



# Yukon Parks Strategy What we heard

A report on the public engagement on the draft Yukon Parks Strategy

## Introduction

The Government of Yukon developed the Yukon Parks Strategy to set the long-term direction for Yukon's system of territorial parks, which includes wilderness parks, campgrounds and recreation sites. The strategy provides guidance on how to sustainably deliver the environmental, economic, social and health benefits of territorial parks.

This document summarizes the input received from the public, First Nations, Inuvialuit and stakeholders during the public engagement on the Draft Yukon Parks Strategy, held from August to December 2019. The final Yukon Parks Strategy reflects this input.

## Summary of public feedback

We gathered public feedback on the draft Yukon Parks Strategy through an online survey posted on EngageYukon.ca.

- 747 people responded to the survey.
- The feedback revealed the majority of respondents are in support of almost all proposals (support ranged from 58 per cent to 87 per cent on the questions posted).
- The only exception was regarding the proposed increases to camping fees, where feedback was split.

## Fee increases

### General feedback

- 41 per cent of respondents agree with fee increases as proposed, 46 per cent disagreed and the remaining 13 per cent were not sure.
- Of those who disagreed, 51 per cent expressed in their comments that the proposed increase to the annual fee from \$50 to \$200 was too much of an increase at once.
- 14 per cent of respondents said they support more modest fee increases than those proposed.
- 61 per cent of the respondents agreed public services need to be funded by government with a reasonable amount of cost recovery from park users.
- Concerns were expressed that some low income groups could not afford a fee increase.
- Higher fees for specific users such as non-residents or tourism businesses were suggested.

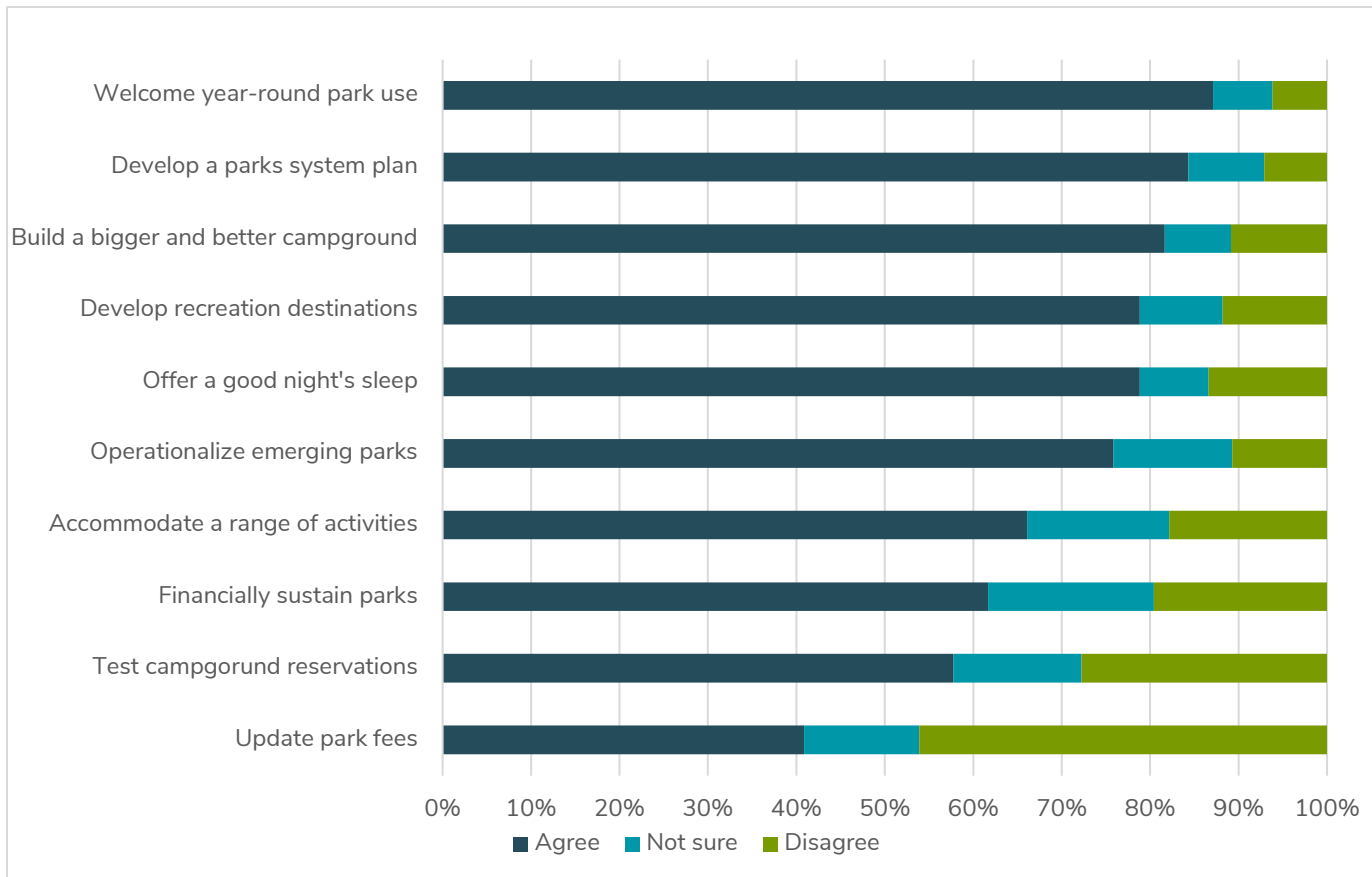
### Feedback on Senior's fee increases

- There were conflicting views about the best approach to camping fees for seniors.
  - Some people (both seniors and non-seniors) felt that seniors should continue to enjoy free camping.
  - Others (both seniors and non-seniors) felt that free camping for this age group put an unfair financial burden on taxpayers and fee-paying campers including young families.
- Some questioned the effectiveness of age-based pricing as compared to the federal and territorial income supports that target income gaps directly. For example, Statistics Canada reports that the poverty rate among Canadians over 65 is lower than among the rest of the population.
- There were concerns about the financial viability of our parks as seniors will make up an even larger proportion of the population in the decade ahead.

### Outcome

- Fee changes will be phased in over two years, starting in 2022.
- New camping fees include a 50 per cent discount for Yukon seniors. The 50 per cent discount applied to the annual camping permit remains as one of the most generous senior's discounts in Canada. Meanwhile, a 50 per cent senior's discount for daily camping permits is in line with other jurisdictions."

## General public survey results



- Territorial parks are not currently accommodating the growing use for recreational activities during the fall, winter and spring seasons in some parts of Yukon. People are increasingly looking to use parks earlier in the spring and later in the fall for activities like camping, hiking, skiing or ice fishing.
- People want a wider range of opportunities for active recreation. They want active things to do when they are staying in our campgrounds and a range of options for people of all abilities. People especially asked for more walking and hiking trails.
- We were asked do more to manage noise in campgrounds.
- There is desire to be able to make online campsite reservations for road-accessible frontcountry campgrounds. This is common in other parks systems around the world. Users value the certainty of knowing they will have a campsite when they arrive.
- Other users value the spontaneity of being able to go camping without having to reserve in advance. Some expressed concerns about mass bookings.
- People want to see reasonable efforts to keep park operating costs modest.



## Summary of engagement with First Nations and stakeholders

The Parks Branch conducted additional engagement with First Nations and Inuvialuit, as well as with interested stakeholders. Input was received from:

- 15 Yukon and transboundary First Nations, the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation and Council of Yukon First Nations;
- Wilderness Tourism Association Yukon and several tourism businesses;
- Klondike Placer Miners Association; and
- environmental non-governmental organizations.

Feedback was received via email, discussion by phone, face-to-face meetings and written comments between August and December 2019.

The following section summarizes qualitative comments received on the draft Yukon Parks Strategy. Feedback has been categorized into sub-themes: collaborative management and reconciliation, conservation and protection, and other.

### Collaborative management and reconciliation

- There is a desire to clarify the approach to managing territorial parks together with Indigenous partners: to formalize it with existing partners and to explore it with new partners.
- Working together to improve joint management of territorial parks is a high priority. Demonstrating a commitment to co-management is an important aspect that should be considered in the overall strategy.
- It was suggested that Parks Branch work with First Nations to guide how to incorporate traditional knowledge into all aspects of park management. For example, there is a shared interest in building up Indigenous guardian programs. There were several suggestions to elaborate on the potential of partnership opportunities to involve these Indigenous guardian programs in park management and operations.
- The purpose of financial sustainability should support, and not to detract from, the park system's foundation of protection and reconciliation.
- Concrete action on joint management was said to be more meaningful than broader statements about reconciliation.

## Conservation and protection

- Parks and protected areas planning should address the changing needs of wildlife in the face of climate change.
- Management and planning should be based on landscape conservation science informed by Indigenous knowledge, social sciences and natural sciences.
- Territorial parks are only one tool for landscape conservation, so planning should be integrated with other conservation activities.
- There was an interest in using the terminology of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas and for the strategy to recognize the opportunity these areas may represent in Yukon.
- The reference in the draft to “reopening old unmaintained trails” elicited concerns that this may refer to First Nations trails with heritage values. Where this is the case, this should be considered cautiously and in partnership with the affected First Nations.
- An operational park should be defined to include a completed management plan, an active committee and an effective budget.
- There are concerns that year-round access to campgrounds would increase promotion and use of remote parks rather than accommodating users in the high-use recreation parks.

## Other

- The draft strategy did not address adding additional campsites to existing campgrounds.
- Wilderness tourism operators desire to be reflected in the description of park users such as Yukon residents and visitors.
- Some expressed interest in contributing to implementation of the strategy.