

DRAFT

YUKON DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

HUNTING, TRAPPING, GUIDING

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Building the Future

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Hunting, Trapping, Guiding Strategy

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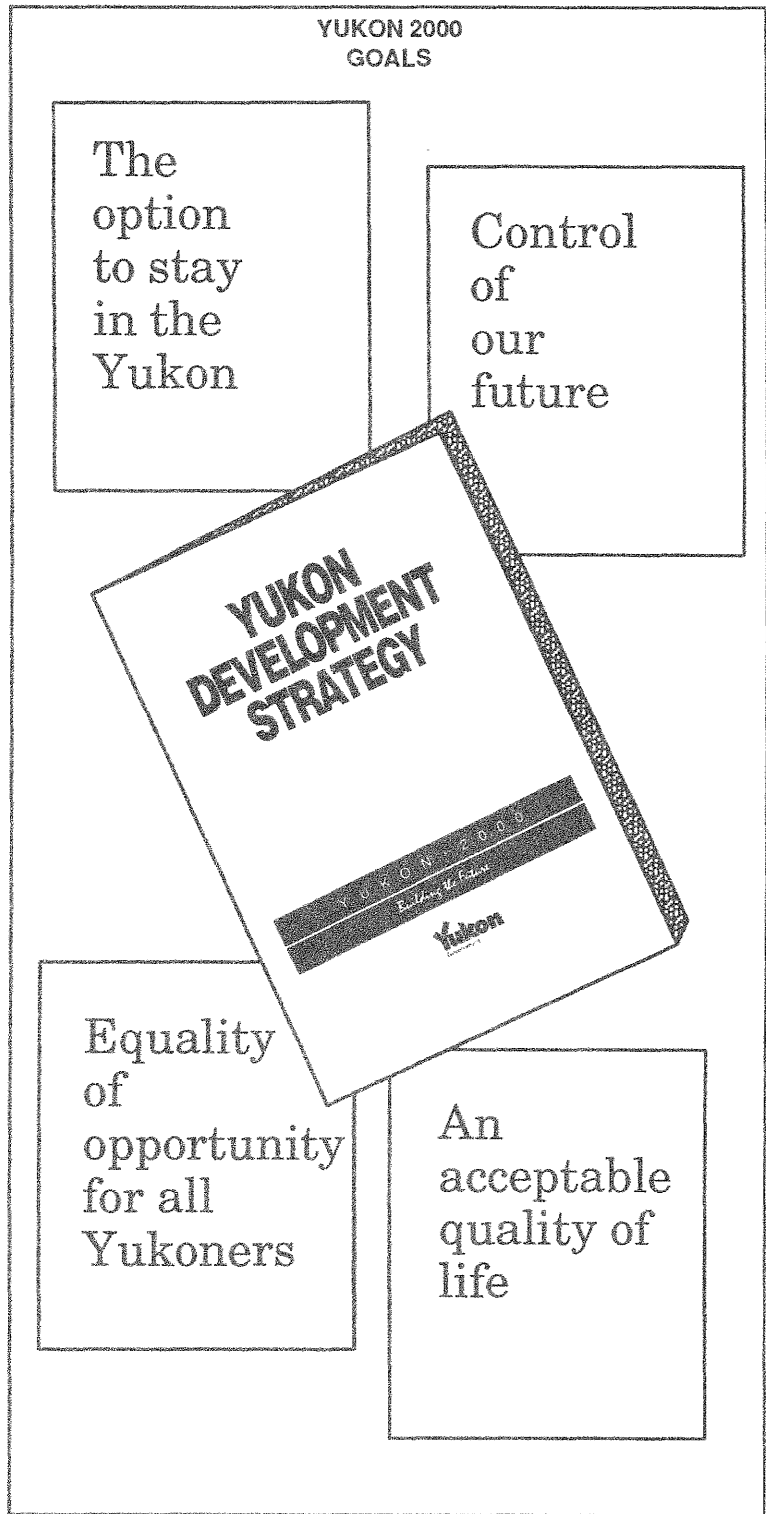
The commercial wildlife sector is composed of a diverse range of activities. Big game outfitting, trapping, and resident and subsistence hunting are consumptive uses of the wildlife resource. Non-consumptive uses involve activities oriented around wildlife viewing, either directly through naturalist activities (bird watching, wildlife photography) or indirectly through wilderness guiding during the pursuit of wilderness adventures (e.g. canoeing, rafting, hiking). Scientific use of wildlife through research can be both consumptive and non-consumptive. High quality wilderness and abundant wildlife resources are essential to all these activities and businesses.

The commercial wildlife sector also includes the secondary processing of wildlife products and the captive breeding of wildlife. Although neither of these activities requires a wilderness setting, their economic development and stability are partly dependent on, or strongly affect wildlife resources. Captive breeding falls within the realms of both commercial wildlife and agriculture for while it involves animal husbandry, it interacts with wildlife through predator/prey relationships, disease transmission and land use concerns.

Directions

1. Better management of wildlife to ensure high quality wilderness and abundant wildlife resources.

The perception within industry is that the Yukon Department of Renewable Resources does not



effectively address problems which confront the industry such as decreased wildlife populations or conflicts surrounding land use or resource allocation. The Department's point of view must be from the resource perspective offering constructive and critical input into the commercial sector. Renewable Resources should see its role as cooperating with and assisting the commercial wildlife sector in using the resource within its biological limitations.

Specific approaches could be:

- Renewable Resources should direct more emphasis on wildlife inventories and monitoring studies. Research which is conducted should be more management oriented, investigating resource potential and developing innovative ideas.
- Provide a forum for interaction between the government managers and the private sector.
- Place government staff with training in ecological management (all species management versus single species management) in communities throughout Yukon to give a regional perspective to management. This would require a decentralization of wildlife managers and planners to communities beyond Whitehorse.
- Develop a commercial wildlife sector management strategy in cooperation with the industry and public.
- Coordinate industry assistance programs within different departments. For example, the Roads to Resources program sponsored by the Department of Community and Transportation Services could conflict with the wilderness quality which forms the basis of the commercial wildlife sector.

2. Recognition of inherent constraints on wilderness and wildlife.

Legislation, policy and an industry strategy should be developed which would protect wilderness, control unlimited entry into the commercial wildlife sector, and deal with land use conflicts and compensation.

Specific approaches could be:

- Develop a Wilderness Act. Since high quality use of wildlife is dependent on the

wilderness setting, the continued integrity of wilderness should be legally protected.

- Economic protection through a compensation policy. Compensate the wildlife operators for lost business when other uses of an area degrade the wilderness and wildlife potential upon which a trapper, outfitter or guide depends.
- Policy decisions on resource allocation within the commercial wildlife sector must be made by industry, public and government, in keeping with the wilderness setting and limited carrying capacity of the land and wildlife populations.

3. Conduct research on new ventures which expand industry.

Given that commercial use of wilderness and wildlife is limited by biological and industrial constraints, the introduction of new ventures should be dealt with cautiously. The approach to new ventures could be formalized by requiring feasibility and commercial pilot studies prior to new ventures proceeding.

- Make feasibility studies mandatory when new commercial ventures are suggested by entrepreneurs. It should be mandatory to explore the biological, technical and economic characteristics of the proposed venture.
- Conduct a pilot commercial operation when a feasibility study warrants proceeding. The projects would test the biological and technical feasibility and further explore the economic potential without committing entrepreneurs and government to a full scale production.

4. Establish a Wildlife Federation.

- Encourage greater dialogue and organization among components of the industry through the creation of a commercial wildlife sector federation, to assist in resolving conflicts within the industry, presenting a united front in the protection of wildlife and wilderness from more aggressive sectors and to act as a more effective lobby with government.



BIG GAME OUTFITTING

Outfitting offers guided big game hunting services to the non-resident hunter. The industry is regulated under the Wildlife Act as a limited entry business with 22 registered guiding areas. Within each area, the licensed outfitter has a monopoly to guide non-resident hunters. No land tenure is granted with the right to guide. Relative to other sector components, big game outfitting is well organized (Yukon Outfitters Association) and economically stable. Total annual revenue exceeds \$4 million.

Constraints

- * increasing competition for limited wildlife and wilderness resource by other users;
- * land use conflicts with mining, forestry and agriculture;
- * government management could take more proactive stance in support of the industry;
- * some outfitting areas may be underutilized.

Options

1. Continue cooperative marketing.
Cooperative marketing (Yukon Outfitters Association) of the high quality, pristine wilderness offered by big game hunts benefits the industry.

2. Provide training programs.
Develop guide training programs conducted through the Yukon College to increase the number of Yukoners employed in the industry.

3. Enhance the wildlife resource.
Manipulate habitat to improve moose and sheep populations, thus increasing or maintaining the amount of wildlife resource available.

4. Increase utilization of outfitting areas.

Expand the use of outfitting areas since many areas are underutilized. A possible course of action would be to sublet or allow sale of portion of outfitting areas. However, this assumes wildlife can be successfully managed at a higher level of use when in reality, underused areas may serve as important wildlife refuges or safe areas.

TRAPPING

Trapping provides a way of life and cash income through the sale of raw fur (marten, lynx, wolverine, beaver, muskrat, etc.) primarily for export out of Yukon. Regulated under the Wildlife Act, there is limited entry to 380 registered trapping concessions plus 4 group-trapping concessions. Within each concession, the trapper has the sole right to harvest furbearers. No land tenure is associated with the concession. Approximately 750 people participate in trapping 15 species of furbearers with a total annual revenue exceeding \$1 million.

Constraints

- * anti-fur lobby could destroy fur market;
- * land use conflicts with agriculture, mining, forestry, and recreation;
- * increasing competition from captive raised furbearers;
- * management problems during low population periods of furbearers; and
- * limited entry and underutilized concessions.

Options

1. *Fight the anti-fur lobby.*

Maintain the lobby efforts and cooperation between Yukon Trappers Association and agencies in responding to the anti-fur lobby.

2. *Research fur farming.*

Either market Yukon wild fur as a specialty product (currently makes up only 15% of world fur market) or investigate feasibility of fur farming in Yukon.

3. *Increase use of trapping concessions.*

Investigate changes in policy to ensure that all trapping concessions are used (currently, 28% of concessions are not utilized while demand for concessions is high). Changes may involve the automatic transfer of a concession if not trapped at a certain harvest level, or provisions to sublet traplines could be developed.

4. *Respond to population cycles of furbearers.*

Expand the use of all furbearers, reducing harvest pressure on species when at the low in their population cycle (lynx, marten, etc.) or when at maximum harvest level. This could involve the manipulation of the market by changing fur styles to less frequently used species such as beaver, muskrat and coyote.



RESIDENT & SUBSISTENCE HUNTING

While not a direct commercial use of wildlife, resident and subsistence hunting impart economic value through contributions to the service sector (purchase of hunting supplies, camp gear, aircraft charters, etc.) and through the food substitution value of meat. Both activities affect other components of the commercial wildlife sector since they represent the major harvest pressure on wildlife populations (particularly moose and caribou).

The economic value of recreational hunting is unknown but probably exceeds

\$1 million annually. The substitution value (replacement of purchased food) of subsistence hunting has been estimated at \$1-10 million. The treatment of subsistence use of wildlife is the subject of a separate YUKON 2000 paper and will not be discussed further here.

Constraints

- * resident hunting tends to concentrate hunting pressures along access points/routes (rivers, roads, fly-in lakes) often locally overhunting the resource; and
- * competition for limited wildlife resource with other users.



Options

1. *Increase utilization of animals.*

Develop a system which ensures that hides can be removed from the bush to increase the utilization of hides and antlers. This would require changes in the Wildlife Act, training programs to teach hunters how to handle hides, and incentives to bring hides and antlers out of the bush either through legal action, allowable sale of hide/antlers or rebate on licence fees. Increased availability of hides and antlers could assist the secondary processing industry (tanning, clothing, handicrafts).

2. *Determine the best allocation of wildlife resource.*

Allocate the wildlife resource more equitably because of the multiple use of the limited wildlife resource and the increased trend towards commercial use of wildlife. This could mean limiting resident hunting in specific areas of big game outfitting or of non-consumptive use.



WILDERNESS GUIDING WILDERNESS VIEWING

Wilderness guiding offers adventure tours such as hiking, canoeing, rafting and cross-country skiing to residents and non-residents. Wildlife viewing is peripheral but important to the high quality wilderness travel experience.

Yukon has unique species of birds, plants and mammals to attract naturalists from around the world, but knowledgeable and well trained personnel are required to attract clientele. There are few outfits in Yukon which supply services strictly for the wildlife viewing clientele (bird watchers, nature photographers, etc.) even though this market is well developed elsewhere in Northern America.

The industry is relatively unregulated. Entry is unlimited with no residency or citizenship requirements imposed on the operators or their staff.

Constraints

- * land use conflicts resulting in loss of wilderness;
- * unlimited and unregulated entry has raised concerns about environmental and aesthetic degradation of popular wilderness rivers or areas;
- * economic importance of industry not always recognized by management agencies, lack of government policy;
- * conflicts of use with other components of commercial wildlife sectors; and
- * lack of experienced guides and naturalists.

Options

1. *Focus the market.*
Concentrate on providing a high quality, low client-volume wilderness experience.

This may mean some form of limited entry on a geographic basis.

2. *Provide specialized training opportunities.*

Develop the specialty skills required for successful guiding in the non-consumptive sector and training programs to ensure a high quality and safe experience for clientele. The skills required for proper marketing of wilderness suggests the development of a professional guiding association with regulatory responsibility for ensuring high quality guiding services.

3. *Better promotion of the industry.*

Promote the Yukon wildlife and wilderness through development of promotional and interpretive material aimed at the motor vehicle tourist and the wildlife tourist (bird watchers, wildlife photographers, etc.). This could be jointly prepared by industry and government in the form of booklets, posters, videos and films.

4. *Better access to the resource.*

Develop wildlife observation points and access to wildlife viewing along highways and in areas of unique or concentrated wildlife. This could involve the development of government sponsored wildlife-interpretation centres. Increasing the changes of viewing wildlife from the road or to other areas will require controlling native and non-native hunting and possible habitat enhancement programs.

Scientific Use of Wildlife

The unique assemblage of plants and animals, ease of access and geographic features of Yukon attract a number of university and institutional researchers to Yukon. The economic value is unknown, however, the potential growth of this industry has not been realized by the Yukon service sectors.

Constraints

- * limited scientific institutional infrastructure available for visiting scientists to support their research;
- * local service industry not aware of needs of visiting researchers; and
- * no policy requirements for researchers to utilize local experts, services and supplies.



Options

1. Ensure that the local economy benefits.
Require visiting scientists to supply some percentage of support services from the local service sector (labor, materials, supplies, etc.) as a condition to their scientific research permits.

2. Provide related infrastructure.
Promote the scientific use of the area by the development of support infrastructure for visiting scientists (laboratory space, high quality research library, etc.) in cooperation with Yukon College.



SECONDARY PROCESSING

The processing of hides, antlers and other wildlife products (moose nugget jewelry) into handicrafts, art or leather are the major activities of secondary processing. In the Yukon, the industry includes tanners, taxidermists, local bone/antler carvers, cottage and factory handicrafts. The industry is socially and economically significant to the Yukon but is not cohesive or well organized. The annual economic return is unknown but likely exceeds \$1 million and could be increased.

Constraints

- * conflicting support from Yukon Department of Renewable Resources;
- * lack of regulations and policy for sale of meat, hides and by-products;
- * land use conflicts with other commercial wildlife uses; and
- * feasibility of game ranching and fur farming unproven.



Options

1. Make use of industry organizations.
Encourage the involvement of secondary processing businesses in various industry organizations. This will assist these businesses to take advantage of existing marketing, designing and processing skills offered by various people within the industry. Organize and increase cooperation between raw material suppliers, processors and cottage trade and handicrafts.

2. Strengthen the industry through training.
Establish a training program with Yukon College in the production and management of cottage handicrafts, marketing of handicrafts and processing of raw materials.

3. Investigate the captive breeding of wildlife.

Investigate feasibility prior to commercial operation. Fur ranching may be feasible, however the lessons of Yukon fur ranching in the 1930's, the current failure of a Yukon farm and concern from trappers should be investigated. Assess viability through pilot commercial projects. Marketing studies should also be undertaken to assess the market size of game meat, hides and antlers.

Promote the captive breeding of birds of prey (gyrfalcons, peregrines). This industry should be promoted and supported by government particularly in fighting the misconception that captive breeding and falconry are detrimental to wild populations.