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# HABITAT MANAGEMENT

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## Concerns

### **Few fish and wildlife habitats are identified in the Teslin Tlingit traditional territory**

There is little information on key fish and wildlife habitats for most of the traditional territory. The Yukon Department of Environment habitat program identifies key habitats based on information from its staff but this material is out of date and does not incorporate much community knowledge. Another Yukon Department of Environment approach, called habitat suitability mapping, ranks habitats as high, medium or low for particular species. The problem is a lack of good habitat and ecological mapping to produce the ratings. TTC identified the Nisutlin River Delta as a key waterfowl habitat and considers calving areas, rearing areas, mineral licks, spawning beds and reeds, and staging areas as important habitats on which it intends to gather information. Presently, it has identified some spawning beds and reeds but needs more information. TTC also noted the falcon nest at the Northwest tower north of Johnson's Crossing. There is also some information on Wolf Lake caribou ranges, sheep ranges and goat occurrences but all of this requires further work and coordination between the Yukon government and TTC.

### **Few habitats in the Teslin Tlingit traditional territory are under special management**

The only major habitat under special management is the Nisutlin River Delta National Wildlife Area created under the TTC Final Agreement. A couple of grayling spawning areas have been identified as requiring protection and one is currently being addressed by Yukon Department of Environment and the Teslin RRC through the wildlife regulations and monitoring. No other habitats have special management conditions attached to them although some may exist as Yukon government map notations.

### **Solution** Identify and manage habitats in a coordinated way

For the past several years, the Teslin Tlingit traditional territory has been the focus of major landscape planning programs in the Yukon, from fish and wildlife to forestry to the Yukon Protected Area Strategy to land use planning. Such intense interest threatened to overwhelm the community. It put all such programs on hold until it completed an exhaustive public survey to establish principles and priorities upon which to base local planning.

With the completion of the Integrated Fish and Wildlife Plan, Teslin will be in the position of being able to initiate the most thorough investigation to date of fish and wildlife habitats, and how they should be managed using the combined resources of all the other planning programs. The challenge will be to coordinate programs in a positive manner to achieve the ends of each in a way that will benefit the entire community and the Teslin Tlingit traditional territory.

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## Actions

Responsible parties, Time line

RRC  
2001/02

Convene a joint meeting of the staff of all planning programs to discuss a coordinated approach to habitat management

Being at or near the centre of each planning program, the RRC should take the lead in coordinating this effort. There were several suggestions about how to approach this.

- a) Review the *Aishihik Integrated Fish and Wildlife Plan*, which identifies several key habitats, and the *Haines Junction Forest Management Plan*. The former plan identifies several key habitats and the latter plan identifies key habitats on a watershed basis.
- b) Review the Mayo RRC's report *A Home for Mayo* which documents important habitats in the Nacho Nyak Dun traditional territory.
- c) Once the major programs have been coordinated — likely through a Memorandum of Understanding (check out the wildlife plan Memorandum of Understanding), look for outside funding from organizations like the Community Development Fund, the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation, and the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Trust.
- d) Put together all existing information. This could come from the Yukon Department of Environment, TTC and the Yukon Protected Area Strategy work on Wolf Lake. This could be the first job of the coordinated team.
- e) Three criteria may be useful to properly identify habitats:
  - value: why does a certain population need this area (e.g. why does the Wolf Lake Caribou Herd need its winter range);
  - criteria: what are the qualities of this habitat that need to be preserved and what are the rules for doing this (e.g. what is it that the Wolf Lake herd needs on its winter range? arboreal lichens? access to areas of low snow depth? rules that allow cutting down of all the mature spruce trees and don't make so many roads that the herd can't move around freely?);
  - thresholds: how much activity can go on without affecting the caribou.
- f) Conduct a community survey to identify areas that need attention.
- g) Hold a workshop where all the areas are displayed on maps and the community can discuss how best to manage each of them. [2001-Tes-AI-34]

YG, TTC  
2002/03

Consolidate community knowledge on sheep habitats

Several bands of sheep and their ranges have been documented for the Teslin Tlingit traditional territory but generally sheep are thinly distributed throughout the traditional territory and virtually nothing has been documented about them (apart from hunter kill reports). The Yukon Department of Environment staff and the TTC need to work out a way of pooling their information on sheep and to undertake some form of community consultation to fill in the blanks. This information would be valuable, not only for habitat management, but also for harvest management and to provide local data for large industrial proposals, such as the gas pipeline. [2001-Tes-AI-35]