



# Wilderness Tourism

August 2006



## DISCLAIMER

Nothing in the Yukon Government Oil and Gas Best Management Practices documents, maps, references, etc, shall be construed as waiving compliance with regulatory requirements imposed by law. It remains the responsibility of commercial or industrial operators to satisfy themselves that the measures adopted in the specific instance are appropriate to the situation and satisfy all legal requirements within the jurisdiction. Legal requirements may be imposed by Territorial, First Nation or Federal regulatory bodies.

Specific BMPs for specific problems cannot be given since solutions will, of necessity, be site and issue specific. Narrative BMPs are given indicating the type of measure which may be useful. Technical engineering prescriptions on how to build specific works or devices are beyond the scope of this project and the assistance of consulting engineering firms is recommended if you do not know how to construct, maintain or operate the relevant BMP or device.

Mention of trade names, commercial products or machinery does not constitute endorsement, or recommendation for use.

This guide is intended to provide users with up-to-date information about best management practices for oil and gas exploration on the Yukon Landscape but this project should not be considered as complete. There are both known and unknown sources of data which have not yet been incorporated and topics which have not yet been treated or addressed. These topics and data will be incorporated and new versions of the documents uploaded as time and resources permit.

By their very nature many specific BMPs soon become obsolete as “better” BMPs become available but the concept and the identified objectives behind the examples remain valid.

Any comments, questions, or suggestions regarding the content of this document may be directed to:

Oil and Gas Management Branch  
Energy Mines and Resources  
Yukon Government  
Suite 300-211 Main Street  
Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2B2  
Phone: (867) 393-7424  
Fax: (867) 393-6262

**All photos courtesy of Yukon Government except as otherwise noted.**

## Table of Contents

1. Objectives.....	4
2. Rationale.....	4
3. Context.....	5
4. Best Management Practices.....	6
5. Description.....	12
Yukon Tourism Industry.....	13
Wilderness Tourism Sector.....	13
6. References.....	16
7. Spatial Data.....	17

## 1. Objectives

- Maintain a vibrant, healthy and growing Yukon tourism industry;
- Maintain intact wilderness landscapes in key wilderness tourism areas;
- Ensure infrastructure that supports wilderness tourism are respected (e.g. trails, airstrips, cabins, lodges);
- Reduce creation of public access into areas previously not accessible;
- Ensure that natural, cultural and historical features important for tourism are respected and maintained;
- Minimize conflict between the tourism industry and the energy sector; and
- Encourage a healthy and collaborative relationship between the tourism industry and the oil and gas industry.



## 2. Rationale

Tourism is a vital part of the Yukon's economy and the wilderness tourism industry and the oil and gas industry often share the same landscape. Activities are based on wilderness landscapes, parks and special areas, significant wildlife features and wilderness-based historical sites and events. With few roads, undeveloped landscapes and healthy and intact ecosystems, intangible qualities of wilderness come from the size and feel of the country, its natural condition, and the expectation of seeing wildlife.



As wilderness areas decrease throughout the world, the demand for wilderness-based tourism has increased. This trend has increased the economic value of the Yukon's intact landscapes and encouraged operators to grow and develop new products.

The viability and growth of the Yukon's wilderness tourism industry is dependent on the consideration and cooperation of other industries using the land. Oil and gas best practices must strive to minimize conflict and encourage a healthy and collaborative relationship between the tourism industry and the oil and gas industry.



### 3. Context

Wilderness landscapes are the foundation of Yukon's wilderness tourism sector, and the quality of Yukon's wilderness is an important factor for travellers choosing a wilderness destination. Access, exploration and development activities that alter wilderness landscapes have the potential to impact visitor experience and Yukon's attractiveness as a wilderness tourism destination.





## 4. Best Management Practices

Issue	Concern	Best Practice
<b>Identifying active use areas and values</b>	Key to avoiding conflict and understanding issues and interests is ensuring that the locations of key wilderness tourism areas are determined well in advance of project planning.	Background information on wilderness tourism activity areas, uses and values can be found on <i>Wilderness Tourism Resource and Activity Maps and Binders</i> , regional tourism plans, visitor exit survey reports and other technical information available from the Government of Yukon, Department of Tourism & Culture in Whitehorse, YT. Cathryn.Paish@gov.yk.ca 867-667-5433
<b>Consultations</b>	Key to avoiding conflict and understanding issues and interests is ensuring that the wilderness tourism operators and regulators are contacted well in advance of project planning. Wilderness Tourism operators make their living off the land, and just like the oil and gas exploration industry can be difficult to contact during the operating seasons. Operating seasons will be dependent on the kind of wilderness tourism operation but in particular the summer months of June through August are difficult times to try and contact wilderness tourism operators.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consult with operators and industry on potential areas of development.</li> <li>• Consult known operators in the activity area – both fixed base and non-fixed base operators.</li> <li>• Schedule consultations to avoid tourism operating seasons.</li> <li>• For high use areas there should be an open public meeting with all stakeholders.</li> </ul> <p><b>Contact information is as follows:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Department of Tourism &amp; Culture <a href="mailto:Cathryn.Paish@gov.yk.ca">Cathryn.Paish@gov.yk.ca</a> Phone: 867-667-5433</li> <li>• Wilderness Tourism Association of Yukon <a href="mailto:wtay@klondiker.com">wtay@klondiker.com</a> 867-668-3689</li> <li>• Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon <a href="mailto:tiayukon@klondiker.com">tiayukon@klondiker.com</a> Phone:867-668-333 <a href="http://www.tiayukon.com">www.tiayukon.com</a></li> <li>• Yukon First Nations Tourism Association <a href="mailto:admin@yfnta.org">admin@yfnta.org</a> 867-667-7698</li> <li>• Silver Trail Tourism Association <a href="mailto:bedrock@yknet.ca">bedrock@yknet.ca</a></li> <li>• Gateway Tourism Association <a href="mailto:dehadwen@hotmail.com">dehadwen@hotmail.com</a> 867-536-7774</li> <li>• Klondike Visitors Association - execdir <a href="mailto:kva@dawson.net">kva@dawson.net</a> 867-993-5575</li> </ul>

Issue	Concern	Best Practice
<p><b>Trails</b></p>	<p>Trails are important for winter and summer wilderness tourism activities, including dog mushing, skiing, snowmobiling, horseback riding, hiking, biking and motorized vehicles.</p> <p>If existing trail use is primarily non-motorized, wilderness tourism operators will be concerned about potential damage to trails due to use as access for oil and gas exploration and development. In addition, wilderness tourism operators do not want increased access or loss of wilderness quality surrounding these trails. On the other hand, consideration should be given to the use of existing roads and trails rather than construction of new trails as long as the conflicts with existing trail users can be mitigated.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consult with trail users prior to utilizing trails for oil and gas exploration or development.</li> <li>• Minimize visual impact within the viewscape of the trails through the use of low impact seismic, careful planning of drilling projects and visual buffers.</li> <li>• Access into regions with identified wilderness tourism values should be restricted to use of aircraft, existing trails or winter roads.</li> <li>• Heavy equipment use should be limited to end of the summer tourism operating season.</li> <li>• Avoid motorized use of winter trails where winter tourism activities occur.</li> <li>• Single trail use is preferred over multiple trail use in order to protect the use of traditional trails. Where a permanent or multi-season road is necessary, all precautions should be taken to minimize the impact on wilderness tourism values and restrict use to operators only.</li> <li>• Monitor impacts when using existing trails. Closure of the trail should occur when there is extensive or long term damage.</li> <li>• Noise from drilling projects, production and transportation should be minimized wherever possible by buffering, considerations of such factors as prevailing winds and vegetative cover and carefully considering options for locations.</li> <li>• Consider seasonal operations that avoid conflict with wilderness tourism operations in the region.</li> <li>• Avoid flying over known wilderness tourism routes/corridors during active wilderness tourism times.</li> <li>• Ensure that motorized vehicles yield to non-motorized. Examples include horses and ATVs, dog teams and snowmobiles, canoes and motorboats.</li> </ul>

Issue	Concern	Best Practice
<b>Trails</b>	Managed trails, roads and routes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stay on managed trails, roads, and routes.</li> <li>• If driving a four-wheeled vehicle, avoid travelling on single-track trails, or on two-track trails that are narrower than your vehicle.</li> <li>• Stay in the middle of trails to avoid widening them.</li> <li>• Avoid creating switchbacks, shortcuts, or new paths for others to follow.</li> <li>• Park or stage only in designated parking areas.</li> <li>• Avoid travelling on poorly placed existing trails that are causing erosion problems. Trails straight up a hillside can severely erode in a heavy rain or runoff. Descending, contouring trails collect water and can also cause severe erosion.</li> <li>• Avoid muddy trails, wet areas, or travelling through water holes.</li> <li>• Accelerate slowly. Avoid spinning wheels/tracks 'Rip and Tear' acceleration has a significantly higher impact than that of conservative driving.</li> <li>• When snowmobiling, ride only where there is adequate snow cover. Do not ride where exposed soil and young trees and plants are visible, in order to avoid damaging soils and vegetation.</li> <li>• Learn to recognize soil conditions, and avoid areas and landforms that are especially sensitive to soil disturbances.</li> <li>• Read and obey all trail/road signs and closures.</li> <li>• Avoid traveling on existing trails if they are poorly placed, and are causing erosion problems (e.g., straight up or down a hillside or on an eroding side slope, or in riparian or wetland areas).</li> <li>• Avoid widening trail corridors.</li> <li>• Avoid breaking branches, which can lead to plant tree destruction.</li> <li>• Minimize or avoid trail use during periods of high precipitation and spring break up, when the ground conditions are soft or saturated.</li> </ul>



Issue	Concern	Best Practice
<b>Trails</b>	<p>If you are not on managed trails, roads, routes.</p> <p>With new trails come erosion and potential transfer of invasive plants.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid creating new trails (without appropriate planning and consultation).</li> <li>• Travel on the most durable surfaces available such as rock, gravel or snow.</li> <li>• Avoid marking trees, hanging flagging tape or building rock piles to point out your path (use GPS technology) .</li> <li>• Dismantle makeshift bridges across streams.</li> </ul>
<b>Lakes</b>	<p>Remote fly-in lakes are used for high quality fishing and also as put-ins for wilderness river/hiking trips. They are also important locations for wildlife viewing. Road accessible lakes are generally used for camping, fishing and as put-ins for some commercial canoe and kayak trips. Open water is generally June to October but there is some resident use for winter activities, including snowmobiling, skiing, dog mushing and ice fishing.</p> <p>The wilderness tourism experience could be affected by increased access, increased sedimentation, possible contamination, noise, loss of fish and wildlife habitat and visual scarring of the landscape along wilderness tourism viewsapes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restrict employees from fishing or hunting or gathering.</li> <li>• Access into regions with identified wilderness tourism values should be restricted to use of aircraft, existing trails (see “Trails” section) or winter roads. Where a permanent or multi season road is necessary, all precautions should be taken to minimize the impact on wilderness tourism values and restrict use to operator only.</li> <li>• Exploration and seismic activity should be set back a minimum of 50 m from water and watercourses. Drilling and production should be set back a minimum of 1 km from lakes and rivers within identified wilderness tourism use areas with no discharge to surface or water from the facility.</li> <li>• Noise from drilling projects, production and transportation should be minimized wherever possible by buffering, considerations of such factors as prevailing winds and vegetative cover and carefully considering options for locations.</li> <li>• Minimize visual impact within the viewscape of the lake through the use of low impact seismic, careful planning of drilling projects and visual buffers.</li> <li>• Consider seasonal operations that avoid conflict with wilderness tourism operations in the region. Avoid flying over known wilderness tourism areas during active wilderness tourism times. If flights are unavoidable, maintain adequate height to lessen disturbance. In particular, avoid overflights of key travel corridors (e.g. Yukon and Peel Rivers and Dempster Highway) except where necessary for safety reasons.</li> </ul>

Issue	Concern	Best Practice
<p><b>Infrastructure</b> (lodges, back country cabins, existing trails, airstrips and camps etc)</p>	<p>Wilderness properties are usually located on lakes and can vary from small tent frames to high-end lodges. Activities take place in all seasons and include dog mushing, snowmobiling, skiing, fishing, hiking and wildlife viewing. To date they are mostly fly-in locations. These facilities can involve huge investments especially for high end lodges.</p> <p>The wilderness tourism experience could be affected by increased access (leading to over-fishing and over-hunting), noise, loss of fish and wildlife habitat and visual scarring of the landscape surrounding lodges/back country cabins/ camps.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and avoid lodges, back-country cabins, trails and camps being used by wilderness tourism operators.</li> <li>• Restrict employees from fishing, hunting or gathering.</li> <li>• Avoid flying over known wilderness tourism lodges, back-country cabins and camps during active wilderness tourism times. If flights are unavoidable maintain adequate height to lessen disturbance.</li> <li>• Access into regions with identified wilderness tourism values should be restricted to use of aircraft, existing trails (see “Trails” section) or winter roads. Where a permanent or multi season road is necessary, all precautions will be taken to minimize the impact on wilderness tourism values and restrict use to operator only.</li> <li>• Exploration and seismic activity should be set back a minimum of 50 m from water and watercourses. Drilling and production should be set back a minimum of 1 km from lakes and rivers within identified wilderness tourism areas with no discharge to surface or water from the facility.</li> <li>• Noise from drilling projects, production and transportation should be minimized wherever possible by buffering, considerations of such factors as prevailing winds and vegetative cover and carefully considering options for locations.</li> <li>• Minimize visual impact within the viewscape of lodges, cabins and camps through the use of low impact seismic, careful planning of drilling projects and visual buffers.</li> <li>• Consider seasonal operations that avoid conflict with wilderness tourism operations in the region.</li> <li>• Utilize existing infrastructure when possible and if agreeable to all stakeholders.</li> </ul>

Issue	Concern	Best Practice
<p><b>River Corridors</b></p>	<p>River Corridors are the Yukon’s most important tourism feature and are vital to the wilderness tourism industry. These travel routes are used for day and multi-day expedition style trips. These trips include canoeing, rafting, kayaking, motorized boating, day hiking from river-side camps, fishing, wildlife and bird watching. Open water is generally found from May to October depending on location in the territory, with the months of June to September being the busiest.</p> <p>The wilderness tourism experience would be affected by increased access, increased sedimentation, possible contamination, noise, loss of fish and wildlife habitat and visual scarring of the landscape along wilderness tourism viewscales.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify wilderness tourism travel corridors in the exploration area and avoid flying over corridors when planning flights in and out of camps and planning airborne operations.</li> <li>• Access into regions with identified wilderness tourism values should be restricted to use of aircraft, existing trails (see “Trails” section) or winter roads. Where a permanent or multi season road is necessary, all precautions will be taken to minimize the impact on wilderness tourism values and restrict use to operator only.</li> <li>• Exploration and seismic activity should be set back a minimum of 50 m from water and watercourses. Drilling and production should be set back a minimum of 1 km from lakes and rivers within identified wilderness tourism areas with no discharge to surface or water from the facility.</li> <li>• Noise from drilling projects, production and transportation should be minimized wherever possible by buffering, considerations of such factors as prevailing winds and vegetative cover and carefully considering options for locations.</li> <li>• Minimize visual impact within the viewscape river corridors through the use of low impact seismic, careful planning of drilling projects and well established visual buffers.</li> <li>• Consider seasonal operations that avoid conflict with wilderness tourism operations in the region.</li> <li>• Winter river crossings should be done diagonally to minimize visual impacts.</li> </ul>

Issue	Concern	Best Practice
<b>Wildlife/Human interactions</b>	Ensuring that crews are aware of potential wildlife interaction concerns and the results of abandoning food remains in the bush while working is very important. In areas where trap lines or wilderness tourism / outfitting camps already exist, careless disposal of garbage or treatment / feeding of wildlife by seismic and survey crews can leave a legacy of habituated bears and other scavengers that may cause potentially deadly consequences for future wildlife and human interactions in the region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that crews receive bear awareness certification.</li> <li>• Ensure that crews understand not to feed or engage with wildlife in a manner that may lead to interactions or habituation.</li> <li>• Provide reusable lunch and drink containers to reduce the chances of littering and discarding food remains in the bush.</li> <li>• Ensure temporary camps are managed in such a way as to discourage wildlife interest and reward (strict camp rules regarding feeding wildlife, managing cooking facilities and food wastes, electric fences, deterrent guidelines etc.).</li> </ul>

## 5. Description

The tourism industry is an important component of Yukon's economy. It is estimated that \$164 million dollars in revenue is directly attributable to non-resident tourism. Tourism is the largest private sector employer in Yukon with approximately 80 per cent of all Yukon employees working for businesses that report at least some level of tourism revenue. There are approximately 1900 jobs in the Yukon that are directly dependent on tourism.



Businesses in all Yukon communities feel the impact of tourism in the economy. A large percentage of tourism businesses are small, localized businesses that provide stability, diversification and job creation, whether it's in the wilderness, in or near municipalities, or on First Nations settlement land.



## Yukon Tourism Industry

In the summer of 2004, 251,704 visitors came to the Yukon - an increase of eight per cent or 18,938, compared to the previous survey done in 1999. Nearly half travelled within the Yukon by private car, truck, van or motorcycle. Thirty per cent of visitors stayed for one to two nights with 27 per cent staying for three to five nights.

Visitors direct out-of-pocket expenditures from June to September 2004 totalled \$75,854,000. This was up by 12 per cent from 1999. The highest expenditure was by parties travelling primarily by boat (canoe, kayak, motor boat). Visiting natural attractions, hiking/walking and wildlife viewing, ranked 2nd, 5th and 8th respectively as frequently mentioned activities.



## Wilderness Tourism Sector

The Yukon's wilderness tourism sector is growing, its products are expanding, and its season is becoming year round. Wilderness tourism activities include but are not limited to guided and self-guided canoeing, rafting, motorized boat tours, horseback riding, hiking, photo safaris, sport fishing, mountain biking, snowmobiling, skiing and dog mushing. Of the 251,704 summer visitors in 2004, 56,266 included wilderness tourism activity as part of their trip and had a significant economic contribution to the Yukon.

Wilderness landscapes are the foundation of Yukon's wilderness tourism sector. Wilderness activities are based on wilderness landscapes, parks and special areas, significant wildlife features and wilderness-based historical sites and events.

Yukon's wilderness attracts guided and self-guided visitors. Guided wilderness trips are provided by licensed tour operators. The *Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act* requires anyone who takes clients into the wilderness for a fee or reward to have a Wilderness Tourism License. Licensed operators must carry insurance, have basic first aid, comply with [no-trace camping requirements](#) and submit annual trip and rental reports. Self-guided visitors conduct their own activities and purchase supplies, transport and often rent equipment.



Wilderness is more than the sum of its parts. With few roads, undeveloped landscapes and healthy and intact ecosystems, intangible qualities of wilderness come from the size and feel of the country, its natural condition, and the expectation of seeing wildlife.





Licensed wilderness tourism operators guide and accommodate tourists on the land and water year round and rely on the Yukon's large pristine areas to maintain their livelihood. Of the 81 operators licensed in 2004, over 75 per cent were Yukon based and employed up to 400 staff each year. About six Yukon companies rent equipment – mostly canoes and kayaks – to self guided travellers. They develop and market their own products and some deliver products for local and foreign companies. Operators guided over 35,000 clients for 45,000 user days in 2004. Yukon's wilderness tourism operators have a reputation as skilled and knowledgeable professionals who deliver outstanding wilderness adventure activities throughout the Territory.

Guided hunting and guide outfitters are not included in the definition of wilderness tourism and will be covered in a separate section of the oil and gas best management practices guide.



**For more information regarding Wilderness Tourism in the Yukon please contact: The Wilderness Tourism Association of Yukon at [wtay@klondiker.com](mailto:wtay@klondiker.com) or contact Cathryn Paish with the Department of Tourism and Culture [Cathryn.Paish@gov.yk.ca](mailto:Cathryn.Paish@gov.yk.ca); Phone:867-667-5433**



## 6. References

[Wildlife Guidelines for Commercial Backcountry Recreation in British Columbia, Environmental Stewardship Division, Ministry of Environment](#)

[Best Practices in Natural Heritage Collaborations: Parks and Outdoor Tourism Operators](#)  
Pam Wright and Associates. Canadian Tourism Commission September 2001

[Best Management Practices for Recreational Activities on Grasslands in the Thompson and Okanagan Basins](#), BC Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection, Ecosystem Standards and Planning Biodiversity Branch

Tourism and Protected Areas Management in British Columbia –a background report prepared for BC's Parks Legacy Panel April, 1998

Tourism Impact Modeling for Resource Extraction Regions, Janaki R. R. Alavalapati University of Florida, USA, Wiktor L. Adamowicz University of Alberta, Canada.  
Annals of Tourism Research, Vol. 27, No. 1, pp. 188±202, 2000 S0160-7383(99)00064-X

[2004 Yukon Visitor Exit Survey, Main Report June 2006](#)

## 7. Spatial Data

Wilderness Tourism Resource and Activity Maps  
Contact the Government of Yukon,  
Department of Tourism & Culture in Whitehorse, YT.

[Cathryn.Paish@gov.yk.ca](mailto:Cathryn.Paish@gov.yk.ca)

867-667-5433

North Yukon Planning Commission Tourism poster  
Available at <http://www.nypc.planyukon.ca>

**Tourism & Recreation Values**  
NORTH YUKON PLANNING REGION

Documenting, understanding and planning for tourism and recreation interests in North Yukon

**Tourism and Recreation Values**  
North Yukon Planning Region

**TOURISM MARKETS, RESOURCES AND PRODUCTS**

**Tourism Markets**  
"Tourism markets" are markets that visit the North Yukon area and include:  
Market segments include:  
• Day-trip visitors ("week-enders")  
• Multi-night visits in North Yukon  
• High or medium-cost and repeat

**Table 1: Visitation to the North Yukon**

**Current Visitation**

- 100,000-150,000 annual visits to the area
- 100,000-150,000 annual visits to the area and surrounding
- Over 100,000 Highway visitors to the area in a year
- 100,000-150,000 annual visits to the area and surrounding

**Tourism Resources**

- 100,000-150,000 annual visits to the area and surrounding
- 100,000-150,000 annual visits to the area and surrounding
- 100,000-150,000 annual visits to the area and surrounding
- 100,000-150,000 annual visits to the area and surrounding

**Tourism Products**

- 100,000-150,000 annual visits to the area and surrounding
- 100,000-150,000 annual visits to the area and surrounding
- 100,000-150,000 annual visits to the area and surrounding
- 100,000-150,000 annual visits to the area and surrounding

**Other factors that influence tourism development are:**

- Local interest and ability to develop and staff tourism businesses
- Access to financing, training, and other support
- Competition from other tourism destinations with similar products

**North Yukon Planning Commission**

**Yukon**

North Yukon Planning Commission, April 2008