

The Power to Protect: Yukon's oil and gas regulatory framework

The Power to Protect

Government uses laws and regulations to create a system of protections for the public, workers, the environment and the economy.

Legislation, regulations and policy work together as a systematic framework, or complementary compilation of rules that bound and guide society so that citizens, society, and the environment are protected.

All development of Yukon's oil and gas resources is subject to strong regulatory requirements and safeguards to protect human health, wildlife, water, land and air.

Yukon's regulatory and enforcement framework consists of legislation and regulations, supported by policies, practices, rules and standards that combine to guide decision-making and activities. They provide a robust framework to effectively manage the responsible development of oil and natural gas activities.

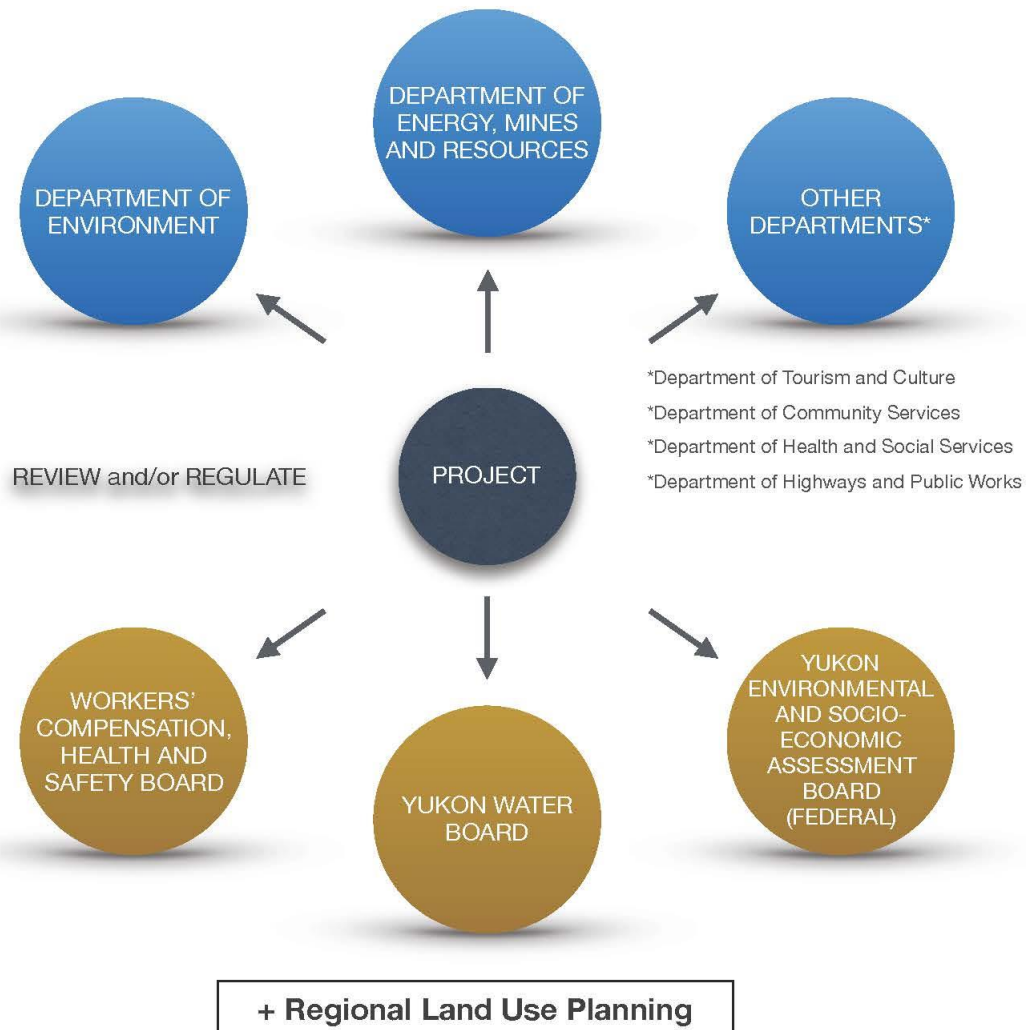
Yukon government's role

There are at least 14 pieces of legislation or Acts administered by various Yukon government departments which could apply to an oil and gas project. Each of these acts also has multiple regulations which apply to specific activities.

The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, the Department of Environment, Yukon Worker's Compensation Health and Safety Board, and Yukon Water Board are the four regulators who play a key role in the responsible licencing, inspection and enforcement activities for the development of oil and gas resources. See [Oil and Gas Act Regulation Framework](#). The overall goal is to develop the resource in a way which protects people, the environment and strengthens the economy.

Consultation with affected First Nations occurs throughout the land disposition and activity approval stages of the regulatory process.

Regulatory Framework for Oil and Gas Development Activities



Energy, Mines and Resources: The Oil and Gas Resources branch is the primary regulator of oil and gas activities in Yukon through the Chief Operations Officer. The Chief Operations Officer regulates oil and gas exploration and production activities in coordination with other regulators.

The main piece of legislation governing oil and gas development is the *Oil and Gas Act*. The key objectives of the Act are to ensure a safe, economic, and efficient development of oil and gas resources using the principles of sustainable development including the maintenance of essential ecological processes and preservation of biological diversity.

Regulations under the *Oil and Gas Act* include:

- [Oil and Gas Disposition Regulations](#)
- [Oil and Gas Geoscience and Exploration Regulations](#)
- [Oil and Gas Licence Administration Regulations](#)
- [Oil and Gas Drilling and Production Regulations](#)
- [Oil and Gas Royalty Regulations](#)
- [Gas Processing Plant Regulation](#)

Virtually all oil and gas activities require assessment under the [Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act](#) (YESAA). For more detail on YESAA, see Federal government's role in the section below. Once an assessment and recommendations are complete, regulators must prepare a Decision Document which states which recommendations are agreed to, which ones are varied and which ones are rejected. The regulators ensure the terms and conditions which are not rejected are met when they regulate the activity. The Decision Document(s) are used by all the regulators of an activity.

Most oil and gas exploration and production activities require a Land Use Permit from the [Land Management](#) Branch of Energy, Mines and Resources.

The Chief Operations Officer reviews applications for activities using the terms and conditions in the Decision Document, a suite of regulations, guidance notes, directions, policies and industry standards. Licences and approvals are issued for all the stages of these activities. The Chief Operations Officer is also responsible for monitoring the activities for compliance. Audits and inspections are the main tools used to ensure compliance, which in turn leads to public and worker safety, protection of the environment and proper conservation of the resources.

The Oil and Gas regulations cover a broad range of activities, including: geoscience exploration, oil or gas exploration and production wells, underground formation injection, drilling rigs, well suspension and abandonment, production, pump or compressor stations, disposal and storage stations, waste storage and processing, and the construction of pipelines (wholly within Yukon), gas processing plants and liquefied natural gas facilities.

[Environment](#): Yukon's [Environment Act](#) provides a legislative framework for the protection of the territory's land, water, and air.

The department regulates and enforces safe standards for air, water, and soil in minimizing and managing human influences on fish and wildlife.

Regulated activities include (but are not limited to) fuel storage and handling, solid waste management, hazardous waste management (see [Solid Waste Regulations](#) and [Special Waste Regulations](#)), air emissions and the assessment and clean-up of spills (see [Spills Regulations](#)).

Inspections of permitted activities are regularly carried out by Environmental Compliance Officers to ensure accordance with the applicable regulations and permit conditions.

The [Air Emissions Regulations](#) protect both human health and the environment from air pollutants, including:

- Controlling harmful air pollutants from industrial sources;
- Reducing air pollution resulting from open burning of materials;
- Controlling the use of high-sulphur fuels;
- Limiting smoke opacity air emission sources

[Yukon Water Board](#): Yukon Water Board is an independent body established under the *Waters Act*. Water withdrawal or waste disposal over certain thresholds may require a Water Licence from the [Yukon Water Board](#). This may include water used for well completion methods, water for the camp, construction of an ice (winter) road, or otherwise. The Water Board processes promote the balance of conservation, development and utilization of Yukon water for all Yukoners and Canadians.

Yukon government's Water Resources branch inspectors are responsible for ensuring the terms and conditions of the water licence are being met. (See [Water Inspection Section](#) for more detail.)

[Yukon Worker's Compensation Health and Safety Board](#): Responsible for the administration and enforcement of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and its regulations. It also promotes workplace safety through training, inspection and compliance and investigations.

Federal government's role

[Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board](#): YESAB is an independent arms-length body, responsible for the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act (YESAA)* and regulations. YESAA requires that before certain listed activities are undertaken, they are assessed or evaluated to ensure their environmental and socio-economic impacts are minimized or mitigated. Regulators use the YESAA evaluations and assessment recommendations to ensure projects are undertaken in accordance with principles that foster beneficial socio-economic change without undermining the ecological and social systems on which communities, their residents, and societies in general, depend.

[Department of Fisheries and Oceans](#): the management of inland fisheries has largely been delegated to the Yukon government; the federal *Fisheries Act* is still the primary legislation regulating the protection of fisheries resources and their supporting habitat. The federal department of Fisheries and Oceans is responsible for this Act.

National Energy Board: The federal government transferred responsibility for onshore oil and gas to Yukon government in 1998. The National Energy Board is the federal board which continues to have responsibility for oil and gas activities in the Beaufort Sea, and continues to regulate interprovincial and international pipelines using the [*Canada Oil and Gas Operations Act*](#).

Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada: The federal government manages disposition of rights and royalties for areas under federal responsibility using the [*Canada Petroleum Resources Act*](#).

How to contact the Oil and Gas Resources branch

General inquiries: 867.393.7042

Toll free (inside Yukon): 1.800.661.0408 ext. 7042

Email: oilandgasconversation@gov.yk.ca