

# Public Review of the Draft Yukon Water Strategy

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WHAT WE HEARD: A SUMMARY OF COMMENTS





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August 2013

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**For more information, please contact:**

Environment Yukon  
Water Resources Branch  
Box 2703 (V-310),  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Y1A 2C6

P: 867.667.3171  
Toll Free: 1.800.661.0408 local 3171  
E: [water.resources@gov.yk.ca](mailto:water.resources@gov.yk.ca)

**For copies of this document, please visit:**

[www.yukonwater.ca](http://www.yukonwater.ca) or [www.env.gov.yk.ca/draftwaterstrategy](http://www.env.gov.yk.ca/draftwaterstrategy)

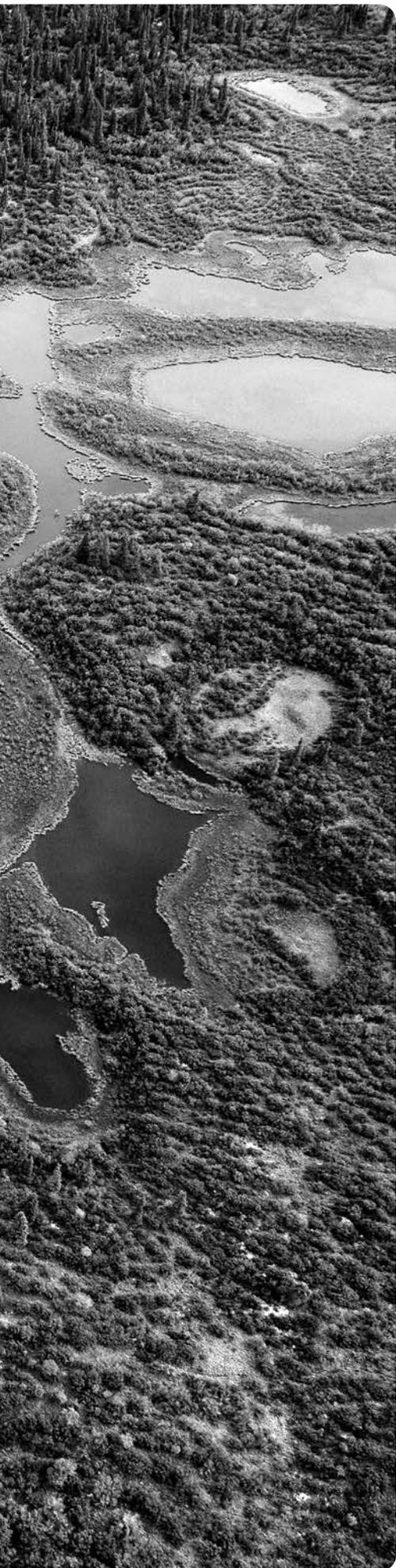
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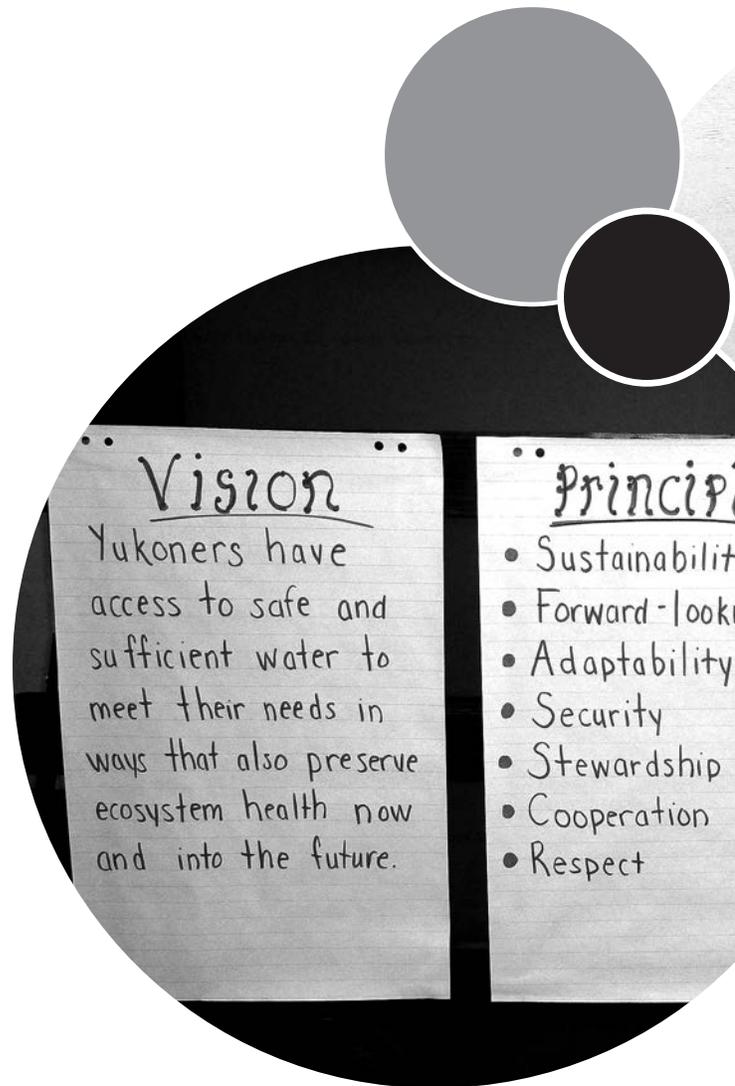
## Minister's Message

On behalf of the Government of Yukon, I would like to thank all individuals, organizations, and governments who contributed to the development of a Yukon water strategy that will guide the government's approach to water management in Yukon for the benefit of water users and the environment. Through your attendance at open houses and public meetings, and your submission of comments, we have heard what you have to say.

Many thoughtful, helpful and passionate submissions were received, all of which have been diligently compiled, summarized and organized according to key themes which emerged during the public review. We will work carefully with our expert staff members to include your input as we develop the final water strategy.

Your contributions are sincerely appreciated. Thank you.

Currie Dixon  
*Minister of Environment*



# Executive Summary

This document is a summary of what Yukon government team members heard during the public review of the *Draft Yukon Water Strategy*. It reflects feedback received from 126 formal submissions as well as 145 attendees at open houses/public meetings on the draft document.

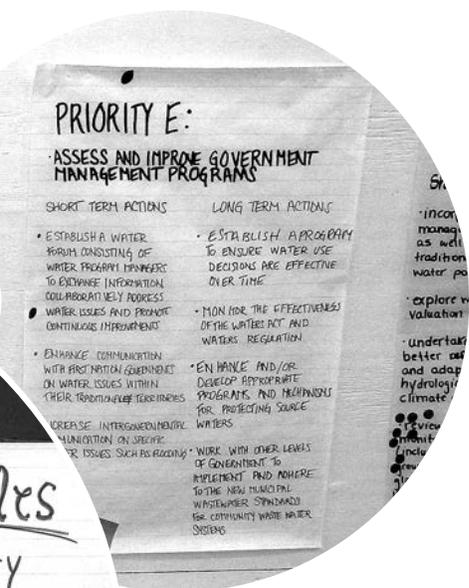
It provides background on the development of a water strategy as well as an overview of the engagement process. A feedback profile is presented including the various sources of feedback as well as reporting limitations and format.

The summary of comments follows the structure of the *Draft Yukon Water Strategy* beginning with the strategic framework, comprised of a vision, principles and goals, followed by the priority areas of work. General comments regarding the strategy are also presented at the end of the document.

The feedback was summarized and categorized into themes. The most frequent and significant feedback themes which emerged during the Yukon government's review and summary are that

“the Yukon government should...

- consider and recognize limitations and obstacles;
- enhance the focus on the ecological value of water;
- revise wording and provide definition and clarification of terms;
- consider additional principles, goals and ideas;
- clarify whether or not the goals are prioritized;
- increase baseline data collection, long-term monitoring and access to water information;
- strengthen its water management regime;
- expand its existing water management programs;
- improve the use of sound science and traditional/local knowledge in water decision-making;
- improve its communication and education regarding Yukon's waters;
- enhance its cooperation, coordination and collaboration with other water managers;
- promote more water protection and conservation;
- explain how it will work together with First Nations and communities;
- outline relevant agreements, legislation and regulation and existing government processes; and,
- promote more innovative water management solutions.”



# Introduction

## Background

The Government of Yukon produced a draft water strategy to clarify its approach to addressing water issues and water management in Yukon for the benefit of water users and the environment, within its areas of responsibility. The draft strategy set out a framework of goals and priority actions, which in turn were based on a vision and set of principles. The short- and long-term priority actions are the strategic items and areas of work the government will carry out.

The *Draft Yukon Water Strategy* builds on work already completed to date by the Yukon government towards improving its water management programs, policies and infrastructure. Several steps were taken to develop the draft document including developing a preliminary discussion paper, engaging First Nation, federal, municipal governments and other Yukon government departmental staff via an information sharing and gathering workshop in June 2012, informal discussions and written submissions.

## Engagement Process

On March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2013, the Government of Yukon announced a public review of its *Draft Yukon Water Strategy* in order to achieve a comprehensive, thoughtful and innovative approach to water management that responds to the values and concerns of Yukoners. The public review period was scheduled to end on May 31<sup>st</sup> but was subsequently extended to June 30<sup>th</sup> in response to requests for more time. Late comments and meetings were also accommodated by the review team.

Comments were sought on the draft vision, principles and goals as well as six priorities and the short- and long-term actions for achieving them. The review was promoted through a news release, direct communication with key water stakeholders, targeted mail-outs, advertising in newspapers and on the Environment Yukon and YukonWater websites, as well as frequent updates on the Yukon water strategy Facebook page and Environment Yukon Twitter feed.

Summaries of comments received at each open house are posted at [www.env.gov.yk.ca/draftwaterstrategy](http://www.env.gov.yk.ca/draftwaterstrategy). This document summarizes what Yukon government team members heard during the public review of the *Draft Yukon Water Strategy*.



# Feedback Profile

A total of 122 written submissions were received. In addition, 149 individuals and organizations contributed via phone, meetings and open houses. Responses were received from Yukon and transboundary First Nations, Yukon government agencies, members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, the federal government, other provincial and territorial governments, municipalities, Yukon boards and councils, non-government organizations, water researchers and consultants, industrial users and individuals.

Eight public open houses and meetings were held over the course of the review (see Appendix II). Some locations were predetermined based on geographical situation and public accessibility, while others were arranged upon request. Attendees discussed key issues and priorities with Yukon government expert staff members.

## Limitations

This report summarizes and organizes all comments into key themes. It does not include most of the (technical) detail and emotion of submissions. This document is not the final water strategy; it is simply a compilation of comments received during the public review. The government will release the final version of the water strategy at a later date.

## Format

The ‘what we heard’ section beginning on the next page is organized using the structure of the draft water strategy discussion document: vision, principles and goals, followed by the priorities and the short- and long-term actions for achieving them. General comments are also presented. Comments have been summarized and organized by key themes. A ranking of the ten most important priority actions as identified by meeting attendees is presented at the end of this section.

## Feedback Sources

<b>Online</b>	56 written submissions
<b>Email</b>	47 written submissions
<b>Mail</b>	16 written submissions
<b>In Person</b>	3 written submissions 2 oral submissions
<b>Phone</b>	2 oral submissions
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>126 formal submissions</b>

### OPEN HOUSE/MEETING ATTENDANCE

<b>Dawson City</b>	10 attendees
<b>Haines Junction</b>	15 attendees
<b>Fort McPherson</b>	24 attendees
<b>Mayo</b>	10 attendees
<b>Pelly Crossing</b>	14 attendees
<b>Ross River</b>	12 attendees
<b>Tagish</b>	15 attendees
<b>Whitehorse</b>	45 attendees
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>145 attendees</b>

# What We Heard

## Vision

*Yukoners have access to safe and sufficient water to meet their needs in ways that also preserve ecosystem health now and into the future.*

### Consider and Recognize Limitations and Obstacles

- Proposed industrial activities, such as fracking, will become an obstacle to achieving the vision due to the significant amounts of water used and the potential for contamination during these activities.
- Current industrial activities, such as hydroelectric generation and mining, already put ecosystem health under stress.
- Water is dynamic and always changing; there are limits to accessing safe and sufficient water, such as natural seasonal conditions and impacts of climate change.

- “Yukoners” limits the vision to a geographical boundary when water itself is transboundary.
- Ensure that the priority areas and actions will help achieve the vision.

### Enhance Focus on the Ecological Value of Water

- Primary vision should be on the health of the land and the water for all beings.
- More emphasis needed on preservation and conservation.

*Of the 56 surveys completed using the online tool, 59% said they supported the proposed vision, principles and goals, 20% did not, while the remaining 21% either did not know or preferred not to answer.*

59%

20%

21%

Principles	
Sustainability	Undertake actions that are environmentally, economically and socially sustainable.
Forward-looking	Anticipate future changes in water quality, quantity and needs due to issues such as cumulative effects, climate change and population growth.
Adaptability	Promote and develop adaptive management strategies to cope with uncertainty and change.
Security	Seek to maintain affordable, adequate, equitable and reliable water quality and quantity to all Yukoners.
Stewardship	Ensure Yukon's watersheds remain intact and healthy, based on both individual and shared responsibilities.
Cooperation	Develop and promote partnerships and collaboration as appropriate in light of shared responsibilities.
Respect	Demonstrate respect for the intrinsic value of water and the values and interest of all Yukoners.

## Revise Wording and Provide Definition and Clarification of Terms

- Language of the principles could be improved to strengthen and clarify intent.
- Define the word 'sustainability', particularly in regard to water. Sustainability is understood differently so it must be clear with what intention this principle holds (i.e. the inherent and imperative biological, spiritual and cultural value of water). Suggestions included the definition from the Brundtland Report and the definition of 'sustainable development' from the Umbrella Final Agreement.
- Include "land use" within the "forward-looking" principle. One of the largest impacts on surface and groundwater supply is land use and the level of land disturbance in the watershed.
- 'Stewardship' should be about a watershed approach to water management. Shared stewardship would then encompass unique circumstances within different Yukon drainage basins and actions and priorities should be based on the specific conditions within each major watershed. This principle should recognize that some watersheds are already affected and address how to promote stewardship on those watersheds. Further, 'stewardship' should engage people in remote locations and water users (not just water managers) and encourage them to be water stewards.

- Further define 'cooperation' by explaining with whom and how these partnerships would be developed and include intent to work together with interested First Nations.
- 'Respect' should include the inherent spiritual and cultural value of water.

## Consider Additional Principles and Ideas

- Include a principle regarding 'humility' or alternative which admits that we need to stay humble about water because we do not know everything about this resource.
- Adopt the 'precautionary principle' which protects public health and the environment recognizing that industry will adapt in order to meet their objectives. Perhaps it could be adopted as a legislative requirement. Should also include and define the application of the 'precautionary principle' within an adaptive management framework.
- The principle of 'conservation' (i.e. preventing the wasteful use of water) would strongly benefit water use. Current approach tends to be based on regulation by setting maximum allowable uses rather than including provisions or incentives for water conservation.
- Elaborate on basic human rights associated with access to water.

## Goals

<b>Water for People</b>	Ensure accessible, safe and sufficient water for drinking and other purposes, including industrial, recreational, heritage, cultural and spiritual uses and values. Promote sustainable and valuable use of water for communities and economies for key business sectors.
<b>Water for Nature</b>	Preserve water quality and quantity for aquatic health and ecosystem services while respecting the intrinsic value of water.
<b>Water Monitoring, Knowledge and Management</b>	Strengthen understanding, knowledge and overall management of water.

### Revise Wording and Provide Definition and Clarification of Terms

- Further elaborate and define terms.
- Acknowledge or mention the important role that water plays in generating hydroelectric power.
- State that rate of flow will be protected.
- ‘Water for people’ should not include “industrial” because in many cases industrial processes come at an expense to people and nature. Also consider removing “key business sectors”.
- ‘Water for nature’ should include “wildlife”.
- ‘Water monitoring, knowledge and management’ should include some mention of scientific study.

### Clarify Whether or Not the Goals Are Prioritized

- Currently reads as though ‘water for people’ is the highest priority. Recommendations are conflicted; some respondents felt that the goals should be treated equally while others thought that they should be prioritized.
- Of those who thought they should be prioritized, views on the appropriate prioritization differed.

Some respondents thought that ‘water for nature’ is the highest priority since all life (including people) is incumbent upon healthy ecosystems. Others said however that ‘water monitoring, knowledge and management’ is the highest priority.

- Combine the goals ‘water for people’ and ‘water for nature’ since they are interconnected.

### Consider Additional Goals and Ideas

- Expand the goal ‘water for nature’ to include terrestrial health and life as water and land are intrinsically linked and act together for the overall health of water.
- More priority actions are needed to promote the ‘water for nature’ goal, e.g., monitor and maintain aquatic habitats for fish and wildlife.
- Set clear and strict limits, for example when there is not enough accessible, safe and sufficient water for all interests of use. Address the issue of commodification and bulk export of water; and address the concept of water rights and ownership.
- Include a goal regarding ‘water for the economy’ because individuals’ water needs are fundamentally different than those of industries.

**PRIORITY A:****Better understand and manage Yukon's groundwater regime.****Increase Baseline Data Collection, Long-Term Monitoring and Access to Water Information**

- Establishing a groundwater program is commendable. This program should include conducting more groundwater testing and monitoring, establishing new wells, collecting baseline data and mapping groundwater sources. Identify knowledge gaps regarding groundwater and develop a long-term monitoring program. Hiring a hydrogeologist would be integral to achieving this goal.
- Developing a centralized groundwater database is overdue and essential. This database should include private wells and/or wells within municipal boundaries. There should be mandatory and standardized well drilling logs so that the public can access information on wells. Perhaps this database could be combined with the various surface water sources (lakes, rivers, wetlands, swamps).

***This point was also made about the priority to maintain/improve access to safe drinking water.***

- Undertake baseline studies in areas of potential oil and gas development, including thermogenic and biogenic methane.
- Concerns that fracking could possibly contaminate groundwater and that not enough is known about our groundwater sources. Until there is more information and education about the activity, it should not be allowed.

***This point was also made about the priorities to maintain/improve access to safe drinking water, promote the sustainable use of water, and plan for water needs now and in the future.***

- Conduct an inventory and status reporting of known or suspected contaminated sites and their risk potential to surface water and groundwater resources.

**Strengthen Water Management Regime**

- Work with federal and international bodies, research institutes, etc. to close information gaps.
- Include developing a wetlands policy within the long-term action to create a regulatory and legislative toolkit to protect groundwater.
- Develop a regulation for all water well drilling, domestic and industrial. Require well drillers to submit a record of their drilling activities to allow for proper documentation of well information.
- Apply a well construction standard to licensed drillers to ensure all water wells in Yukon are constructed in accordance with best practices.
- Establish clear parameters for groundwater testing for the purpose of developing baseline conditions. Important to test for all parameters (the results found are only what you look for).
- Commit to collecting security on oil and gas projects to ensure funds are in place to remedy in the case of groundwater contamination.
- Recognize the interaction between ground and surface waters. This continuum is crucial to making sound water management and land use decisions.
- Assess risks and threats to Yukon's water resources. For example, fracking on the groundwater regime.

*Of the 56 surveys completed using the online tool, 57% said they supported the actions proposed for this priority, 5% said they did not, while the remaining 38% either did not know or preferred not to answer.*

38%

5%

57%

## PRIORITY B:

### Maintain/improve access to safe drinking water for all Yukoners.

#### Expand Existing Water Management Programs

- Continuing the Rural Domestic Water Well Program should be expanded to include well users inside municipal boundaries.
- Promote and support the Yukon Water and Wastewater Operator Training Program (YWWOP).
- Develop and/or review guidelines for private wells and bulk water delivery. Private well holders need access to affordable and accessible testing programs.
- Facilitate the establishment of a certified water testing lab in Yukon for metals. Currently, samples need to be sent out of the territory to be analyzed. It would be cost and time-effective to either open a public lab or to provide funding/incentives to open a private lab in the territory.
- Make inspection reports and information regarding municipal water quality and quantity available to the public online and in a timely fashion.  
*This point was also made about the priority to improve the generation and use of water information.*
- Conduct an economic and ecological goods and services assessment of water when assessing the cost of providing drinking water.
- Commit to providing access to drinking water for people in remote locations.

#### Improve the Use of Sound Science and Traditional/Local Knowledge in Water Decision-Making

- Recognize that healthy wetlands, aquifers, lakes and rivers are essential to maintain and improve safe drinking water.
- Investigate and apply appropriate set-back standards for drinking water sources from

possible contamination sources. Traditional set-back standards may differ from government standards.

#### Strengthen Water Management Regime

- Develop source water protection plans including for all groundwater sources of community water and include associated actions in both the short-term and long-term actions.
- There needs to be more of a link to developing source water protection plans and land use planning. It is more expensive to remediate a contaminated source than to protect it. Attention to source water protection is not only a human health issues but also a water stewardship and economic issue.
- Provide for the regulatory oversight of activities which could impact watersheds that supply water to the communities.

#### Revise Wording and Provide Definition and Clarification of Terms

- The short- and long-term actions regarding water costs and education should be clarified and the differentiation made clearer.
- This priority could be linked to water quality; while this might be inherent, it is not obvious.
- These actions should include wording that they will be carried out in a collaborative manner with municipalities and other stakeholders.
- Recognize the safety of private well holders' water supplies.
- Concern with the reference to "Yukoners". Water is transboundary so these decisions impact more than just Yukoners. Further, these decisions impact visitors to the Yukon and non-humans as well.

*Of the 56 surveys completed using the online tool, 54% said they supported the actions proposed for this priority, 9% said they did not, while the remaining 37% either did not know or preferred not to answer.*

54%

9%

37%

## PRIORITY C: Promote the sustainable use of water.

### Improve Communication and Education Regarding Yukon's Waters

- Include education and outreach activities. There was a suggestion that Renewable Resource Councils may be a good partner for these types of activities.
- Provide educational services to the public, including Kindergarten to Grade 12 schools, and support for advanced education such as post-graduate investigations of Yukon water issues.
- Develop greater involvement of communities and schools in monitoring and use of water.
- Ensure that industry and new proponents are familiar with the Waters Act and Regulation and the final Yukon Water Strategy goals so that everyone is working towards a common vision for Yukon's waters.

### Improve the Use of Sound Science and Traditional/Local Knowledge in Water Decision-Making

- Recognize the importance of headwaters and protecting them from contamination. This could be incorporated in Best Management Practices (BMPs) or as a reference in the strategy.
- Improve the knowledge and demonstrating the linkages between surface water, groundwater, permafrost and aquatic resources.
- Compare Yukon government BMPs to those developed by First Nations and to address

gaps in recommendations to provide for consistency and clarity.

### Strengthen Water Management Regime

- Create enforceable regulations that reflect BMPs. BMPs are inadequate without an enforcement framework. Many options are available to modernize and adapt legislation and regulations that would allow specific legally enforceable provisions of licences and permits to provide more certainty that proponents will fulfill surface and groundwater protection objectives.
- Develop economic incentives for proponents to sustainably manage water.

### Revise Wording and Provide Definition and Clarification of Terms

- The Best Management Practices action item should be better defined. It needs to be stated that this activity is directed at industry and not the public or domestic user.
- The word "affordability" in the long-term action surrounding innovative technology suggests the commodification of water. This action requires more description to explain the costs of providing infrastructure, treating water, etc.
- This priority needs to mention the activities which almost all the water in Yukon is used for including hydroelectric generation, placer and hardrock mining and agriculture.

*Of the 56 surveys completed using the online tool, 46% said they supported the actions proposed for this priority, 9% said they did not, while the remaining 45% either did not know or preferred not to answer.*

45%

9%

46%

## PRIORITY D:

### Improve the generation and use of water information.

#### Enhance Cooperation, Coordination and Collaboration with Other Water Managers

- Work with communities and First Nations on a number of objectives, including:
  - Establishing a better relationship with First Nations and municipalities through more open communication and collaboration for the purpose of determining the most useful and effective ways to share data and information. A suggestion is to create a central location and position that people can obtain water information, such as the provision of notifications on water issues and new initiatives.
  - Increasing education and outreach on water-related data and information. Focuses could include engagement with youth, communities, First Nations and homeowners with water holding tanks.
  - Determining how to incorporate local and traditional knowledge and make it available to provide insights on historical baselines, the potential impacts of trends and interactions with other ecosystem components.

#### Expand Existing Water Management Programs

- Integrate water information collected into existing mapping applications like the Yukon Mining and Lands Map Viewer.
- Standardize reporting water data (i.e. adopt a water monitoring protocol for all agencies and users) in order to allow for consistent data and easy comparison.
- Develop a centralized database that tracks actual volume of water withdrawn under water licences from rivers or watersheds, which would improve cumulative effects assessments.

- Increase the number of networks on YukonWater and expand the water data catalogue to include actual data.
- Make water information available in French and First Nation languages.

#### Improve Communication and Education Regarding Yukon's Waters

- Commit to continually making improvements to the YukonWater and WATERLINE web tools.
- Include a searchable database within the YukonWater and WATERLINE tools to locate key data and related information, all spatially referenced with the ability to focus on selectable levels of orders of watersheds.
- Ensure government has an idea of the type of information that people are looking for. The Yukon government should not spend too much on the dissemination of data.
- Increase communication with transboundary water users such as First Nations since there are many transboundary water interests and concerns which should be contemplated and considered.
- Make all historical reports, government reports, monitoring results and inspections available online in a timely fashion.
- Make all data available online, not just who to contact to retrieve the data.
- Release a "State of Yukon's Watersheds" report. Create as a stand-alone from the "State of the Environment" report.

#### Revise Wording and Provide Definition and Clarification of Terms

- Clarify what is meant by "water information". For example, "scientific data and traditional ecological knowledge".

*Of the 56 surveys completed using the online tool, 52% said they supported the actions proposed for this priority, 4% said they did not, while the remaining 44% either did not know or preferred not to answer.*

52%

4%

44%

## PRIORITY E:

### Assess and improve government management programs.

#### Strengthen Water Management Regime

- Complete a comprehensive review and modernization process for the *Waters Act*, *Quartz Mining Act* and *Placer Mining Act*. Suggest consulting with First Nations on re-starting the Successor Resource Legislation Working Group as contemplated in the Devolution Transfer Agreement.
- Amend the *Waters Act*. Suggestions included amending it to align with the Umbrella Final Agreement, improve accountability, policy and planning, better measure progress of ongoing efforts to improve the quality of science and data.
- Adopt stringent effluent guidelines and improve *Waters Regulation*, permitting and compliance enforcement.
- Issue only short-term, quantitative permits and licences for water in order to reassess as the environment changes.
- Collect fees for large scale water use or extraction and apply these to water monitoring and management programs. Institute a user-pay type system.
- Establish security and funds for reclamation of projects that extract or contaminate Yukon's water.
- Exclude Yukon waters from all Free Trade Deals and Foreign Investment Agreements.
- Prevent freshwater lakes in Yukon from becoming tailings ponds.
- Work toward standardizing water quality monitoring procedures and to monitor cumulative impacts on water quality at the watershed scale.
- Focus on effective, fair and value-based allocation to address water allocation concerns and potential impacts related to the cumulative volume used on watersheds.
- Identify and address gaps in overlapping jurisdiction of various water management agencies.
- Develop regulations regarding geothermal heating. This activity is becoming increasingly popular, so there should be regulations in place.

- Utilize independent third party monitoring as appropriate, or perhaps create a new independent agency.
- Develop a formal structure for which programs are reviewed and incorporate service standards. For example, responding to website inquiries within two business days.
- Create a policy prohibiting bulk water export.
- Adopt a more holistic and connected approach to managing Yukon's water.

#### Enhance Cooperation, Coordination and Collaboration with Other Water Managers

- Include the public and NGOs for a portion of the forum. The implementation of the final water strategy will require the inclusion of all appropriate other Governments and bodies that have water management interests and responsibilities in discussions about water matters.
- Expand the Strategic Water Initiatives Group to include municipalities and First Nations. This three-way ongoing dialogue would be a good addition to the Water Forum initiative. The group should share its Terms of Reference, meeting minutes and explain its work on [www.yukonwater.ca](http://www.yukonwater.ca) to show how the departments work together.
- Provide funding support to First Nations to develop their own water management programs on their settlement lands and traditional territories.
- Acknowledge First Nation water rights in the Umbrella Final Agreement and specific provisions of Final Agreements. To date, government and regulatory boards have not seriously considered how a project might impact First Nation water rights.
- Implement agreements which are already in place, such as the Yukon-Northwest Territories Bilateral Water Agreement.
- Recognize organizations, which can collectively address water issues and promote continuous improvements as well as help enhance communication with First Nations governments. For example, Yukon Energy Corporation.

## Promote Water Protection and Conservation

- Assess the feasibility, costs, and benefits of metering water use in the short-term.
- Retrofit all Yukon government buildings and operations to divert grey water for non-potable uses.
- Make a clear link between water planning and land use planning. Land use should be explicit about allocation of land to protect water.
- Make a link to wetland management programs. Wetland protection and wetland buffer zones

are a way to protect water quality and this “ecosystem service” is a way to save costs of unnatural water treatment.

- Restore degraded waters and ecosystems by commencing hands-on reclamations.

## Revise Wording and Provide Definition and Clarification of Terms

- The long-term action to establish a program to ensure water use decisions are effective over time is unclear and could benefit from explanation or elaboration.

*Of the 56 surveys completed using the online tool, 52% said they supported the actions proposed for this priority, 5% said they did not, while the remaining 43% either did not know or preferred not to answer.*

52%

5%

43%



**PRIORITY F:****Plan for water needs now and in the future.****Enhance Cooperation, Coordination and Collaboration with Other Water Managers**

- Each of the actions will require more engagement with First Nations. Collaboration may reduce costs by hiring and training of local people as monitoring technicians in regional or watershed based stewardship programs.
- Develop a community-based monitoring program.

**Increase Baseline Data Collection, Long-Term Monitoring and Access to Water Information**

- Review and “expand” monitoring networks. With more potential development, there needs to be more monitoring across the territory.
- Increase the percentage of real-time data transmitting stations; upgrade current existing hydrometric network stations to “real-time”.

**Improve the Use of Sound Science and Traditional/Local Knowledge in Water Decision-Making**

- The action to integrate water valuation as a tool to support decision making was well received. Some respondents noted challenges and moral issues with assigning monetary values to nature.
- Preparing for new resource sectors should be a short-term and not a long-term goal if fracking is imminent and it should state that Yukon government will undertake a comprehensive study of how oil and gas development will affect water resources.

- Either explicitly state fracking or do not provide an example. As it stands, it seems to suggest fracking is a foregone conclusion, however, it is good to see that government would be prepared if it did in fact take place.
- Undertake research to determine how to incorporate traditional knowledge and a guideline of how to use it along with best available science. Traditional knowledge is very important and needs to be included but there needs to be more direction from traditional knowledge holders.
- Maximize the use of current hydroelectric facilities for optimal benefit and add a long-term action to protect water bodies that have good hydro potential for future development.

**Promote Water Protection and Conservation**

- Develop habitat protection and watershed management plans.
- Provide incentives to promote water conservation and build a culture of conservation. For example, bleeder replacements, low-flow shower heads, etc.

**Revise Wording and Provide Definition and Clarification of Terms**

- The actions to incorporate adaptive management approaches and traditional knowledge into plans and to employ available governance mechanisms for Integrated Water Management are vague and obscure. These need to be expanded to highlight what government will do.
- Define ‘water valuation’ and explain how it could be used.

*Of the 56 surveys completed using the online tool, 50% said they supported the actions proposed for this priority, 13% said they did not, while the remaining 37% either did not know or preferred not to answer.*

37%

13%

50%

## Priority Rankings

Participants at community meetings, using a prioritization exercise, ranked the following as the top ten action items for the Yukon government:

1. Review and adjust water monitoring networks (including surface water, groundwater, permafrost and glaciers) to ensure adequate information is available for good decision making now, taking into consideration climate change, adaptation measures and future needs.
2. Prepare for new resource sectors (e.g. petroleum) as they relate to water management and build internal capacity to respond to resource extraction.
3. Enhance and/or develop appropriate programs and mechanisms for protecting source waters.  
Continually make improvements to [www.yukonwater.ca](http://www.yukonwater.ca) based on the results of periodic evaluations.  
Better understand and manage Yukon's groundwater regime.
6. Increase public education to increase knowledge of water use, costs and conservation opportunities.
7. Ensure regulatory oversights of all public water systems through current legislative and enforcement programs.
8. Continue to develop and improve best management practices using best available science and technology as well as local and traditional knowledge.
9. Increase communication on water in a manner that is most effective for users.
10. Undertake research to better understand and adapt to Yukon's hydrological response to climate change.



## General Comments

A number of submitted comments do not fit within the strategy's current structure but warrant further consideration by the Yukon government in developing the final strategy.

### Explain How the Yukon Government Will Work Together with First Nations and Communities

- Outline more definitive timelines and description of how First Nations will be involved in the process.
- Commit to a collaborative engagement process for developing the Action Plan that will arise from the final water strategy and to working together with First Nations, other governments and stakeholder groups during the implementation.
- Expand and further describe the roles and responsibilities of other governments within the 'Roles and Responsibilities' section of the strategy.
- Develop a water strategy that encompasses all governments within the Yukon.
- Reference or commitment regarding the importance of early involvement in the assessment and regulatory process.
- Concern regarding the Yukon government's past engagement processes; want to see their voices in this water strategy and work together in implementation.

### Outline Relevant Agreements, Legislation and Regulation and Existing Government Processes

- Clarify the Yukon government's existing obligations to Yukon waters, such as provisions set out in the Umbrella Final Agreement, and provide an overview of relevant legislation and regulation. Acknowledge the transfer of *Waters Act* inspections for mines and mining activity from Environment to Energy, Mines and

Resources. There should also be a reference to Chapter 14 of the Umbrella Final Agreement within the strategy.

- Indicate in the strategy that the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council established a vision to "be able to drink water directly from the Yukon River".
- Provide an overview of the responsibility of the collection of baseline data within the strategy document itself; the Yukon government versus the industrial user.
- Provide highlights of Yukon's disaster management and emergency preparedness programs related to extreme water events such as flooding, drought and contamination.

### Promote More Innovative Water Management Solutions

- Give greater prominence to technology, innovation and environmentally sustainable economic opportunities within the priorities.
- Reference protection of wetlands and biodiversity within the strategy. The linkage between surface water, wetlands and groundwater is very important and vital in maintaining clean water. Wetlands can protect surface waters and act as natural filters. This "ecosystem service" is a way to save costs of other methods of water treatment.

### Revise Wording and Provide Definition and Clarification of Terms

- Priority actions should be more descriptive, action-oriented and achievable.
- Make a link to energy within the water strategy. Water is crucial to hydroelectric power generation in the territory.
- Provide general time frames for "short-term" and "long-term" actions.
- Improve the glossary; add more of the language used in the document.

## Next Steps

The feedback summarized in this report will be used to inform the final version of the strategy. The final version of the Yukon water strategy will include a plan for implementing the actions set out for each priority. While the Yukon government will be committed to following the final water strategy, other water managers are welcome to use the strategy and invited to collaborate to fulfill its goals as much as possible. The Yukon government will work together with other governments and organizations to determine who can do what, when and how.



# Appendix I:

## Organizations Contacted to Participate in the Public Review

The following governments and organizations were sent formal invitations to provide comments and/or request a meeting regarding the *Draft Yukon Water Strategy*:

Aboriginal Affairs & Northern Development Canada  
Access Mining Consultants Ltd.  
AECOM Canada Ltd.  
Alsek Renewable Resource Council  
Association of Yukon Communities

Cambio Consulting  
Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment  
Carcross/Tagish Renewable Resource Council  
Carcross/Tagish First Nation  
Carmacks Renewable Resource Council  
Champagne and Aishihik First Nations  
City of Dawson  
City of Whitehorse  
Council of Yukon First Nations

Dan Keyi Renewable Resource Council  
Dawson District Renewable Resource Council  
Dawson Regional Planning Commission  
Denison Environmental Services  
Ducks Unlimited Canada

Ecological Logistics & Research Ltd.  
EDI Environmental Dynamics Inc.  
Environment Canada

First Nation of Na-Cho Nyak Dun  
Fisheries & Oceans Canada  
Friends of McIntyre Creek

Golder Associates Ltd.  
Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board

Hamlet of Ibex Valley  
Hamlet of Mount Lorne  
Health Canada  
Hurlburt Enterprises Inc.

Inuvialuit Regional Corporation

Klondike Placer Miners Association  
Kluane First Nation  
Kwanlin Dün First Nation

Laberge Renewable Resource Council  
Liard First Nation  
Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation

Mackenzie River Basin Board  
Marsh Lake Community Society  
Marsh Lake Local Advisory Council  
Mayo District Renewable Resource Council

Nicholson Contracting  
North Yukon Renewable Resource Council  
Northern Climate Exchange

Quest Engineering Group Inc.

Ross River Dena Council

Selkirk First Nation  
Selkirk Renewable Resource Council  
South Klondike Local Advisory Council

Ta'an Kwäch'än Council  
Tagish Local Advisory Council  
Taku River Tlingit First Nation  
Teslin Renewable Resource Council  
Teslin Tlingit Council  
Tourism Industry Association of Yukon  
Town of Faro  
Town of Watson Lake  
Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in

Village of Carmacks  
Village of Haines Junction  
Village of Mayo  
Village of Teslin  
Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation

White River First Nation  
Wilderness Tourism Association of Yukon

Yukon Agricultural Association  
Yukon Chamber of Mines  
Yukon Conservation Society  
Yukon Development Corporation  
Yukon Electrical Company Ltd.  
Yukon Energy Corporation  
Yukon Engineering Services  
Yukon Environmental & Socio-economic Assessment Board  
Yukon Fish & Wildlife Management Board  
Yukon Land Use Planning Council  
Yukon Mining Advisory Board  
Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council  
Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee  
Yukon Water Board

# Appendix II:

## Open House and Public Meeting Highlights

### DAWSON CITY

**When:** Friday, April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2-9 p.m. (showed *Chasing Ice* film and light refreshments)

**Where:** Klondike Institute of Art & Culture

**Who:** 10 local participants including First Nations, NGOs and members of the public

**What:** water panel displays and informal discussion

**YG Representation:** Departments of Environment, Health & Social Services, and Energy, Mines & Resources

### WHITEHORSE

**When:** Thursday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2-9 p.m. (light refreshments)

**Where:** Kwanlin Dūn Cultural Centre

**Who:** 45 local and out of territory participants including First Nations, NGOs and members of the public

**What:** water panel displays, informal discussion, and ranking exercise

**YG Representation:** Departments of Environment, Health & Social Services, Energy, Mines & Resources, and Community Services

### HAINES JUNCTION

**When:** Wednesday, May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2-9 p.m. (community supper)

**Where:** Da Kų Cultural Centre

**Who:** 15 local and nearby community participants including First Nations, NGOs, Renewable Resource Council and members of the public

**What:** water panel displays, informal discussion, and ranking exercise

**YG Representation:** Departments of Environment, Health & Social Services, and Energy, Mines & Resources

**\*Note this session was held together with the Champagne & Aishihik First Nations who also consulted their citizens on a water strategy.**

### MAYO

**When:** Tuesday, May 14<sup>th</sup>, 5-8 p.m. (community supper)

**Where:** Curling Lounge

**Who:** 10 local participants including First Nations, Municipality, Renewable Resource Council and members of the public

**What:** water panel displays, formal presentation, informal discussion, and ranking exercise

**YG Representation:** Departments of Environment, Health & Social Services, and Energy, Mines & Resources

### TAGISH

**When:** Wednesday, June 12<sup>th</sup>, 7-9 p.m. (light refreshments)

**Where:** Community Centre

**Who:** 15 local participants including NGOs, Local Advisory Council, Renewable Resource Council and members of the public

**What:** water panel displays, formal presentation, informal discussion, and ranking exercise

**YG Representation:** Departments of Environment, Health & Social Services, Energy, Mines & Resources, and Community Services

### FORT MCPHERSON

**When:** Monday, June 24<sup>th</sup>, 5:30-8:30 p.m. (community supper)

**Where:** Annie G. Robert Council Chambers (Hamlet)

**Who:** 24 local participants including First Nations, Renewable Resource Council and members of the public

**What:** formal presentation, informal discussion, and ranking exercise

**YG Representation:** Departments of Environment, Energy, Mines & Resources, and the Executive Council Office (Water Board Secretariat)

### ROSS RIVER

**When:** Thursday, July 4<sup>th</sup>, 3:30-5:30 p.m. (light refreshments)

**Where:** Hope Centre

**Who:** 12 local participants including First Nations and members of the public

**What:** water panel displays, formal presentation, and informal discussion

**YG Representation:** Departments of Environment, Health & Social Services, and Energy, Mines & Resources

### PELLY CROSSING

**When:** Friday, July 5<sup>th</sup>, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. (community lunch)

**Where:** Link Building

**Who:** 14 local and nearby community participants including First Nations, Renewable Resource Council and members of the public

**What:** formal presentation, informal discussion, and ranking exercise

**YG Representation:** Departments of Environment, Health & Social Services, and Energy, Mines & Resources



