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YUKON DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

NATURAL RESOURCES

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Y U K O N · 2 0 0 0

Building the Future

THIS DISCUSSION PAPER
REFLECTS THE CONSULTANTS
VIEWPOINT. IT DOES NOT
NECESSARILY REFLECT THE
YUKON GOVERNMENT VIEWPOINT.

Yukon
Government

Natural Resources Strategy

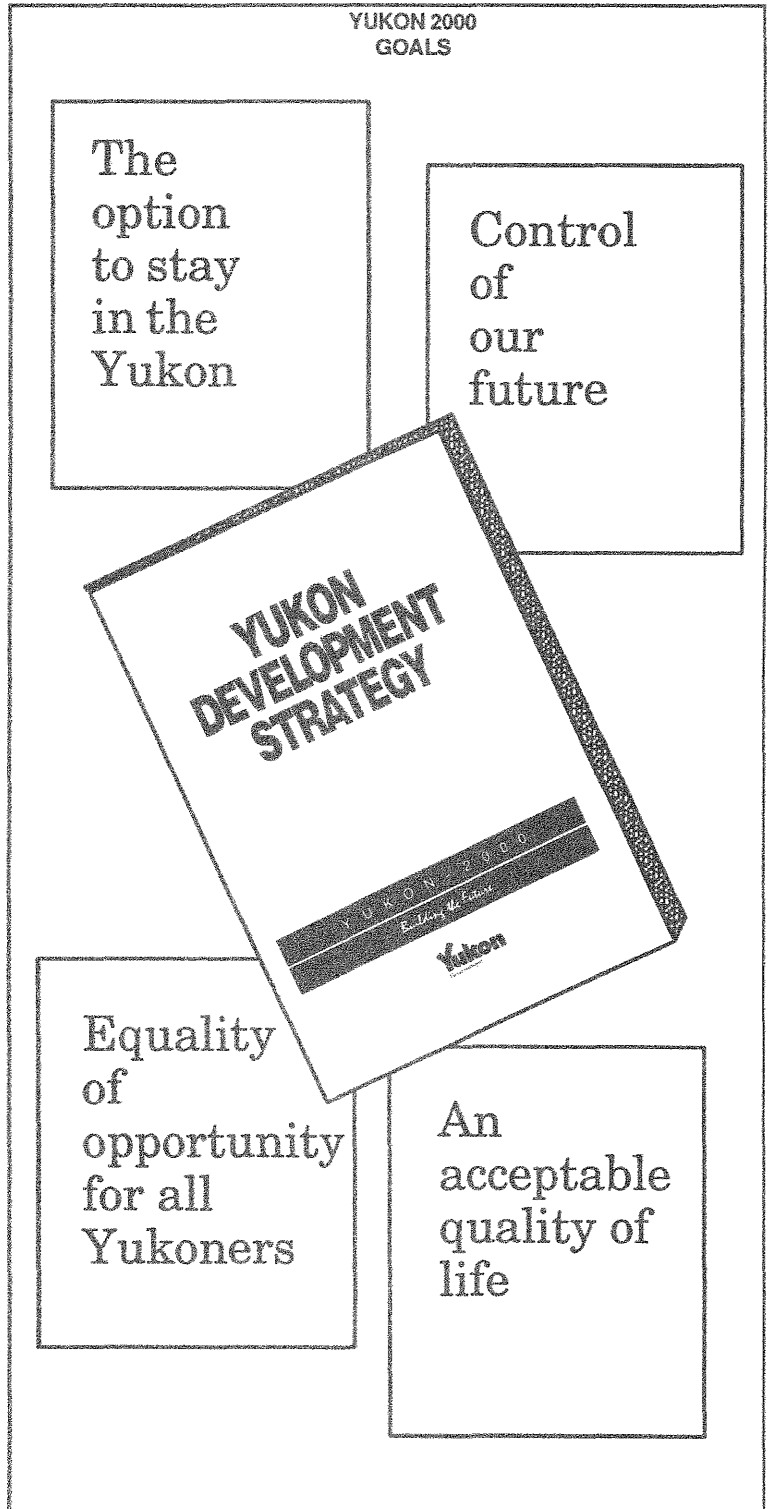
A Progress Report ■ April, 1987

Natural resources are the Yukon's most obvious treasure. In fact, a relative handful of people is scattered through one of the world's last great wilderness areas. Yukon has a wealth of mountains, forests, lakes, rivers, wildlife and minerals. Developing that wealth is the key to a stable and prosperous future for the Yukon.

But there are difficult barriers to overcome before the promise of the territory's natural wealth can be fulfilled. Many of the Yukon's most valuable resources are currently inaccessible or, at least, very difficult to reach. Markets are remote and transportation expensive. The infrastructure that is necessary for development — financial institutions, support industries, communications and transportation facilities — is in its infancy.

Besides the difficulties of exploiting their resources, Yukoners face some hard decisions about what they want from development and at what cost. Is a mountain valley better used for mining, tourism or trapping? Is there a way to use it for all three purposes? Or should it be left untouched, part of the world's diminishing wilderness? On what basis will these decisions be made? Debating such issues is a necessary preliminary to formulating a policy on the development of natural resources.

This paper is a starting point for that debate. It doesn't offer final answers. It raises issues, opens questions and sets out some of the factors Yukoners will have to deal with as they plan their future and that of the territory.



Objectives

If Yukoners want to achieve, at home, a standard of living on a par with the rest of Canada, they must keep the following objectives in mind when managing the territory's natural resources:

1. Develop the full range of natural resources, both renewable and non-renewable.

Prosperity depends on increasing the ability of the economy to support Yukoners and on diversifying the economy to avoid the boom-and-bust cycle. Given the Yukon's small population and geographic situation, the surest road to diversification is the development of a variety of industries based on different resources.

2. Increase the economic return to the Yukon from its resources.

For example, further processing in the territory, less waste and greater local ownership would keep more of the benefits of resource development in the Yukon.

However, if development is to mean long-term improvement in the territory's economy, Yukoners must consider the following objectives:

3. Develop renewable resources at a rate that won't deplete them.

For example, if trapping is to provide a living for generations to come, not just for this generation, it's vital to protect the habitat that allows the animals to live and reproduce. If forests are to be the foundation of a continuing industry, they cannot be harvested faster than they can regenerate.

4. Develop non-renewable resources in a way that assures more stable economic growth.

Non-renewable resources can't be replaced, but they can be developed so that the maximum benefit goes to the people who have already chosen to make the Yukon their home. Instead of importing a temporary labour force in order to develop a resource as quickly as possible, development can be spread over many years, providing long-term employment for local people.

Development of the Yukon's natural resources should not come at the expense of

those features that attracted people to the territory or make them want to stay. In discussing their goals for economic development, Yukoners have made it clear they want to keep the following objectives in mind:

5. Maintain the resources required for subsistence lifestyles.

Living off the land is a vital part of the culture and economy of Yukon Indians, both through choice and through necessity. Other Yukoners are also attracted by the possibility of making a living with little more than what they can do, make, catch and grow themselves. Yukoners, Indian and non-Indian, want to retain that option.

6. Safeguard the Yukon's natural environment and historical and archaeological heritage.

Enjoyment of the Yukon's natural environment is an important part of the quality of Yukon life. Economic development can and should be in addition to, not instead of, this enjoyment. The heritage of the Yukon includes natural, archaeological and historical features that are unique or that have played an important role in the life of the territory's peoples. Examples of these features should be retained. And finally, it's important to protect the diversity and productivity of the Yukon's renewable resources to help the territory adapt to changing social and economic conditions.

The aim of Yukoners is to control decisions over their water and land. And with control comes responsibility. Both elements figure in the following objectives:

7. Establish Yukon control over the territory's natural resources.

Yukoners have to live with the consequences of decisions about their natural resources. Therefore, they should make the decisions.

8. Fulfil Canada's responsibilities for resources of national or global importance.

Some resources, such as minerals, should be developed in the national interest. Others, such as unique populations of plants or animals, should be preserved for the benefit of all people.

Like everyone else in the world, individual Yukoners want a variety of seemingly

contradictory things out of life — for example, a high standard of living plus the benefits of wilderness.

Planning must include methods for dealing with the contradictions. Hence the final objective:

9. Establish procedures for managing natural resources which accommodate the needs and values of Yukoners.

Such procedures will have to accommodate the often contradictory needs and values of the diverse elements of the Yukon community.



Directions



Even with a clear set of objectives, decisions won't be easy. In many instances, several objectives will be valid. In others, the demands of the diverse groups and peoples who are part of Yukon society will conflict. The following directions could act as guides in grappling with the difficult decisions to come:

1. Accommodate the needs and values of the various peoples that make up the Yukon.

In societies like the Yukon's, different groups of people have different needs and different concepts of benefit. In particular, Yukon society contains two distinct cultural groups — Indian and non-Indian — and extra effort will be required to reconcile their needs. However, with a spirit of co-operation, it's usually possible to find a satisfactory compromise. And that effort to compromise is what knits the society into a whole.

2. Retain options.

Natural resources should be managed so that as many options as possible are retained. One reason is the moral responsibility to leave, future generations, a world at least as productive and diverse as the one we inherited. As the saying goes, "we have not inherited the earth from our parents, we have borrowed it from our children." A second reason is the changing demands of markets and economies that mean we should keep the capacity to respond to change.

3. Identify compatible uses.

Looking for compatibilities before conflicts means fewer areas will be restricted to a single use. But some uses are compatible with others only if they are managed very carefully. It's important to set out clearly the management conditions that will allow such uses to be compatible with others.

4. Consider the needs of all sectors.

Integrating conservation and development when allocating land and water uses is a more positive approach than simply regulating development. It also has a better chance of ensuring that development of one sector is not achieved at the expense of other sectors.

5. Accommodate incompatible uses by allocation and scheduling.

Some uses of resources will remain incompatible with each other: for example, you can't have a housing subdivision on farmland. Allocation gives priority to a particular use in a particular place. Scheduling gives priority to a particular use at a particular time.



Priorities



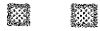
Even with careful planning, and using the directions above, it won't always be easy to decide which resource use deserves priority in a particular place or at a particular time. In order to make those difficult decisions, it is important to agree on a system of priorities well ahead of time. The following general principles are suggestions of how Yukoners might approach the problem of deciding which uses will take precedence at a disputed site. These suggestions are provided for discussion.

1. Uses that depend on a few sites before uses that can choose from many sites.

2. Subsistence uses before commercial uses before recreational uses.

3. Economically major uses (in terms of income and employment) before economically minor uses.

4. Renewable resources before non-renewable resources.
5. Uses with strong cultural values before uses with weak cultural values.
6. Existing uses before new uses.
7. Community needs before Yukon needs before Canadian needs before international needs.
8. Resources of world significance before resources of Canadian significance before resources of Yukon significance.



Conclusion



Clearly the objectives and directions set out in this paper are not a final solution to the problem of developing the Yukon's natural resources effectively and advantageously. Rather, they are a basis for discussion, a discussion among Yukoners that will set the development path for years to come. And the time for that discussion is now while there is leisure for it, before would-be users of the resources are waiting in line for quick decisions.