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Baikal sedge in its sand dune habitat

Collaboration in Action

Working with First Nations in the Yukon to recover Baikal Sedge

Canada's Aboriginal Peoples have long known the value of ecosystems in balance. So when a rare plant called the Baikal Sedge was listed as Threatened under the federal *Species at Risk Act* in 2005, **Kluane National Park and Reserve** – where the largest sedge population in Canada grew – went to local First Nations to ask for help and advice. This was the start of the Baikal Sedge Recovery Team, a team that also included Environment Canada, Yukon Environment, and others who wanted to help support recovery of the sedge and its habitat.

This early and ongoing collaboration between federal and territorial government staff, First Nations staff, local botanists and others created an important foundation for future partnerships in support of the Baikal Sedge and other species at risk. It also serves as a model of how traditional knowledge and science can be incorporated into species at risk recovery efforts.

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Tenacious but at risk

The Baikal Sedge (*Carex sabulosa*) is a perennial plant that grows in the loose, sandy soil of windswept dune systems in the southwest Yukon. The sedge has long horizontal roots called rhizomes. New shoots can grow all along the length of these roots, so a single plant can cover a large area, making it hard to tell where one individual plant ends and another begins.

These tenacious plants, with their deep root systems, thrive where many other plants cannot. At the same time, Baikal Sedge plays a role in stabilizing the dunes and creating an environment where other species – both natural and exotic invasive – can take root, multiply and ultimately compete with them.

The Baikal Sedge is found in active sand dunes, habitats that were created when the glaciers retreated at the end of the last Ice Age. Smaller dunes, where natural processes like wind are absent, have been filling in across the territory since the ice retreated, leading to habitat loss and population declines for species like Baikal Sedge. Other threats to the species include the use of recreational vehicles on the dunes, although this is not a factor in the park.



