



Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement

Progress report for 2024-25

Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement

Protecting biodiversity and restoring nature in the Yukon

The Government of Canada and the Government of Yukon signed onto the Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement, which took effect in April 2023. Fiscal year 2024–25 marks the second year of this agreement established to help protect nature in the Yukon, and support work toward the Government of Canada's commitment to conserve 30 per cent of lands and waters by 2030. Through the agreement, the Government of Canada is providing \$20.6 million over three years to the Government of Yukon to:

- protect and conserve new areas of the Yukon;
- financially and collaboratively support Indigenous-led conservation efforts;
- increase knowledge collection and data sharing; and
- enhance efforts to monitor and manage species at risk and cumulative effects on the environment.

Under the Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement, the Government of Yukon reports progress each year on advancing its conservation priorities. The Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement: Progress Report for 2024–25 highlights progress from April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025 on nature agreement-related work across the Yukon.

In 2024–25, the Government of Yukon established 13 funding agreements with Yukon First Nations and transboundary Indigenous governments, groups and co-management bodies to advance Indigenous-led conservation initiatives. This included support for protected areas, land and conservation planning; community stewardship projects; land and guardian programs; and youth culture camps. It also provided funding to the Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope) to support Indigenous participation at the January 2025 Yukon North Slope Conference, which focused on Indigenous Conservation Economies.

Together with Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, City of Whitehorse and Parks Canada, the Government of Yukon advanced important work to protect the Chasàn Chùà (McIntyre Creek) area. This is a highly valued wildlife, cultural and recreational corridor that runs through the heart of the growing capital city of Whitehorse, Yukon. Following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding by the five governments in April 2024, a Steering Committee was established to advance work towards protecting the area, including engagement with First Nations Citizens and Beneficiaries, the general public and stakeholders in Fall 2024.

The Government of Yukon expended just over \$6.9M of the agreement funds in 2024–25. Projections for 2025–26 are to expend approximately \$6.5M, including disbursing at least \$1.1M to Yukon First Nations and transboundary Indigenous governments and groups to support continued Indigenous leadership in conservation.

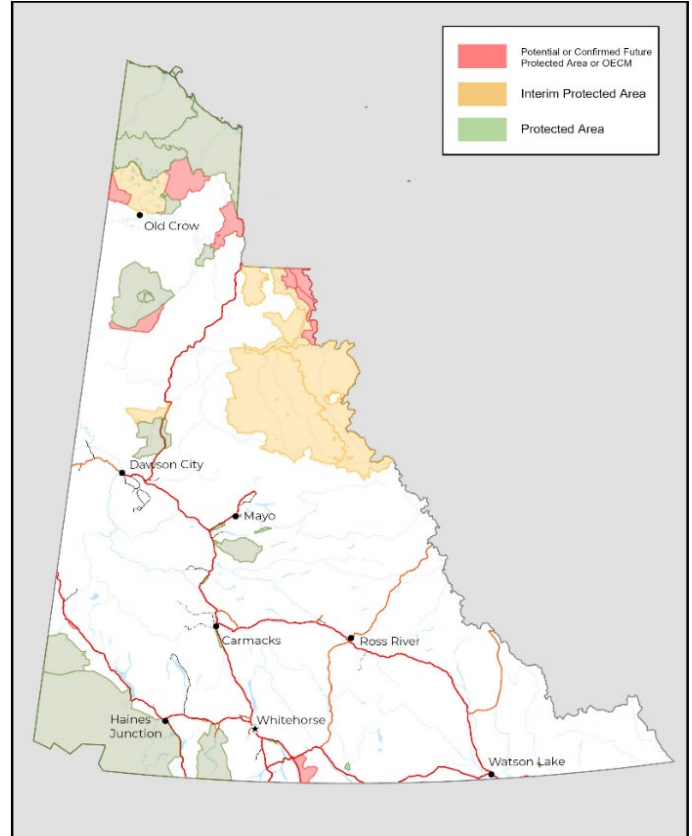
For more information about the Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement and its related projects, please visit: yukon.ca/learn-about-canada-yukon-nature-agreement.



Protecting areas of the Yukon

Since signing onto the Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement, the Yukon has increased its protected lands and waters area to a total of 21.1 per cent as recorded under the Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database. As of March 31, 2025, this remains the highest percentage reported of all provinces and territories in Canada.

A goal of the Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement is to identify initiatives that will contribute to the protection and conservation of 30 per cent of Canada's lands and waters by 2030. Areas that contribute to the Yukon's total protected area count are primarily made up of protected lands, including parks (territorial and national), habitat protection areas, special management areas and national wildlife areas. The Yukon is also exploring the potential application of other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs). OECMs have seen greater application in southern Canada. They are areas that help conserve biodiversity but are not managed primarily for conservation. OECMs can complement a network of protected areas to support conservation and land management decisions.



Map depicting protected areas, future protected areas, and interim protected areas in the Yukon, as of March 31, 2025.

Increasing the Yukon's total protected areas

Yukon First Nations and transboundary Indigenous governments and groups have long been leaders in protecting the Yukon's natural environment. The Yukon First Nations' Final Agreements, the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement* and the *Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement* include commitments to protect areas. The Government of Yukon is building on these commitments to increase the Yukon's protected areas.

Regional land use planning is a commitment under the Yukon First Nations' Final Agreements. Regional land use planning is advancing in the Yukon and supports efforts to protect and conserve the Yukon's wild spaces and biodiversity by providing certainty and clarity about the use of lands and resources. For example, in 2024, the Gwich'in Tribal Council, First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, Parks Canada and the Government of Yukon advanced a feasibility assessment for a new national park in the Peel region of the Yukon, following through on commitments in the Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan. In addition, the Government of Yukon, in partnership with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Government, continue to advance land use planning in the Dawson region in 2024–25.

Heading into the third year of the Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement, the Government of Yukon will continue to strengthen relationships and advance work towards protecting additional areas with Yukon First Nations and transboundary Indigenous governments and groups. This includes following through with planning for protected areas like the Pickhandle Lakes Habitat Protection Area with Kluane First Nation and White River First Nation; the Chasàn Chuà (McIntyre Creek) area with Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council; and exploring the establishment of an Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area in a portion of the Ross River Area with Ross River Dena Council and Parks Canada.

Developing tools to support conservation

The Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement is supporting the Yukon to develop the tools it needs to protect against biodiversity loss and conserve the natural environment and the species that rely on it. Adequate tools are needed to better understand the impact of development on species and their habitats and to identify key areas that should be protected.

Ecological cumulative effects decision support tool for caribou

Funding from the Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement is supporting efforts to protect all caribou populations in the Yukon, including the Porcupine caribou. Of the three types of caribou in the Yukon, the Northern Mountain population of woodland caribou is listed as a species of Special Concern under Canada's Species at Risk Act.

This year, the Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement continued to support the development of an ecological cumulative effects decision support tool for Northern Mountain caribou. In collaboration with the Biodiversity Pathways consultancy, advancements were made on the relationship between caribou and disturbance from multiple stressors, i.e., fire, mining, linear features. This had not been explored before at this scale going across the Northern Mountain caribou range (Yukon, British Columbia and the Northwest Territories). Initial results of modelling work and the overall project have been encouraging.

This work will increase the understanding of cumulative effects on caribou through developing habitat disturbance relationships and will generate new information on caribou responses to landscape change. Targeting for completion by April 2026, this information can support decision-making in environmental assessment of cumulative effects and inform land use planning and monitoring programs.



Camera-trap images capturing a caribou group with calf and collar, and a wintertime grizzly 2024-25

Cumulative effects monitoring in the Central Yukon

Funding from the Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement is supporting on-going cumulative effects monitoring using trail cameras across central Yukon. In 2024-25, the Government of Yukon collaborated with five First Nation partners in four project areas to understand the impacts of land use

change on species such as Northern Mountain caribou, grizzly bears, moose, wolves and wolverine. The results of these studies will be used to inform regional land use planning and environmental assessments through analyzing the cumulative effects of land use change on species at risk (e.g., Northern Mountain caribou and grizzly bears) and development of habitat models that will be used to predict the impact of land use change on key species.

Mapping surface disturbance in the Northern Tutchone and Kaska regions

In 2024–25, the Government of Yukon completed surface disturbance mapping for the Northern Tutchone and Kaska regions. This includes digitization and mapping of visible man-made (anthropogenic) surface disturbance within the Klaza caribou herd range, and previously unmapped regions of the Pelly and Finlayson caribou herds. Funding from the Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement also supported the purchase of new satellite imagery for the Dawson and Na-Cho Nyäk Dun planning areas.

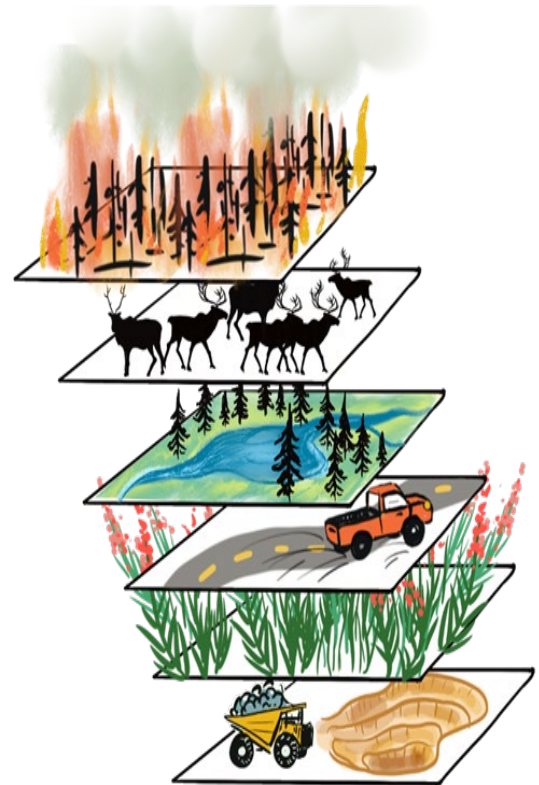
Ongoing efforts for 2024–25 included the development of the surface disturbance database 2.0; this supports the commitment to publish reliable surface disturbance data on GeoYukon with consistent and relevant surface disturbance categories. Also underway is the development of a public-facing web-based surface disturbance mapping tool that will improve consistency of surface disturbance analysis to inform new projects and support the implementation of land use plans. Making data publicly available is a commitment in the Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement, and all completed surface disturbance data layers are available on GeoYukon.

Ecological Cumulative Effects Framework

The Government of Yukon initiated work on an Ecological Cumulative Effects Framework in 2024–25. The framework will support efforts to better consider the true (cumulative) impacts of human-led development and environmental changes on ecological values. The government hosted a pre-engagement survey in summer 2024 and a number of meetings with Yukon First Nations and transboundary Indigenous governments and groups. Three funding agreements with First Nation governments were established committing \$200,000 over 2024–2026 to support the co-development of the framework. In addition, the Government of Yukon prepared graphic communication tools outlining the goals and a possible structure for the Ecological Cumulative Effects Framework.

Next steps

The Ecological Cumulative Effects Framework will act as a roadmap for considering ecological cumulative effects in land use planning, project assessment and decision-making processes. To advance co-development of the Framework, plans are to host community workshops in 2025–26 with Indigenous governments, groups and co-management bodies.



Cumulative effects are the combined (past, present, future) effects from natural and human-caused changes that impact values (i.e., caribou), including fire, flooding, road development and potential future development.

Illustration credit: Yukon Graphic Recording, 2025

Supporting Indigenous leadership in conservation

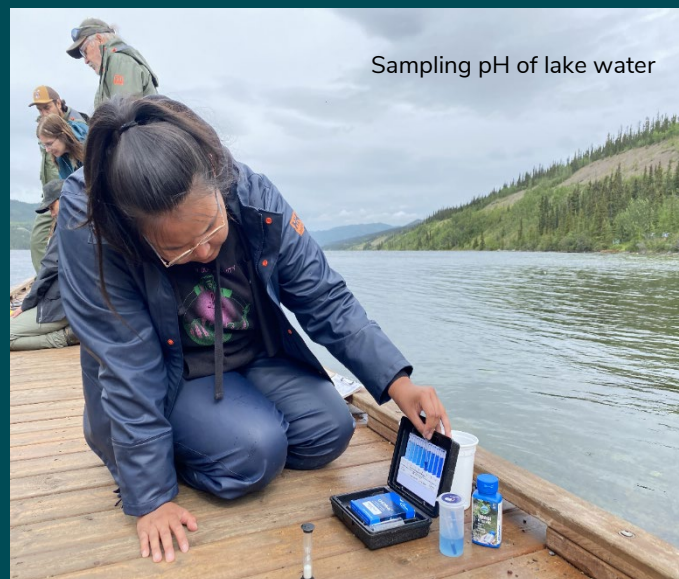
Yukon First Nations and transboundary Indigenous governments and groups have relied on the Yukon's lands and waters for generations. They have long been leaders in protecting the Yukon's natural environment and have worked to include protected areas in their land claim agreements. The Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement provides funding to support continued Indigenous leadership in conservation.

Indigenous-led Conservation Capacity Fund

The Government of Yukon developed the Indigenous-led Conservation Capacity Fund to distribute Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement funding to Indigenous partners to lead or participate in identifying areas of conservation interest in their traditional or asserted territories in the Yukon. Since the establishment of this fund, nine Indigenous governments and groups have been awarded funding for their conservation projects. So far, \$2.6 million has been committed to Yukon First Nations and transboundary Indigenous governments and groups through this fund.

In 2024, the Government of Yukon established a two-year funding agreement with the Council of Yukon First Nations to support collaboration, coordination and input from the Yukon's Indigenous governments and groups into the development of a management approach for species at risk and an ecological cumulative effects framework. We continue to work with Indigenous partners to disburse the Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement funds to support their conservation priorities. Addressing climate change and biodiversity loss requires a collective approach across all governments.

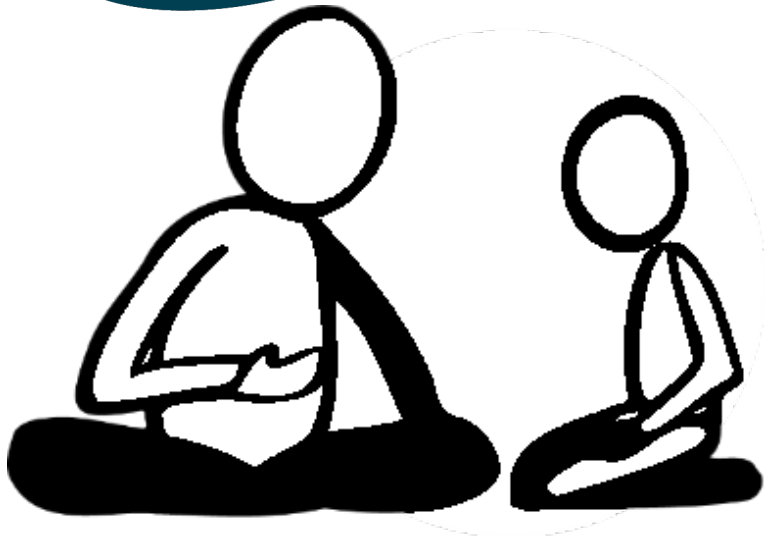
Water monitoring course with Indigenous Guardians



On July 9-10, 2024, the Government of Yukon's Department of Environment, Parks and Water Resources branches delivered an introductory water monitoring course for First Nation land guardian staff. The two-day course was funded under the Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement and was designed and delivered under contract with Living Lakes Canada, a non-governmental water stewardship organization. Eleven people from four First Nations participated in the course to learn about the theory of water monitoring on day one and a practical learning day at Fox Lake campground on day two. Feedback was positive and demonstrated interest in future collaborative work between Yukon Parks, Water Resources and First Nation guardian programs.

Land Guardians

In 2024, \$52,000 was utilized by three Yukon First Nations to support land and guardian programs to conduct land use monitoring, surface water quality monitoring, environmental data collection and trails and cabin maintenance, as well as to offer youth land-based education programs and culture camps. Building partnerships with land guardians is an important way that we can reach shared goals around conservation and monitoring on the land.



Implementing Aullaviat/Anguniarvik Traditional Conservation Area

Together with Inuvialuit and the Government of Canada, the Government of Yukon signed the Aullaviat/Anguniarvik Traditional Conservation Area Agreement in June of 2024. This Indigenous-led conservation area is located in the Yukon's Eastern North Slope and covers almost 8,500 km² total land. Yukon has been supporting and collaborating with Aullaviat/Anguniarvik's newly established guardians to identify community priorities, administrative structure, training and the implementation of new ecological monitoring programs since 2023. One of these programs, the Aullaviat/Anguniarvik Stewardship and Guardians Program, will support management and monitoring of the area and enable on-the-land cultural engagement across generations of Inuvialuit.

The Government of Yukon is also leading research and monitoring in the Conservation Area by focusing on Porcupine caribou habitat quality and shifting range use noted by Inuvialuit through:

- forage sampling efforts, to understand ecological drivers of summer range use;
- development of annual and daily snow models since 1985 and 2014 respectively, to help understand fall and winter range shifts noted by Inuvialuit; and
- research and monitoring of other significant ecological changes including moose productivity, wolf ecology and shifting muskox populations.

Each of these has been identified as a priority by the Inuvialuit and other First Nations in the region. They have the potential to influence the Inuvialuit and their primary food source, the Porcupine caribou. All research is occurring collaboratively with Inuvialuit, academic organizations, First Nations governments and co-management bodies adjacent to the area to ensure wildlife populations are monitored at the appropriate scale, as defined in the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement*, and to ensure all relevant ecological components are described and understood (e.g., permafrost and changes in vegetation).

Species at risk

Climate change and human impacts on the environment change ecosystems. They put Yukon's species and their habitats at risk. The Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement includes funding to help protect species at risk and their critical habitat. The funding supports collaboratively developing a management approach for protecting species at risk in the Yukon with Indigenous governments and groups, increasing assessment, monitoring, planning and conservation of species at risk.

Research and monitoring species at risk

Research and monitoring are the foundation of assessing and conserving all wildlife populations. In 2024–25, the Government of Yukon worked with a variety of partners to conduct research and monitoring projects for several species listed under the federal Species at Risk Act. These partners included First Nations, other governments, academia and the public. Focal species included little brown myotis (bat), collared pika, Northern Mountain caribou, wolverine and grizzly bear.

Work on **little brown myotis** (Endangered) in 2024–2025, included analysis of data collected in previous years and resulted in reports on: guidelines for handling bats, a selection of ponds in the Whitehorse area and the impact of climate change on bat body growth across Canada. Analysis of data on bat use of a peri-urban watershed was advanced to inform planning that considers the needs of little brown myotis. The long-term monitoring of six maternity colonies across southern Yukon was maintained and this past year, the 10,000th bat was banded in the Yukon. In addition, work was done with community-based partners to establish alternative roosting structures (bat houses) to protect at risk maternity colonies or provide areas for bat viewing and appreciation.

Northern Mountain caribou (Special Concern) are a focal species at risk for the Government of Yukon, given both their conservation status and cultural importance. In 2024–25, Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement funds were utilized to conduct field activities including fall composition surveys of 14 of 26 herds, a calving survey of one herd, and a census of another population. These surveys provide crucial information on the status of Yukon's Northern Mountain caribou herds. Additionally, GPS collars were deployed on caribou in five herds so that their distributions and habitat use patterns can be better understood.

Collared pika (Special Concern) were also a focus in 2024–25. Part of a long-term study, field monitoring was completed at over 200 sites in Tombstone and Kusawa territorial parks. This is to study the response of pikas to climate change - their primary threat. A draft report on how climate change may impact collared pikas, scheduled for peer review in 2025, includes perspectives from various experts which were solicited, analyzed and interpreted.



Northern Mountain caribou capture to GPS collar – Bonnet Plume herd

Wolverine (Special Concern) work in 2024–25 focused on two projects. The first is continuation of the long-term research by sampling carcasses submitted by Yukon trappers which provides information on their health and harvest patterns. This work resulted in further building a dataset on the age-sex composition of harvested animals. The second was the establishment of a new camera trapping array to investigate seasonal habitat use and distribution of wolverine within lowland river valleys in the Southern Lakes region, where anthropogenic landscape changes (e.g., urbanization, agriculture, forestry) are the greatest in the territory.

Grizzly bear (Special Concern) research and monitoring in the Yukon in 2024–25 involved planning for a new density and distribution survey in the Selwyn Mountains, which is scheduled for summer 2026. Work was also done on an analysis of samples obtained in 2023–24 from a genetic capture-mark-recapture study in the Ogilvie Mountains and imagery, from surveys completed in 2023–24, were classified from the Ogilvie Mountains and Klondike Plateau. These studies aim to generate an estimate of the abundance of grizzly bears in those regions.

All of the 2024–25 research and monitoring work on Yukon species at risk was supported by various project partners, including First Nations, Renewable Resources Councils, other government agencies, academic researchers and the public.

The Yukon North Slope Conference (Indigenous Conservation Economies)

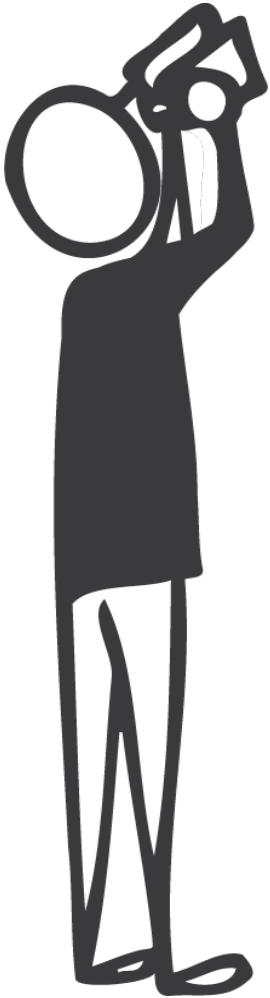


Aklavik Drummers and Dancers perform at the 2025 YNSC (credit: WMAC NS)

The Yukon North Slope Conference was held on January 28-30, 2025, on the heels of the creation and signing of the Aullaviat/Anguniarvik Traditional Conservation Area Agreement in 2024. The conference is hosted by the Government of Yukon and the Wildlife Management Advisory Committee (North Slope). It is held every five years and fulfills a commitment of the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement*.

The theme of this year's conference was Indigenous Conservation Economies – traditional and local Indigenous economic systems that are deeply intertwined with land stewardship. The theme was chosen to support partners and give guidance to the Aullaviat/Anguniarvik Guardianship Program through collective learning and networking. This includes Indigenous-led conservation areas and conservation finance, harvesting and on-the-land support, guardians and monitoring programs, climate adaptation initiatives, ecotourism, research economies and artistry.

The Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement supported Indigenous participation in the conference. Representation from 13 of 14 Yukon First Nations and delegates from Indigenous organizations from across Canada were able to bring forward their own lived experiences all while learning from others at more advanced stages of implementation.



Identifying and protecting species at risk

In 2024–25, the Government of Yukon and the Government of Canada continued to work toward developing a Memorandum of Understanding that will outline how the respective governments will work together to support species at risk conservation under environmental assessment processes as required under Section 79 of the *Species at Risk Act*. Supported by the Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement, the Government of Yukon also advanced the development of a streamlined process for species at risk mitigations on project reviews and published a wildlife key area interim data layer accessible publicly on GeoYukon.

In 2024–25, the Government of Yukon contributed regional technical expertise to the Government of Canada's development of national management plans for several species listed under the federal *Species at Risk Act*, including grizzly bears, wolverine, Western bumblebee and Yukon buckwheat. In August 2024, the Government of Yukon released a conservation plan for wood bison in southeast Yukon, which may serve as an action plan for the 2018 national recovery strategy for the species. Substantial work was undertaken by the Government of Yukon in 2024–25 towards implementation of several national recovery strategies and management plans for high-profile species at risk, with an emphasis on Northern Mountain caribou, little brown myotis and collared pika.

The Government of Yukon continues to actively participate on the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) to provide national status assessments for species of conservation concern and possible listing under the federal *Species at Risk Act*. In addition, the Yukon Conservation Data Centre contributed territorial ranks for hundreds of lesser-known species to the General Status of Wild Species Working Group for inclusion in the next 5-year report by the Canadian Endangered Species Conservation Council (CESCC).

Next steps

Protecting species at risk in the Yukon cannot be done without the insight and support of Yukon First Nations and transboundary Indigenous governments and groups. In 2025–26, the Government of Yukon plans to continue engagement work with Indigenous governments, groups, and co-management bodies to determine how we can best work together to develop an approach to protect species at risk in the Yukon, including the potential to co-develop legislation. Yukon-specific complimentary legislation was a commitment from the 1996 *Species at Risk Accord* in addition to a commitment in the Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement.



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