

Yukon Conservation Society 2018 Highlights

For the past 50 years, YCS has provided Yukoners with information and experiences that change minds, build momentum for conservation, and celebrate what's great about the Yukon.

We couldn't have done this without your ongoing support. Thank you!

In 2018, we've been celebrating 50 years of grassroots action with a series of events, from a storytelling BBQ in September to our **Dance Party Celebration on November 17. Join us!** Tickets for Nov. 17 are on sale at our office, at 867-668-5678, and online at www.yukonconservation.org.

Energy

We advocated for improved policies and renewable energy options for the Yukon, in order to displace the need for fossil fuels:

- We provided input to the Aishihik Advisory Committee to support Champagne & Aishihik First Nations and Yukon Energy as they negotiate to reduce the environmental impacts of the Aishihik dam.
- We built significant momentum within Yukon government towards starting an electric thermal storage (ETS) pilot project. ETS systems store heat during off-peak hours and then releases the stored heat during peak hours, reducing the load on the electrical system.
- We researched and presented findings on long-duration energy storage technologies to a multi-stakeholder working group. We also held a public event at the Beringia Centre to introduce Yukoners to various types of energy storage solutions.
- We provided a strong voice supporting carbon pricing as a member of the Low Carbon Yukon Stakeholders Committee.
- We pushed for aggressive demand side management (DSM) programming from Yukon Energy as a member of their DSM Technical Advisory Committee.
- We initiated collaboration with the City of Whitehorse to explore converting city streetlights to LED.
- We welcomed new Energy Analyst Cody Reaume to the YCS team after saying farewell to long-time staff member Anne Middler.

Peel Watershed and Land Use Planning

We celebrated a huge legal victory and pushed for a strong conservation win for the Peel Watershed:

- In December 2017, we received a ruling from the Supreme Court of Canada on the Peel Watershed case. The ruling was a huge victory for the Peel Watershed, democracy, and Indigenous rights in the Yukon. Yukon government was ordered to return to where the land use planning process was derailed seven years ago by the previous government. Final consultations are now underway on the Final Recommended Plan, which would protect 80% of the watershed from industrial development (55% permanently protected and 25% interim protection). After seven years, the public can finally comment on this legitimate plan produced by the Peel Commission – not the illegal plan introduced by the previous government that would have opened 71% of the watershed to development.
- **Please learn more about how to submit a comment at www.protectpeel.ca – and submit yours by November 19!** We are encouraging you to submit a comment asking for 80% permanent protection.
- In collaboration with CPAWS Yukon, we brought the Peel Watershed photo exhibit to Whitehorse after its tour of Peel communities. The photos can be viewed online at www.peelportraits.ca.
- We began preparing for the launch of the Dawson Land Use Plan – the first regional land use plan that will be tackled after the Peel. The Dawson LUP is the 3rd of a total 7 plans that must be completed throughout the Yukon.

Outreach

We connected people with nature:

- We had a great season on the trails, reaching more than 1500 people through our summer programming. We took 959 people on guided hikes to Canyon City (an increase of 25% from last year), helped 191 children explore nature through our Kids Ed-Ventures programming, and welcomed 482 visitors to our outdoors art event, *Created at the Canyon*. Thanks to Max, Ingrid, and Jamie, our fantastic trail guiding team for 2018!
- We kept our membership informed – and reached new people – through our quarterly newsletter, *Walk Softly*; our weekly news email; and social media, including Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.
- We spoke with students from the Stories North journalism program, Vancouver high schools, Wilfred Laurier University, and Yukon College about our work.

We honoured people doing great work:

- The 2017 Gerry Couture Stewardship Award (\$1000) was awarded to Angela Sabo, a long-time activist, for her work to raise awareness and protect the Yukon's land and water from contamination. The 2018 award winner will be announced at our party on November 17.
- The 2018 Ted Parnell Memorial Scholarship (\$500) was awarded to Shyloh Van Delft, a student of Northern Environmental and Conservation Science at Yukon College and the University of Alberta. Shyloh

is a dedicated birder, volunteer and conservation ambassador. Her connection with YCS began when she was part of our Trail Guiding Team in 2014.

Wildlife

We brought people together to build a better future for Yukon wildlife:

- We are working to raise awareness in the territory about how roads affect wildlife – from the dangers of vehicle collisions to the problem of roads bisecting critical habitats. As new mining roads are planned south of Dawson through the Roads to Resources program, we are trying to keep Yukon wildlife safe. In October, we brought three experts to Whitehorse for a series of workshops to help government practitioners, First Nations, and environmental NGO representatives learn more about road ecology and designing for wildlife. We also met with Yukon government ministers to discuss this issue.
- We are part of the ongoing roundtable effort to create a wetland policy for the Yukon. In September, we brought environmental organizations and First Nations representatives together with wetlands experts in order to ensure an informed, united voice for wetlands protection during this Yukon government process.
- We convened a volunteer Wildlife Committee, similar to our Mining and Energy Committees, to support the work of Wildlife Analyst Sebastian Jones with expert advice.

We raised awareness about threats to Yukon wildlife:

- In April, we partnered with Friends of McIntyre Creek and other groups to help bring Harvey Locke, conservation leader and co-founder of Nature Needs Half, to Whitehorse. In a public talk at the Yukon Arts Centre (available on the CPAWS Yukon YouTube channel) Locke spoke knowledgeably and compellingly about landscape-scale conservation in the Yukon context.
- As part of our roads and wildlife impacts workshops, we held a public event (available on our YouTube channel) with presentations from the road ecology experts.

We spoke up for wildlife in government processes:

- We submitted comments to the Alaska and US governments asking for a more thorough assessment of how proposed oil drilling on Alaska's North Slope will affect the Porcupine Caribou Herd, which winters in the Yukon and is a vital part of life for the Gwich'in.
- We are preparing comments on the Yukon government's draft Grizzly Bear Management Plan.

Mining

Our contributions helped shape mining decisions in the territory:

- We submitted comments on 23 mining projects through the Yukon Environmental and Socio-Economic Assessment Board (YESAB) and the Yukon Water Board.
- Victories included the regulator recommending against both the Judas Creek Placer project and the Nordenskiold River bridge near Braeburn. We had raised serious concerns about both proposed projects through the regulatory process.
- Thanks in part to concerns we raised about the design of its huge tailings dam, the proposed Casino Mine, a massive copper, gold, molybdenum and silver project located south of Dawson and west of Pelly, must undergo the highest level of development assessment. It is effectively on hold.

We provided information to the wider Yukon and Canadian community about mining issues:

- In partnership with LightHawk, an organization that supports pilots flying for conservation purposes, we created aerial video footage of the Faro mine site. We also obtained ground photographs of the leaking Hud Bay adit on the North Canal Road. All mining footage is available on our website.
- We published regular editorials in the *Yukon News* on topics including the flagrant environmental damage caused by participants on placer mining reality-TV shows and the inadequacy of cleanup funds provided as security by mining companies.
- We spoke regularly to Yukon College environmental students about Yukon mining issues.

Around the Office

We spruced up our office and launched a new local food project:

- We launched our Edible Garden Project with funding from the City of Whitehorse. With the help of a dedicated volunteer crew, we built and planted 4 large garden boxes, harvesting 20 kg of veggies over the summer – everything from salad greens to kale, radishes, turnips, carrots and potatoes. Half the harvest went to the Whitehorse Food Bank, while our volunteers took home the remainder. We also tidied up our yard, our wall tent, and the invasive species that had previously been growing on our lawn!
- We undertook a mini-renovation at the YCS office. We re-organized our reception room to be more welcoming; gave the walls a fresh new coat of paint; and improved our volunteer computer station.
- We welcomed many new and returning volunteers at YCS this year. Volunteers keep us running in many ways, from designing our newsletters to processing all our membership correspondence.
- We welcomed a Policy Intern, Faris Mecklai, who worked on wetlands and conservation policy research.