

Yukon Conservation Society 2016 Highlights

Energy

Fossil Fuels

We facilitate public discussion and provide information about proposed industry projects:

- YCS submitted comments to the Yukon Environmental and Socio-Economic Assessment Board (YESAB) on the Northern Cross Yukon (NCY) proposal to drill up to 20 new oil wells at Eagle Plain. Our outreach included presentations on the project in Old Crow, Mayo, Dawson and Whitehorse. YESAB referred the project to an Executive Committee review due to unresolved questions about the impacts of the project on the Porcupine Caribou. NCY then sought a judicial review of the referral. The case remains in the pre-hearing stage.
- YCS hosted a *Fractured Land* screening and talk at the Available Light Film Festival.

We work to hold government accountable on environmental impacts:

- YCS continued to act as a watchdog of Yukon Government's (YG) Oil and Gas branch. We publicized the process that led to the extension of NCY's Eagle Plain permits without meaningful consultation, and asked that the Request for Postings of interest by oil companies and the results from a spill at the Kotaneelee site be shared. YG has yet to share these results publicly.
- We work with community groups to organize advocacy events and share information about fracking.

Renewables

We research and provide information about renewable energy options for the Yukon:

- We attended the Yukon Chamber of Commerce's *Fueling Yukon's Economy* workshop and engaged in public dialogue about the need to shift away from fossil fuel consumption rather than invest in creating a local oil and gas industry and fracking the Yukon.
- We researched and delivered a presentation comparing the Pope's encyclical "*On Care For Our Common Home*" with the Leap Manifesto for Vanier Secondary School's Climate Justice Café.

We advocate for improved policies within government- and utility-led processes:

- We contributed to the multi-stakeholder *Shift Whitehorse: Transportation Showcase* event to promote options to reduce emissions in transportation, the Yukon's most fossil fuel-intensive sector.
- We submitted comments to YG on the draft biomass for heat energy strategy.
- We completed a nation-wide scan and survey of renewable energy co-operatives to assess what model would work best for the Yukon in our quest to help establish a renewable energy investment co-op, and have begun building relationships with local contacts.
- We submitted comments to the Pan Canadian Framework on Climate Change urging bold action at the federal level, and participated in the Yukon working group for Federal Sustainable Development Strategy.
- We continued to inform and promote a diverse, decentralized and distributed electricity grid in Yukon Development Corporation's Next Generation Hydro process and Yukon Energy Corporation's Integrated Resource Planning Technical Advisory Committee.
- We intervened in the ATCO Electric Yukon's General Rate Application to the Yukon Utilities Board to invest in LNG electricity-generating infrastructure in Watson Lake. We are opposed to this proposal.
- YCS is part of the Aishihik hydro relicensing process in partnership with Champagne & Aishihik First Nations.

Land Use Planning and the Peel Watershed

We work to uphold the land-use planning process and protect the Peel:

- In June 2016, the Supreme Court of Canada granted our leave to appeal the ruling of the Yukon Court of Appeal, confirming that the Peel and the future of land use planning in the territory are of national and public importance. The court hearing has been set for March 22, 2017 in Ottawa.
- This summer, YCS and CPAWS Yukon launched the Peel Pledge and spent hours at markets, festivals and gatherings throughout the territory, talking to people about the Peel Watershed. During the territorial election campaign, we launched 'Vote for the Peel'. In addition to distributing buttons, images, and a campaign video viewed 12,000 times, we mailed a door-hanger to every Yukon household.
- With CPAWS Yukon, we travelled to the Peel communities and captured the words and images of Peel champions for use in a photo exhibit in 2017.
- The Protect Peel website is being redesigned and we have launched 'Protect Peel' social media channels on Facebook and Twitter to offer Peel supporters a clear voice from the campaign. Coverage of the campaign included an image gallery on the *Guardian*, the widely-read UK news site (shared 1100 times).

Mining

We support transparency and access to information about mining in the Yukon:

- We pushed the territorial and federal governments to release the Faro Mine water test results. In October, results for most of 2016 were posted on the Yukon Water Board website. Water data prior to 2016 is available on the YCS website (the only publicly-available source of this data).
- We worked with a volunteer pilot and the LightHawk program to capture aerial footage of the Faro Mine and the Indian River placer operations near Dawson. The video and photos are available on our website.

We advocate for strengthened or new policies and regulations to improve the efficiency and reduce the risks of mineral development:

- Thanks in part to the comments we submitted to YESAB, the following projects were recommended against due to environmental concerns: Judas Creek Placer, Kluane Quartz Exploration, and Mint Quartz Exploration. YG concurred with the recommendations.
- YCS participated in the YESAB assessment of a placer project within Dawson city limits, which proposed to mine the local cross country ski trails. YESAB recommended against the project; YG's decision is pending. YCS opposed another placer project in the Indian River valley, south of Dawson, which proposed to mine most of the only remaining significant wetland in Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in traditional territory. YESAB recommended against mining in the wetlands and the Yukon Water Board also required that the wetlands be avoided. YG has rejected this recommendation and taken the Water Board to court. The case is pending.
- In 12 submissions to YESAB and the Yukon Water Board on other hard-rock mining projects that did proceed, we indicated actions the proponents could take to reduce environmental impacts, some of which were included in the recommendations coming from these assessor bodies.
- We submitted comments to YESAB on the proposed Casino Mine project. This project has been elevated to a Panel Review – the highest level of environmental assessment possible in the Yukon.

We provide information to the wider Yukon community about mining issues:

- We hosted a public meeting in Whitehorse about the environmental risks associated with the proposed Casino Mine. Over fifty people attended and it generated much media interest.
- The *Yukon News* published a series of our articles about Yukon's antiquated mining royalty regime and the need for stricter enforcement of mining regulations, among other topics.
- The media frequently looks to YCS as the environmental voice on mining issues – we were interviewed throughout the year about the environmental impacts of mining exploration, development, and clean-up.
- Three guest lectures were delivered at Yukon College on the environmental impacts of mining.

Outreach

We connect with Yukoners, visitors, and YCS members:

- We reached more than 1100 people through our outdoors programming this summer, which included free guided interpretive hikes in Miles Canyon, special events including Lunchtime Yoga sessions and seniors' hikes with the ElderActive Recreation Association, Kids' Ed-Ventures and our outdoors art event and exhibit, Created at the Canyon.
- We worked with YG to update the Miles Canyon interpretive panels and Canyon City brochure.
- Our new website at yukonconservation.org was launched, along with an updated membership brochure and membership display boards. These new tools were put into action by our dedicated volunteers at the Fireweed Community Market and other outreach events.
- We celebrated you, our supporters, with our first ever Summer BBQ Party in our garden and wall tent.
- We connected with our membership through weekly news emails; social media including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram; and our quarterly newsletter, *Walk Softly*, in print and online.
- We hosted a public policy intern through the summer who worked on Arctic policy research and outreach.
- During the territorial election, we worked with CPAWS Yukon to shine the spotlight on the important environmental issues facing the territory. We hosted an All-Party Forum on the Environment that was attended by 180 people with 100 more tuning into the livestream. We widely distributed the parties' responses to our Environment Questionnaire. Finally, a team of YCS and CPAWS volunteers knocked on 800 doors to ask Yukoners about their environmental priorities and share our voter education material.

We celebrate and support Yukoners doing great work:

- We awarded the Ted Parnell Scholarship to Michelle Peter, a conservation student at Yukon College.
- We were proud to continue administering the Yukon Environmental Training Fund that supports training of those employed by Yukon's environmental groups.
- We will be awarding the Gerry Couture Stewardship Award at our Year End Party on Friday, Dec. 9.

Wildlife

We work to protect wildlife:

- YCS led the opposition to a proposal by White Pass to spray a cocktail of herbicides along the railway tracks beside Bennett Lake. This resulted in the company being denied a permit.
- We contributed to the development of the City of Whitehorse Chadburn Lake Park Management Plan.
- YCS participated in the first round of developing a Grizzly Bear Conservation and Management Plan, which is intended to address, among other issues, the issue of roadside shooting of grizzlies.
- With the Friends of McIntyre Creek, we finalized the BioBlitz report which recorded over 160 species in the McIntyre Creek Park.

Internal Operations

We keep our building, books and organization ship-shape:

- We re-established our wall-tent (which was stolen last season) and spruced up our yard.
- We have our books audited yearly. This year we completed another successful financial audit.
- We finalized our three-year Strategic Plan and developed an Annual Operating Plan for 2017.
- YCS staff attended numerous conferences and training sessions on fundraising; financial management; diversity, equity, and inclusion; membership expansion; and campaign and leadership development.