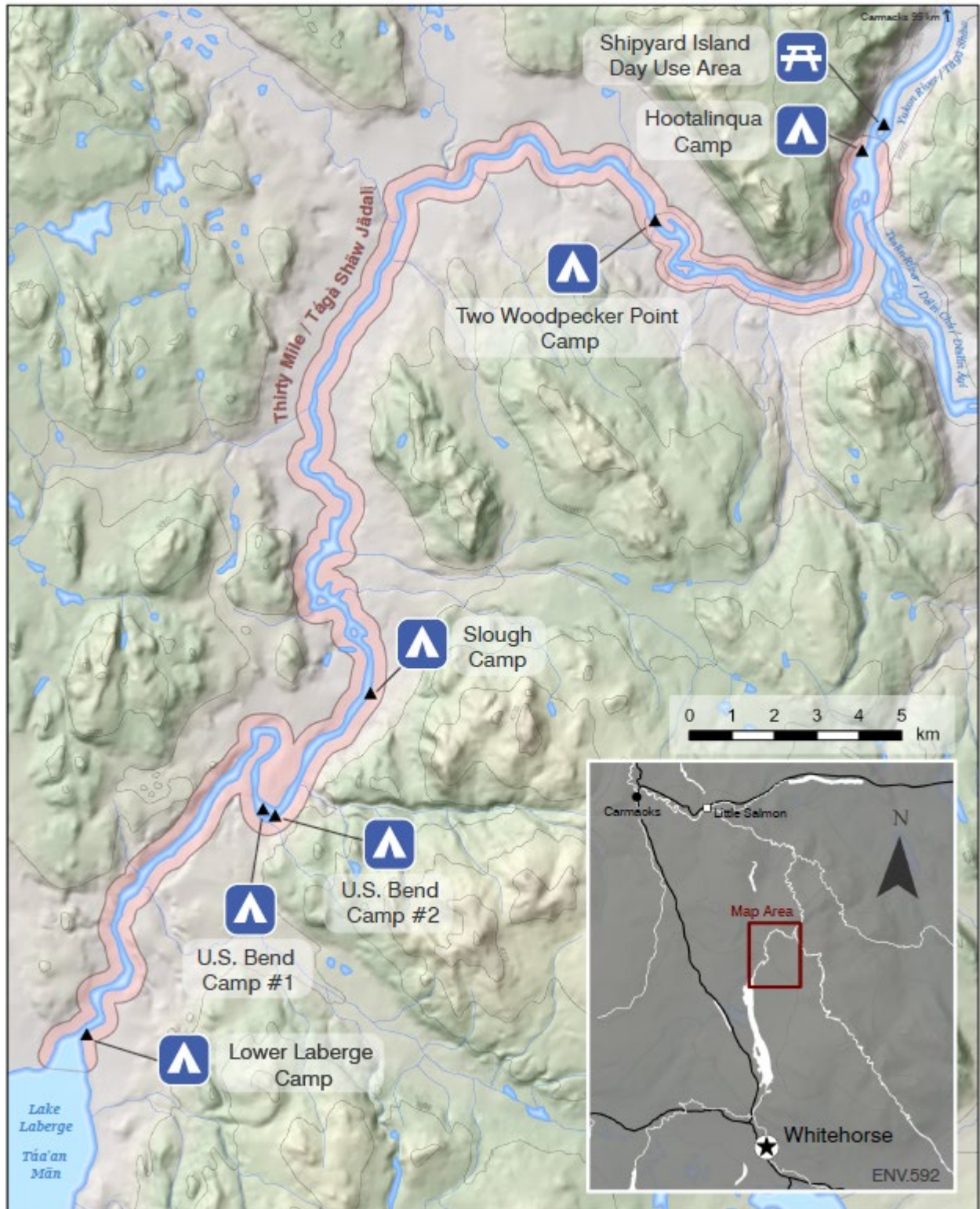


An aerial photograph of a wide river flowing through a lush forest. The river is a deep blue-green color, reflecting the sky. The forest is dense with tall evergreen trees, some of which have yellowed, indicating autumn. In the background, there are rolling mountains under a clear blue sky. On the right bank, near the bottom of the frame, there are several small boats or kayakers. A large, wavy, teal-colored shape separates the photograph from the text below.

Thirty-Mile Ten Year Monitoring Report 2013-2022

**Prepared by Yukon Parks
March 2023**



Executive Summary

The Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS) is a national program that recognizes, celebrates and conserves the natural, cultural and recreational values of 41 rivers across Canada.

This ten-year monitoring report was prepared for the Thirty Mile portion of the Yukon River, for the years 2013 to 2022. The primary purpose of the review is to “assess the river’s ability to meet the criteria outlined in the designation document” and recommend “that the river maintains its Canadian Heritage River designation, or that it be de-designated” (PPOG 2016).



Paddling group at Hootalinqua Camp

The Thirty Mile Section of the Yukon River was nominated to become part of the Canadian Heritage Rivers System in 1988. Designation took place in 1991, following the completion and approval of the management plan in 1990. The Thirty Mile was the first Canadian Heritage River (CHR) to be designated in the Yukon. This report represents the third ten-year monitoring report since its designation in 1991.

The Thirty Mile Section of the Yukon River has seen no significant change in the integrity of its natural, cultural and recreational values since its designation as a Canadian Heritage River in 1991. A review of the conditions of the heritage values indicates that some improvements to the integrity of the natural values were accomplished.

The Ta'an Kwach'an Council settled their land claim agreement in January of 2002, ushering in a new era for the First Nation, which has affected how land and water use decisions were made for the Thirty Mile. This has resulted in the involvement of the Ta'an Kwäch'än First Nation in the periodic servicing of the campsite facilities along with monitoring of the river users. The Parks Branch of Yukon Government is the primary River Manager for Thirty Mile, ensuring that campsite facilities are kept to a high standard.

This report strongly recommends that the heritage designation remain, due to analysis indicating that the criteria are still being met, if not exceeded.

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Section 1: Chronology of Significant Events, Actions and Research since 2012

2013

Site Monitoring and Maintenance

Description:

- The Ta'an Kwäch'än were contracted to service the campsite facilities and monitor river usage.

Plaque Clean-up

Description:

- Cleaned the brass plaque and stripped cedar post.

2014

Site Monitoring and Maintenance

Description:

- The Ta'an Kwäch'än were contracted to service the campsite facilities and monitor the river usage.
- Documentation and recording of historic data at Shipyard Island and Hootalinqua.
- Preparatory work for restoration of the Telegraph Office at Lower Laberge.
- Initiated a voluntary visitor survey of river travelers and received 155 responses between late June and early September.

2015

Site Monitoring and Maintenance

Description:

- The Ta'an Kwäch'än were contracted to service the campsite facilities and monitor river usage.
- Restoration and repair of foundation, walls and roof of Telegraph Office at Lower Laberge.

2016

Site Monitoring and Maintenance

Description:

- The Ta'an Kwäch'än were contracted to service the campsite facilities and monitor river usage.
- Major campsite maintenance work to repair and replace facilities at campsites and three historic sites.
- Final stages of restoration and repair of foundation, walls and roof of Telegraph Office at Lower Laberge.

2017

Site Monitoring and Maintenance

Description:

- The Ta'an Kwäch'än were contracted to service the campsite facilities and monitor river usage.
- Major campground maintenance work to repair and replace facilities at two campsites and three historic sites.
- Monitoring visits to Lower Laberge and Hootalinqua by Heritage Branch, updating information into the Yukon Historic Sites Inventory.
- Detailed documentation of select sites at Lower Laberge, Hootalinqua and Shipyard Island for long-term conservation planning.
- Brushed and cleared the sites at Hootalinqua and Shipyard Island to reduce fire hazard.

2018

Site Monitoring and Maintenance

Description:

- In September 2018, Yukon Parks conducted a Backcountry Recreation Impact Monitoring (BRIM) survey of the seven campsites and historic resources.
- Yukon Parks upgraded the picnic table and outhouse facilities at many of the sites.
- The Ta'an Kwäch'än were contracted to service the campsite facilities and monitor river usage.

2019

Site Monitoring and Maintenance

Description:

- The Ta'an Kwäch'än were contracted to service the campsite facilities and monitor river usage.

2020

Site Monitoring and Maintenance

Description:

- A new private contractor took over responsibility of maintaining the campsites within Thirty-Mile in 2020. Minor repairs were also completed on the facilities.
- Department of Tourism & Culture conducted restorative activities on the Telegraph Office at the Lower Laberge site, involving the reconstruction of the rear porch due to extensive decay of individual elements and the collapsed nature of the structure.
- At Hootalinqua, a site visit was conducted and assessment of the condition of the heritage resources at both Hootalinqua and Shipyard Island. Dead and damaged trees that were threatening historic structures were removed.

2021

Summer 2021

Site Monitoring and Maintenance

Description:

- The Ta'an Kwäch'än were contracted to service the campsite facilities and monitor river usage.
- A team of four Historic Sites staff from the Department of Tourism & Culture visited Hootalinqua in early October 2021. The goal was to monitor the site and perform much needed conservation work on two of the outbuildings of the Telegraph Office, which had failing roofs. Flooding had deposited silt around one of the buildings. The roofs were restored and one of the building was stabilized to prevent further deterioration.

2022

Summer 2022

Site Monitoring and Maintenance

Description:

- A private contractor was re-hired to maintain the campsites along Thirty Mile. In addition to the usual upkeep of campsite facilities, the contractor also cleared debris from flooding and removed deadfall caused by heavy snowfall the previous winter.
- A Backcountry Recreation Impact Monitoring Survey (BRIM) was conducted in September 2022 to examine the impacts of recreational use at the campsites. Due to the regular maintenance of the sites and the reduced river

traffic as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, recreational impacts are minimal. In fact, in some cases the vegetation appeared to be returning to previously trampled sites. However, the effects of flooding and heavy snow loads are very apparent at many of the sites. Some sites and facilities had been completely inundated earlier in the summer, which resulted in lost or damaged infrastructure. A significant amount of debris was left on the sites as well. Further clean up by the contractor will be needed.

- During the BRIM survey, two staff from the Heritage Branch of Yukon Government conducted heritage assessments of the historic features at Lower Laberge and Hootalinqua.



U.S. Bend Camp #1

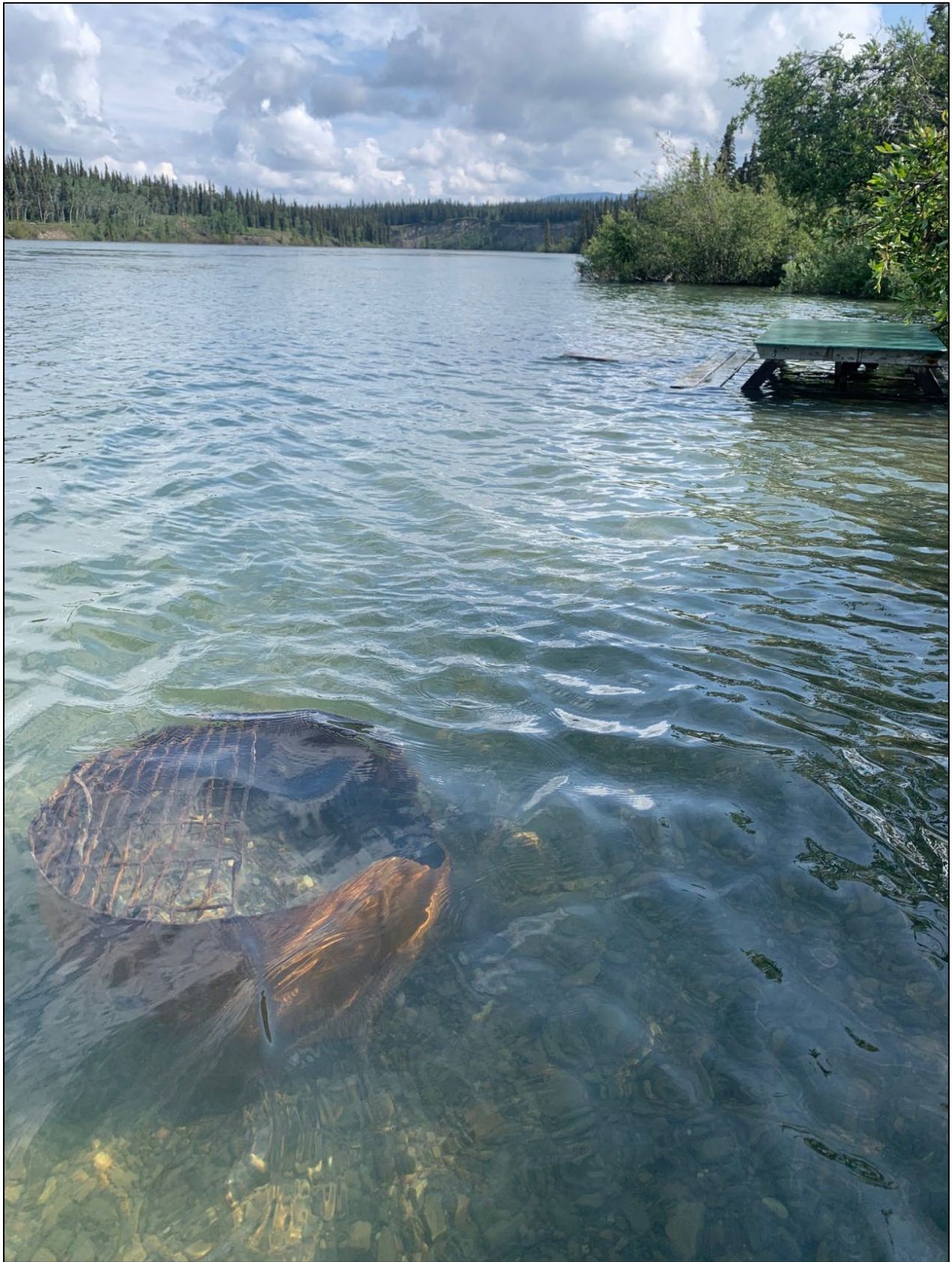
Abandoned cabin at Hootalinqua



Replacing the roof on an historic building in 2021.



Wildfire in 2021, near Hootalinqua (Photo: D. Coté, C2 Management).



Flooding at Lower Laberge Camp at the start of Thirty Mile in 2022. (Photo: D. Coté, C2 Management)



Flooding at Hootalinqua Camp in 2022. (Photo: D. Coté, C2 Management)

Section 2: Changes and Threats to Natural, Cultural and Recreational Values since 2012

NATURAL, CULTURAL OR RECREATIONAL VALUE	DESCRIPTION OF CHANGE IN VALUE (e.g. Magnitude, Positive or Negative Change, Immediate or Long-term)	REASON FOR CHANGE (e.g. Threat, Stressor, Management Action)	ACTIONS TAKEN IN RESPONSE
Hydrology	- Flooding affected visitation and the ability of Yukon Parks staff and contractors to perform their maintenance and servicing of the campsites. - Flooding also left some campsites unusable, damaged infrastructure and covered sites with silt and debris. Heavy snowfall also caused the collapse of an historic drying shelter at Lower Laberge on Ta'an Kwäch'än Settlement Land - If these pressures persist as we expect, then the historic and recreation values along Thirty Mile will remain vulnerable to these threats.	Climate Change	Monitoring of the sites natural and cultural areas and structures to record and respond to changes as they arise.
Campsite Use	- Sites have experienced a significant reduction in natural fuels, due to scavenging by campers. - The clean public outhouses within Thirty Mile contrasted with the unsanitary conditions of campsites downstream of Thirty Mile, due to	Heavy and steady use of the campsites throughout the summer months. As international travel picks up, river traffic will likely increase significantly. Yukon Parks does not track visitation, however.	- Monitoring river users and campground maintenance activities. - Maintenance of the campsites and upgrades to the facilities are a priority for Yukon

	recreational paddling groups. After leaving Thirty Mile, the campsites to Dawson City have no facilities at all, so human waste, toilet paper and garbage are common sights for paddlers. Yukon Parks is not responsible for any other sections of the Yukon River, but the public outcry is an indication of the environmental pressures facing the Yukon River from recreation use.	• There is a public desire to find a solution to recreational impacts along the Yukon River from Whitehorse to Dawson City. Impacts are particularly severe beyond the Thirty Mile portion of the Yukon River, where Yukon Parks has no management authority. However, with so many jurisdictions (Yukon Government, multiple First Nations, private lands, industrial access to shoreline, and government lands) along the extent of the Yukon River, it is a very complicated matter. Any resolution will require a coordination of jurisdictions, perhaps through regional land use planning processes, or perhaps a dedicated Yukon River management plan.	Parks. The provision of firewood and the removal of human waste remain the most significant challenge for Yukon Parks.
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Section 3: Integrity Guidelines since Designation

NATURAL, CULTURAL OR RECREATIONAL INTEGRITY VALUE	CHANGE IN INTEGRITY VALUE (Brief Description)	THREAT OR STRESSOR (Current, Immediate, Long-term)	ACTION(S) TAKEN TO ADDRESS THREAT	THREAT STILL PRESENT?
Hydrology	Extremes in seasonal variation – both flooding and low-water.	Thirty Mile has experienced severe flooding of recreational campsites, historic and cultural values over the past five years. Flooding has caused destruction of recreational campsites and resulted in closures when it was impossible to access the sites. Low-water events have made the river unnavigable for maintenance staff to reach the campsites by motorboat. The flooding events have also threatened Indigenous camps and historic buildings.	Very little action can mitigate the impacts of these hydrological fluctuations. Adaption is required in order to maintain the recreational values. Sites have been rehabilitated. Maintenance staff access the sites as soon as feasible and stock the sites with firewood and clean up debris.	As is the case with climate change, the threat is still present, and the fluctuations in water levels will likely become more frequent and more extreme.
Recreation	Interruption in recreational use - flooding	During flooding, paddlers have not been able to camp at some of the designated campsites. The increased currents also make paddling more risky.	No actions taken.	The threat will remain present as long as flooding episodes remain a risk. With climate change, the threat will likely increase.

	Interruption of recreation use – wildfires	In the summer of 2022, wildfires approached the Hootalinqua site within a few hundred metres of the historic site that includes campsites and historic features.	Wildland Fire Services monitored the fire and installed sprinklers on historic structures during the fire of 2022.	The frequency and intensity of wildfires are expected to increase with further onset of climate change.
	Site maintenance	Due to heavy snow loads in 2021, many trees were damaged or uprooted, making some campsites impassable.	Regular maintenance by a contractor ensures that the sites remain safe and usable. Sites were cleared of deadfall.	With climate change, it is anticipated that there will be a greater frequency of higher snow accumulation in the Yukon, which will also create heavier snow loads on the trees.

Section 4: Management Plan Recommendations and Current Status

The Thirty Mile Management Plan (1990) identifies a series of non-binding tasks under the following themes: natural heritage resources, cultural heritage resources, and heritage buildings and related structures.

Many of the tasks identified in the plan relate to restrictions of land use as a means of protecting the values along the river corridor. However, most of the tasks do not fall within the jurisdiction of Yukon Parks (e.g. “establish a 100 metre neutral area along both river banks where no resource uses other than traditional cultural pursuits (such as hunting and trapping) will be permitted”). In most cases where these tasks are still a priority, they will need to be dealt with through regional land use planning or environmental assessment processes rather than through heritage river management.

Additional tasks in the plan focus on the restoration and preservation of historic structures, which are the responsibility of the Department of Tourism & Culture’s Heritage Branch. Over the past ten years, Heritage Branch has done extensive work to restore several of the buildings at Lower Laberge and Hootalinqua, as highlighted above.

Section 5: Summary of Benefits and Costs since Designation

Type of Benefit	Description
Cultural Benefits	
Improved appreciation of river, watershed, Indigenous or other history of river use	The Department of Tourism & Culture continue to upgrade the cultural features along the river – especially the historic structures, with accompanying interpretive signage. This will inevitably increase the awareness and appreciation of the historic use of the area. Upgrades to the website content have also provided benefits to public appreciation of the area.
Increased identification and protection of culturally significant sites	As mentioned above, the upgrades to the cultural and historic features – namely the telegraph offices at Lower Laberge and Hootalinqua – increase the visitors' appreciation of the historic and cultural values on the heritage river.
Recreational Benefits	
Improved recreational experience	Upgrades to the campsite facilities, regular supply of firewood, and consistent maintenance of the sites have greatly improved the recreational experience for paddlers.
Community Engagement and Collaboration	
Increased dialogue with Indigenous community	Yukon Parks has worked closely with Ta'an Kwäch'än Council to ensure that their staff and citizens play a role in the management of the camping facilities, within the capacity of the community.
Increased Indigenous participation in river management discussions and river activities.	Yukon Parks and Ta'an Kwäch'än maintained regular contact to explore potential contracting and assistance with Backcountry Recreation Impact Monitoring surveys of the campsites. Further collaboration on projects is desirable.
Monetary Benefits	During the years when Ta'an Kwäch'än Council had the capacity, Yukon Parks contracted them to provide regular maintenance of the campsites during the summer months. This included: supply of firewood, stocking and cleaning outhouses, and cleaning campsites as needed.

Detrimental Effects	Description
None.	

Section 6: Overall Assessment

The designation as a Canadian Heritage River should

- ☒ remain in place
- ☐ be reviewed by the board due to the following concerns: