
Kluane National Park and Reserve Economic Impact Study

Background Paper No. 6

COMMUNITY INTERVIEWS

Luigi Zanasi Economist
The Outspan Group Inc.
Research Northwest
Inukshuk Planning & Development

March 4, 2005

Kluane National Park and Reserve Economic Impact Study

**Background Paper #6
Community Interviews**

Table of Contents

<i>Table of Contents</i>	<i>i</i>
<i>1 Introduction</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>2 Methodology</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>3 Business interviews</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>4 Individual interviews</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>5 Summary</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>APPENDIX A: Business interview instrument</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>APPENDIX B: Individual interview instrument</i>	<i>13</i>

Kluane National Park and Reserve Economic Impact Study

***Background Paper #6
Community Interviews***

1 Introduction

This background paper is the last of six prepared for the Kluane Economic Impact Study. In addition, a summary report was prepared outlining the findings of the six background papers. The six background papers are:

1. Baseline Economic Profile
2. Economic Impact Analysis
3. Economic History of the Kluane Region
4. Community Economic Comparison Analysis
5. Economic Benefits Framework
6. Community Interviews (this one)

All papers are available in PDF format at <http://www.yukonomics.ca/reports/kluane/>

2 Methodology

With the assistance of some members of the Steering Committee, we drew up a list of 54 potential interviewees in the Kluane region. The initial list included elders, business people and individuals who had lived in the region for a long period and the local Steering Committee members felt that interviewing all of the people would provide us with a wide range of perspectives on KNPR and its impacts on the community. A number of the potential interviewees were First Nations elders, but Champagne-Aishihik representatives indicated that the information we sought was already available and directed us that elder interviews would not be appropriate. Our interviewer ended up trying to contact 41 individuals. Eight refused the interview and 11 could not be reached for an appointment. Considerable effort was expended in attempting to contact people and in persuading people to sit down and be interviewed.

To ensure confidentiality, only the interviewer knew who was contacted and who was interviewed. No identifying details about individuals were provided to the rest of the study team.

We completed a total of 22 interviews with business owners and other residents of the Kluane region for this project. Of the 22 interviewed, 12 were local business owners. Many of those interviewed have lived and worked in the region for decades. Nineteen of the interviews were in Haines Junction and three in the Burwash Landing/Destruction Bay area.

The interview instruments used — one for business owners and one for individuals — can be found in the appendices of this paper. Initially we hoped that some useable quantitative data could be gathered from the business interviews but the owners' understandable reluctance to share financial information — and the lack of a sufficiently representative sample — has resulted in no useable hard numbers. This paper therefore, focuses on the qualitative responses for both the business and individual interviews.

Given the small number of respondents as well as the low response rates, this survey cannot be claimed to be representative of the entire community. A representative survey, like the one undertaken by Leverton, would likely not have as one-sided a set of responses. Nevertheless, the surveys did provide some valuable insights and raised a number of questions for this study to answer.

The interviews, and the process of asking people to be interviewed, have resulted in us drawing the following broad lessons:

1. Some people in the Kluane region think that they have expressed their views on the park many times in many forums but that their views have largely been ignored. This has made them reluctant to spend yet more time being interviewed or consulted.
2. The business owners who did do interviews had an almost uniformly negative overall view of Kluane National Park and Reserve and its impact on the communities of Haines Junction, Destruction Bay and Burwash Landing. For many, that negative view is strongly held and was forcibly expressed.
3. The individual interviewees generally held more positive views of KNPR than the business owners, but a small majority still expressed a high level of dissatisfaction overall.
4. It is clear from the interviews that much of the overall negative view stems from disagreements over access into the park and the types of activities that are permitted within park boundaries.
5. Given that the interviewees were assured of anonymity, we are assuming that they felt less constrained in expressing their views. That is, there was little or no need to acknowledge others who might have different views as is usual in a more public forum.

3 Business interviews

A total of 12 business owner/operators were interviewed. The businesses represented included: air tours and charters (both fixed wing and helicopter), gas station, housing construction, general contracting, restaurants, wilderness tours (eco-tourism), guided fishing, placer mining, artist, and a highway lodge. The businesses collectively represent approximately 13 full-time year-round jobs, 2 part-time year-round jobs, 19 full-time seasonal positions, and another 6 part-time seasonal jobs.

How has the park shaped your business?

About a quarter of the owners replied that their businesses benefited from the establishment of the park and the first few years of its operation when there was considerable capital investment in Haines Junction. However, all stressed that the positive effect is now a thing of the past and that KNPR no longer affects their business much.

Another quarter of the interviewees replied that the park has had no role whatsoever in shaping their business.

The majority of business owners interviewed stated that Kluane National Park and Reserve has been a negative influence on their business. Lack of access by both land and air is the dominant theme with overregulation of activities also being a strong concern.

How do you feel that KNPR has shaped the formation/growth of Haines Junction?

The large majority of business owners viewed the establishment of the park as positively affecting Haines Junction by bringing in a number of families when KNPR was first staffed. The capital investment in housing and park infrastructure such as the visitor centre were also viewed as a positive for the community.

There was also the explicit acknowledgement by some that the existence of Kluane National Park and Reserve as a park — with the resulting built-in advertising and name recognition — does play a role in attracting tourists to the Kluane region.

However, there was near unanimity that the positive effects of KNPR are outweighed by the negative impacts of restricted access to the land and other restrictions and regulations such as the lack of mosquito control, which reduces tourism. The loss of mineral potential and the business generated by mineral exploration was also mentioned.

Would your business exist without the park? If so, would it be bigger or smaller?

All of the business owners stated that their business would exist whether Kluane National Park and Reserve had been established or not.

Only one of the respondents stated that without KNPR — and hence the presence of park employees in Kluane — his business would likely be smaller.

About a quarter of the owners felt that their business would be largely unchanged. The presence or absence of the Park with its employees, etc., is irrelevant to the business.

A large majority of those interviewed stated that their business would likely be larger if KNPR did not exist. Business would be better because access to the area would be easier and hence opportunities to develop tourism businesses such as fly-in hiking would increase. Some motorized access (e.g. with four wheelers) and the possibility of developing cabins and camps in the area would also increase opportunities. Finally, if mining and mineral exploration were permitted, business would be better.

What opportunities do you see with relation to the park?

Eleven of the 12 business owners interviewed had a blunt response to this question: there are no business opportunities under the current rules for access and use.

Only one interviewee offered some potential opportunities, but all of them require a wholesale change in the current rules for access and use. The opportunities include: more snow machine access, regulated roads for viewing tours, guided ATV tours, a golf course, and ski hills.

Over the last 25 years, HJ has grown considerably more and faster than any other rural community in the YT. To what do you attribute this?

Although almost all of the business owners mentioned the growth of government as being a prime driver of Haines Junction's growth; few mentioned any role played by Kluane National Park and Reserve, either as an employer or as a tourist attraction. Indeed, some were adamant that KNPR had nothing to do with the growth.

Other reasons offered for the growth of the community included:

- increased highway traffic and highway tourism
- proximity to Whitehorse
- the Haines Junction airport
- the increasing number of retirees in Haines Junction
- the increasing investment in local businesses by Europeans
- decentralization of YTG jobs
- the growth of Champagne and Aishihik First Nations' activity following the settlement of land claims and
- the general attractiveness of the community and its surroundings.

On the other hand, Burwash and D-Bay have remained relatively stagnant economically. Can you provide some insight as to why?

Most of the responses to this question were variations on the theme of the smaller communities simply having fewer (or no) economic opportunities. Haines Junction has become the regional centre with more jobs, more services and more opportunities.

Another factor mentioned is the improvement of the north Alaska Highway decreasing the need for tourists to stop, further reducing the economic potential of Burwash Landing and Destruction Bay.

Do you consider the establishment of KNPR on the whole to have had a positive or negative effect on you/your business/the community?

Personal impacts:

None of those responding saw the establishment of the park as having a positive effect on their lives as individuals. Two stated that KNPR had no effect one way or the other.

The large majority view the establishment of Kluane National Park and Reserve as having had an overall negative impact on their lives as individuals. The predominant reason is the restrictions placed on access and use — particularly the restrictions on motorized access using ATVs. The general response was that local people have lost many recreational opportunities of all kinds — fishing, hunting, 4X4ing, horseback riding, etc.

Business impacts:

About a quarter of the respondents stated that the establishment of KNPR had a positive effect on their business but stressed that effect lasted only a few years. Once established, Kluane National Park and Reserve had no lasting effects.

Another quarter of business owners saw no impact, positive or negative, of the park on their business.

Approximately half of the respondents saw the establishment of KNPR as having a negative impact overall on their business. Limitations on access and overregulation were repeatedly cited as crimping the development of the business.

Community impacts:

The overwhelming majority of responses saw the overall impact of KNPR on the community of Haines Junction as negative. A common thread was the view that the creation of the park — and the years of argument over the management of it — has, and continues to divide the community into camps that either support or oppose the park..

Only one respondent saw an overall benefit to the community through KNPR's protection of wildlife but added that the wildlife was protected by the Game Reserve anyway, and the park was unnecessary.

What keeps you in the region? Have you considered moving or closing your business?

Almost all the respondents to the question of what keeps them in the Kluane region answered with variations on how attractive the region is, how the community is generally solid and a good place to raise kids, and that Kluane is where they belong.

Only two people stated that they have considered moving to seek out better employment opportunities and because of the effort needed to lobby for more access to the park.

One business owner is closing their business this year because licensing and insurance fees are too high to make it worthwhile continuing.

Any other comments?

“Without the park Kluane businesses could do better by advertising the area themselves and having access to it.”

“We are doomed if this becomes a retirement town, elders tend to be against growth and change.”

“It's a beautiful park it's just a shame that it's under a glass dome.”

“It's a pretty park but ice and snow don't pay the bills.”

“Humans are treated like an intruder; we have a place here too.”

“Most youth leave after graduating, no opportunities, any growth will be the Europeans coming to retire, anyone that comes with dollars and who are not a burden on society is a good thing.”

“This will never become another Banff or Jasper, it's too hard to get here and too expensive.”

“We have enough knowledgeable people here to guide and interpret for the park. Why hire outsiders?”

“Hire local people, you don't need a university degree to do these KNP summer jobs. KNP shouldn't be in business with bus tours offering nature walks, etc.”

“People that move here don't want expansion. Business owners want tourism, but not for people to stay.”

“Tourism charters are on a down slide. Other than rafting, there are no charters. The regulations are

getting tighter and making it harder to operate.”

“The government claims to support small businesses but they charge too much to operate, the insurance fees are too high. The only fishing charters that survive are sub-contractors, so that we can run under our contractors insurance.”

“Park only seems to be for the park employees. It’s a private playground.”

“Another sad thing is that Kluane Park employees don’t feel comfortable being a part of the community because they consistently get attacked with questions that they can not answer regarding the Kluane Park regulations. A lot of the admin., and regulations came from people who don’t even live here.”

“If I was to count on the Park [for business] I would have starved years ago.”

4 Individual interviews

A total of 10 residents who were not business owners were interviewed for this project.

What do you see as the positive aspects from the establishment of the park?

The majority of those interviewed saw the environmental protection — and particularly wildlife protection — provided by KNPR as a benefit.

On the economic front the strong majority see very little or no economic benefit coming from the establishment of Kluane National Park and Reserve. Some saw a benefit from the jobs that the park brought to the region, relatively well-paying, stable jobs that allow people to raise families. The summer positions that are usually filled by locals were mentioned as a positive economic aspect by one interviewee.

A number of respondents mentioned positive aspects for the community. These included community involvement by Parks staff and their spouses and children, and strong support for the school.

What do you see as the negative aspects from the establishment of the park?

Interviewees tended to see negative aspects of Kluane National Park and Reserve primarily in economic and community terms. Only one respondent voiced the concern that the protection of wildlife from hunting would lead to imbalances in wildlife populations and create environmental problems. And one responded that there were no negative aspects to the park.

The majority saw a general lack of economic opportunity due to access restrictions and other regulations as the largest negative of KNPR. Another common economic concern was the perception that too much work and too many contracts go to people who do not live in the region.

The lack of access was also raised by the majority as a social negative of Kluane National Park and Reserve. The loss of cultural and recreation opportunities was seen as a downside to the creation of the park. Another social negative mentioned is that KNPR — and the conflict over management issues — has created strong divisions in the community. Finally, the requirement for locals to both pay fees and report their activities, etc. was considered to be an insult by one respondent.

What opportunities do you see with relation to the park?

Specific opportunities mentioned include:

- increased eco-tourism,
- opportunities to increase sales of arts and crafts,
- native enhanced tourism with horse back and walking tours, and
- production of glacier water.

But the majority of interviewees stated that there were few, if any, economic opportunities given the current rules governing access to Kluane National Park and Reserve.

Over the last 25 years, Haines Junction has grown considerably more and faster than any other rural community in the YT. To what do you attribute this?

Reasons mentioned for the growth of Haines Junction include:

- government employment is available
- an appealing location/beautiful area
- near Whitehorse
- the highway junction

- attractive to Europeans who invest in businesses or retire
- generally attractive for retired people
- highway construction employment
- good quality school from K to 12, and
- recreational facilities.

The presence of Kluane National Park and Reserve was not specifically mentioned by anyone.

On the other hand, Burwash Landing and Destruction Bay have remained relatively stagnant economically. Can you provide some insight as to why?

Most of the responses to this question were variations on the theme of the smaller communities simply having fewer (or no) economic opportunities. The extra distance to Whitehorse was mentioned, as was the pull out of some of the already few government jobs in the two smaller communities. Another factor mentioned is that there is no land available for purchase and therefore reduced entrepreneurial opportunities.

Has the existence of the park curtailed your utilization of the area?

Interviewees appear to be evenly divided between those whose use of the area has been curtailed by Kluane National Park and Reserve and those whose use has not.

The lack of hunting opportunities was mentioned by two respondents as a factor curtailing their use of the area while others mentioned the lack of motorized access in both winter and summer. One interviewee stated that all the regulations made them reluctant to go into the park at all for fear of inadvertently breaking the law.

Has the formation of the park/ game sanctuary affected your lifestyle or way of making a living?

Like the related area utilization question above, interviewees appeared to be fairly evenly divided in their responses.

While the majority stated that KNPR and the game sanctuary had not unduly affected their lifestyle or means of making a living (e.g. through loss of trapping areas or placer creeks), many mentioned that they knew others who were affected.

Those who have felt effects specified that they were largely due to the restrictions on access and land use that changed their land use patterns. There was also one respondent who mentioned that generations of First Nation people have been adversely affected by the restrictions on hunting and trapping in the sanctuary and the park.

Do you see the park as having a positive or negative effect on the growth of Haines Junction?

There were a wide range of responses to this question with people bringing up both positive and negative effects while others saw the overall effect as neutral.

Overall, however, a small majority of the individual interviewees viewed Kluane National Park and Reserve as having a negative effect overall on the local community.

Any other comments?

“It’s a good thing to have this area as a retirement area.”

“The formation of Kluane National Park has moderated the boom + bust business like logging.”

“Kluane National Park [administration] needs to have more faith in the local people.”

“I don’t even go into the park, I’m too worried about breaking the law.”

“I would support people utilizing existing roads and trails, but not making more.”

“Parks getting into bed with Princess tours is wrong. The government has no business being in business.”

“There should be more First Nation input.”

“I like that we have a park in our area, but I don’t like the limited access.”

“Kluane National Park has turned locals into criminals.”

5 Summary

We conducted a total of 22 interviews with business owners and other residents of the Kluane region for this project. Of the 22 interviewed, 12 were local business owners. Many of those interviewed have lived and worked in the region for decades.

Key Points:

- The majority of interviewees pointed out that they have consistently expressed their concerns about the lack of economic benefit derived from park establishment over the years but felt that their views have been ignored.
- The business owners who were interviewed had an almost uniformly negative overall view of the park and its impact on regional communities. For many, that negative view is strongly held and was forcibly expressed.
- The individual interviewees generally held more positive views of KNPR than the business owners, but a small majority still expressed a high level of dissatisfaction overall.
- Much of the overall negative view seems to stem from disagreements over how access to the park is managed and the local inability to capitalize on the presence of the park because of restrictions on the type and level of use permitted.
- An underlying theme is that the economic expectations of a majority of those interviewed have not been met. For some it appears that economic hopes and expectations have been raised and then dashed over the past decades as management and access rules have been established.

APPENDIX A: Business interview instrument

1. What is the nature of your business?
2. How long have you been in business?
3. # of workers/employees p-t or f-t?
4. Year round or seasonal?
5. Your best year in sales (why)
6. Who's your target market?
7. How has the Park shaped your business?
8. How do you feel that the Park has shaped the formation/growth of Haines Junction?
9. Would your business exist without the park? If so, bigger or smaller?
10. What opportunities do you see with the relation to the park?
11. Over the last 25 years, Haines Junction has grown considerably more and faster than any other rural community in the YT. To what do you attribute this?
12. On the other hand, Burwash Landing and Destruction Bay have remained relatively stagnant economically. Can you provide some insight as to why?
13. Do you consider the establishment of the Park on the whole to have a positive or negative effect on:
 - a. You personally?
 - b. Your business?
 - c. The community?
14. a) What keeps you here?
 - b) Have you considered moving?
 - c) Closing down your business?

APPENDIX B: Individual interview instrument

1. What do you see as the positive aspects from the establishment of the park?
 - a) Environmentally-
 - b) Economically-
 - c) Socially-
2. What do you see as the negative aspects from the establishment of the park?
 - a) Environmentally-
 - b) Economically-
 - c) Socially-
3. What opportunities do you see with relation to the park?
4. Over the last 25 years, Haines Junction has grown considerably more and faster than any other community in the YT. To what do you attribute this?
5. On the other hand, Burwash Landing and Destruction Bay have remained relatively stagnant economically. Can you provide some insight as to why?
6. Has the existence of the Park curtailed your utilization of the area?
7. Has the formation of the Park/ game sanctuary affected you?
 - a) Lifestyle-
 - b) Cash economy (trapping mining)-
8. Do you see the Park as having a positive or negative effect on the growth of Haines Junction?
 - a) Personally-
 - b) Business-