wrapping 24 tanks will be 10.5 MWh.

Light Bulbs: According to participants' estimates of use for each light, compact fluorescent replacements saved 1.1 MWh.

Additional Savings

Details noted by the energy technicians indicate that there were additional savings not anticipated at the outset of the project. During the house calls, approximately one third of the hot water tank temperatures were turned down from the factory setting of 60°C (or higher) to 54°C. (Energy technicians estimate that 10% of the hot water tanks they wrapped were already turned down to prevent burns to young children or to save energy.)

As well, nearly 90% of respondents indicated their intent to purchase more compact fluorescent lightbulbs although cost and fixture limitations are deterrents. Additional savings will accumulate from the use of low flow showerheads or doing laundry in cold or warm water.

What's Next

Now that we have a success under our belts with the House Calls Pilot Project, we're ready to expand. We are also ready to try a new pilot project, which also has potential to help reduce both greenhouse gas emissions and the Yukon's contributions to climate change.

The House Calls Project 2000

Information collected from the House Calls Pilot Project was used to assess the potential of expanding the House Calls Project. The pilot project was a success from many perspectives. People are generally interested in finding out what they can do to save energy and to reduce the impacts of climate change.

The pilot project did not include an analysis of actual changes in energy consumption however there is a measurable predicted reduction. Since Whitehorse is mainly a

hydroelectric community, the savings are less significant than they would be in diesel-electric communities. The reason for using Whitehorse homes in the pilot project was to reduce travel costs until the value of the project was confirmed. Now that we know the project works, we want to conduct more diesel-community house calls. Pending approval of a funding application, the House Calls Project will be expanded to include two thousand Yukon homes.

The Penguin Pilot Project

During the House Call Pilot Project, participants completed a hot water use survey indicating when hot water is used in the home on weekdays and on weekends. Information from the survey was used to document patterns of household hot water consumption to determine the practicality of using timer technology to shift hot water tank loads away from peak times of day.

Results of the survey have led to the development of another pilot project. This new project is intended to shift electricity use in times of peak load. On the WAF system, peak loads requiring diesel use occur in winter. Generally speaking, there are two daytime peaks, one in the morning and one in the late afternoon. If we can reduce these peaks, we may be able to avoid the use of diesel.

Normally the elements on hot water tanks start heating right after the tank refills with cold water, which means that in Whitehorse alone, about 8000 hot water tanks could be contributing to the morning peak! One approach to peak reduction that works in other jurisdictions is to delay the 'recharge time' for hot water tanks until later in the day.

About two thirds of the Whitehorse participants indicated minimal or no hot water consumption during the day on weekdays. We are asking 50 of these households to participate in our new pilot project (The Penguin Project). The project involves installing a pre-programmed timer on the hot water tank which will turn the hot water tank elements off after morning use and turn them on again later in the day to ensure a fully heated tank when people return home from school or work. The timers would only function on weekdays in the winter. Hot water would remain "normal" on weekends and in the summer. If there is the occasional time when hot water is needed but not available there is an override button to turn the tank on again.

The project is slated to start in February. If you are interested in participating, call Craig at 668-5234.

craig olson

Fifteen Seconds of Fame

*“Don’t it always seem to go
That you don’t know what you’ve got
Til’ it’s gone:
They paved paradise and put up a parking lot”*

joni mitchell

How we house ourselves has a lot to do with how we transport ourselves, and what our environmental quality is like. What Joni Mitchell sang about in the 1970’s, is true of the Yukon, and many other wild spaces today. Our transportation and urban planning really does pave paradises in favour of parking lots. This became very clear this winter when the city engineers proposed to asphalt a significant wildlife area near Quartz Road in order to speed up commuters’ driving time by 15 seconds.

The reasoning behind this kind of thinking bears some examination. It is about the philosophies used in urban planning in Whitehorse. A lot of it can be laid at the foot of ‘country residential’ zoning and the decisions made to support such zoning. Country residential zoning is the ultimate form of car-oriented land use: large lots placed on trunk roads, some 20 km or more from the centre of the city. There’s a further ‘ex-urbia’ which is housing that is just outside the city limits, at roughly 30 km from downtown.

The appeal of these places is that people live in what resembles nature, while still being within easy driving distance of...well...everything. And that’s the snag. Because ‘country residential’ living keeps numbers of people per square kilometre so low it is very difficult for these areas to support and sustain public transit, fire coverage, education or health care services. Everything has to come from town, and pretty well everybody is assumed to get there by car.

Which brings us to the push to pave wetlands in order to shave 15 seconds off of a commuter’s driving time. The explosion of ‘country residential’ housing and its dependence on private motor vehicles may be one of the reasons why the Yukon’s car population has doubled since 1976. Though the human population has shrunk, it is certainly a powerful driving force behind upgrading approach roads to Whitehorse, and for the massive construction of arterial roads over the past decade.

As a result, bird watchers have had to fight to preserve habitat from road-based destruction, while we’ve all held our breath to see if the salmon will cope with the Robert Service Way widening. This is not to mention the numbers of people who’ve given up on clean air in Whitehorse during the winter car-idling and wood stove burning season. Nor our promotion to the infamous ranks of the top 15 cities in Canada for carbon monoxide — the tailpipe stuff that kills people in closed garages.

Living streets, like Second Avenue, have become wide arterial roads, designed, in the classic freeway philosophy of the 1960’s cloverleaf overpass, to speed hurried drivers through the city and out to their car-oriented suburbs, or ‘ex-urban’ enclaves like ‘country residential’ lots ringing Whitehorse.

To support this ravenous transportation by private motor vehicle, ‘living streets’ which are quiet enough for pedestrians to chat with one another in a normal voice, where cafes thrive, and where public concerts can be given, turn into large, noisy, multi-laned arterial streets like Second Avenue, or parking lots for cars.

In cities like Edmonton, Montreal, Ottawa, and Victoria, urban environmentalists have fought such street expansions to a standstill, and have made it clear that unlivable streets are not the automatic costs of ‘mythical progress’. In these cities the cost has been made plain to the public of an urban planning approach which aims to shave off those famous 15 seconds of transit time, by putting cars first. People are starting, across Canada, to question why it is that pedestrians, children, cyclists, and animals have to come dead last in transportation planning.

Is Whitehorse ready for this change in urban planning? There’s a lot at stake here. Not just accessible urban green spaces like the Quartz Road area, but also the very basic aim of having a downtown where people would like to live, as opposed to the Detroit model, where downtown is a concrete hell that people drive through with their doors locked.

There are other northern towns which have gone down the classic 1960’s ‘15 seconds faster’ approach to urban planning. In Fairbanks, an aerial photo will show that almost half of the available land in the urban core is dedicated to car parking or car driving. Huge galvanized fences bisect the town cutting off one neighbourhood from another — unless you drive a car. Crossing the

street is prohibited by the same fences, culminating in three story high 'cattle-chute' pedestrian overpasses which grudgingly allow pedestrians to cross streets as long as they're willing to climb up and down six flights of stairs.

Is this where we want to go as a community? It's not like we can't see the costs of what has been done already. The

Ok, so what's the alternative? Well, we could start saving wild spaces that are inside and around cities. We could make town more livable and encourage people to live within walking, cycling and public transport distance to services such as health clinics and libraries. Now, this may mean that you won't own your own little slice of bush nirvana in the classic 'country residential' mode. But it also might mean that you could hobble to the doctor's office if you've got stomach cramps, instead of being faced with a dangerous half hour drive where your cramps could put you and your truck into the ditch.

It would also mean fewer days of absenteeism from work at -40°C, because it's too cold to run the truck. It might also mean visiting cafes in the summer, and coffee houses in the winter, on foot. It might even mean less pressure on people to drink, and then have to drive that 20 km home again, hoping not to run into somebody else, or the RCMP. You might even walk up the clay

cliffs with your backpack to catch a plane Outside for a conference, and ogle the bald eagles on the way to the airport!

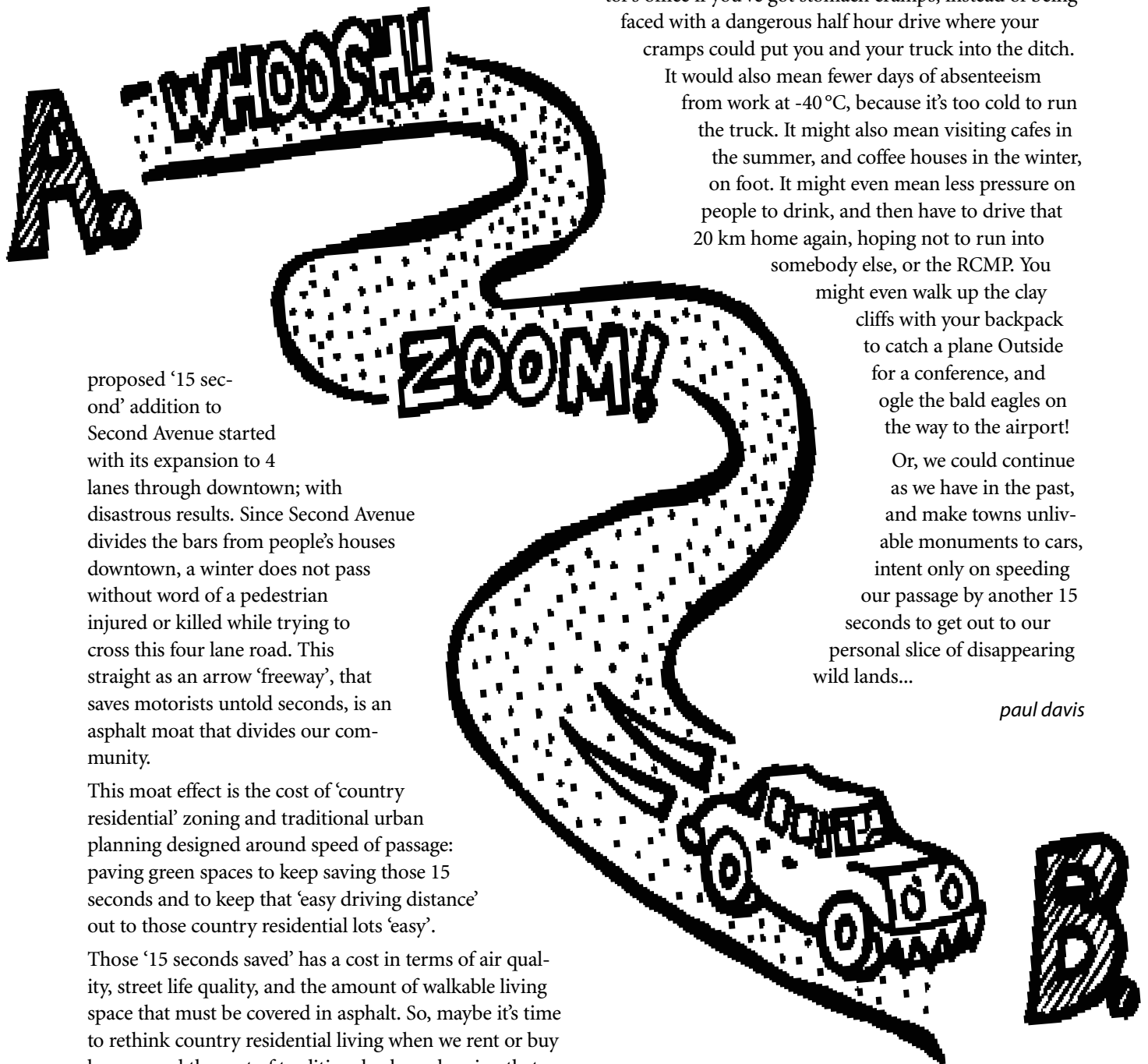
Or, we could continue as we have in the past, and make towns unlivable monuments to cars, intent only on speeding our passage by another 15 seconds to get out to our personal slice of disappearing wild lands...

paul davis

proposed '15 second' addition to Second Avenue started with its expansion to 4 lanes through downtown; with disastrous results. Since Second Avenue divides the bars from people's houses downtown, a winter does not pass without word of a pedestrian injured or killed while trying to cross this four lane road. This straight as an arrow 'freeway', that saves motorists untold seconds, is an asphalt moat that divides our community.

This moat effect is the cost of 'country residential' zoning and traditional urban planning designed around speed of passage: paving green spaces to keep saving those 15 seconds and to keep that 'easy driving distance' out to those country residential lots 'easy'.

Those '15 seconds saved' has a cost in terms of air quality, street life quality, and the amount of walkable living space that must be covered in asphalt. So, maybe it's time to rethink country residential living when we rent or buy homes, and the sort of traditional urban planning that we've put up with.





Volunteer Development a Priority at YCS

We Want YOU!!!

Volunteerism is an integral part of our social fabric. For the Yukon Conservation Society, volunteerism is the stuff of our organizational fabric which enables our existence. The impulses that motivate people to pitch in vary widely, but at YCS there is a common theme, a concern for and a desire to promote the conservation ethic in the Yukon.

We hope that the relationship between YCS and its volunteers is one of mutual benefit. The organization maintains its wonderful base of volunteers who direct, contribute and participate, while the volunteers benefit from training opportunities, experience, new knowledge, travel, relationship building and personal satisfaction (not to mention Alpine Bakery freezer bread!).

From Friday volunteers to Katima-victims to scores of hard working committee members, YCS is rich with human resources! Built from the ground up, the society relies on a steady stream of eager individuals who share strong convictions about conservation issues in the Yukon. Not surprisingly, YCS has identified volunteer development as a high priority. This is one of the reasons we are currently setting up a structured volunteer program — so we can better meet the needs of our volunteers.

One option for being a regular volunteer is as a YCS director. The society is guided by a board of volunteer directors who meet once a month to discuss issues, make decisions and strategize. This forum is lively, informal and always interesting! Having a broad base of people with different interests, experience and backgrounds is valuable to our board. If you are interested in joining our board of directors — or would like to nominate someone — please contact Lorill at YCS (668-5678) to obtain a board information package. Board members will be voted in at our Annual General Meeting on March 28, 2000.

So...are you fulfilling your potential as a volunteer? Does satisfaction, comradeship and a sense of purpose appeal to you? Are you flexible, keen to learn, and interested in conservation issues? If so, we urge you to come in and explore the myriad of volunteer opportunities with YCS. With such a broad range of issues and organizational challenges, there is certainly something here for everyone! And to those of you who are already dedicated YCS volunteers...thank you!!

teresa earle



New Volunteer Initiatives

This past winter YCS has been actively looking at ways to organize volunteers and volunteer opportunities. A lot of interest and energy is offered on a regular basis by willing volunteers and the challenge is to make effective use of their time and to match interest with issues and tasks. We now have a volunteer coordinator, Suzanne den Ouden. Suzanne will spend Mondays coordinating YCS volunteers.

In addition to our core of long term volunteers who continue to contribute to the organization in a variety of ways, we have some new volunteer initiatives.

Phase 1 of the Placer Mining Project was completed by Karen Sedgewick who spent many hours at the Water Board pouring over placer mining water licenses. Her background research lays the foundation for our participation in the *Placer Mining Act* review which begins next year.



The dark and scary basement, stuffed full of treasures by environmental packrats, is now being sorted and organized by brave Suzanne den Ouden.

YCS volunteers and staff will be showcased in a Photo Gallery album created by Tyla Crowe. This Photo Gallery is a way for the public to get to know the staff and volunteers and what they do. No longer will you hear the question... "Who's that guy with the beard?"

We have begun the initial stages of creating a Bird Box Program. This volunteer program will allow the public a chance to volunteer a couple hours a week or a Sunday afternoon with the family. This long term project would entail cleaning, repairing, mapping, hanging and monitoring bird boxes in the Whitehorse area. A special thanks to Amelie Rousseau who has begun some of the research on this project.

How You Can Get Involved

1. Assist in the creation of the Bird Box Volunteer Project through research, coordination, funding applications for bird box supplies and construction, etc. Or, stay posted on the project and help out in the field this spring, summer and fall.
2. Here's a great way to get to know the environmental issues of the Yukon and improve your written and communication skills.

Help create Media Content Kits on the various environmental issues throughout the Yukon. With the assistance of Teresa Earle, these kits will be created to educate and inform the media and special interest groups on various issues and projects. The contents of this kit would include: background of the issue, key facts, YCS' position, question and answer sheets, etc.

3. Want to put your interest and knowledge on forestry to good use? Here's how you can get involved:

Assist in the editing and final touch ups of the Forestry Slide Presentation and potentially become the individual that makes these presentations to the public.

Background knowledge on forestry is needed for this position.

For more information on these and other volunteer opportunities at YCS, contact Suzanne den Ouden at the YCS office on Mondays.

A special thanks to those who contributed to the 340 volunteer hours logged at YCS since December 1st, 1999!!

tanis davey



YES! I want to help protect the Yukon's environment and support YCS!

I'd like to make a tax deductible gift!

- \$50 \$100 \$500 \$1000 \$ Other _____

Sign me up as a 1999 member (or renew my current membership).

Membership includes getting *Walk Softly* newsletter four times a year. Memberships run January to December.

- \$10 student \$15 individual \$25 family
- \$25 subscriber (receive *Walk Softly* without membership rights)

new!

- I am donating \$100 or more so I get a free YCS membership for the year!
- I am donating \$1000 or more so I get a YCS lifetime membership!

PAYMENT METHOD: Total \$ _____

- Cheque enclosed (payable to Yukon Conservation Society)
- I'd rather charge my VISA:

VISA # _____ Expiry date ____/____

Signature for VISA: _____

NAME(S) _____

ADDRESS _____

POSTAL CODE _____ PHONE _____

- Yes, add me to the YCS members email list (and get no more than two informative emails a month on Yukon issues or YCS activities).

EMAIL _____

Mail your form to Yukon Conservation Society, Box 4163, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 3S9

Yukon Conservation Society

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