



ASSESSMENT YUKON

**ON THE PATH TO 2030: A REPORT
CARD ON PROGRESS TO PROTECT
LAND AND OCEAN ACROSS
CANADA**

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ON THE PATH TO 2030

YUKON ASSESSMENT

A REPORT CARD ON PROGRESS TO PROTECT LAND AND OCEAN ACROSS CANADA

The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) has reviewed progress made from 2022 through 2024 by federal, provincial, and territorial governments towards Canada's commitment to effectively protect at least 30% of land, freshwater, and ocean by 2030.

This section presents the grade and the complete assessment of the Government of Yukon for their terrestrial conservation efforts.

THE GRADE STEMS FROM HOW WELL YUKON ACCOMPLISHED SIX CONSERVATION PRINCIPLES:



1. Collaboration to achieve Canada's 30% targets



2. Setting ambitious regional targets



3. Prioritizing Indigenous-led conservation



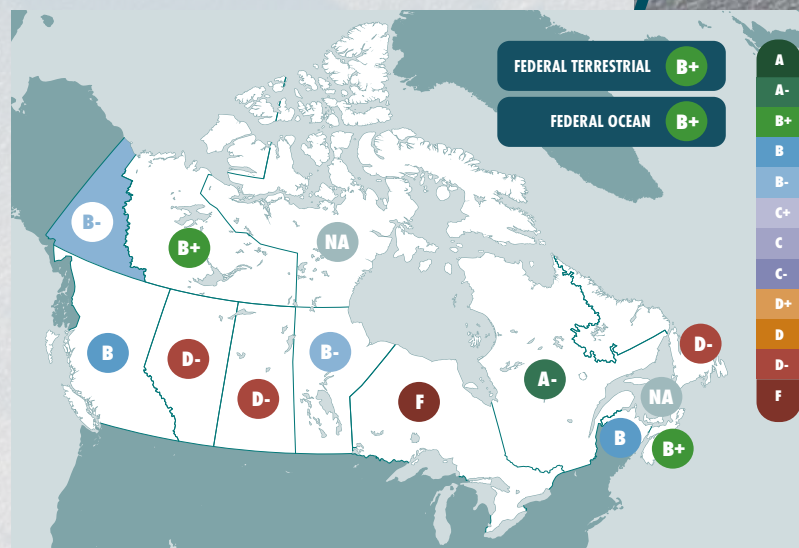
4. Completing existing conservation projects



5. Identifying additional high-quality areas for protection



6. Increasing long-term conservation funding



Our assessment reinforces the importance of prioritizing meaningful conservation efforts by emphasizing not only the quantity of land and freshwater conserved, but also the selection of key areas and the mechanisms used to ensure long-term, effective, and equitable protection.

This land and freshwater conservation assessment was a collaborative effort between the CPAWS Yukon Chapter and the CPAWS National Office. For a review of Canada's ocean conservation, [please see the Federal Ocean section](#).

The full report can be found here: [On the Path to 2030: A Report Card on Progress to Protect Land and Ocean Across Canada](#).

YUKON

2021
B-

2024
B-

Highlights and Lowlights



2023: Ross River Dena Council IPCA – Ross River Dena Council proposed an IPCA covering 35,000 km² of their traditional territory. They are discussing co-management options with the Governments of Canada and Yukon, and signed an agreement in December 2024 to explore designating part of the IPCA as a national park.



2024: Peel Watershed Plan implementation – the Gwich'in Tribal Council, First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, and the Governments of Canada and Yukon committed to exploring the establishment of a co-managed, 3,000 km² national park in the Peel Watershed Region.



2024: Chasàn Chùà (McIntyre Creek) protected area – Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, the City of Whitehorse, Government of Yukon, and Parks Canada committed to permanently protecting Chasàn Chùà, a wildlife and cultural corridor that has faced past development threats. Public engagement began in November 2024.



2024: Aullaviat/Anguniarvik Traditional Conservation Area – Inuvialuit Parties and the Governments of Canada and Yukon signed an agreement to create a collaboratively managed, 8,500 km² Indigenous-led conservation area, joining a network of terrestrial protected areas and the Tarium Niryutait Marine Protected Area.



2024: Governments greenlit mine despite First Nation opposition – in 2024, the Yukon Supreme Court and Yukon Court of Appeals both ruled that the Governments of Canada and Yukon had failed in their duties to consult with the Kaska Nation on the impacts of the Kudz Ze Kayah mine. The mine threatens caribou, water and Kaska culture, in a part of the Yukon with a long history of abandoned mines.



2023: Yukon government challenges Peel Watershed Plan – the Yukon Environmental and Socioeconomic Assessment Board recommended against an exploration project in the Peel Watershed, as it did not align with the region's land use plan and would adversely impact wildlife and First Nation wellness. The Government of Yukon has taken the board to court over the recommendation, an action which undermines the Yukon's modern treaties with First Nations.

Yukon First Nations and Inuvialuit Leading the Way in Conservation

Yukon's Final Agreements (modern treaties) enable constitutionally protected land use planning processes. First Nations that have not signed Final Agreements also have options to create protected areas, such as IPCAs and co-management and co-governance planning processes. These plans take time, and they also require political will from the territorial government and considerable resourcing. Our *2022 Roadmap to 2030* identified the lack of adequate federal funding to complete land use planning and implementation as a top challenge. The 2022 Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement³⁵ may address this. However, it is unclear how well First Nations are able to access this funding.

Furthermore, the territorial government strongly delayed progress on the Dawson Regional Land Use Plan, and starting land use plans in other regions, despite requests from First Nations.

The Government of Yukon's prioritization of extractive industries above ecological and cultural values is another barrier to conservation progress. The number of court cases relating to mineral development and land use planning in the Yukon in recent years indicate little progress in this arena. These cases generally showcase First Nation parties challenging the government's decision to allow projects to proceed or the government challenging independent boards that have recommended against projects.

Nevertheless, the Government of Yukon is advancing the creation of some protected areas. Chasàn Chùà (McIntyre Creek) protected area is a place treasured by local First Nations and residents. It is also symbolic of collaborative work between municipal, First Nation, territorial, and federal governments. Management planning for the Pickhandle Lakes Habitat Protection Area and Asi Keyi Natural Environment Park continues with Kluane First Nation and White River First Nation and through community engagement sessions. In the Peel Watershed Region, a new Territorial Park, Tagé Héinlin (Nijin Han Niinlaih), is in the early stages of planning led by the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, and a feasibility study for a national park is also underway for a separate area.

Significant advances are also happening through IPCAs. The Aullaviat/Anguniarvik Traditional Conservation Area (8,500 km²) arose via Inuvialuit leadership, and a Stewardship and Guardians program will be supported with a trust fund of federal and philanthropic contributions. Ross River Dena Council proposed an IPCA in their unceded territory, and they are exploring the feasibility of co-designating portions of the IPCA as a national park.



Photo: Joris Beugels

RECOMMENDATIONS

To maintain the territory's position as a leader in Canadian conservation, to better support Yukon First Nations and Inuvialuit in Indigenous-led stewardship, and to integrate decision-making that honours cultural and environmental values into government actions, CPAWS recommends that the Government of Yukon:

1. **Initiate moratoria on mineral staking and/or development, as requested by First Nations, in areas slated for land use or conservation planning. This work must focus on relationships and honouring agreements and rights to decision-making.**
2. **Work with First Nation governments to complete the development of the new minerals legislation and new public lands legislation, ensuring they centre around partnership and co-management with First Nations.**
3. **Include tools in the new minerals legislation to guide mineral claim relinquishment, buy-outs, and expropriation. To date, the government has been slow to consider options beyond voluntary relinquishment, which limits the protection of other values in land use planning.**

In conclusion, the Yukon has protected a significant amount of its land base and, when considering the additional opportunities available (see table below), is on track to exceed the 30% by 2030 target. However, the processes through which future conservation and ongoing management occur must be better supported by the territorial government, including meaningful partnerships with First Nations and a broadening of focus from resource utilization to resource stewardship.

Mapping Out 30% by 2030 in the Yukon

PROTECTED AREA OPPORTUNITIES

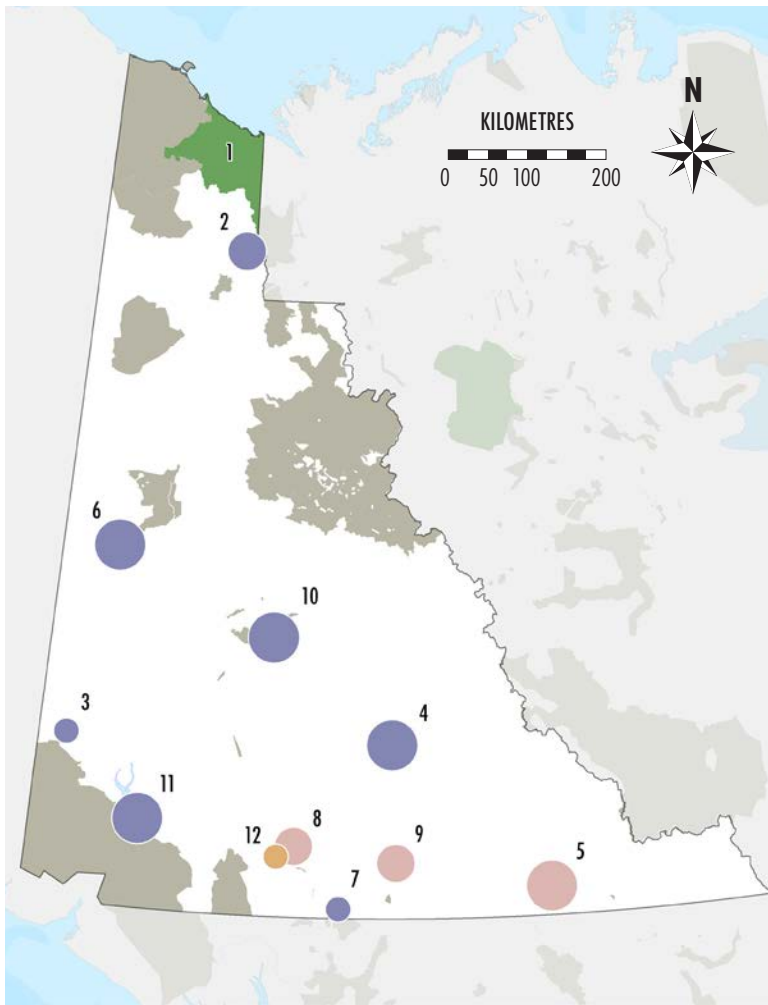
- Identified After 2022
- In Progress
- Progress Uncertain

TERRESTRIAL PROTECTED AREAS

- Created After 2022
- Created Before 2022

PROTECTED AREA OPPORTUNITIES (km²)

- ≤ 1,000.0
- 1,000.1-10,000.0
- 10,000.1-225,000.0
- ≥ 225,000.1



Opportunities for Protection: Areas Previously Identified

Information on Progress to Protected Area Status

1	Eastern Yukon North Slope Aullaviat/Anguniarvik Traditional Conservation Area covering 8,472 km ² created June 2024.
2	Dáadzäi Vän Territorial Park No management plan in place yet. Need to complete as Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement committed to reporting to CPCAD as an interim protected area of 1,525 km ² by April 2024.
3	Pickhandle Lakes Habitat Protection Area Need to complete Recommended Management Plan. Nature Agreement committed to reporting to CPCAD as interim protected area of 51 km ² by April 2024.
4	Ross River Dena Unceded Territory Tu tidlini IPCA of about 35,000 km ² proposed by Ross River Dena Council.
5	Liard First Nation Unceded Territory Too early to update progress on the approx. 15,000 km ² area.
6	Dawson Regional Land Use Plan Recommended plan awaiting modifications. This includes 13,598 km ² of protected areas/OECMs.
7	Agay Mene Territorial Park Nature Agreement commits to reporting to CPCAD as protected area of 725 km ² by December 2026.
8	Whitehorse Planning Region Carcross/Tagish First Nation, Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council developed a land and water relationship pre-planning document for the Southern Lakes <i>How We Walk with the Land & Water</i> .
9	Teslin Planning Region Yukon Land Use Planning Commission (YLUPC) is prepared to recommend planning proceed once Yukon and First Nation governments reach an MOU.
10	Northern Tutchone Planning Region YLUPC recommended a General Terms of Reference for a Na-Cho Nyäk Dun Regional Planning Commission in October 2023.
11	Kluane Planning Region Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, Kluane First Nation, and Government of Yukon are in the pre-planning stage.

Areas not previously included in 2022 Identification of Opportunities

12	Chasàn Chùà (McIntyre Creek) MOU in place; the first round of public engagement began in November 2024; parties agree to determine next steps to permanent protection for the 46 km ² .
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