

Northern Pike and Walleye 2017 Management Framework Survey

Survey opens 22 August 2017 and closes 05 September 2017

About Alberta Fisheries Management



6 days ago

Fisheries Management in Alberta has evolved over the past 100 years from a focus on commercial fishing and feeding mink farms, liberal fishing regulations and resulting serious fishery declines, to managing fisheries sustainably for multiple stakeholders including indigenous peoples, recreational fishers and even some competitive fishing events in our busy province.

Alberta is blessed with a diversity of aquatic habitats, but not a great abundance. We have only 800-odd natural fish bearing lakes, with another 300 lakes stocked with trout. In comparison, other provinces, such as Saskatchewan have many tens of thousands of lakes. As a result, there are approximately 375 fishers per lake in Alberta, while Saskatchewan has 1.9 fishers, Manitoba has 1.7 and Ontario has 2.3 fishers per lake. Combined with these statistics it should be noted that most of our lakes are ice covered for at least 5 months of the year. Our short growing seasons really limit fisheries productivity. Compared to many other places, we also lack diversity of fishes. Our sport fish species are quite vulnerable to being caught as a result. With a rapidly growing human population and high demand on fisheries, and with such limited fisheries resources, we have our work cut out for us.

Alberta's fisheries management program follows the Fish Conservation Management Strategy and is made in Alberta for Albertans. For more information on the fisheries management program, please refer to the Fisheries Management in Alberta presentation found at:

- [Fisheries Management](#)

The fisheries management program is built upon an objective-based system which runs on scientific data and stakeholder input. We start with science-based stock assessments, using standardized protocols for repeatable and comparable results. These assessments describe the status of fish populations with a province-wide perspective. We compare current status to what we know of trends over time and what stakeholders set as the Fisheries Management Objectives and check-in with indigenous communities and recreational anglers to confirm that the management objectives are still current, and seek input on actions to achieve those objectives.

Fisheries Management Objectives for a fishery are really a set of objectives in four categories:

- Ecosystem Conservation,
- Habitat Conservation,
- Indigenous Fishery and
- Recreational Fishery.

Management objectives are a focal point of the management framework for a fish species. These frameworks identify the types of management objectives available to define the types of fisheries desired and link those to the tools that are most effective at achieving those objectives.

Additional information is available in the Important Links section found in the right hand margin.

Fisheries Management Framework Survey



Alberta Environment and Parks is in the process of developing two management frameworks for this upcoming fishing season (2018/19). These frameworks are updates of the 1995 and 1999 walleye and northern pike management and recovery plans.

At this time, we are seeking your input to help us write draft Walleye and Pike Management Frameworks. We will use the feedback from the following questions, dilemmas and examples to help us prepare frameworks that meet the diverse range of angling experiences that Albertans would like in a sustainable way.

Once we receive and incorporate your input, drafts of the management frameworks will be shared online for your review and comment.

Thank you for your interest and taking the time to assist us.

Survey closes on September 5, 2017 at 4:30pm.

Personal Information Collection and Use Notification

The opinions you provide in this survey to Alberta Environment & Parks (AEP) is collected under the authorization of the *Fisheries (Alberta) Act* and Section 8 (1) (2) of the *Government Organization Act*, and is being managed in accordance with Part 2 of the *Freedom of Information & Protection of Privacy Act*. Submission of this information is strictly voluntary and the opinions being collected will be used by AEP to develop, engage and provide information on policies, plans, programs and services pertaining to Alberta's fisheries.

The email addresses collected may be used to inform respondents through email of future surveys. By participating in this survey you are giving Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) your permission to use your opinions and comments for input into this directive and the results of the survey will be anonymized and summarized on AEP website. The personal information provided, will not be used or disclosed for any other purpose without your consent by Alberta Environment and Parks. Should you have any further questions or concerns, please contact:

David Park, Section Head of Provincial Fisheries Allocation
2nd fl. Great West Life Building
9920 - 108 Street
Edmonton, AB T5K 2M4

Tel: [780 427-8347](tel:7804278347)

Email: dave.park@gov.ab.ca

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1. From the answers below, how would you describe your preferences and values for Walleye fishing. * ...

- I catch and release Walleye only.
- I catch and release Walleye, but see the importance of Walleye harvest when the fishery supports that.
- Harvest isn't my prime motivation, but I would like to harvest Walleye from time-to-time.
- I regularly harvest Walleye, and I seek waterbodies that provide harvest opportunities.

2. From the answers below, where would you place yourself to describe your preferences and values for Northern Pike fishing. * ...

- I catch and release Northern Pike only.
- I catch and release Northern Pike, but see the importance of Northern Pike harvest when the fishery supports that.
- Harvest isn't my prime motivation, but I would like to harvest Northern Pike from time-to-time.
- I regularly harvest Northern Pike, and I seek waterbodies that provide harvest opportunities.

A Special Harvest Licence (SHL) is obtained via a priority-based draw that WIN card holders can apply for to fish for a specified size category of walleye at a lake. This is currently used as a management tool at a few lakes with high angling pressure in order to provide safe harvest opportunities for specific sizes of fish. Further information can be found by searching "Special Harvest Licences" at:

- [Fisheries Management Glossary](#)

The alternative to using SHL's as a management tool is that these fisheries would remain at catch and release, have very short harvest seasons or larger minimum size limits, in order to achieve sustainability. In some cases, like on small lakes with high angler pressure, there may not be other sustainable options for harvest.

If open harvest with less restrictive regulations can be used to achieve the objectives, then it will be considered.

Given this information:

3. Do you support the use of Special Harvest Licences, as an alternative to catch and release or very restrictive seasons or size limits?

- Do not support
- Somewhat Support
- Support
- Strongly Support

4. If you do not support use of Special Harvest Licences, what are some of your reasons?

Please limit answer to 250 characters

250

5. Do you support expanding the use of Special Harvest Licences to include Northern Pike as well as Walleye, where the alternative would typically be catch and release only?

- Do not support
- Somewhat Support
- Support
- Strongly Support

6. Do you have any additional comments on Special Harvest Licences?

Please limit answer to 250 characters

250

7. If a fishery has been assessed and is classified as “high risk” to long-term sustainability (based upon the low numbers of fish in the lake) it would receive a recovery regulation as it could not sustain an open harvest. In other words a minimum size limit would still be too high of a risk to the recovery of the fishery. Further information can be found by searching “High Risk Fisheries” at:

- [Fisheries Management Glossary](#)

In this situation which would you prefer as a management action?

Select your preferred option:

- Issue a few harvest tags knowing that it would slow the recovery by several years.
- Allow catch and release only (moderate time to recovery) until the population increases to a “moderate risk” and receives a sustainable harvest regulation.
- Close all fishing (fastest time to recovery) until the population increases to “moderate risk” and receives a sustainable harvest regulation.

8. Short, open harvest seasons for waterbodies, with minimum size limits, are another way to allow some harvest while avoiding over harvest. Further information can be found by searching “Open Harvest Seasons” at:

- [Fisheries Management Glossary](#)

However, previous experience shows that short harvest seasons still result in excessive harvest and can overwhelm local infrastructure. Campgrounds and boat launch capacity are often exceeded, leading to much frustration and conflict.

Under this approach, the risk of over-harvest typically increases, which would be followed by less future opportunity during recovery. In situations like these, managers would tend instead to use a Special Harvest Licence which that allows for only a specified number and size of fish to be harvested over the year. Knowing this, what would you prefer as a management action?

Select your preferred option:

- Short harvest seasons (1-3 weeks, followed by catch and release the remainder of the year).
- Special Harvest Licenses for lakes where these may be the only harvest options.

9. Even with Alberta's relatively low number of lakes, the ability to regularly monitor fish populations at each lake is unachievable. As a result, an option to ensure sustainable fish populations are maintained at each lake could include splitting lake regulations into ACTIVE or PASSIVE management.

Actively managed lakes are those typically used by the majority of Albertans and would be where the majority of monitoring efforts would be focused. Passively managed lakes, with less fishing pressure, would have lower monitoring effort applied to them.

Regulations on ACTIVE management lakes would therefore be less restrictive because information on fishing pressure and population status would typically be recent. Regulations on PASSIVE management lakes would be more restrictive, because while they are considered to have low fishing pressure, they also will have less monitoring resources devoted to them, and so a more precautionary (restrictive) regulation ensures that a population collapse is less likely in the absence of frequent monitoring.

Do you support this type of management concept?

- Yes
- No

Thank you for taking our survey!

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If you have any additional comments or would like to provide feedback any other fisheries management topic, please feel free to email:

• AB.Fisheries@gov.ab.ca

10. Remote lakes (no road access) typically receive low to moderate fishing pressure and are more difficult to monitor. Further information can be found by searching “Management of Remote Lakes” at:

- [Fisheries Management Glossary](#)

Fishing pressure may have a very minor influence on the population status at these lakes. Precautionary regulations can be used to manage these lakes, such as a conservative bag and/or size limit, that allows the opportunity for a small amount of harvest (e.g. one fish per day per person) while minimizing the risk of a collapse in absence of information.

An alternative is to have a liberal harvest regulation (two to three fish per day per person) on these lakes, but the risk being that if fishing pressure were to increase, it could result in an undetected decline in the population before any monitoring takes place.

What would you prefer to see at remote lakes where there is low angler pressure? (select one)

- A more liberal harvest
- A more precautionary approach

11. Adaptive management and experimentation are an important part of furthering fisheries science. Manipulating fishing regulations is often part of adaptive management experiments. We call these ‘pilot’ regulations. The level of risk to the population by doing this can vary widely depending on the type of study. Further information can be found by searching “Adaptive Management and Experimentation” at:

- [Fisheries Management Glossary](#)

What is your level of risk tolerance to these proposed pilot regulation scenarios?

I support pilot regulations that offer harvest opportunities that will likely result in:

- Limited or low risk to the fish population or its sustainability, e.g. expanding use of Special Harvest Licences.
- Some additional or moderate risk to fish populations or sustainability, knowing that this could result in longer recovery or even decline in population that may impact future harvest opportunities, e.g. may include a more liberal minimum size limit.
- Significant or high risk to the fish population or its sustainability, knowing that this will probably result in population declines that will affect future harvest opportunities, e.g. providing open access, short harvest seasons.