

Why the Y2Y?

This activity begins by teaching students about the Y2Y concept, then has them represent various sectors of society in a role play that helps them better understand the complexities of the situation and the challenges that await the proponents of the Y2Y vision. Do we really need the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative? Is the network of existing protected areas really as inadequate as some say? It depends on who you talk to...

Materials

Although the prior activities in this booklet will help, several concepts are presented here that may be new to both you and your students. The following resources are available to assist you:

- a copy of the Y2Y map and the one page summary below entitled About the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative
- visit www.y2y.net for more information and resources

Part I: Understanding the Y2Y

1. The first step is to have students clearly understand what is being proposed: before they can consider *Why the Y2Y?* they need to be clear on “What is the Y2Y?”



Project the map entitled 'Yellowstone to Yukon' on the board. Ask the students:

- **Where is Banff National Park on this map?**
The protected areas are the darkest shade on this map; Banff itself is not marked, but it is part of the Four Mountain Park block directly west of Canmore and Calgary.
- **How many countries are covered by the proposed Y2Y area? How many provinces? States?**
Stretching over both the U.S. and Canada, the Y2Y covers five states, two provinces, and two territories. It is approximately 3000 km in length from north to south.
- **What does the lightest area represent?**
This area is NOT the boundary of a "Y2Y Park", or any such thing. Rather, it represents the edges of the area that conservationists feel should be reviewed when discussing the creation of a system that could preserve the biodiversity of this huge area.

The worksheet "Understanding the Y2Y" and the following discussion questions can be used to help students to better understand this concept. You may wish to assign the worksheet before proceeding with these discussion questions.

- **Who is promoting the Y2Y concept? Is it governments? Industries?**
At the time of writing (Spring 1999), the major support for the Y2Y concept comes from grassroots environmental groups and conservation biologists, with funding from U.S. and Canadian Foundations. Governments and industries are just starting to become informed about this idea.
- **What exactly does the Y2Y network wish to have happen within this area?**
The following answer to this question is taken straight from the Y2Y brochure text. Ensure that students understand the key concepts (bolded below) before proceeding:

*Our mission, then, is to build and maintain a life-sustaining system of **core protected reserves** and connecting **wildlife movement corridors**, both of which will be further insulated from the impacts of industrial development by **transition zones**. Existing national, state and provincial parks and wilderness areas will anchor the system, while the creation of new protected areas and the **conservation** and **restoration** of critical segments of ecosystems will provide the cores, corridors and transition zones needed to complete it.*

Ask the students:

- **Show on the map where you think wildlife might move to travel between adjacent protected areas.**
Generally speaking, animals travel north and south through mountain valleys and the Eastern Slopes, following the spine of the Rockies.
- **Who owns the protected areas within the Y2Y?**
All of the protected areas shown on this map are under the jurisdiction of provincial or national governments, and are managed to allow some combination of public use and environmental protection.

About the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative

Why Yellowstone to Yukon?

In the early 1800s, the western cordillera of North America was a living tapestry of richly varied landscapes - of lush forests, wild rivers and untrammelled alpine meadows, inhabited throughout by astonishing numbers of animals. It was a delicate tapestry of intricate habitats and evolving relationships, created over tens of thousands of years by an interplay of forces that we are only now beginning to understand.

Today, in the blink of an eye, the tapestry is unraveling. Forests are cut, rivers dammed and diverted, and roads pushed up the last untouched valleys. Once flourishing populations of predators and prey are diminished, relegated to small, landlocked islands of habitat which cannot, over the long run, support such wide-ranging species. And yet, for all that, the Rocky Mountains of the northern United States and Canada still hold the hope - the best on Earth today - of a fully functional mountain system, complete with trout- and salmon-filled rivers, eagle-shadowed flyways, and terrestrial habitats to nurture healthy, viable populations of the grand wilderness icons: grizzly and black bears, gray wolves, cougar, lynx and wolverine.

Ours is a vision for the future of the wild heart of North America, the vision of a bright green thread stitching together 1800 contiguous miles of the Rocky, Columbia and Mackenzie Mountains, all the way from Yellowstone to Yukon. In place, the thread will be a vital remnant of the once-great North American tapestry, and a living testimony to a society wise enough to recognize the need for such a thread, altruistic enough to create it, and prudent enough to maintain it.

The Mission

The Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative (Y2Y) belongs to a new family of far-sighted, broad-based programs that seek to restore and maintain North America's natural heritage. Holding out the promise that human and wildlife populations can not only co-exist, but prosper in each other's presence, Y2Y draws on the insights, interpretations and lessons of the new discipline of conservation biology. If we are to maintain

prosperous, sustainable human communities and yet protect our natural heritage, we must protect habitat. More specifically, to protect the large carnivores - the survivability of which is directly linked to the health of the systems in which they live - we must protect much larger areas of habitat than anyone previously imagined. And to protect those larger areas of habitat, we must begin to think and to act at a scale much larger than we previously have. Local efforts must become regional; regional become national; and national become international.

Our mission, then, is to build and maintain a life-sustaining system of core protected reserves and connecting wildlife movement corridors, both of which will be further insulated from the impacts of industrial development by transition zones. Existing national, state and provincial parks and wilderness areas will anchor the system, while the creation of new protected areas and the conservation and restoration of critical segments of damaged systems will provide the cores, corridors and transition zones needed to complete it. Within that rewoven natural fabric, communities will find new prosperity as they become aware of, adjust to, and learn to benefit from, the population and economic changes that are creating "the New West."

The Program

Y2Y is a joint Canadian-US network of over 170 organizations, institutions, and foundations, plus individual scientists, conservationists, economists, and community advocates who have recognized both the necessity and the advantages of coordinating their efforts transnationally, on a spatial scale that mirrors the area they seek to conserve. Within Y2Y, science and advocacy have joined forces to develop a strategy to promote the Y2Y vision and to enable, energize, and inspire grassroots organizations by linking their efforts to support that vision. By creating new tools to support conservation and community work, and by adopting mechanisms that foster the exchange of ideas and the coordination of action among its cooperators, Y2Y opens new possibilities for ensuring the continued co-existence of North American wildlife, wilderness, and human endeavor.

Understanding the Y2Y

To be used with the one-page information sheet entitled "About the Yellowstone to Yukon Initiative"

What does Y2Y stand for?

According to this information sheet, why do we need the Y2Y?

The sheet says: "...the Rocky Mountains... still hold the hope, the best on earth today, of a fully functioning mountain ecosystem..." Why is this?

According to this sheet, why do we need to think on such a huge scale?

What groups are part of this network?

What groups are *not yet* part of this network?

What are the values of the person who wrote this sheet?

Conservation biologists

Your position regarding the Y2Y concept:

You're determined that it must take place. During your life's work you have seen countless areas lose species because they are too small or poorly managed. You are confident that this group will implement the Y2Y concept once they hear the results of all your scientific studies, which prove that Grizzlies are becoming inbred because their protected areas are too small.

What you believe in:

The importance of doing science well and using the results properly. The preservation of biodiversity at all levels. The need to do lots of research in the future to monitor the natural system.

Your initial feelings about this process:

You're uncomfortable with politics and hope that there won't be any arguments or unpleasantness.

Grassroots environmentalists

Your position regarding the Y2Y concept:

It's beautiful - and it should happen as soon as possible. The Y2Y gives a greater meaning to all the local campaigns you're involved in. You believe what scientists have told you about needing more protected areas to preserve biodiversity. The Y2Y will also preserve lots of wilderness for you and your "flower-sniffing" friends to enjoy.

What you believe in:

Preservation of biodiversity, saving wilderness for the generations to come, and the importance of living sustainably. You question the philosophy of wildlife management.

Your initial feelings about this process:

You are suspicious of the might of big business, and don't like the urban style of the facilitator. You feel that any compromises you make here will come back to haunt you, and you hope your savings will last long enough to keep you at the table.

Hunters and fishers

Your position regarding the Y2Y concept:

It seems like an OK idea, but you're uneasy because you've never really got along with environmentalists. You love fishing, hunting, driving, and camping and in the great outdoors, and the Y2Y will help ensure that there will always be things to hunt.

What you believe in:

The rights of the individual, the right to bear arms, fiscal conservatism, unfettered access to natural areas, predator control, and the conservation of prey species like elk, deer, and sheep.

Your initial feelings about this process:

You're a little impatient with long-winded meetings, and are liable to jump up and start shouting if things don't go your way.

Business leaders

Your position regarding the Y2Y concept:

Yikes. This looks like a land grab by the environmental movement, and you don't like it one bit. The Y2Y represents a threat to the bottom line of your company, and you owe it to your shareholders to maximize profits in your area.

What you believe in:

You are aware that we have a few environmental problems, but are confident that these can be solved by better management and technology. You believe in the capitalist system and think things are being run just fine.

Your initial feelings about this process:

You feel that you can tolerate this process so long as it doesn't create any major changes. You yearn to explain to everyone the importance of allowing your business to continue in the Y2Y area, as it represents your livelihood.

Government land managers

Your position regarding the Y2Y concept:

You feel that it is a good idea (but your boss doesn't). You also feel a little insulted by its premise that "the current network of protected areas is inadequate," since you work really hard at protecting your park's environment. You suspect that one of the environmentalists across the table is the person who started last summer's letter-writing campaign that gave you so much trouble.

What you believe in:

Conservation, protected areas, keeping a level head, the ability of a democratic state to reflect the will of the people, and the state's ability to enforce things.

Your initial feelings about this process:

Given political realities and the power of business and industry, you're pretty sure this idea is going nowhere, and that this process will end up being a waste of time. You're also afraid to speak out in favour of the Y2Y in case your political bosses make life difficult for you.

Ranchers

Your position regarding the Y2Y concept:

Seems like a lot of fuss over nothing. You've always been a good steward of the land you lease from the government, and you don't even shoot wolves unless they're eating your cattle. If the Y2Y means somebody coming around trying to tell you how to run your land, it can go jump in a lake.

What you believe in:

The rights of the individual, the ability to get ahead by working hard, the necessity of cattle ranching.

Your initial feelings about this process:

You've got a ranch to run and its calving season, and you only came as a favour to the government land manager. There's been a lot of talk over nothing and you're getting impatient.