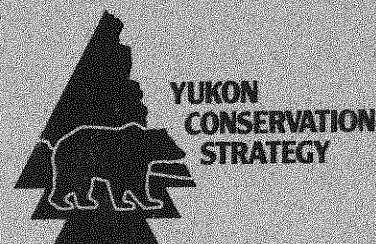


IMPLEMENTING THE YUKON CONSERVATION STRATEGY

A Progress Report

SEPTEMBER 1991



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**Department of Renewable Resources
Government of the Yukon**

September 1991

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Introduction

The Yukon Conservation Strategy (YCS) was released in May, 1990 after two years of preparation by government and public working groups. The Strategy is a set of goals, objectives and actions that outline the means by which Yukoners can move toward a more sustainable way of life in the 1990's. Specific actions are identified for all levels of government, First Nations, interest groups, industry and individuals.

The Yukon was among the first jurisdictions to act on the recommendation of the 1987 National Task Force on the Environment and the Economy that called for provincial and territorial conservation strategies. The strategy was well received nationally and internationally, and has received wide distribution in Canada and abroad.

The Yukon government coordinated the project and made a commitment to carry out actions relevant to its current and developing areas of jurisdiction. This report identifies the progress of the Yukon government in carrying out the commitments that are listed in the Yukon Conservation Strategy. In conjunction with with a summary of action plans, it is intended to assist the Yukon Council on the Economy and the Environment (YCEE) and Yukon government departments in identifying the work that is currently being done to implement the strategy.

Government Responsibilities - Implementation

The action plans being carried out by the Yukon government echo the government's Statement of Environmental Responsibility and Ethics (Appendix 1).

Responsibility for implementing the Yukon Conservation Strategy is shared among various Yukon government departments. Each department is expected to prepare and implement an action plan dealing with their direct responsibilities under the YCS.

The Department of Renewable Resources is responsible for coordinating the preparation of departmental action plans and regular updates to these. The Executive Council Office (ECO) is responsible for providing assistance, as needed, to help resolve questions about departmental responsibilities. ECO is also responsible for analysing completed action plans and updates, and to assess, from a strategic point of view, government's success/deficiencies in implementing the strategy. This arrangement allows the Department of Renewable Resources to be an advocate for the strategy, while allowing ECO to carry out the impartial review within government.

Yukon Council on the Economy and the Environment

The Yukon Council on the Economy and the Environment was established in 1989 to provide advice to the Yukon government on major policy, legislative and program initiatives on the Yukon's economy and environment. Under the new Environment Act, the YCEE is to conduct an annual review of the Yukon government's implementation of the YCS and to report its findings to the Yukon legislature. The Council is now reviewing both the Yukon Conservation Strategy and the Yukon Economic Strategy to measure progress on implementation of the strategies and how they can be integrated to achieve sustainable development.

Implementation of the Strategy

A preliminary assessment of each department's progress in implementing the strategy was conducted in November 1990. Interviews were conducted with government staff to: 1) identify which department had the lead responsibility for each action; 2) identify the status of each action (complete, in progress, not yet started); and 3) identify what remained to be done.

Following completion of this reference database, departments submitted action plans reporting how they would complete each of their respective commitments and the status of these plans. These actions plans have been compiled in a separate document by the Department of Renewable Resources. The format for the plans was developed jointly with the Department of Economic Development, which has prepared on a companion report on the implementation of the Yukon Economic Strategy (1988).

Fifteen months have elapsed since the release of the YCS. Results indicate that the Yukon government is implementing more than eighty percent of the commitments in the strategy. This is considered to be good progress.

There are 372 commitments outlined in the YCS, of which 320 involve action by the Yukon government. Renewable Resources is responsible for the majority of these commitments (197), Economic Development has 38, Community and Transportation Services has 35, and the other departments each have less than twenty to deal with.

Statistics for each department were compiled using the following information:

- 1) the number of "lead" commitments of each department
- 2) the status of each action
 - number of actions in progress
 - number of actions not yet started

Figure 1. Progress in Implementing YCS Actions (by department)

<u>LEAD DEPARTMENT</u>	<u>ACTIONS</u>	<u>IN PROGRESS</u>		<u>NOT YET STARTED</u>	
	Total	Number of Actions	(% of total)	Number of Actions	(% of total)
Renewable Resources	197	160	(81%)	35	(18%)
Economic Development	38	31	(82%)	7	(18%)
Community & Transportation Services	35	28	(80%)	7	(20%)
Tourism	17	16	(94%)	1	(6%)
Education	15	12	(80%)	3	(20%)
Executive Council Office	9	7	(78%)	2	(22%)
Government Services	7	5	(71%)	2	(29%)
Other	2				

Departments have made good progress at implementing these commitments since the strategy was released in May, 1990. Departments range from having 71% - 94% of their commitments underway. This leaves 6% - 29% of the commitments that have yet to be started.

All the commitments are expected to be completed in the 1990's. Of the 80% that are in progress, many will take years to complete. For example, a number of the actions require the land claim agreement to be completed and implemented, yet the time frame for this is unknown. Many commitments are also associated with the devolution of resource management responsibilities now resting with the federal government.

Discussion

Yukon government action on the strategy falls under the following main headings:

- **Government as a Model Environmental Citizen**

Government Services has the main responsibility for ensuring that government purchasing practices and use of property and materials is done in a way that is not harmful to the environment. Major initiatives underway to achieve this include an internal Papersave Program, new travel directives that support car/aircraft pooling and group travel, recycling programs, and the purchasing of environmentally-friendly products.

- **New Legislation**

The government has met many commitments through new legislation. These include:

Environment Act

The development and passage of the Yukon's Environment Act in May 1991 met a wide range of government commitments to improve environmental protection within the Yukon. Regulations now being developed under this new law will cover the use of beverage containers and support recycling programs and technologies. These will be followed by regulations to manage the use of pesticides and regulations on litter.

Other provisions of the legislation commit the government to public consultation during the development of regulations, to the principle of sustainable development, to producing State of Environment reports, to integrated resource management, and to a streamlined environmental review process for development projects within the Yukon.

The Act also reflects other strategy principles by recognizing the value of traditional aboriginal knowledge in resource management, and by providing for partnerships with other governments, with First Nations and with non-governmental groups, for achieving sustainable development.

An Environmental Bill of Rights sets out the government's commitment to ensuring individual and collective rights to a healthful natural environment.

Historic Resources Act

The commitment to enact new historic resources legislation was met in May 1991. The law provides for a comprehensive framework for protecting and preserving the Yukon's historical resources. Together with provisions of the Yukon Umbrella Final Agreement, it meets commitments to work cooperatively with Yukon First Nations to protect aboriginal heritage resources.

Wildlife Act - Revisions

Proposed changes to the Wildlife Act were released for public review in 1991. These changes were recently considered by the Fish and Wildlife Management Board towards amending the Act in 1992. These revisions will enhance habitat protection and management programs for Yukon's wildlife resources.

Health Act

The passage of the Yukon's Health Act focuses on sustainable strategies for health protection that supports preventative education and information-sharing.

Education Act

The Education Act recently passed by the Yukon legislature will result in more community control over many issues that affect school environments.

Highways Act - Amendments

Changes were made to the Highways Act to allow roads to be closed for environmental or conservation reasons in addition to public safety reasons.

Implementation Agents - Department of Renewable Resources

As the Yukon government agency responsible for managing the Yukon's natural resources and environment, the Department of Renewable Resources has a lead role in implementing the Yukon Conservation Strategy.

It is meeting its 197 commitments under the strategy through new legislation, policies, programs and legislation. These include the Environment Act and the Wildlife Act (and regulations), the signing of a new Canada-Yukon aquaculture agreement; new education and demonstration programs, such as the Conservation Action Team, the Yukon Conservation Strategy Demonstration Fund program and the Fisheries Initiatives for a Sustainable Harvest (FISH) Fund program;

new policies, such as the agriculture policy and the parks and outdoor recreation policy, and new management strategies for fish and wildlife resources, including wildlife viewing.

In 1992 the department will complete work on a strategic plan which will guide the department's actions to implement other strategy commitments over the next five years. These will cover the transfer of forestry management responsibilities, the development and expansion of environmental protection programs, parks and protected areas planning, the development of wildlife viewing projects, as well as ongoing wildlife management, fisheries, regional planning and agriculture programs.

• Intergovernmental Actions

One of the important ways in which the Yukon government is achieving environmentally sustainable development is by working with other governments. Commitments involving this cooperative approach are being met through the negotiation of a Canada-Yukon Accord on Environmental Cooperation and the implementation of the new Canada-Yukon Economic Development Agreement.

Co-operation is also underway in delivering programs created under the federal government's Green Plan (Arctic Environmental Strategy).

This past year the Yukon government was a signatory to the Western Accord on Environmental Co-operation and Protection and participated in the signing of the Finnish (Rovaneimi) Circumpolar Declaration on the Protection of the Arctic Environment. The agreements will enhance cooperative government efforts to deal with national and transboundary environmental issues.

The Yukon minister of Renewable Resources also participates on the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment and other forums which are addressing environmental and resource management issues.

The Department of Tourism and the Department of Renewable Resources are contributing to the development of a national code of ethics for a sustainable tourism industry.

- **New Resource Management Processes**

The ratification of the Yukon Comprehensive Land Claim Umbrella Final Agreement and the negotiation of First Nation Final Agreements will create new ways to manage our natural resources. These will reflect the commitments and principles of the Yukon Conservation Strategy.

The establishment of the Mayo Renewable Resources Council and the Fish and Wildlife Management Board represent the type of joint management arrangements that will sustain the wise use of our fish and wildlife resources.

Funding is now also being set aside for a trust fund to develop and enhance these resource populations.

Next Steps - Implementation Review

It is anticipated that the Yukon Council on the Economy and Environment will be using the departmental action plans as a starting point in its review of the implementation of the Yukon Conservation Strategy and the Yukon Economic Strategy. The Council has stated that the review is intended to help identify overlaps and inconsistencies between the two plans, and to develop useful performance indicators for each commitment in them.

In reviewing the action plans, the following considerations should be noted:

- rates of progress should not be compared between departments as certain commitments are more difficult to implement than others. For example, some actions require technologies or agreements that do not yet exist.
- some departments are involved in conservation projects and activities that are not listed in the YCS. For example, conservation goals and objectives are being factored into many aspects of the Department of Education's programs yet commitments for these are not specified in the Strategy
- it is difficult to measure completed actions, as many actions are ongoing. For example, tasks such as organizing a conference may be completed as part of the ongoing program to support environmental education events.
- the commitments in the strategy are organized by resource sector, which causes some repetition of commitments. For example, commitments outlined in environmental protection issues cover management objectives in other sectors. And many commitments to develop parks and outdoor recreation areas will be completed by implementing a new parks and outdoor recreation policy.
- there is a need to cross-reference actions as some departments are involved in other sectors as well as their own (eg. tourism has a strong interest in the wilderness/wildlife viewing recommendations).
- the lead department for some of the actions is not clear

- the degree to which Yukon government departments are using the strategy to direct their programs is difficult to determine. In many cases, many projects were underway when the strategy was released.

Under the terms of the Yukon's Environment Act, the Yukon's Minister of Renewable Resources will be revising the Yukon Conservation Strategy within three years from the date the Act is proclaimed, and every three years after that. These revisions will reflect public input and the recommendations of the Yukon Council on the Economy and the Environment. It is anticipated that the revisions will be made in conjunction with ongoing departmental strategic and program planning.

Conclusion

The Yukon Conservation Strategy is an important vehicle with which to mobilize Yukoners ideas and energies. It has complemented the increasing level of awareness about environmental issues throughout the world, and provided new resources for conservation and environmental protection projects here at home.

From this preliminary assessment, it is clear that the goals and objectives of the Yukon Conservation Strategy are being factored into Yukon government programs and policies. More than eighty percent of the commitments identified in the strategy are in progress, indicating that departments are aware of their role in implementing the strategy. Action on many remaining commitments is affected by the process of negotiating and finalizing land claims agreements and devolution agreements.

While it is recognized that government has a large role in implementing the strategy, an evaluation must also be undertaken of the commitments for which groups other than the Yukon government are responsible (eg. federal government, First Nations, industry, interests groups). This would provide a more comprehensive approach to monitoring the strategy.

As well, more work must be done to increase public awareness of conservation planning and projects, to support actions involving Yukon businesses, individuals, communities and non-government groups.

The Yukon Conservation Strategy and the Yukon Economic Strategy together serve as a blueprint for the sustainable development and integrated management of the Yukon's natural resources. The Yukon government is working to create environmentally sustainable development today and for tomorrow. It welcomes public comment and suggestions on how to meet this challenge.

Where Does the Yukon Government Stand on the Environment?

A Statement of Environmental Responsibility and Ethics

The people of the Yukon, native and non-native, have called for balanced and sustainable development of our natural resources. To be sustainable, development must be environmentally and economically sound. It must meet the needs of the present generation, but not compromise the needs of future generations.

The people of the Yukon have also called for the continued protection of lifestyle choices, including the opportunity to live off the land, and the maintenance of the natural environment that nurtures and inspires us and our many visitors.

To help achieve these objectives, the Government of the Yukon pledges to:

- Assess the positive and negative effects of all resource development activities. The negative effects of development, whether social or environmental, will be minimized.
- Consider all environmental attributes in the government's decision-making and regulatory processes. In particular, this means recognizing the important value of wildlife in supporting the food, recreational and cultural needs of Yukoners. And it means respecting the Yukon wilderness as a resource in its own right that has both economic and non-economic value.
- Protect essential ecosystems and ecosystem processes and ensure that water, trees, wildlife and other resources are available for all time.
- Protect the biological and genetic diversity of all Yukon plant and animal species.

- Educate Yukoners and their children to help them understand the value of our land and resources and to recognize the fundamental relationship between a healthy environment and cultural, community, social, economic, and individual health and well-being. This includes explaining that we are individually responsible, in our everyday lives, for protecting the environment.
- Provide all Yukoners with the opportunity to be involved in, and contribute to, all decisions about our land and resources.
- Recognize and respect the international significance of the Yukon's environment. This means cooperating with our neighbours on the management of shared resources at the local, national, and international level.
- Reflect the principles of sustainable development and sound environment management in all government projects, policies, and programs.
- Ensure Yukon government employees understand their individual responsibility for protecting the environment when carrying out their duties.

The Government of the Yukon is committed to these principles and will carry out its duties in a way that is consistent with the expressed objectives of Yukoners.

In its commitment to these principles, the Government of the Yukon will continue to support the social and economic development of Yukon communities and the health and social well-being of Yukoners.