



SOUTHERN LAKES

HABITAT PROTECTION AREAS COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

MARCH 2022

BACKGROUND

Habitat Protection Areas (HPAs) are territorial special management areas administered under the Yukon Wildlife Act; many were identified during the development of First Nations Final Agreements. HPAs conserve important fish and wildlife habitats, protect the diversity of fish and wildlife populations, and recognize and protect traditional and current use by First Nations. These outcomes are accomplished by limiting potentially harmful activities, increasing public knowledge regarding biodiversity, and encouraging public appreciation and enjoyment of the natural resources in these areas.

The Carcross/Tagish Traditional Territory, or the area commonly known as the Southern Lakes in Yukon, Canada contains one designated HPA, the Tagish River Habitat Protection Area, and one HPA in development, the Lewes Marsh Habitat Protection Area. This area is also home to Agay Mene Territorial Park, a Natural Environment Park.

As part of a continued effort to engage with the community, the Carcross/Tagish Renewable Resources Council developed a public survey to better understand public interest in the future of special habitat protection areas.

SUMMARY

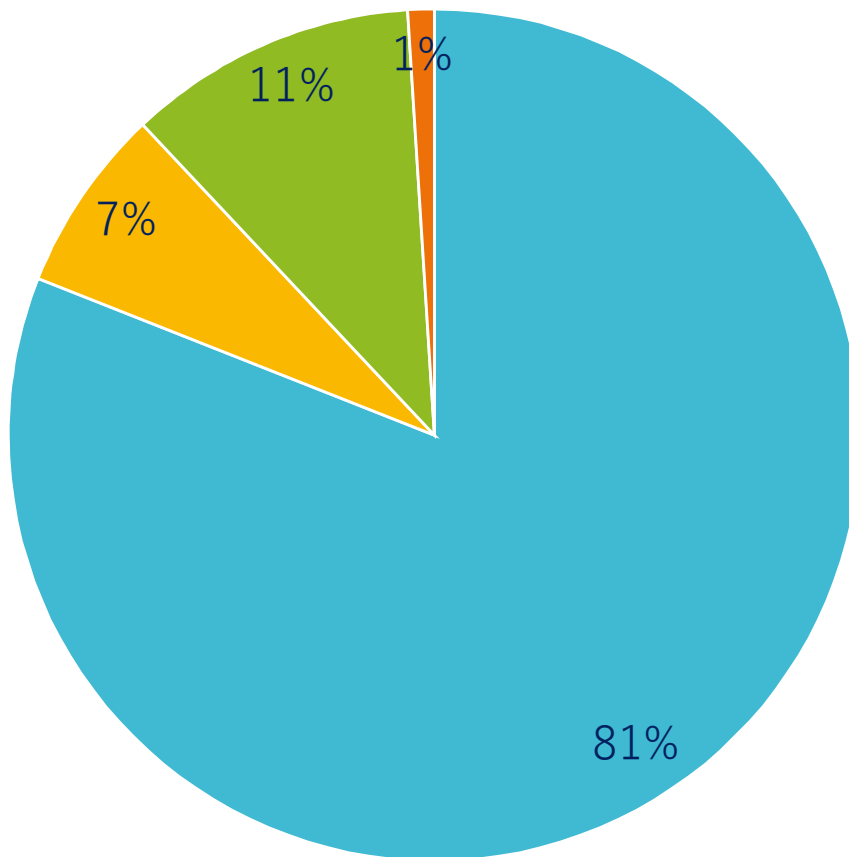
The public survey was launched November, 2021 and closed January, 2022. In the two months that the survey was open, 102 respondents completed the survey. Of those respondents, 81% were current residents of the Southern Lakes. 82% of respondents were in favour of additional special habitat protection. Montana Mountain, Nares Mountain, and the Wheaton Valley were the most frequently listed areas that respondents felt could benefit from additional special habitat protection. Caribou habitat was the most frequently listed wildlife concern by respondents.

Disclosure: the survey received 598 responses in total, however, it is suspected that illicit measures were used to fill out a significant number of surveys on November 26 and 27, 2021. To preserve the integrity of the survey and present the most accurate representation of community opinion, all input, 496 surveys, from November 26 and 27, 2021 has been omitted from these results.



RESULTS

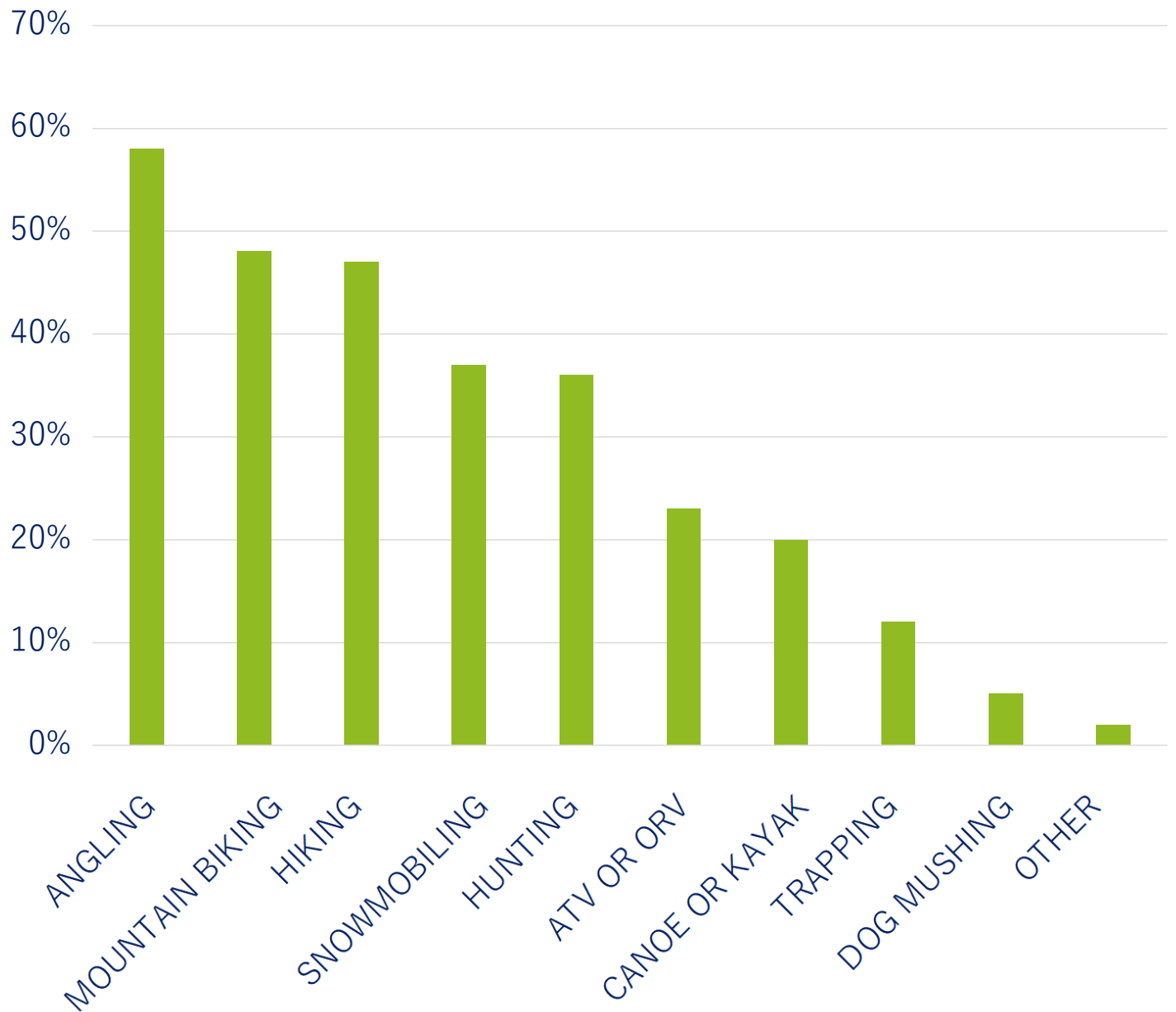
QUESTION 1: Do you currently reside in the Southern Lakes Region (Mount Lorne, Carcross, Tagish, Marsh Lake)?



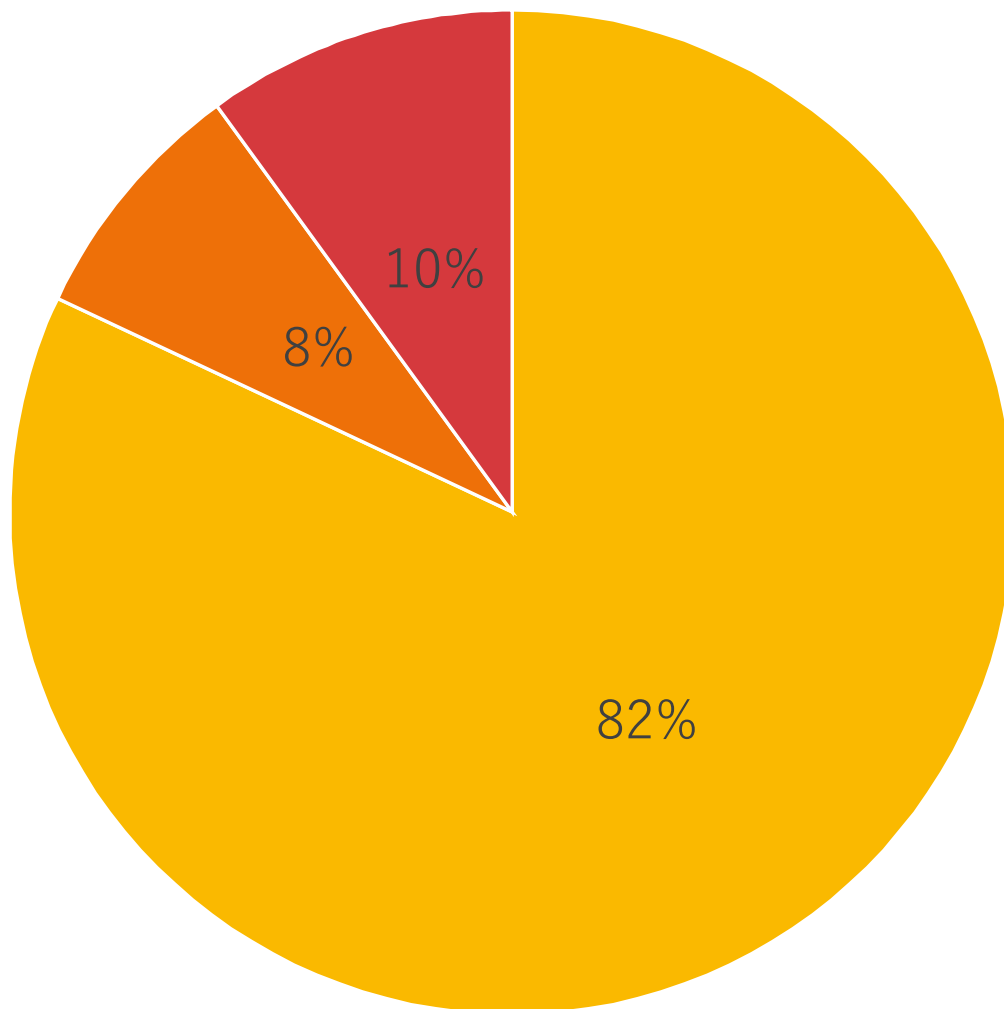
■ YES ■ NO ■ NO, BUT I USED TO ■ NO, BUT I'M MOVING



QUESTION 2: Do you participate in any of the following activities within the Carcross/Tagish Traditional Territory (Southern Lakes Region)?



QUESTION 3: Would you support the creation of additional Habitat Protection Areas in the Carcross/Tagish Traditional Territory?



■ YES ■ NO ■ MAYBE



QUESTION 4: Which areas within the Carcross/Tagish Traditional Territory would you consider regulating for additional habitat protection?

Question 4 was provided in long answer format. The following areas were listed by respondents more than three times:

**Montana Mountain,
Nares Mountain, and
Wheaton Valley.**

The following areas were also listed by respondents, but three or less times in total:

**Little Atlin Lake,
Six Mile River,
Lewes Marsh,
Tagish River,
Kusawa Lake,
Carcross Desert,
Bennett Lake,
Yukon River watershed,
Squanga Lake,
McClintock River,
Michie Creek,
Judas Creek,
Corwin Valley, and
Ten Mile marshes.**



QUESTION 5: What considerations for wildlife are important to you? ex: waterfowl staging, caribou winter habitat, sheep or goat

Question 5 was provided in long answer format. The following consideration was listed by respondents more than five times:

Caribou habitat.

The following considerations were also listed by respondents, but five or less times in total:

**Moose habitat,
Waterfowl and migratory bird staging areas,
Shoreline protection for small fish,
Fish breeding,
Reptile habitat,
Goat kidding,
Sheep lambing,
Human habitat (Agricultural land),
Black bear and grizzly bear habitat, and
Wolf denning sites.**



QUESTION 6: Any additional comments or concerns on Habitat Protection Areas in the Carcross Tagish Traditional Territory?

Question 6 was an open-ended long format question. Respondents provided various levels of feedback. Some respondents also provided more detail to Question 4 and Question 5. In an effort to voice the communities opinion on responses that could not be numerically summarized, those quotes are listed:

“The string of lakes and wetlands from Squanga Lake to the McClintock River are very special. I paddled/portaged the route this summer and moose density (based on tracks and other sign) appears to climb as you move past Jackfish Lake. I don't know but wonder if the drainages, because they are relatively inaccessible, are important moose source areas for the Little Squanga Lake and Jackfish Lake area. Some things really stand out in my memory - wild mint lines the shores of upper Michie Creek, kingfishers, swans and waterfowl are abundant, there are freshwater springs, the area has amazing fish habitat.”

“Marshes and any areas anticipated to be acutely impacted by climate change and/or increased pressure from human activity would be my focus.”

“There is a large section of heavily trafficked traditional territory between Tagish and Johnson's Crossing and south past the BC Border along the Atlin Road. Our land selections are not very present here and are concentrated in another area of traditional Territory. There is very much taxation of wildlife with nothing resident trappers can do but watch our place get marauded by weekend warriors and encroachment.”

“Everything is interdependent! Most important is organized development with very clear protocols around human living.”



“If we can protect/rehabilitate caribou range and especially WKAs, we’ll be well on the way to protecting the habitat for most other species. Protecting wetlands will mostly conserve habitat for the remainders. Protected and conserved areas need to be of sufficient size and adequately connected to other protected and conserved areas in order for them to provide space for wide ranging mammals to thrive especially as the climate crisis worsens.”

“The sharing of land with all wildlife in an equitable way. Teaching children and youth to give them space and allow them to thrive. Maintaining corridors for their travel and clean, wild lands to support their feeding needs.”

“Work with Kwanlin Dūn to protect some other key caribou winter habitat on the Annie Lake road and Alligator Lake road.”

“We don’t need any more regulations.”

“Eliminating noise disturbance in many areas is important. Noise from drones, aircraft, snowmachines, off road vehicles, dogs, and maybe others. Keeping in mind that noise easily travels past boundaries of management zones.”

“How do we make visitors/new residents more aware and respectful of traditional land, of community members, and wildlife?”

“We are getting more and more new people coming to our home lands so we have to stand together and really start protecting all animals - birds [and] fish that we have served for thousands and thousands of years thanks to our Elders.”

“With its proximity to the rapidly growing Whitehorse population, CTFN’s traditional territory is at risk of being overwhelmed by the cumulative impacts of human activity. As someone who spends much of their time on the land but doesn’t always know the best way to do so with minimal impact on the ecosystem. Social media has lots of well-meaning individuals who attempt to provide guidance in that regard, but their guidance is at times conflicting and/or unclear. As such, public education about habitat protection, particularly in HPAs, is critical.”



“Regulation on ORV’s and motorized vehicles.”

“Human incursion and activities must take a back role to wildlife habitat.”

“I would like to see more education on the importance of keeping the neighbourhoods clean of garbage. This garbage ends up in the water, the trees, animals are getting caught up in it. Car batteries and fluids are draining down through the sand and into the water table.”

“Subsistence hunting only by indigenous peoples. No hunting as life style choices, ie recreational and sport.”

“Especially with talk of power line expansion from Atlin, we can expect to see devastation by human settlement in the near future. This is not a question about [what] people like or want to wipe out now. It is a warning that caribou winter habitat and the abundance of fish stocks are in jeopardy & have been for a long time with no attention to some of the heavier traffic within our traditional territory.”

“Restricted motorized vehicle use. Reduced speed zones during caribou movements.”

“Concern for mountain biking trails on Montana Mtn.”

“Another option to explore for the Squanga Lake to McClintock wetlands would be nominating the wetland complex as “Wetlands of Special Importance”, so that development could not impact the values / benefits of those wetlands. This option will be available to RRCs once the draft Yukon Wetlands Policy is finalized.”

“Recreational and hunting practice assisted by quads, side-by-sides and snow machines needs better understanding as to negative landscape and wildlife impacts. We are getting to be too many abusing our common landscape and wildlife in too many ways.”

“[An] old cree saying: Only when the last tree has died and the last river poisoned and the last fish been caught will we realize we cannot eat money.”



OUTCOME

The results of this survey conclude that the majority of the respondents are in favour of creating additional Habitat Protection Areas.

The Yukon Bureau of Statistics released 2021 population estimates of 478 Carcross residents and 376 Tagish residents. While Marsh Lake and Mount Lorne statistics are not defined in the Yukon Bureau of Statistics report, it can be concluded that this Habitat Protection Areas survey reached and had response from a significant portion of the community with 102 completed surveys.

The C/TRRC is the local management body and the community voice for fish, wildlife and forestry in the Southern Lakes Region. The C/TRRC plays an advisory role to the Yukon Territorial Government, the Canadian Federal Government, the Carcross/Tagish First Nation Government, and the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board on process and regulation changes, and will use these results in discussions regarding the establishment of future Habitat Protection Areas.

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