

**STAYING ON TRACK**

**Revisions to  
the Yukon Conservation Strategy**

August, 1996



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Policy and Planning Branch  
Department of Renewable Resources  
Box 2703  
Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6

Phone: 403-667-5634  
Outside Whitehorse call toll free:  
1-800-661-0408, extension 5634  
Fax: 403-393-6213

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# Introduction

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## On the path to sustainable development

The Yukon was one of the first jurisdictions in Canada to step on the path to sustainable development. In 1990 it adopted the Yukon Conservation Strategy as a plan for conserving our environment for the benefit of future generations. This mirrored the desire of Yukon residents to preserve our rich natural and human heritage while ensuring economic prosperity.

The 80-page Strategy sets out 18 guiding principles and objectives and identifies more than 300 steps for government, industry, individuals and communities to take towards sustainable development.

A recent implementation report by the Yukon Council on the Economy and Environment, entitled "Making Progress: Yukon Government Implementation of the Yukon Conservation Strategy" found that the Yukon government is well on its way to meeting its commitments. A strong foundation has been laid through the *Environment Act* and the provisions of Yukon land claim agreements. Intergovernmental agreements, national and international initiatives, and public education are other tools that have been used in making progress towards sustainable development.

The *Environment Act* requires the Yukon government to prepare the first revisions to the Yukon Conservation Strategy this year, and subsequent revisions every three years thereafter. Opportunities for public input in preparing the revisions are also required under the Act.

The Yukon's first State of the Environment Report was recently completed as required under the *Environment Act*. It is therefore time for the Yukon government to review its environmental agenda and set out its priorities for sustainable development in the Yukon for the next three years. We would like you to participate with us in that process.

## Revising the Yukon Conservation Strategy

The Strategy needs updating to reflect changes in government roles, resources and partnerships. We are more aware of our interdependence locally, regionally and nationally, with other governments and cultures, in securing economic and environmental health.

Since the Strategy's completion five years ago, a number of new legal agreements have been adopted which implement as well as complement the Strategy. These include land claims agreements, new federal legislation and programs, international agreements and protocols, and transboundary initiatives.

Land Claims agreements obligate the parties to manage renewable resources on a sustainable basis, mindful of the principles of conservation. New mechanisms and processes, such as renewable resource councils, advisory boards, and processes for environmental review, will also meet the commitments and the objectives of the Yukon Conservation Strategy. The Yukon land claims agreements include provisions for special management areas, land use planning, fish and wildlife management, forestry management and the development assessment process.

The development and proclamation of the *Environment Act* (1991), and subsequent regulations have provided new authority for environmental protection and sustainable development in the Yukon. The Act sets out objectives and principles which recognize that environmental considerations must be integrated effectively in all public decision-making.

The Yukon government, through its membership on the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment, is committed to supporting the Convention on Climate Change, and the Biodiversity Convention, both of which were approved in 1992 at the United Nations Conference on Economy and Development (UNCED). As well, Canada supports the UNCED's approved list of sustainable development objectives, entitled Agenda 21, covering social, economic and environmental goals.

In most provinces and territories, sustainable development plans and policies are in place and are being implemented through various means, including Round Tables. In the Yukon, the Yukon Council on the Economy and Environment (YCEE) monitors the Yukon government's implementation of the Yukon Conservation Strategy and advises the government on ways to achieve sustainable development.

Revisions to the Strategy will consider these and other mechanisms which support the Yukon government's goal to achieve sustainable development.

## **Purpose of the revisions**

This document sets out the Yukon government's plan for the next three years to achieve the goals of the Yukon Conservation Strategy and to meet related commitments made since 1990. The three-year plan forms what we will call the Revisions to the Yukon Conservation Strategy, as required under the *Environment Act*, Sections 43 and 45.

The Yukon government approach to preparing the Revisions is based on a consideration of similar work completed in other jurisdictions. In general, the trend is to develop framework strategies that establish broad goals, objectives and actions,

from which sector-specific strategies can be developed.

When completed, the Revisions will form a companion document to the Strategy. The document will endorse the Conservation Strategy's goals, objectives and actions, focus on the role of government in achieving environmental sustainability, and address new issues and activities that have emerged since the Strategy was developed.

The Revisions will:

- reaffirm the Yukon government's commitment to the goals and principles of the Yukon Conservation Strategy;
- identify initiatives and strategies that the Yukon government will pursue to support the Strategy's objectives,
- consider the findings of the Yukon State of the Environment Report, and
- focus on this government's approaches to implementation through partnerships and cooperation.

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# Affirming the Yukon Conservation Strategy

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## Background

Under the *Environment Act* (Section 44), the stated purpose of the Yukon Conservation Strategy is to:

*provide a comprehensive long-term guide for the policies and practices of the Government of the Yukon in relation to the environment; and*

*set out the commitments and recommendations of the government of the Yukon with respect to conservation of the environment and sustainable development.*

The Strategy is designed to help us secure:

- a healthy environment,
- a stable non-renewable resources sector,
- healthy small businesses,
- community development,
- maintenance of culture and lifestyles, and
- protection of the Yukon's heritage resources.

## Principles

Nine principles guide the Yukon Conservation Strategy and its implementation. The Yukon government endorses and uses these principles to achieve sustainable development.

1. *Conservation of our natural and human heritage*

Sustainable development must consider the long term management of all of our natural resources and heritage resources, for both consumptive and non-consumptive values and uses.

2. *Cultural awareness and recognition*

The Strategy recognizes the perspectives, ideas and knowledge that both the aboriginal and non-aboriginal cultures have about conserving our resources.

3. *Integration of economy and environment*

A healthy environment can provide a healthy economy, and healthy lives. Environmental values must be considered in making decisions about how we obtain and maintain economic prosperity.

4. *Recognition of non-monetary values*

Cultural, heritage, recreation and other values not easily translated into monetary terms must be considered in decisions about our use of resources.

5. *Preservation of living resources "capital"*

Sustaining biological life requires protecting essential ecological processes, and maintaining the widest genetic diversity among all the world's living things.

6. *Individual responsibility*

Each person uses the Yukon environment and therefore has some responsibility to help conserve the Yukon's resources and protect its environment for future generations.

7. *Informed decision-making*

Both scientific and traditional knowledge can help us to make informed decisions about ways to protect and conserve natural and heritage resources.

8. *Importance of education*

Education provides the foundation for decisions and actions that conserve our natural and heritage resources. Opportunities to learn about and demonstrate such actions must be supported for all residents and visitors, and in all sectors of our society.

9. *Commitment to the global community*

The Yukon's natural environment includes resources of global significance which are also part of ecosystems beyond our borders. We must cooperate with national and international agencies to protect and sustain these resources.

## **Goals and objectives**

The Yukon government affirms the goals and objectives set out in the Yukon Conservation Strategy (1990). There are four broad goals with a number of objectives that will continue to guide the Yukon government in all of its economic and environmental activities.

**Goal 1: To provide for the wise management of our resources through:**

- sustainable use of our renewable resources,
- development of a range of renewable resource uses,
- a stable, healthy non-renewable resource sector, and
- active integrated management of our natural resources.

**Goal 2: To provide for the wise management of our environment through:**

- protection of a quality environment, and
- protection of our natural and human heritage.

**Goal 3: To support our needs and values as Yukoners through:**

- benefits and opportunities for Yukoners from the development and conservation of our natural resources,
- community involvement in decision-making about resources management, and
- understanding of aboriginal resource management practices and knowledge.

**Goal 4: To help us recognize our responsibilities for the conservation of resources through:**

- public awareness and understanding of conservation principles, and
- public involvement and participation in conservation efforts.

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# Achieving Sustainable Development

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## **Goal 1: To provide for the wise management of our resources through:**

- sustainable use of our renewable resources,
- development of a range of renewable resources,
- a stable, healthy non-renewable resources sector, and
- active integrated management of our natural resources.

### ***Where we are now***

The Yukon government has limited control over the development of our natural resources, with most forestry, lands, water and mineral resources falling under the jurisdiction of the federal government. Subject to the *Yukon Act* and principles of legal paramouncy, the *Yukon's Environment Act* applies throughout the Yukon. The Yukon government also has jurisdiction over wildlife, tourism, economic development, transportation, parks and protected areas, agriculture and freshwater fisheries. Land claims agreements and First Nation Final and Self-Government Agreements have established new roles and responsibilities for government and First Nations in natural resource management. Sustainable development principles are the foundation for many of these new regimes.

The appointment of a single Minister for both Renewable Resources and Economic Development in 1994 was one of the steps taken recently to integrate economy and environment decision-making in the Yukon government.

How we manage our resources is also determined by what we know about them. Scientific research in some areas has increased dramatically in the last decade, and with that, a new type of information are now being incorporated in resource management, planning and assessment practices, and in State of Environment Reporting.

Government and cooperative wildlife research and management programs with First Nations and other groups are carried out on a variety of species. Most emphasis has been on big game populations and on small game/furbearer populations which support land-based lifestyles and economy.

The Canada-Yukon Economic Development Agreement sustained many of the initiatives of the Yukon Conservation Strategy. The Renewable Resources Cooperation Agreement provided funding for research, planning, pilot and demonstration initiatives, and business development in support of the Strategy. It was a major contributor to the development of the agriculture sector and supported numerous

salmon enhancement projects. The Haeckel Hill wind turbine research project proved to be a viable alternative to hydro power generation in areas with appropriate wind regimes. A successful caribou co-management initiative in the Carcross area was launched with EPA funding.

The Forestry Cooperation Agreement provided funding for the Yukon's first ever silviculture program. It also sponsored a forestry conference, and funding for training, research projects and public awareness activities regarding sustainable development.

Yukon's relatively small human population relies on natural resources to support varied cultural and economic activities in our communities. Most of our renewable resources, such as wildlife, forests, and fisheries are fairly abundant and are in good health, however there are regional resources issues which require our attention. Some examples of these issues are:

1. To ensure sustainable development of our forests, the Yukon needs to develop a comprehensive forest management regime to protect biological diversity and other benefits arising from this valuable resource. This is particularly important in the south-east Yukon, where 79 per cent Yukon's timber harvest takes place.
2. The Yukon is home to a wide number of migratory species, and provides critical habitat for the caribou, raptors, migratory non-game birds and waterfowl. The Yukon's role in the protection of endangered species is important, as shown by our successful efforts through national programs to protect two endangered or threatened Yukon animals species: the anatum peregrine falcon, and the wood bison. The Yukon will continue to support national programs in this area.
3. About 80 percent of the Yukon is considered wilderness, for recreational and aesthetic purposes. Wilderness values must also be incorporated in assessing and planning resource development.
4. As attitudes towards wildlife change, managing our resources for non-consumptive uses is also important. Wildlife viewing, for example, is considered a growing component of our tourism industry. Efforts to develop wildlife viewing attractions support this economic sector as well as other resource management goals.
5. Anti-trapping and anti-hunting lobbies have affected markets for Yukon's wild furs and outfitting industries, which in turn affect these traditional rural industries.
6. Yukon's salmon fishery is regulated by the federal government and will be managed by a Salmon Subcommittee under provisions of the First Nation Final and Self Government Agreements; regulations for Yukon's 40 species of freshwater fish have been administered by the Yukon government since 1989. Increased baseline information and knowledge about the impacts of atmospheric pollution and development at specific lakes has created a variety of management issues that need to be addressed to support a sustainable fishery.

7. Agricultural development remains a fledging industry in the Yukon, with a limited amount of arable land and conflicting demands for its use being constraints. Infrastructure is limited for livestock production and diversification has focused mainly on game farming.

### ***Where we want to be***

The Yukon government will continue to work with First Nations, federal and local governments so as to manage resources in ways that support sustainable use and conservation objectives. Such use must be at a level that will respect cultural needs and values.

The Yukon government will negotiate and implement Yukon land claims agreements towards meeting these objectives. Specifically this includes establishing the Fish and Wildlife Management Board and Renewable Resource Councils and working with the First Nations, boards and councils as appropriate.

### ***Proposed actions***

1. The Yukon government will work with the Regional Land Use Planning Commissions to encourage development in a sustainable manner, in conjunction with other land claims provisions.
2. Within the Yukon government's areas of jurisdiction, integrated resource planning will be undertaken in areas where there is increasing development pressure from mining and forestry. This planning process will consider the full range of resource values and issues through an ecosystem management approach.
3. The Yukon government will develop a made-in Yukon forestry policy in preparation for the transfer of federal forestry programs. This policy would respect the values of all forest users and would incorporate broad management principles agreed to by the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers in the Canada Forest Accord, the Yukon Conservation Strategy and the Umbrella Final Agreement. Discussions and recommendations arising from the forestry conference sponsored by the Yukon Council on the Economy and Environment, and other public input, will also contribute to this policy-making process.
4. The Yukon government will review its Agriculture Policy and implementation to ensure that it supports the development of environmentally sustainable agricultural practices. It will develop animal health legislation to support effective management of this industry.
5. Through the development and implementation of intergovernmental agreements and management plans, the Yukon government will continue to work cooperatively with federal agencies and First Nations to protect endangered and migratory species. As part of this commitment, the Yukon government will continue to support lobbying efforts to safeguard the calving grounds of the

Porcupine Caribou Herd, and a management plan for the Fortymile Herd, which moves between Alaska and the Yukon.

6. We will develop options for licensing, aquaculture, and fish inspection programs, and allocation policies to protect large old fish - the most important spawners and vital to a healthy fishery.
7. The Department of Renewable Resources will continue work to identify and protect key wildlife habitat through a protected areas strategy, land claims special management areas, and regional management programs.
8. The Yukon government will consider and respond to recommendations of sectoral conferences sponsored by the Yukon Council on the Economy and Environment on such areas as energy, forestry, agriculture, First Nation economies and sustainable communities.
9. The Yukon government will support Canada's ratification of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the implementation of the strategy in the Yukon. The three objectives of the convention are: the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable use of biological resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources.
10. Promote ongoing participation by Yukon residents in sustainable renewable resource harvesting and non-consumptive activities.
11. The Yukon government will ensure a consideration of the full range of wilderness values through its integrated resource planning initiatives, its recommendations to the Regional Land Use Planning Commissions, its forestry policy development, its Protected Areas Strategy and other environmental management initiatives.

## **Working towards achieving a stable healthy non-renewable resource sector**

As set out in the Yukon Conservation Strategy, the Yukon government's goals for the long term development and use of non-renewable resources are to:

- continue to work towards the transfer of mineral and energy resources,
- provide a fair and stable regulatory environment in which industry can operate, and
- encourage environmentally-sound development and fair decision-making about the use of land for non-renewable resource development.

### ***Where we are now***

The Yukon government has limited jurisdiction in the management of non-renewable resources, but efforts are continuing to gain more control over them. In 1993 the Yukon government negotiated the framework for the transfer of oil and gas responsibilities,

and draft legislation for this authority was released for public review in September 1995. Subsequently, the *Yukon Oil and Gas Act* was tabled in the Yukon Legislative Assembly in April 1996.

The Yukon government is participating in multistakeholder efforts to reform the Yukon Quartz and Placer Mining Acts which regulate mining in the territory. In 1993 a new Placer Authorization was introduced which better integrates environmental practices in this industry. As well, the federal government approved a new *Yukon Waters Act*, updating and improving upon provisions of the *Northern Inland Waters Act* respecting the Yukon.

We have initiated a resource assessment process to ensure that renewable and non-renewable resource values are considered in the identification of park candidate areas and before land is withdrawn from mineral development.

The implementation of First Nation Final and Self Government agreements and the establishment of a Surface Rights Board and legislation are key steps to providing certainty to resource developers about settlement land, and to resolve conflicts over access to mineral development and related land use on privately held lands.

A Mineral Resource Economic Development Agreement cost-shared with the federal government supported mineral development infrastructure and exploration programs in the Yukon. The Yukon government agreed to the principles and goals resulting from the Whitehorse Mining Initiative, a national group including government, industry, environmental and First Nations members aimed at resolving key issues facing the Canadian mining industry.

### ***Proposed actions***

1. Development of legislation establishing a Development Assessment Process (DAP) is an obligation set out in the Umbrella Final Agreement that must be completed by February 1997. Canada, Yukon and the Council of Yukon First Nations are working to develop a single assessment process for responsible renewable and non-renewable resource development in the Yukon. DAP is intended to do such things as: guarantee First Nation participation in the assessment process; protect the environment and ensure development is consistent with the principles of sustainable development ; and, provide certainty to people affected by development projects.
2. Implement the Yukon Energy Plan. The Yukon government and the Yukon Energy Corporation will support initiatives to ensure that energy resources are developed and managed in an economically, socially and environmentally responsible manner, and to reduce our dependence on imported fossil fuels.
3. Implement the Mineral Resources Action Plan. The Yukon government will work with other government partners to support the development of clear standards

and guidelines for environmental reviews and mitigation. It will also encourage the use of environmentally responsible practices in mineral exploration and mining through the use of technology designed to mitigate the environmental effects of mining.

4. Continue to participate and support the reform of legislation guiding hard-rock mining in the territory through participation on the Yukon Placer Committee and the Yukon Mining Advisory Committee.
5. Approve and implement oil and gas legislation to provide effective and local management of this industry in the Yukon.

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**GOAL 2: To provide for the wise management of our environment through:**

- protection of a quality environment, and
- protection of our natural and human heritage.

***Where we are now***

The Yukon's environment is considered relatively pristine compared to many other parts of Canada. Since the *Environment Act* was proclaimed in 1992 regulations have been passed to cover pesticide use, special wastes, a recycling fund, and a beverage container deposit system. In 1995 the Government released a discussion paper called "Managing Yukon Garbage" as a first step toward development of a comprehensive waste management program for the Yukon. Regulations for ozone depleting substances came into force in February 1996.

The Yukon's State of the Environment Report highlights a number of environmental issues:

1. Concerns exist about air emissions and particles from the burning of wastes. The deposit of organochlorenes (toxaphene, PCBs and DDTs) originating elsewhere in the world has caused health concerns where they are detected in some lakes and fish. The Yukon produces almost half a million tonnes of carbon dioxide from burning fossil fuels, half of which comes from transportation.
2. Water quality is considered very good in most communities, although trends in quality are just being assessed. Impacts from sewage, mining and forestry have created most of the concerns about water quality in the Yukon.
3. Regarding waste management, it's estimated that 75 per cent of the waste produced in Whitehorse could be reused, recycled or composted. Oils and greases make up almost 70 % of the hazardous wastes generated in the Yukon.

4. Certain sites and areas of the Yukon have been identified as requiring special protection for their unique heritage or natural values.

### ***Where we want to be***

The Yukon government wants to do what it can to protect our key natural and heritage resources. We want to ensure that the environment is healthy for all living species, that we protect our air, water and soil resources, and help maintain biodiversity throughout the world. Yukon's environmental agenda is guided by a diverse number of commitments, locally, nationally and internationally.

### ***Proposed actions***

1. Continue the development of regulations and strategies, to deal with contaminated sites, storage of fuel and other hazardous substances, ozone depleting substances, spills, air emissions and related administrative matters.
2. Develop an integrated waste management strategy to reduce waste destined for landfills by 50 per cent by the year 2000. To do this the Yukon government will:
  - expand the beverage container deposit program to include other types of containers, with input from an advisory committee and the public,
  - develop solid waste regulations with stakeholders and implement nationally-developed standards and incentives to reduce packaging wherever possible, and
  - support increased recycling efforts through centres and education programs.
3. Work cooperatively with the federal government, communities and First Nations to provide adequate sewage treatment options to address water quality and management issues.
4. Support relevant research and monitoring programs to help us track changes in our environment, and make informed and responsible decisions about environmental management.
5. Act as a model environmental citizen in our own housekeeping and environmental practices.
6. Continue to support the objectives of the Yukon Conservation Strategy, the Umbrella Final Agreement and the *Environment Act*, to work cooperatively with stakeholders and other governments to protect our environment, through memoranda of understanding, protocols, and other mechanisms. Examples of such cooperation include an MOU on Yukon spills, the Canada-Yukon Environment Accord and other agreements.
7. Continue to support commitments as a member of the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment to work towards the harmonization of

environmental legislation, policies and practices, to improve environmental protection while eliminating overlap and duplication in such areas as environmental assessment.

8. Support federal commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through a Yukon Energy Plan, *Environment Act* regulations, and related policies and programs. For example, we will continue to participate in the National Air Pollution Surveillance Program which monitors air emissions.

## **Protection of our natural and human heritage**

About 7.6 per cent of the Yukon is currently protected for its unique heritage, ecological or wilderness values. This 7.6% figure refers to Category I and II protected areas as defined by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

There are presently three national and two territorial parks (including one ecological reserve), 42 campgrounds and 9 outdoor recreation sites. New parks and special management areas have been established under Yukon land claims agreements, including Vuntut National Park, Fishing Branch River Ecological Reserve, and the Nisutlin River Delta National Wildlife Area. Heritage River nomination documents are being prepared for the Tatshenshini River (Yukon portion). The Bonnet Plume River has been nominated and a management plan is being prepared for it.

Territorial Historic Sites administered by the Heritage Branch of the Department of Tourism have been identified at Lapierre House, Rampart House, Dalton Post and Lansing Post. Other sites such as Canyon City and Fortymile are being preserved and developed by the Heritage Branch in partnership with First Nations.

The Yukon has welcomed visitors since time immemorial. Its history, landscape and natural resources continue to attract newcomers today. As a result, Yukon's paths, rivers and highways are exposed to an ever larger number of travelers. It is ironic that increased use can degrade the environment and wilderness that is marketed for tourism. Appropriate management of the wilderness resource will protect the environment, and will also ensure sustainability and long term investment in the tourism industry. Tourism is also now an avenue for cultural as well as environmental exploration.

The Yukon government and industry are taking several measures to protect our environment and heritage, and the economic benefits which are derived from tourism. Visitors receive information about wildlife viewing, garbage and wastewater disposal, low impact camping, protection of historic artifacts, and First Nations culture and heritage.

### ***Proposed actions***

1. Continue to work with industry and First Nations to develop a sustainable ecotourism industry, through conservation, interpretation and education programs.

2. Undertake the development of a protected areas strategy and completion of a parks system by the year 2000 which will result in setting aside representative areas of each of the Yukon's 23 ecoregions.
3. Develop legislation for regulating the wilderness adventure tourism industry through research, industry support and recognition of the range of wilderness values. The legislation will acknowledge the need to conserve wilderness and its importance in supporting a viable adventure tourism industry. This legislation will place control of the industry in the hands of Yukon people and will help ensure wilderness protection through responsible use.
4. Proclaim and implement an amended *Yukon Historic Resources Act*, and continue research and information programs to protect heritage resources with input and in consultation with the Yukon Heritage Resources Board, First Nations and the heritage community.
5. For the upcoming Klondike anniversaries, work with non-profit and industry associations and communities, to develop sustainable special attractions under the Centennial Anniversaries Program and Centennial Events Program.
6. Encourage conservation values be incorporated into Regional Tourism Strategies.
7. Continue to incorporate tourism values into land and resource review processes to ensure multiple benefits are realized from our resources.

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### **Goal 3: To support our needs and values as Yukoners through:**

- benefits and opportunities for Yukoners from the development and conservation of our natural resources
- community involvement in decision-making about resource management
- understanding of aboriginal resource management practices and knowledge

#### ***Where we are now***

Yukon residents want to have a larger share of the benefits arising from resource development in the Yukon, and a greater say in how those resources are developed. Yukon land claims agreements have established new ways for First Nations and other residents to participate in natural resource management, through Renewable Resource Councils and the Fish and Wildlife Management Board. There has been community input and participation in heritage resource management through planning, consultation and involvement in archaeological research, historic sites research and

development, and other programs. Yukon Heritage Resources and Yukon Geographical Place Name boards have been established to provide advice to Governments on heritage matters.

Consultation requirements are also included in land claim agreements, for matters affecting the rights or interests of First Nations. The *Environment Act* contains provisions for consultation on new regulations or amendments to the *Wildlife Act*, the *Parks Act* and the *Environment Act*. The *Environment Act* also guarantees opportunities for public participation in revising the Yukon Conservation Strategy.

### ***Where we want to be***

The Yukon Government is committed to fulfilling obligations to carry out consultation and to provide opportunities for community input in resource management. Several specific actions are proposed relating to this commitment.

### ***Proposed actions***

1. Development of a made-in-Yukon forestry management policy to guide the Yukon government following forest transfer from the federal government. Aspects of this policy will consider local training and employment needs.
2. Development and implementation of training plans for renewable resource and heritage resources management.
3. Government research and policy development will include opportunities for and incorporate traditional knowledge in resource management.

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## **Goal 4: To help us recognize our responsibilities for the conservation of resources through:**

- public awareness and understanding of conservation principles, and
- public involvement and participation in conservation efforts.

### ***Where we are now***

Yukoners care about their environment, and are taking steps to demonstrate that concern more actively. For example, the 1993 Yukon Health Promotion Survey found that Yukoners are active in recycling and composting; at rates higher than the rest of Canada. Interest in regulating development impacts, for example in forestry, show public awareness about the need to manage our resources wisely.

Individuals and groups can make a difference in the environmental quality of their neighborhoods and their communities. The Yukon government has provided seed money for recycling, education programs, composting, and alternate energy projects.

The need for this type of funding has diminished with the introduction of new legislation and resource management processes, and as the concept of sustainable development becomes more accepted as a society norm.

Non-profit groups such as the Recycling Centre play a large role in educating consumers and in delivering hazardous waste collection and recycling programs and help ensure that enforcement remains the last resort in achieving compliance with environmental regulations. A Recycling Fund established under the Environment Act assists the 15 community recycling centres, with Yukoners now returning about 75 per cent for eligible containers.

Project Wild, the Conservation Action Team and Y2C2 programs have given Yukon youth new opportunities to learn about and practice conservation in their community.

Increasingly, market forces, such as energy prices and consumer attitudes and preferences, have led to more environmentally sustainable products and practices.

### ***Proposed actions***

The Yukon government continues to support community-based sustainable development through the following mechanisms:

- demonstration projects,
  - public awareness, education and training,
  - public participation and involvement, and
  - financial support and incentives.
1. The beverage container deposit program provides an economic incentive to return recyclable materials and more containers will be eligible under this program in the future.
  2. Penalties for littering, for improper waste disposal and other infractions under the *Environment Act* will be enforced.
  3. Public education and training in conservation remain important goals supported by the Yukon government, through curriculum development and training strategies.
  4. Public awareness will be supported through ongoing information (hunting synopsis, advertising and other media materials) and special events held throughout the year, such as Earth Day, Environment Week, Parks Day, and Clean-Up Week.
  5. Yukon government support will continue for the work of the Yukon Council on the Economy and Environment. Budgets for the Council are currently provided through the Departments of Economic Development, Renewable Resources and the Executive Council Office.

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# The Path Ahead

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## Implementation tools and mechanisms

The Yukon Conservation Strategy (1990) discusses the ways that the Yukon government can help achieve sustainable development. It identified major roles for the Department of Renewable Resources and the importance of legislative tools and intergovernmental agreements as instruments for change.

Yukon's *Environment Act* and land claim agreements obligate governments and First Nations to manage fish, wildlife and their habitats using the principle of conservation. This will protect Yukon's biodiversity and ways of life that are sustained by them.

The Yukon government must develop and implement new or improved management tools and techniques to sustain our natural and cultural environment for future generations.

### ***Role of the Department of Renewable Resources***

Renewable Resources has the lead role in ensuring that environmental considerations are incorporated into Yukon government decisions. It has begun or has completed implementing more than half of the action items in the 1990 Strategy, and will continue to implement others, pending settlement and implementation of land claims, further

### **Educating by example**

The Yukon government has set high standards for its own environmental performance in its Statement of Environmental Responsibility and Ethics included in the Yukon Conservation Strategy.

Government departments, in cooperation with Raven Recycling Program, have helped divert tonnes of paper from Yukon landfills. Purchasing and contracting activities continue to support environmentally friendly products and practices.

Energy conservation practices and targets are being put in place to reduce negative impacts on the environment and reduce the risk of environmental pollution.

The government will continue to monitor levels of waste and identify opportunities for recycling, and more efficient energy use in all aspects of government activity. This includes building construction, leasing and maintenance, and transportation fleet planning and maintenance.

legislative developments and transfer of federal programs such as forestry. The Department is also the main agency with intergovernmental agreements on environmental cooperation and renewable resource management.

The Department's role will continue to be guided by obligations under Yukon land claims agreements regarding fish and wildlife, environmental assessment, and natural resource development. A new strategic plan will shape its role in supporting sustainable development. Possible devolution of federal programs for forestry, water and land will create new responsibilities for this department.

It will also have a key role in the four main processes used for achieving sustainable development: land claims agreements, integrated resource management, land use planning and the development assessment process. These processes will continue to provide the foundation for wise decisions regarding land use and sustainable natural resource development.

Other government departments which play a key role in planning for sustainable development include Economic Development, Education, Tourism, Government Services and Community and Transportation Services.

The Yukon government will integrate environmental, economic, and cultural values and goals in planning and managing natural resources.

We will also manage our resources mindful of our connection with living resources beyond our borders.

### ***National and International Commitments***

The Yukon government will support the goals of the Conservation Strategy through a variety of national and international agreements and commitments. As noted elsewhere in this report, the Yukon is committed to supporting the Biodiversity Convention and the Convention on Climate Change, agreed to at the United Nations Conference on the Environment in 1992.

Other environmental agreements include the Canada-Yukon Accord on Environmental Cooperation, the Western Accord on Environmental Cooperation, and the Agreements on the conservation of the Porcupine Caribou Herd and migratory birds, among others. Participation in the Canadian Councils of Environment Ministers and Energy Ministers are other key mechanisms for sharing information and resources to achieve the goals of sustainable development.

The Yukon government will also continue to rely on working partnerships with non-profit groups, industry, communities and associations to help support conservation objectives, and to encourage individuals to take conservation actions.

## **Measuring our progress**

Yukon's environmental agenda is guided by a diverse number of commitments - locally, nationally and internationally. Yukoners must be able to monitor environmental change and to determine if goals of the Strategy are being reached. Environmental indicators, such as levels of pollution, are key measures for environmental health, and for pinpointing areas that need our attention.

The Yukon's first State of the Environment Report will be an important tool for assisting us track changes in our natural environment over time. Other studies, such as the Yukon Health Status Report, and economic indicators also help us get a picture of how well our society and our environment are sustaining one another.

Revisions to the State of the Environment Report and the Yukon Conservation Strategy are required every three years. These updates will help us stay on track in our goals for a sustainable Yukon.

## **Opportunities and constraints**

Until the devolution of land, forestry, mineral and water programs occurs, responsibilities for environmentally sustainable development still rests largely in federal hands.

The implementation of new processes and mechanisms under land claims agreements will continue to provide a framework for sustainable development over the long term.

Federal funding for environmental research and clean-up, under the federal Green Plan and the Arctic Environmental Strategy, will end in 1997 as will a number of regional development agreements. Clearly, partnerships and cooperation will be essential to achieving the goals of the Strategy in the coming years.