

FOR RELEASE
April 7, 2011

YAA # 11-1

Yukon Avalanche Association secures large federal contribution agreement to initiate public avalanche forecasting next winter

WHITEHORSE – The Yukon Avalanche Association (YAA) has received a \$ 658,000 federal contribution agreement through the National Search and Rescue Secretariat's New Initiatives Fund (NIF) to develop and deliver public avalanche forecasts, bulletins and special avalanche warnings for the backcountry areas in southern Yukon and the White Pass.

"Avalanche risk management services are vital to a wide range of user groups, including tourism, recreation and industry," YAA President Kirstie Simpson said. "Developing and delivering public avalanche forecasts for the White Pass and issuing special avalanche warnings will be an important addition to traveler safety in Yukon and adjacent mountain travel areas."

The NIF contribution agreement of \$ 658,000, in combination with other in-kind contributions, brings the public avalanche forecasting and education budget for the two-year pilot project to \$885,000. This funding will allow the YAA to conduct avalanche terrain mapping of high-use backcountry areas, creating information-rich maps that will be easily available and accessible to the public and key user groups. The YAA will also develop and deliver a broad-based, multi-media awareness and targeted outreach and education campaign.

"The YAA initiative to develop avalanche forecasting programs for Southern Yukon and provide warnings for other areas will be a significant step forward for winter tourism growth," Wilderness Tourism Association of the Yukon Vice-president Blaine Walden said.

Public use of the mountainous regions of Yukon and the adjacent B.C. coastal mountains has increased significantly in the past 25 years. Technological advances for skiers, boarders and snowmobilers have allowed backcountry users to venture further into the backcountry than ever before, and have given users with limited backcountry knowledge access to places that previously only the very experienced could go.

The Canadian Avalanche Centre (CAC), based in Revelstoke, BC, is the primary partner for this initiative and will play a central role in technical data collection and developing regular, reliable public avalanche forecasts. "We are very pleased with this initiative and the amount of work the YAA has accomplished in such a short time," said Ian Tomm, Executive Director of the CAC. "There is a growing need for public avalanche information in this area, and we look forward to helping the YAA with that challenge."

For more information about the Yukon Avalanche Association visit www.yukonavalanche.ca

Contacts:

Kirstie Simpson, President YAA – 633-2199 or 334-7424
Hector Mackenzie Vice-President YAA - 668-2513
Christine Aikens Board Member YAA - 667-3816