

The YCS QUARTERLY

Newsletter of the Yukon Conservation Society

December 1994

INSIDE: *Lawsuit ♦ Wolfkill Position Statement ♦ Beetles and Blowdown ♦ Swine Bedding ♦ News*

Taking the government to court over “Killer Gold”

The Yukon Conservation Society (YCS), represented by Sierra Legal Defense Fund, is suing the federal government for its refusal to assess the environmental impacts of exploration work on a block of mineral claims in the Aishihik area. The claim block is in the heart of the area where the wolf kill program has been carried out by the Yukon government for the last two years. It is a critical habitat area for the Aishihik caribou herd

The federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs (DIAND) issued a land use permit at the end of August allowing heavy mining equipment to travel across the calving grounds of the caribou herd on its way to the “Killer Gold” mining claims. The Yukon government, which has killed over 100 wolves so far in the name of protecting this herd, endorsed this access to the claim block.

Land use and mining legislation are interpreted by the DIAND in a way that allows for mining companies to stake public lands and then, as part of their exploration work, strip forest cover, carry out extensive bulldozing, trenching and drilling, build airstrips, camps or roads, all without any permit or environmental assessment.

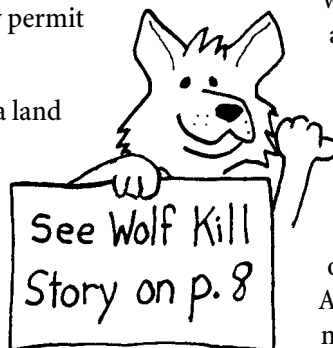
In this case the company did have to get a land use permit in order to move its heavy equipment across crown land to its claims. This is how the proposed activities became known to YCS and other stakeholders and became the focus of public debate. However, DIAND did not consider comments about the exploration work as relevant to its review of the permit application. It refused to assess the environmental impacts of the planned trench digging and other mineral exploration work even though extensive input from biologists, First

Nations, environmentalists and outfitters predicted the exploration work could significantly affect the caribou and Dall Sheep that rely on the area.

The lawsuit contests DIAND’s issuance of that permit on three grounds.

First, DIAND only looked at the environmental impacts of the access to the claim, and failed to consider the consequences of the work the equipment was going to do once it reached the claims. It will be argued that DIAND should have reviewed the overall impacts that would result from issuing the land use permit.

Secondly, Section 76(1) of the antiquated Yukon Quartz Mining Act (YQMA) states that the Minister may limit the use and occupation of a mineral claim to the extent considered “necessary” for efficient operation of the claim. DIAND has never exercised its authority under this section and the mining industry has been allowed to carry out exploration work without regulation. If, as will be argued, the Minister is obligated by this section to make a decision on which exploratory activities are necessary, and therefore permissible, then an environmental screening should be triggered.



The final argument centers on section 3.3 of the Territorial Lands Act (TLA). This section states that nothing in the Act “shall be construed as limiting the operation of the Yukon Quartz Mining Act...” DIAND has interpreted this section as meaning mineral claim holders are totally exempt from having to obtain land use permits under the TLA and, therefore, are exempt from undergoing environmental screening prior to exploratory work proceeding. However, it will be asserted that requiring permits and environmental screenings does not “limit the operation” of the



YQMA. Placing conditions on land use activities on a mineral claim, as long as these do not prevent development of the claim, would still be consistent with the meaning of section 3.3.

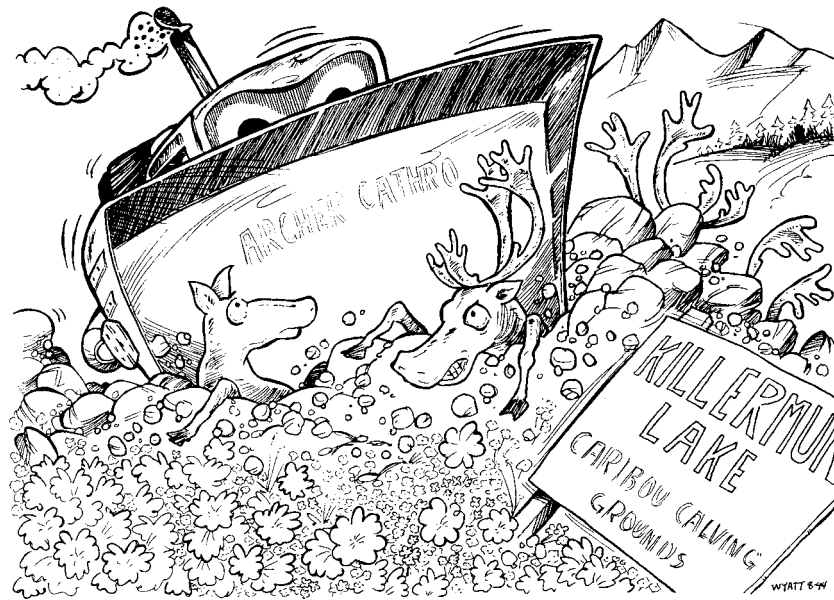
The fact that a mining company can go into one of the most sensitive areas in this territory and carry out unregulated exploration work is ridiculous. People were appalled and frustrated by DIAND's dismissal of their concerns about the impact this activity could have on caribou and sheep. The Yukon government's endorsement of this activity in their 'wolf control study area' is equally appalling; they will kill wolves to try and increase the caribou population but they won't protect the land the caribou depend on.

Since November 1990, the YCS has been active on the Yukon Mining Advisory Committee (YMAC) which was established to advise the government on how to reform mining legislation in the Yukon. The committee, which also includes members from the mining sector, submitted its recommendations to the Minister of DIAND in April 1992. The legislation has still not been amended.

Although the government has kickstarted the YMAC process again and YCS is continuing to work for change through this committee, there have been so many missed deadlines in this process that any timeframe for achieving the YMAC recommendations is purely speculation.

Initial exploration work was commenced on the Killer Gold property soon after the permit was issued in late August. The company has said the trenching program will continue next summer and that there will likely be diamond drilling as well. It is important to have exploration activities on the Killer Gold property assessed before another season of exploration begins, before the impact on the herd may be irrevocable.

Despite a request made by the YCS last June to have the area temporarily withdrawn from further mineral



with permission from the Yukon News

staking – until the caribou herd reached a healthy size – the number of claims staked in this herd's habitat has doubled over the summer. The Yukon government has refused to lobby the federal government for a moratorium on staking.

The arguments in the YCS lawsuit parallel those in the Bonnet Plume lawsuit which Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society's Yukon chapter filed last May. That case challenges the federal government's issuance of a permit to construct a winter road into mineral claims along the Bonnet Plume River. Although the river had been nominated as a Canadian Heritage River, there was no assessment of the subsequent exploration activities, which included the construction of a 1.3 kilometre airstrip. It is hoped that these cases will be heard early next spring.

Although Sierra Legal Defence Fund is providing free legal services for this lawsuit, the Yukon Conservation Society will be covering expected court costs and related expenses.

jennifer ellis

If you would like to support our fight to have effective environmental assessment of mining in the Yukon, send your tax deductible donation to YCS, Box 4163, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 3T3.

Wildlands Vision

For many people the dream of seeing a wild Grizzly Bear or Timber Wolf is one they cherish yet may never fulfill. Living in the Yukon is perhaps the best way for serious dreamers to experience wildlife in a truly wild setting. While industrial development is no stranger to the north, the Yukon remains one of the few regions in North America with sufficient wild spaces for large carnivores like the Grizzly Bear and Timber Wolf or vast herds such as the Porcupine Caribou Herd. We must take steps now to ensure the survival of our wildlands. The *Yukon Wildlands Project*, sponsored by YCS, CPAWS-Yukon, and Friends of Yukon Rivers, provides an avenue for action towards a future for truly great wild spaces.

The North American Wildlands Project uses concepts developed by the science of Conservation Biology to create a holistic protected areas network in North America. Wildlands bases the development of protected area networks on the spatial requirements of “umbrella species” – large carnivores and great herds. The protection of small fragments of representative habitats is not sufficient if we are to maintain our natural biological diversity. Small or isolated wildlife refuges cannot meet the needs of wide ranging wildlife like Grizzly Bears or Barren Ground Caribou.

The Alaskan and Yukon North Slope are the calving grounds of the Porcupine Caribou Herd. Every year the caribou make a spectacular long distance migration from their North Slope calving grounds to their wintering grounds which extend from Alaska, across the Yukon and into the NWT. The survival of the Porcupine Caribou Herd requires that we recognize the importance of their calving grounds, wintering grounds and traditional migration routes. As development threatens the health of the Porcupine Caribou Herd, we must establish a network of protected areas connected by protected corridors which recognizes the whole life cycle of the herd. Countless species with lesser spatial needs will benefit when we protect land by considering

the requirements of *umbrella* species such as wolves, bears or great herds like the Porcupine Caribou Herd. This is the *Wildlands* vision.

The Yukon will undoubtedly play a key role in the *North American Wildlands Project* as the Yukon is one of the few areas where large carnivores and great herds still exist in a natural balance. Sadly, that balance is even threatened in the Yukon where unchecked resource extraction, overhunting, and habitat loss continue to consume our wildlife and wildlands.

The *Yukon Wildlands Project* is not a new group, rather it is the collective efforts of three of Yukon’s most active and effective environmental organizations. Wildlands will move away from fighting for every square foot of protected space on a watershed by watershed basis. Instead *Wildlands* will place these watersheds into a greater vision and it is this greater vision that we will be working toward.

For more information, or to get involved, call Juri Peepre of CPAWS-Yukon at 668-6321.

cameron eckert





Editorial

The YCS Quarterly

is published by the Yukon Conservation Society and is available free of charge to members of the Society. Memberships and information about the Society can be obtained by phoning the YCS at (403) 668-5678, by writing to Box 4163, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 3T3, or by visiting the YCS office at 302 Hawkins Street, Whitehorse.

We welcome newsletter submissions and letters to the editor.

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The common theme that connects many of the articles in this issue of our newsletter is not a sexy one. It is not one that fundraisers would even be tempted to use as a basis for a fundraising campaign. It is not one that pulls in volunteers off the streets. Yet it is something that we must tackle in virtually all of our advocacy work.

The theme is government process. Or should I say the lack of government process? Over the past summer and fall, the YCS has been lobbying hard for both the federal and Yukon governments to either adhere to the policies and procedures they have or improve the existing ones.

For example, this summer the federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs refused to do an environmental screening of mining exploration activities at Killermun Lake, located in heart of the wolf kill area. The YCS chose to sue the government in the hope that the courts will instruct the federal government to follow its own procedures, the federal Environmental Assessment Review Process Guidelines Order, and undertake an environmental screening of any future exploration in the area.

Antiquated federal forestry legislation and policies, which have led to a rush on Yukon forests that parallels the exploitive fever of 1898, have been a further target of YCS efforts. Although devolution of forestry is anticipated this spring, current federal government decisions are undermining the possibility of forestry as a renewable resource in south east Yukon.

The Yukon government has also failed to adhere to its policies. Although the Yukon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan was created with input from diverse sectors, and finally adopted by Cabinet last year, it is clear that the government is not abiding by the spirit or letter of the Plan.

These issues and others have kept YCS busy in the last months of 1994. They are not activities that most successful fundraising campaigns are based on. We don't have a park with clear boundaries, a specific old-growth forest or a threatened species that we are (at this time) making a pitch for. But if we are successful in getting government to abide by or improve its policies, habitat, forests and species will, in the end, be protected.

And so, our simple fundraising pitch: consider giving a donation to YCS this year end. They are tax deductible, worthwhile and very much appreciated.

Happy Holidays!

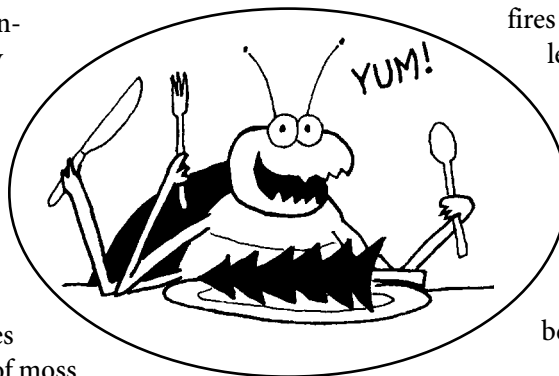
Spruce Beetles and Yukon Forests

The Setting

Close your eyes and picture a young spruce forest in the Yukon. Let me help a bit ... first, the more visible parts of the forest: a mixture of spruce and deciduous trees such as aspen, poplar and birch. These trees provide shelter and hiding cover for mammals and birds living in the forest. There are likely open areas in this young forest where willow, alder and other shrubs grow; moose and other ungulates depend on these shrubs for food. If you hunker down a bit, you may see lots of small plants growing underneath the shrubs and underneath each other. You may also see a few mosses and lichens growing on the forest floor.

In addition to plants, trees, mosses and lichens, the forest floor is home to a host of insects, and micro-organisms such as fungi and bacteria. These organisms are responsible for breaking down organic material such as fallen leaves and dead trees into smaller and smaller parts. The forest depends on these organisms for its supply of nutrients; they provide a vital link between the above-ground part of the forest and the soil.

As forest-time goes on, the slower-growing, but long-lived spruce trees begin to dominate the forest landscape. Since the deciduous trees need lots of direct light to grow, they begin to die off as the spruce trees become more abundant. This is a natural and very necessary part of the forest process. There are now fewer openings in the forest, and so there are fewer shrubs and understory plants growing under the spruce trees. The forest soils become colder because less light reaches the forest floor. The presence of moss and the accumulation of spruce needles insulates the soil, and further contributes to lower soil temperatures. As a result, there are not many spruce seedlings germinating in mature spruce forests.



As the forest ages, its growth rate slows down and the trees within become less vigorous. At this stage, individual trees and groups of trees are more susceptible to infection by insects and fungi. Insects and fungi feed on trees, weakening, and sometimes killing them. Fungi and bacteria in the soil can then consume the leaves, branches, and trunks of trees, and effectively recycle the nutrients back into the forest soil.

Periodically, large insect outbreaks occur; during a large outbreak, the fungi and bacteria in the soil are often unable to decompose the dead trees as quickly as the insects are killing the trees. The resulting build-up of standing and fallen dead trees becomes the fuel needed for fire to occur. Wildfire is the most important factor in maintaining the integrity of northern forests; it is a catalyst for the regeneration and renewal of the forest, and it also helps to keep insect populations in check.

Spruce Beetles

Spruce beetles are endemic to Yukon forests; at low levels they prefer to breed in weakened trees, and trees that have blown down. However, with abundant food and breeding materials available, beetle population levels can increase, and emerge into healthy forests.

Over time, the active suppression of forest fires can increase the number of older, less vigorous trees in the forest; prime spruce beetle habitat. Areas where logging activities have left behind piles of logs and other tree parts are also prime spruce beetle habitat. A series of warm winters can also contribute to increasing beetle populations.

There have been documented reports of spruce beetle outbreaks in the Yukon since the late 1940's. The natural population level of spruce beetles in Yukon forests is unknown.



Spruce Beetles in the Haines Junction Area

During the summer of 1994, aerial surveys identified approximately 35,000 hectares of spruce forest in and adjacent to Kluane National Park that have been affected by the spruce beetle. Of the affected area outside the park, approximately one quarter is lightly affected, where fewer than 10% of the trees in a given area have been killed by spruce beetle; the remaining area has been moderately (10-30% of the trees have been killed by beetles) to severely (greater than 30% beetle-killed) affected.

To address this situation, several management options are currently being considered by Forest Resources (DIAND), including a major harvest of dead and infected trees. However, it is acknowledged that there really is no way of stopping the spread of the beetles (short of burning the entire area).

The YCS Forest Committee does not support an intensive harvest of the infected area. We advocate the concept of ecosystem management. The fundamental goal of ecosystem management is to maintain an intact ecosystem while obtaining a range of benefits from it. Within this management regime we recognize the vital role of the spruce beetle and other insects in the overall functioning of the forest. However, we fully support the local harvest of beetle killed trees for local residents, as long as no new access is created.

Blowdown in the La Biche Area

Patches of blown down trees have been confirmed in the La Biche area, located in the extreme southeast corner of the Yukon. The reason for the blowdown has not yet been determined, but it may be due to the spruce budworm (an insect commonly found in North American forests) and/or a root rot (caused by a fungus), or this area may have experienced exceptionally strong winds. Regardless of its cause, forest managers are worried that the blowdown in this area will attract the spruce beetle.

To address this potential problem, logging proposals and plans for the La Biche area were requested from over 30 interested logging companies. The successful

bidder (Trans North Timber of Fort Nelson, B.C.) has proposed to log approximately 800 hectares of old growth white spruce forest in the La Biche drainage between 1994-1996; a total of 231,712 cubic metres will be harvested from 49 clearcut blocks. This is more timber than Kaska Forest

Resources, the largest timber harvesting company in the Yukon, has logged or has proposed to log over any two-year period.

Of the 49 blocks scheduled for logging in the operating plan, 21 blocks do not have any blowdown. An additional 9 blocks have less than 20% blowdown (on a volume basis), and another

9 blocks have less than 50% blowdown. The blowdown in the remaining 7 blocks occurs in patches within the blocks.

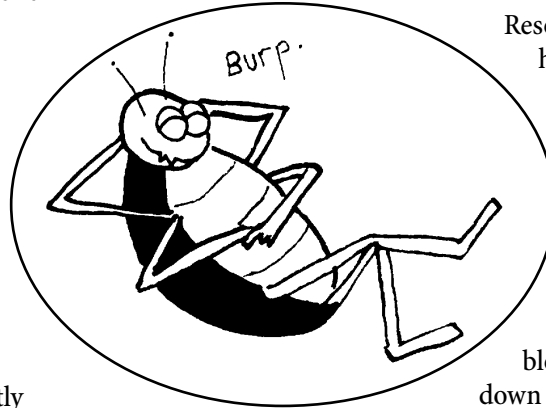
It is not known what percentage of blowdown occurs naturally in a mature white spruce forest.

The YCS Forest Committee does not support this proposed large-scale logging operation. A more stringent environmental assessment, including public input, should accompany a logging operation of this scale. Too much healthy forest is being logged under the guise of "salvage"; alternative methods are not considered.

In a written submission to DIAND, the Forest Committee has recommended that all blocks with less than 5% blowdown should be removed from the logging plans, and that selection logging methods be used to remove blowdown and other susceptible trees from those blocks with between 5-30% blowdown. In the blocks with more than 30% blowdown, we recommend using trap trees (a natural method of controlling the movement of spruce beetle) and extracting the patches of blowdown.

The Forest Committee meets about twice a month to discuss and respond to current forest management issues in the Yukon. If you are interested in participating, please call Yukon Conservation Society to find out when the next meeting is (668-5678).

sue olson



Yukon Conservation Society Position Paper on the Wolf Kill

Position:

The Yukon Conservation Society (YCS) is opposed to the continuation of the wolf control program in the Aishihik area. Although the YCS continues to fully support the Yukon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan, the current proposal to continue the wolf kill must be protested since it clearly is being done outside the context of the Plan. The commencement of mining activity in the study area near Killermun Lake, which received the Yukon government's support, has been a significant factor in our decision to protest the kill.

Background

Since the beginning of the wolf kill, the YCS has stated that predator control is not a legitimate, acceptable wildlife management tool. To use predator control is to admit a management failure that has precipitated a crisis management response. Allowing prey populations to reach these levels is essentially a breach of public trust.

However, the YCS has supported the creation in 1992, and finally the adoption by the Yukon government in 1993, of the Yukon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan. This plan is a guideline for an integrated, comprehensive, preventative approach to managing predator/prey/human interactions. It is a step towards an ecosystem management approach for the territory's wildlife.

Key elements of the Plan include:

- peer reviewed scientific rationale for any predator control proposals
- hunting bans two years prior to implementing wolf control
- increased research and monitoring of predators and prey
- habitat protection
- access control

- public education
- discussion of management and ethical issues

The plan is written in twelve sections. The Government of the Yukon has so far chosen to implement only one section of the plan; that governing wolf reduction programs. Even the elements outlining how and when to do wolf reduction have been implemented on a selective, not comprehensive, basis. This piecemeal implementation of the Plan is unacceptable and violates the conservation intent of the plan.

Shortcomings of the implementation of the Yukon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan

Habitat protection

According to the Plan, the key habitat of the prey species must be identified and protected from development (section 7.2). The mineral exploration activity in the Killermun Lake area, and the access to these mining claims, received the Yukon government's support even though this area is known critical habitat area for the Aishihik caribou herd (the target prey species).

The Yukon government also refused to take any action to protect this habitat from further mineral staking, stating it would be premature to



do so. Instead, the then Minister of Renewable Resources said in a letter to YCS, “Through monitoring of the Aishihik program, we shall evaluate its relative success and decide if additional steps are required to protect the herd” (June 13, 1994). This directly contravenes the letter and spirit of the management plan. In order for wolf control to be implemented it is incumbent upon the government to undertake all other possible measures to protect the target species habitat. Not only has this government not protected the habitat, it has supported activity that clearly reduces the quality of the habitat.

Historically poor management of this herd and its habitat created the crisis situation in the first place. Refusing to protect the area, and in fact condoning increased access to, and disruption of, the habitat, shows a blatant disregard for the well-being of the herd. This disregard raises the question that if the health of the herd is not fundamental to this wolf kill, then what are the real motives? To increase game for hunters on a short-term basis, rather than working to ensure the long-term stability of the ecosystem?

Integrity of the experimental design

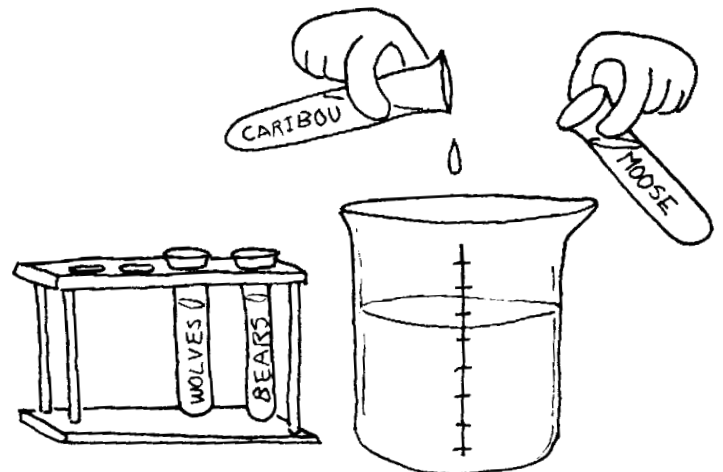
A basic premise of the Plan is that there must be an experimental design prepared for any wolf kill area. This government has prided itself for developing a scientific design that it says will insure the Aishihik kill is carried out in a manner that will contribute to future knowledge of predator/prey relations.

Two fundamental aspects of any scientific experiment are to have a control group to provide a comparison to the experimental area and to prevent the addition of new variables which could influence the experiment results. The Wolf Lake caribou herd was selected to be the control in the experimental design of the Aishihik program as it had similar dynamics to the Aishihik herd. However, in the two year review of calf survival rates, the Yukon government did not initially provide the data for the control area to the independent scientists who were asked to review the success of the program to date. We understand this data was provided, after the deadline for comments on the evaluation had

passed, to one reviewer upon request. As YCS has not been allowed to review the information given to the independent reviewers, it is unknown whether all reviewers received this information and if they were given the opportunity to revise their submissions.

Allowing mining activity in the wolf control area not only has the very real possibility of significantly impacting the herd, but it also jeopardizes the integrity of the experimental design by adding another variable to the “experiment” part way through the program. The mining activity in the study area makes it different from the control group, adds an additional influence and makes it difficult to gauge whether negative changes are due to wolves or to the mining activities.

The scientific design for the Aishihik wolf kill states that the two year review of the program should show that increases in caribou numbers are due to the wolf kill program (page iv of the scientific design). The government is now saying that all it must do is show that the caribou calf survival rate has at least doubled, and deliberately states that it does not have to show that the increase is due to the kill.



However, there may be other significant factors affecting the herd and its ecosystem which could mean the continuation of an extreme intervention like a wolf kill in the ecosystem can no longer be justified. Changes in habitat or weather

conditions, the change in the male/female ratio of the herd, or the natural cycle of the snowshoe hare population are all elements which could affect the ecosystem and the herd's recovery.

Moose as a target species

In a number of documents moose are noted as being one of the target prey species of the current wolf kill in the Aishihik area; the expressed objective is to increase the moose population from 1800 to 4000. However, hunting of moose was not stopped in accordance with the Plan which states that all hunting in the study area must be stopped for two years prior to the commencement of a wolf kill (section 9.1.3) and that hunting of a target species must be stopped for the duration of the kill (section 9.3.6). In 1991, government biologists recommended a hunting closure. After two winters of the wolf kill, this fall has been the first season that hunting of moose has not been permitted in the area. The refusal to implement these sections of the Plan highlights how this wolf kill program is not following the directions of the Plan.

Additionally, after two years, the government must review the calf survival rate of the target ungulate species in the area. It must have at least doubled as a result of the wolf kill in order

to consider continuing the predator control. The two year review that the government is currently doing only considers caribou calf survival rates. It does not discuss moose calf survival. The absence of this data is puzzling and means that the two-year evaluation is incomplete.

Furthermore, government biologists have not agreed what would happen if one of the target prey species reaches the desired number and the other has not. This uncertainty of desired outcome is outside the realm of good science.

Other research shortcomings

The Plan states that biological information on the status of the ungulate habitat must be collected (section 9.1.3). The habitat quality of the Aishihik study area is currently being assessed by determining body condition and pregnancy rates. High pregnancy rates are taken to mean that the habitat quality is good. However, this method of determining habitat quality is flawed due to the low size of the sample and, more importantly, because pregnancy rates are established by testing for progesterone in the caribou. Since progesterone is also elevated when an ungulate is under high stress, as they are when an animal is being captured for the test, the results are obviously questionable. It is important to know habitat quality in order to estimate how many caribou and moose the area will be able to sustain. Therefore, there is a need for valid habitat assessment through the use of field vegetation surveys.

A principle of the Plan (section 3.3.) states that there should be ongoing research and monitoring of not only wolves and their prey, but also other elements of the ecosystem. In the Aishihik study area little research is being done except on wolves, caribou and moose. This past summer, for example, no bears were radio-collared and monitored even though bears have been identified to be a significant predator of ungulates and the scientific design specifically stated that radio collaring of brown bears was to occur in 1994 and 1995 (p. 29). It also states that understanding grizzlies is critical to the program. Eagles, lynx and coyotes are also predators in this ecosystem and Dall sheep and snowshoe hare are other prey





species. What has been the impact of the low caribou and moose numbers on these species? How have they been impacted by the reduced number of wolves and the activity of the cull program itself?

The continued management of wildlife in the Yukon on a species by species basis contravenes not only the spirit of the Plan, but the direction wildlife management is taking in other jurisdictions. All of the components of an ecosystem are interconnected. In order to restore balance to the ecosystem in the Aishihik area, it is incumbent upon the government to do its utmost to include as many components of the ecosystem as it can in wildlife management. This requires ongoing studies and monitoring.

Peer Review of the Science

There has yet to be a scientific journal publication on results of the wolf reduction experiments in either the Finlayson or Aishihik areas. Peer review of these programs has been limited to government selected reviewers. Publication in a major journal of the government's program design and implementation would indicate an acceptance by the larger scientific community and allow for a broader review, thereby increasing the credibility of the science involved.

Summary

This is not an exhaustive review of the government's implementation of the Yukon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan. Rather it focuses on the components of the Plan that directly relate to the current wolf kill program in the Aishihik. As noted earlier, there are many key elements of the Plan that have nothing to do with wolf reduction programs such as the development of education materials, the protection of wolf habitat areas and the improved management of wolves throughout the Yukon. These are all fundamental components of the Plan.

The YCS continues to advocate that the Plan be implemented as a whole. However, the YCS must protest any proposed continuation of the wolf kill in the Aishihik area for the following reasons:

- not only has there been no protection of critical habitat in the area as required by the Plan, the Yukon government has condoned disruptive mining activities in this area;

The YCS continues to advocate that the Plan be implemented as a whole. However, the YCS must protest any proposed continuation of the wolf kill in the Aishihik area.

- the integrity of the experimental design for the area has been eroded by the lack of moose data, the lack of control group data, the addition of an extra variable in the experimental area (mining), the uncertainty of desired outcome, and the refusal to consider whether there is a direct relationship between the wolf kill and the increase in calf survival rates;
- although directly contravening the Plan, moose hunting, and hunting of other prey species, was allowed to occur in the two years prior to the commencement of the wolf kill and during the kill program;
- the narrow view of single species predator/prey relations in this ecosystem, as exhibited by the scope of research studies in the area, is against the intent of the Plan and leads to an unfair designation of the wolf as the "cause" of a problem.

For more information contact:

Jennifer Ellis, Executive Director(403) 668-5678

Utility Regulation Under Review

The Yukon Government has put “everything on the table” to try to reduce costs in its review of electrical utility regulation, according to government leader John Ostashek.

YCS and other stakeholders discussed the review at a three day workshop held in mid-November.

The urgency of this review was advanced by the Yukon Energy Corporation and the Yukon Electrical Co. Ltd. They cited the million-dollar 1993 public hearing and the cumbersome process as basis for change; though both companies would gain financially — at their customers’ expense — with less scrutiny from the Yukon Utilities Board and interveners.

Conducting a review on the basis of one hearing was questioned by participants who identified three unusual reasons which tripled the normal costs of a hearing:

- closure of the Faro mine caused the rate application to be refiled;
- Curragh’s bid for 50¢ power and its rejection of a negotiated return on investment combined to extend the hearing from 3 days to 6; and
- YEC/YECL spent more than \$500,000 on lawyers and consultants.

A discussion paper prepared by the Justice department became controversial after the media discovered it was written by a utility employee. Skepticism grew when the deputy Justice minister, who last year was acting president of YEC, validated suspicions that costs were intentionally escalated by the utilities to justify the review.

At the workshop, however, some aspects of the review were supported. Dr. Mark Jaccard, a regulatory reformist and Chair of the B.C. Utilities Commission, promoted the idea of resolving disputes in other ways in order to reduce the time and expense of formal hearings. He suggested the use of both Integrated Resource Planning and Negotiated Settlements to deal with environmental issues, capital plans, etc.

YCS remains concerned with outstanding issues such

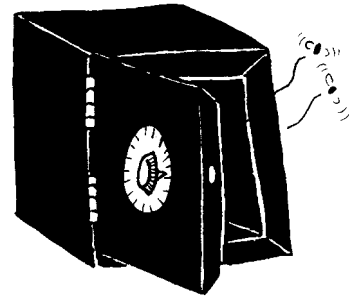
as intervener funding cuts and screening mechanisms. Overall, the workshop was viewed as a first step in public consultation, though more are not planned at this time.

A decision on regulatory reform is expected from Cabinet by year-end.

gary mcrobb

Tamblyn Tunes

The Yukon Conservation Society is a nationally recognized, non-government, non-profit group of volunteers. Our programs include a wide range of public education work, ongoing research and environmental advocacy. YCS is working hard to put together a fund-raising extravaganza. Our core funding from government sources is shrinking while the number of issues demanding our attention is growing. Our boreal forests are being logged at an unprecedented rate. The Yukon Government is expected to announce the third year of its wolf kill program. We are going to court in order to ensure that the Federal government does environmental assessments of mining exploration. Plus there are always the ongoing struggles with water protection, sewage, waste, protected area issues, etc.



The Yukon wilderness is important for many Yukoners and Canadians alike. Over the last 26 years YCS has consistently spoken for the protection of our wilderness and the wise development of our natural resources. We have often been the only voice.

Through the generosity of Ian Tamblyn, nationally acclaimed singer/songwriter, YCS will be hosting an evening featuring the arts and wilderness at the Yukon Arts Centre on February 4th, 1995. The event will include a slide presentation by Ian on his recent travels, an art auction (featuring works from local and national artists), and ending with a musical set by Ian. Plan to attend.

Help us be an effective voice for the future of Yukon wilderness.

joy snider

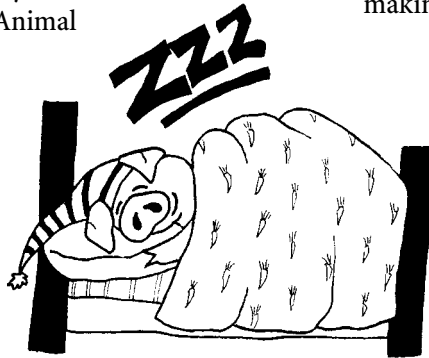


"Swine Bedding" Project

Some Whitehorse area farms have had a different look about them this fall. Instead of the usual straw, animals have been bedding down with shredded paper. Volunteer farmers have been taking part in a pilot project being conducted by the Yukon Conservation Society and the Raven Recycling Society. The "Swine Bedding" Project is a study more formally called The Feasibility of Using Locally Produced and Shredded Paper For Animal Bedding in the Yukon and funded by the Arctic Environmental Strategy under the Green Plan. The aim of the project is to establish the practical benefits and/or drawbacks of shredded paper as animal bedding, with a view to the possibility of creating a local market for recycling waste paper whose current fate is the Whitehorse landfill.

Although the Raven Recycling Society has an extremely successful paper recycling program through the PaperSave project, there is still waste paper generated in Whitehorse that is not as of now being recycled. This includes old newspaper and confidential shred from local offices such as Northwestel and the RCMP. These materials could potentially have second and third lives as animal bedding and then as field compost, rather than taking up space in the landfill.

The idea of using shredded paper as animal bedding is not new - several farming communities in the U.S. have undertaken similar projects, which have shown in many cases that paper has some distinct advantages over straw. These include greater absorbency, fewer odours, better sterility, and faster decomposition in the field. It has also been shown to be a more affordable product for farmers than straw. This last factor could be of great benefit to Yukon farmers. Little of the straw used in the Yukon is grown here. For the most part, straw is shipped up from southern Canada, making it very expensive.



We are carrying out a practical investigation of these findings in the Whitehorse area. Participating farmers are using shredded paper instead of straw on a variety of animals, including goats, chickens, pigs, and rabbits, for a period of one month. Once the practical phase of the project is complete, all results and farmers' observations will be

compiled into a report, which will also examine the marketing possibilities of recycling shredded paper bedding in the Yukon. The report will be ready by the end of December, and will be available at the Yukon Conservation Society and the Agriculture Branch of Renewable Resources.

anne louise genest
sue moodie



NAAEE FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL

The North American Association for Environmental Education
presents this

Award for Best of Show, Instructional K-12, Elementary

A Fish's Tale

The Raven Recycling Society

Produced by Chris Clarke and Joy Snyder

Music by Barbara Chamberlin

Acknowledging the Yukon Conservation Society
Assistance of the Arctic Environmental Strategy, DIAND and the City of Whitehorse



CNF Conference in Whitehorse June '95

The Canadian Nature Federation will hold its 1995 annual conference and general meeting in Whitehorse June 16, 17 and 18. The conference will be hosted by YCS, a CNF affiliate.

The CNF is a strong voice for nature on the national scene, with an impressive record of successes and constructive actions. A few are highlighted here.

- CNF was a member of the multi-stakeholder Whitehorse Mining Initiative that sought to establish a basis from which to resolve conflicts between industry and environmental groups;
- CNF is a member of the strategy committee advising the federal government on the International Biodiversity convention signed in 1992;

- CNF launched the Endangered Plants and Invertebrates in Canada (EPIC) program with the support Environment Canada and Noranda Inc.;
- CNF lobbied for an effective wildlife and plant protection act that is now law;
- with the Canadian Wildlife Service, the CNF developed a draft landbird strategy to reverse the decline of many landbird species by ensuring protection for migratory birds breeding and wintering habitat;
- CNF was a significant member of the working group dealing with the buffalo disease issue in Wood Buffalo National Park;
- CNF was a founding member of Tatshenshini International as well as the Canadian affiliate of Bird Life International.

The CNF conference will include both naturalist and issue related presentations and will feature post-conference trips. A special birding trip will be offered to the Yukon North Slope.

A speaker and presentation list is being compiled. If you have suggestions on naturalist or issue subjects or are interested in volunteering during the conference, please call YCS.

Yukon Forests: A Sustainable Resource!

A symposium sponsored by Economic Development: Forestry Agreement will be held in Whitehorse February 2-4, 1995. The focus of this symposium will be on northern forests: the resource, values within, and the management of. The key-note speaker will examine the roles of ecosystem management and integrated resource management in forest management planning. Other topics to be addressed during this two-day conference include: Yukon forest resources, history of logging in the

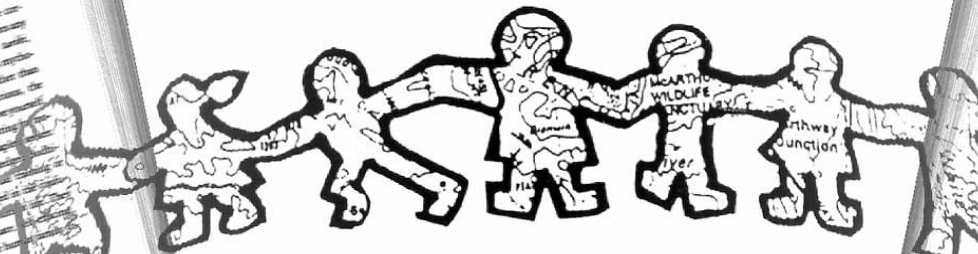
Yukon, wildlife in the boreal forest, ecology of the boreal forest, timber harvesting and silviculture in the boreal forest, insect management, and an overview of the Yukon forest industry.

If you are interested in attending this conference and/or would like to receive registration materials, please contact Deb Wortley, Canadian Forest Service (tel. 668-4467) or Sue Olsen, Yukon Conservation Society (tel. 668-5678).

Hope to see you there!

The forest conference is sponsored by Yukon College and EDA.

THE GREEN PAGES...



GET YOURS TODAY!

The Green Pages is a directory of Yukon agencies that deal with a variety of environmental issues. Includes contact information for non-government groups, First Nations, government and funding bodies.

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Thanks to NorthwTel and Arctic Environmental Strategy for their financial contribution to the Green Pages



WHAT'S HAPPENING AT YCS?

Oh! You've made it to the back page! That's my cue to attempt to distill the myriad of YCS activities to a few sentences and exclamation marks. Here goes!:

Wildlands Benefit

YCS co-hosted the November audio-visual extravaganza at the Arts Centre. Funds and awareness were being raised to support the Wildlands Project which aims to prevent the Yukon from becoming merely a piecemeal collection of isolated and dying parks. It was a successful and entertaining endeavour – thanks to all who participated!

Sustainable Communities

Work is continuing on this large project. It is an exciting and long-term effort that hopes to assist Yukon communities in becoming socially and environmentally sustainable.

Hikes and Bikes

Thanks to all those volunteers that helped out with the field testing of the trails! The manuscript is currently going through a series of final checks in preparation for printing. The edition will be out in the spring so look forward to a lot of great hiking and biking information for this summer! ... Ahh, summer...

Environmental Industries

This feasibility study of opportunities for local environmental industries has been completed and disseminated. If interested, you can come down to the YCS office and have a look at it.

Yukon Water Board Appeal

The Yukon Fish and Game Association, Friends of Aishihik, and YCS has dropped their appeal to the

Yukon Water Board due to funding difficulties. The struggle to protect Aishihik Lake, however, continues on many other fronts.

Wheelchair Accessibility

YCS is currently looking at options to make the office wheelchair accessible.

Recycled Harley

The Pocket Men's Clothing Store is helping out YCS's fundraising efforts by raffling a revamped Harley Davidson motorcycle and giving us the proceeds! Pop by the Pocket and buy a ticket or two! Maybe you can be the next "easy rider"!

Geography 222

YCS was invited to make a presentation to Yukon College's Geography 222 class (– ever on the lookout for new activists and supporters!).

Ian Tamblyn

Planning and organization for the February 4th YCS fund-raising event with singer/songwriter Ian Tamblyn are continuing. It should be a great night with lots of songs, slides, and surprises! Plan to attend!

Geoscience Forum

YCS representatives attended the recent forum to keep up on the latest mining information and advances.

Killermun Lake

The case hearing will be held in February or March of 1995. YCS is attempting to ensure that the government does an appropriate environmental assessment before developing a mine in the area. Financial assistance for this court battle would be welcomed.

Wolf Document

Research has begun on an educational document that will present Yukon-specific information in an accessible format. The goal is to give people diverse, unbiased information so that they can make informed decisions on the issue of wolves and wolf management.