
Yukon Wetland Management Policy: Pre-Engagement Interview Summary

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Background & Context

Yukon government (YG) has committed to creating a wetlands management policy stemming from its *Yukon Water Strategy and Action Plan: Water for Nature, Water for People* (2014-2018). YG has further committed to develop the draft policy in a collaborative partnership with the parties affected - other governments (Indigenous, municipal), relevant Non-Government Organizations NGOs, and developers/industry. This collaborative process is scheduled to start in April 2018, and employ a consensus-based roundtable format.

The process facilitators invited potential participants to meet for one-on-one scoping interviews leading up to the roundtable process, in order to explore their views on:

- What is working well and challenging in regards to wetlands
- Hopes for a YG wetlands policy - what it could accomplish
- Hopes for the collaborative policy process - what would make it a valuable process, what could detract from its value

Who we interviewed (at their request):

Category	Organizations
Indigenous	• Ta'an Kwach'an Council
	• Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in
	• Vuntut Gwitchin Government
	• Carcross/Tagish First Nation
UFA/Treaty Board	• Fish and Wildlife Management Board
	• Wildlife Management Advisory Council - North Slope
Developers/Industry	• Klondike Placer Miners' Association
	• Wood Products Association
	• Yukon Chamber of Mines



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Yukon Energy Corporation
ENGO	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Ducks Unlimited
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Wildlife Conservation Society
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Yukon Conservation Society
Assessor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board (YESAB)

What we heard - themes and key points

Below are the main themes and key points recorded by the process facilitators. It is important to note that not all interviewees expressed the same opinions. Some perspectives fit well together, while others were quite divergent. Further, some points made fit within the scope of the collaborative policy discussions, while others pertained more to post-policy details and implementation.

> What is working well in regards to wetlands

- Overall support for YG committing to ‘do something’ around guiding wetland use and designation
- YESAB and the Water Board generally work well in regards to wetlands, despite YG policy vacuum
- The *Forest Resources Act* does a pretty good job accounting for wetlands
- Overall support to clarify and improve wetland reclamation processes
- Some areas have good baseline information already gathered
- Many key wetlands are identified as protected areas


> What is challenging in regards to wetlands

- The general public does still not fully understand wetland functions or value, and all the important services wetlands provide people
- Yukon does not have a comprehensive inventory of wetlands
- Lack of guidance on wetland values and how to make decisions:
 - YESAB and the Water Board must use best judgment in the absence of broader policy direction
 - No official Best Management Practices (BMP) in place for mining

- Comments in regards to YG operations and decisions around wetlands:
 - Examples where there has not been a willingness by YG to explore challenging and politically charged public policy issues
 - EMR and ENV can operate in silos, which can undermine trust and collaboration
 - Unclear on YG's commitment to mining BMP's and reclamation guidelines
 - Previously, Yukon Protected Areas Strategy addressed wetlands, but was not acted upon

> Hopes for a Wetland Policy

- Assertion of Value
 - Statement that wetlands matter to people in many ways including cultural, economic, and intrinsic, and that not all values are obvious
- Improved Management Clarity
 - Common language and understanding about what wetlands are, their types and functions
 - Direction on wetland use and protection (something “more than status quo”). Several organizations are hoping the policy will commit to pursuing the following future activities:
 - Inventory: classification, implementation of inventory, mapping, responsibility
 - Stewardship: impact avoidance, mitigation where possible, spatial and temporal buffering, and possibility of no net loss for certain types
 - Protection: mechanisms under land use designations; full protection zones; classes and responsibility
 - Assessment of legislative and regulatory changes: commitment to future legislation
 - Direction on mitigation sequence: avoid, minimize, and if needed, compensation
 - Some requested a commitment of no net loss of wetland function
- Diversity of Values and Interests
 - Balance of development and conservation values
 - May be wetlands with such high conservation value that development of any kind is not permitted
 - Realistic expectations of good reclamation process
 - Not about ‘shutting down industry; but some recognition that right now there is a blank slate around wetlands management that needs to be filled to some degree
- Realistic and Effective
 - Address policy elements that do more than the status quo; provide some meaningful guidance for decisions around wetlands management

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- All YG departments commit to adopting the policy
 - Clear designation of internal YG responsibilities and accountabilities
 - Policy is implementable: contains more than broad, generalized statements of principle, but is also realistic for YG depts. to put into practice

> Hopes for policy development process

- Process Clarity
 - Clarification from YG on how this wetlands conversation is different from previous processes? Why this, why now?
 - What is YG's level of internal coordination, and overall commitment to this process and outcomes?
 - Acknowledgement that Aboriginal governments are not the same as other stakeholder organizations; be clear about how they are being engaged as gov'ts
- Inclusion
 - Create the space to share stories and understand each other's interests even if everyone does not agree
 - Consideration of both science and traditional knowledge
 - Opportunity to educate wider public about the multiple values of wetlands
 - Need to have industry and developers at the table and part of inclusive, transparent discussions
 - Balanced representation of interests and expertise:
 - Broad development interests; not just mining
 - Broad mining representation; not just placer
 - Broad biological representation; not just bird and duck biologists
- Openness and Fairness
 - Clarification and commitment from YG on the extent participant input will impact the final policy and overall decision-making process
 - All participants commit to process by being honest about needs and do not come with firm positions
 - YG departments are honest about their respective needs and interests
 - Commitment that the process is not about 'shutting down industry' and that the status quo is not workable
 - Smaller technical working groups can work out details and ensure the larger group maintains overall ownership
- Effectiveness
 - Ensure YG participants are actually able to make decisions to ensure process does not stall
 - Appropriate time, resources and information