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Kelly Hayes
#9-320 9th St. NW
Calgary, AB T2N 1T4

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Yukon Protected Areas Strategy
Department of Renewable Resources, Government of Yukon
Box 2703, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6

Attention: Katie Hayhurst (and the Protected Areas Strategy Committee)

Thank you for this opportunity to present some of my ideas to those involved in developing a protected areas strategy for the Yukon.

My name is Kelly Hayes and I am a Yukon student currently pursuing my Master's degree in Environmental Design at the University of Calgary. I am in the process of developing my thesis project and I would like to do something in the Yukon. I am very interested in the current development the Yukon Protected Areas Strategy and would like to know if there might be an opportunity for me to be involved.

As a short introduction, I'll tell you a bit about my background. I completed my undergraduate degree in journalism (specializing in environmental studies and First Nations issues) at Carleton University. I worked for different media organizations and as a private contractor in Whitehorse, then tried my hand as an interpretive before returning to academia. I am now in my first year of environmental science in the environmental design program. My area of specialization is Natural Areas Planning and Management. Some of my courses this year include applied ecology, wildlife management, ecosystem management, tourism planning, and protected areas management.

On a more personal note, I grew up in the Yukon and have spent a great deal of time exploring different parts of the territory. However, I didn't really appreciate what the Yukon has to offer until I moved away for a while and saw how the rest of the world lived. This realization has inspired me to pursue my current field of study. I'm interested in designing management strategies that reflect the interests of Yukoners while preserving the integrity of the territory's wilderness. I would be very interested in playing a part in the development of protected areas in the Yukon.

I have been considering what projects I could undertake that might be of some use to the development of protected areas. The following are some general proposals:

- **Examination of potential visitor activity and management.** While many protected areas are established to preserve ecological values, human use of these areas is often an important consideration. Hunting and trapping are some of the uses that may be of particular concern to Yukoners. Recreation and ecotourism are other activities that may also occur within parks or protected areas. Tourism is currently one of the Yukon's primary industries, with wilderness tourism numbers growing each year. There can be significant educational and economic benefits related to these activities,

but they can also have serious environmental impacts if not managed carefully. A possible project I could undertake is the examination of a nominated protected area to determine the potential for visitor activities and develop recommendations for visitor management. The project could include a survey of current use, collection of data on areas already impacted, determining levels of acceptable change, a literature review to examine approaches to visitor management in other jurisdictions, and input from various stakeholders. I am not sure if there is already a strategy in place to deal with visitor activity management, but I believe such a strategy is needed and that understanding human use is crucial to the protection of wilderness areas.

- **Examination of possible protected area management approaches.** Co-management with First Nations and local communities could create the opportunity to develop effective protected area management strategies. Another possible project I could undertake is to develop a series of management recommendations for a proposed protected area. This could include a review of protected area management strategies in other jurisdictions highlighting successes and problems; an examination of the role of Yukon land claims, land use planning and renewable resource councils; a review of the framework established under the Yukon protected areas strategy; and input from stakeholders on how they would like to see the area managed.
- **Examination of public participation in protected areas design.** The last idea I would like to present is the examination of public participation in the protected areas process. This could involve following the establishment process for a nominated protected area, reviewing public participation in the development of protected areas in other jurisdictions, and determining participant and organizer satisfaction with the final outcome. My conclusions could include an overview of the things that worked in the process and more effective approaches that could be taken in the future.

I would like to stress that the above proposals are only ideas. I have invested more time into the examination of visitor use in protected areas because it is the area that I am most familiar with. As I stated earlier, I am still looking for a master's project and I welcome any suggestions you may have. I'm sure there are many topics that need to be researched. My primary goal is to do something that will be useful, and not end up sitting on someone's bookshelf (i.e. mine) gathering dust. According to the timeline established by the faculty, I should defend my thesis in the spring of 2000, which leaves me two years to do research. The end of the school year is fast approaching and I'm scrambling to put something down on paper as I would like to begin work this summer. I have potentially secured some funding for research, but it is minimal. Therefore, I am also looking for financial support for this project.

If you would like to contact me, I can be reached by e-mail at kahayes@acs.ucalgary.ca or by phone at (403) 283-9189.

Thank you very much for your time. I know you are all busy completing the strategy. I hope we can establish some sort of relationship as I think it could be beneficial for everyone.

Kelly Hayes