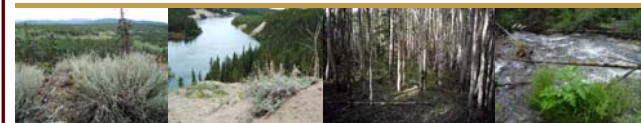
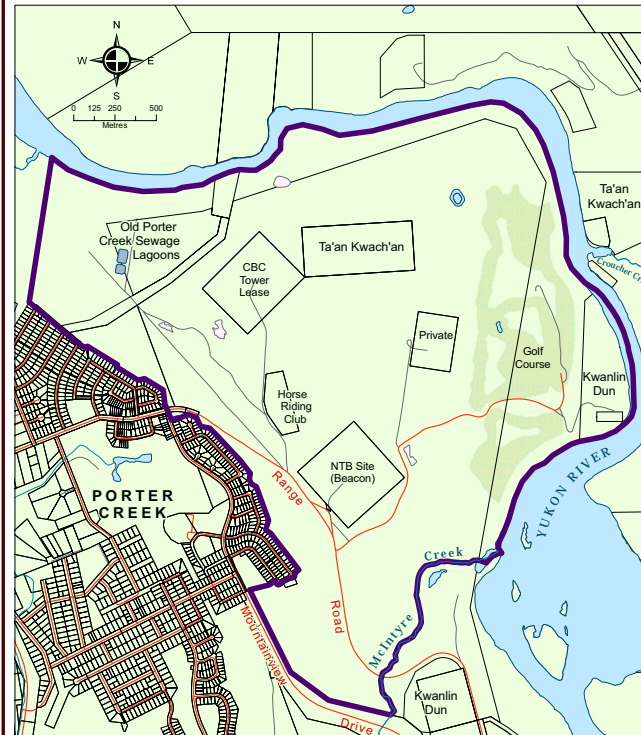


# Environmental Inventory Porter Creek Bench

Gartner Lee Ltd (GLL), was retained by the City of Whitehorse to conduct an inventory of the special places and the environment of the Porter Creek Bench. We have collected existing data from a wide variety of sources and are still in information gathering process. The information presented below captures the key elements of the physical environment on the Porter Creek Bench that we have identified to date. A more detailed inventory is available in the Background Report.

Special Places can only be identified through interaction with people who use the area, therefore we encourage you to take this opportunity to identify the areas that are important to you. You can deliver your opinions in person, to a GLL representative, through the interactive digital map displayed nearby or by writing down your input on one of the maps provided. We sincerely look forward to including your input.



- ECOSYSTEMS**
- 1 & 2 Slopes, south-facing steep slopes and warm aspects in Glacial Lacustrine parent materials form a habitat for nesting swallows. The exposed soil is too actively eroded by wind for plants to occupy these sites. Some less steep slopes are mainly occupied by Grass/Sage vegetation community.
  - 3 Slopes, north-facing moderate to steep slopes, cool aspect on colluvial slopes are mainly occupied by Spruce/Feathermoss vegetation communities. In this area most trees are around 120 years old or 80 years old since the last fires.
  - 4 Wetlands, the few wetlands in the area are sedge meadows or grass meadows. The sedge meadows may be underlain by permafrost where hummocky ground exists.
  - 5 "Potholes" were formed by ice stagnation and decay processes. Potholes are formed when blocks of ice become detached from the main ice sheet and melt in place forming depressions or "Kettle Holes". There are 4 small potholes present in the Porter Creek bench area. Some dry out completely over the summer whereas others have water year-round.
  - 6 Sand overlying clay throughout most of the Bench. Aspen, Bearberry and Pine / Bearberry forests make up most of the ground cover.
  - 7 Cracker, Fluvial soil has poor to imperfect drainage with salt and calcareous properties. Here this soil type is associated with grass meadow and willow/spruce vegetation communities.
  - 8 Large sand dune, highly erodible material covered by pine - bearberry forest.



- WILDLIFE**
- 1 McIntyre Creek, from its headwaters to mouth is the longest, continuous wildlife corridor in the City of Whitehorse. It's headwaters provide excellent habitat for waterfowl and other wildlife. From Mountainview Drive to the Yukon River, the stream is flanked on both sides by steep clay cliffs, which provide a natural protective area for this important watershed.
  - 2 Eagle Bay earns its name from the bald eagles who use the clay cliffs as a home. In the fall the eagles, and other wildlife feast on the spawned out salmon carcasses found at the mouth of the creek and on the sand and gravel bars in the Yukon River.
  - 3 Birds that inhabit the Lower McIntyre Creek valley include: Tundra and Trumpeter Swans, geese and Eurasian Wigeon (occasionally), Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk, Gyrfalcon, Northern Shrike, Townsend's Solitaire, Mountain Bluebird, Herring Gulls, Mew Gulls, and Glaucous or Glaucous-Winged Gulls. The older seral stage forests on the north end of the Lower Bench, and the aspen forest, are the most likely areas for species such as goshawk, owls, marten, warblers.
  - 4 Ungulates have been observed in the McIntyre Creek Valley area although typically on the East side of the Yukon River. The lower aspen stand on the Bench is likely also high value winter range for ungulates.

- WATER**
- 1 Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*) have been documented to spawn throughout McIntyre Creek. McIntyre Creek is also an important habitat for juvenile Chinook salmon.
  - 2 The Yukon River provides salmonids and other fish a pathway to access vital habitats in adjoining tributaries. Chinook salmon have also been observed to spawn along the shoreline of the Yukon River near the proposed Porter Creek Bench.
  - 3 The Lower Bench is very dry. The only water bodies are McIntyre Creek, a pot-hole pond on the 16th hole of the golf course and three ephemeral pot-hole ponds that dry up over the summer months.
  - 4 Some drainage occurs in the ravine at the northwest end of the bench through a narrow ravine. There is evidence that water flows at surface at least periodically (during heavy rainfall, snowmelt, etc.). The area has wet soil conditions and likely shallow groundwater. This wet area may be a zone of groundwater discharge.
  - 5 Very little is known about the groundwater on the Porter Creek Bench, as there is record of only 3 wells drilled on the Bench. However, according to surficial geology data the Porter Creek Bench may have groundwater heat source potential.

- CLIMATE**
- 1 Climate in the Whitehorse region is driven by warm air coming down off the coastal St. Elias Mountains and cold Arctic air coming in from the North. Like many mountainous regions, the topography of the area has a major impact on wind speed and direction.
  - 2 The shape of the Yukon River valley and the surrounding topography shape the wind patterns in the city and on the Porter Creek Bench. The wind is funneled down the valley by Grey Mountain, which causes increased wind speeds at the airport. As Grey Mountain drops away the topography opens up and the wind speed slows as it moves down the river and over the Porter Creek Bench.
  - 3 The normal total annual precipitation in Whitehorse is 267 mm. 60:40 rain:snow. The summer months of June, July, August and September have the highest precipitation and the months of February, March and April have the lowest.
  - 4 Prevailing winds at the airport and on the Lower Bench are from the South and South East. Wind speed remains relatively constant over the year with a slight drop in the summer months. Wind speed on the Porter Creek Bench is very slow, with many days of "calm" or "light air" conditions throughout the year.



Example of erosion



View looking down McIntyre Creek towards Yukon River

