

Little Atlin Lake fishing regulation amendment engagement

What We Heard
February 2025



What We Heard

Introduction

The Government of Yukon is proposing regulation changes to protect lake trout populations for Little Atlin Lake while maintaining recreational fishing opportunities for Yukoners. The proposed changes, which were the subject of this engagement, are intended to strike a balance between maintaining angling opportunities and preventing the lake trout fishery from being closed entirely on Little Atlin Lake.

This document summarizes the input received during the public engagement on the proposed regulatory amendments to fishing gear, slot size and seasonal closure for Little Atlin Lake.

Background

Little Atlin Lake is a popular lake for recreational fishing, which puts pressure on the lake trout population. The Government of Yukon is proposing changes to the Yukon Territory Fishery Regulations to protect the lake trout population. The proposed changes to fishing regulations for Little Atlin Lake are:

- implement a harvest slot (allowable fish size) for lake trout from 58.5 cm (23 in) to 65 cm (25.6 in);
- implement a seasonal closure for lake trout on Little Atlin Lake from July 1 until November 30; and
- require the use of single-point barbless hooks for all fishing on Little Atlin Lake.

These proposed regulations were generated from recommendations in the [Little Atlin Lake fishery status report](#).

Engagement process

The public engagement was launched in collaboration with the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board to learn whether Yukoners support the proposed changes.

The engagement was open for 60 days and opportunities were provided for the public to submit their feedback through an online survey, by email or by attending public information sessions.

The Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board

The Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board collaborates with the Government of Yukon to oversee the public engagement process for reviewing proposed changes to fish and wildlife regulations.

The Board is an independent advisory body that operates separately from the government. As the primary instrument for fish and wildlife management in the territory, it acts in the public interest and ensures public involvement in developing its decisions and recommendations.

Following a public engagement, the Board will make a recommendation to the appropriate Minister, providing its views on the matter and advice on how to proceed. In developing its recommendations, the Board considers all sources of information, including public feedback, and integrates the best available science with local and Traditional Knowledge.

Communities, First Nations and Renewable Resources Councils

Letters of support for the proposed changes were provided earlier in the process by Carcross/Tagish Renewable Resources Council and Taku River Tlingit First Nation.

The Government of Yukon sent consultation letters to Carcross/Tagish First Nation, Carcross/Tagish Renewable Resources Council, Taku River Tlingit First Nation and the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board on November 20, 2024. A letter notifying of engagement was also sent to the Yukon Fish and Game Association.

Public information sessions

Public information sessions were held on the evenings of:

- November 25 at the Tagish Community Centre
- November 26 at the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre

- December 9 at the Marsh Lake Community Centre
- December 18 online on Zoom

Twelve attendees participated in these meetings.

Invitation for public input through Engage Yukon

Between November 18, 2024 and January 17, 2025, we extended invitations to the public through multiple media platforms to comment via a survey hosted through [Engage Yukon](#) on the proposed regulatory changes.

The engagement survey was available Yukon-wide, giving Yukoners an opportunity to respond to the proposed changes, voice their opinions and help the Government of Yukon determine its next course of action.

To support engagement, we provided the [fishery status report](#) and the [fishery status report summary](#) for Little Atlin Lake, and a link to the [Guide to fishing in the Yukon](#) on the Engage Yukon landing page, as well as in the survey introduction.

What we heard

The following information is based on completed survey responses and in-person feedback at public information sessions. Feedback received has been summarized into the following categories: survey demographics, angling, regulation support and additional feedback.

Survey demographic

The engagement survey was completed by 132 respondents, of which 131 were Yukon residents.

The majority of respondents identified as non-Yukon First Nations, with 14 preferring not to say and six respondents identifying as a member or citizen of a Yukon First Nation.

Most respondents were from the Whitehorse area, with the majority ranging from 30-39 and 40-49 years old (**Figure 1**).

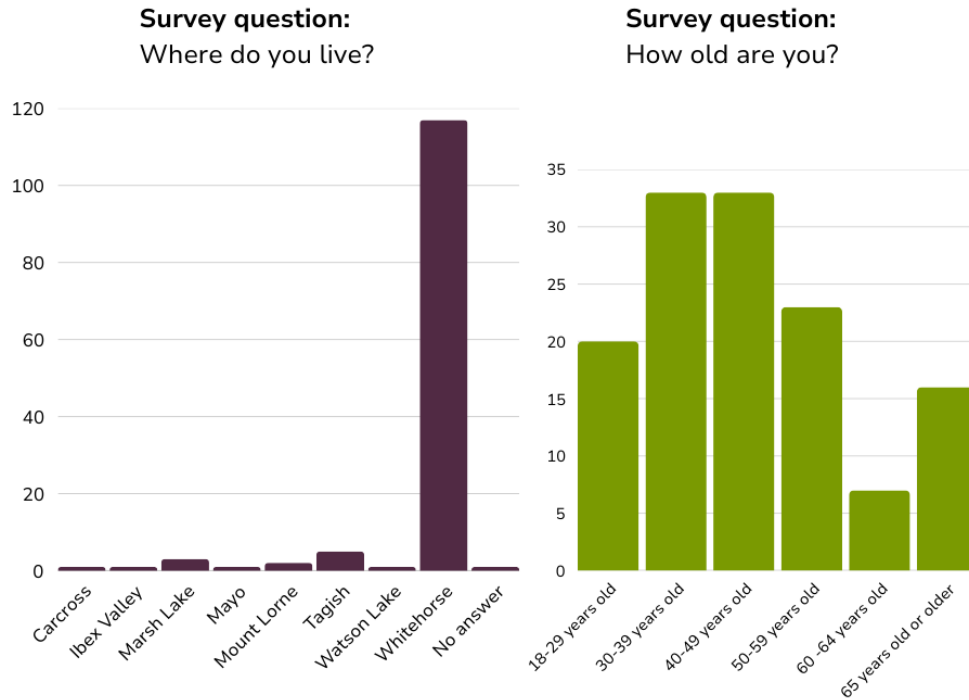


Figure 1. Results of survey respondents' location of residence and age bracket.

Angling

The survey asked several questions involving angling, including whether respondents purchased a recreational licence in 2024, their angling participation in 2024, their experiences fishing on Little Atlin Lake and their reasons for choosing it as a fishing destination. We also asked about their views on live-release fishing. Below is an overview of their responses.

Most respondents that purchased angling licences, had recreationally fished in 2024, and were active on Little Atlin Lake within the past 5 years (**Figure 2**).

The reasons given by those anglers who chose not to fish on Little Atlin included; high fishing pressure, the lake was too busy and a preference for other locations as the main reasons for why they chose to stay away from Little Atlin Lake (**Figure 3**).

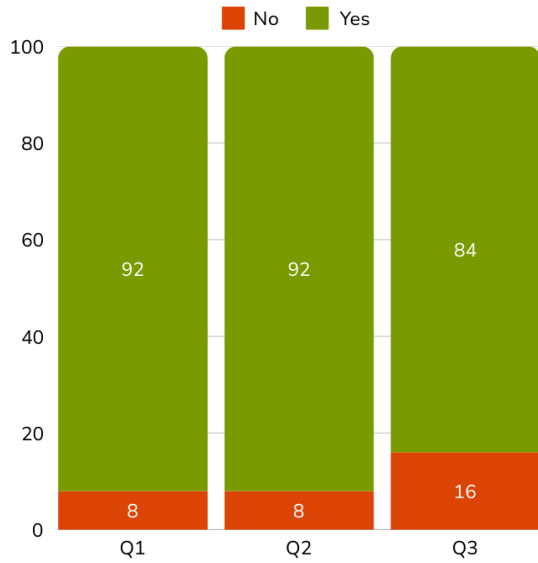


Figure 2. Per cent of survey responses to Q1: Did you purchase a recreational angling licence in 2024? Q2: Did you fish recreationally in 2024? Q3: Have you fished recreationally on Little Atlin Lake within the past five years? For anglers who indicated that they did not recreationally fish on Little Atlin Lake within the past five years, an additional question was asked to determine why.

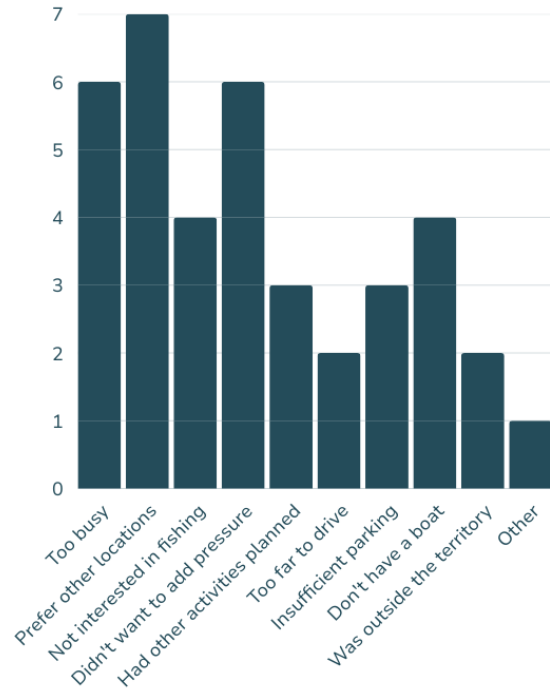


Figure 3. Survey results from anglers who indicated they did not fish recreationally on Little Atlin Lake within the past five years.

Live release fishing

The proposed management actions, as indicated in the fishery status report and the fishery status report summary, may initially result in an increase in live release fishing because of the more restrictive harvest slot. To gauge public opinion, the survey asked whether respondents support the practice of live release fishing. Over 87% of respondents indicated that they support the practice of live release fishing. Additionally, the survey asked whether respondents fished recreationally to harvest, practice live release or both. The results indicate that over 72% of respondents recreationally fished to both harvest fish and practice live release fishing (Table 1).

Table 1. Survey responses to the question: Do you practice live release fishing, or do you harvest fish to eat?

Survey question	Yes	% Total
I practice both live release fishing and catch fish to eat	96	73%
I practice live release fishing	15	11%
I catch fish to eat	17	13%
I do not catch fish	4	3%

Regulation support

The primary focus of the engagement survey was to gauge public support for the three proposed regulatory recommendations. The level of support for the recommended harvest slot (**Figure 4**), the seasonal closure (**Figure 5**), and the recommendation for barbless hooks (**Figure 6**) is outlined below. Broad support was indicated for all three recommendations with 91.7% supporting the harvest slot, 76.5% supporting the seasonal closure and 84.1% of respondents supporting the use of single-pointed barbless hooks only on Little Atlin Lake. This support was consistent with the views and feedback received during the in-person public information sessions.

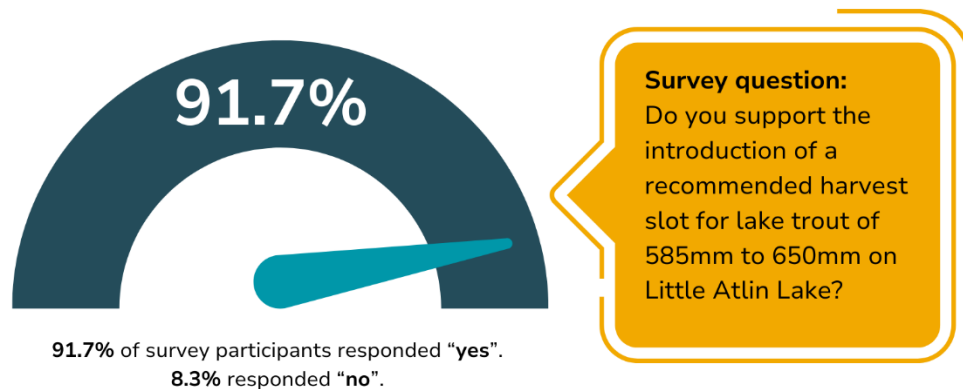


Figure 4. Percentage of survey respondents indicating support for the recommended harvest slot for lake trout of 585mm to 650mm on Little Atlin Lake.

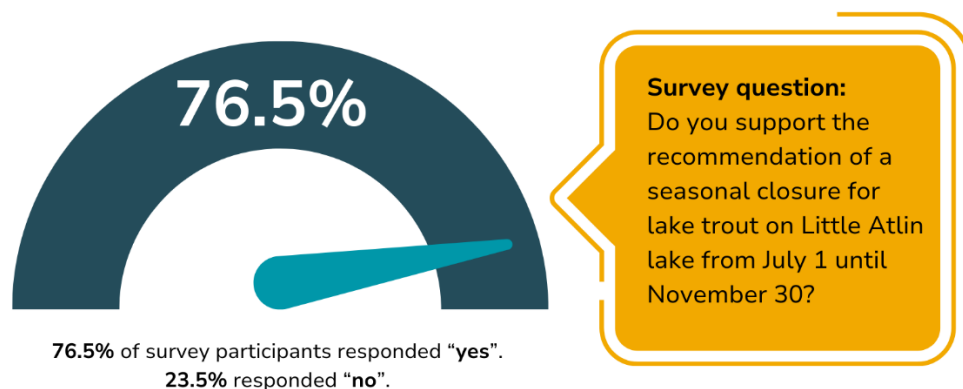


Figure 5. Percentage of survey respondents indicating support for the recommended seasonal closure for lake trout from July 1 until November 30, on Little Atlin Lake.

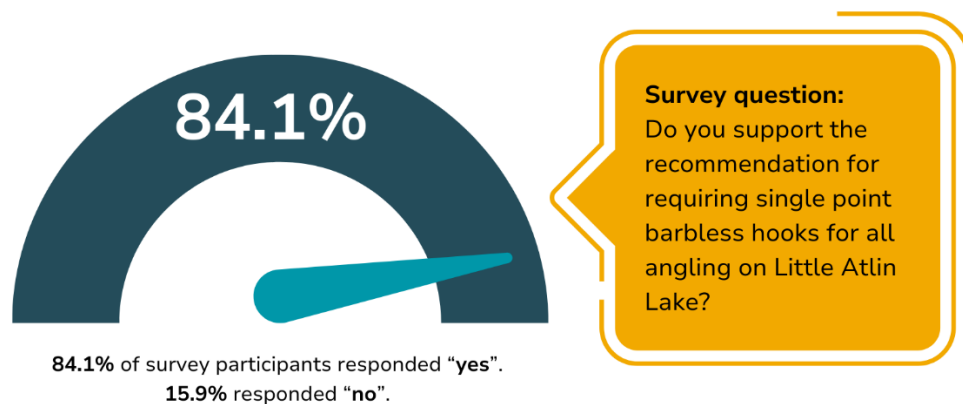


Figure 6. Percentage of survey respondents indicating support for the recommended restriction of barbless hooks only, on Little Atlin Lake.

Additional feedback

During the public engagement process, through the online survey and the in-person public information sessions, additional comments focused on four main themes: **education; evidence-based management; enforcement and compliance; and broad vs. targeted measures.**

Education

Education emerged as a key focus, with many respondents suggesting there should be improved fisheries education across the Yukon. Key areas of interest included handling practices, catch-and-release ethics and proper gear use. Comments and discussions also included the immediate need to educate the public about the new management actions for Little Atlin Lake.

Catch-and-release ethics were a key component of comments from the online survey and the in-person public information sessions. It was clear that there are wide-ranging views on this topic, from its need for use in conserving fish stocks to concerns about it as a perceived unethical behaviour and the impacts catch and release may have on handled fish.

Evidence-based management

As previously mentioned, there was widespread support for the management actions grounded in evidence including potential lake-wide closures if necessary. The support for this approach was observed in the survey question about what measures people support to maintain a sustainable fish population (**Figure 7**). The results indicate that there is a wide variety of supported measures to manage fish, with lake closures and doing nothing as least supported.

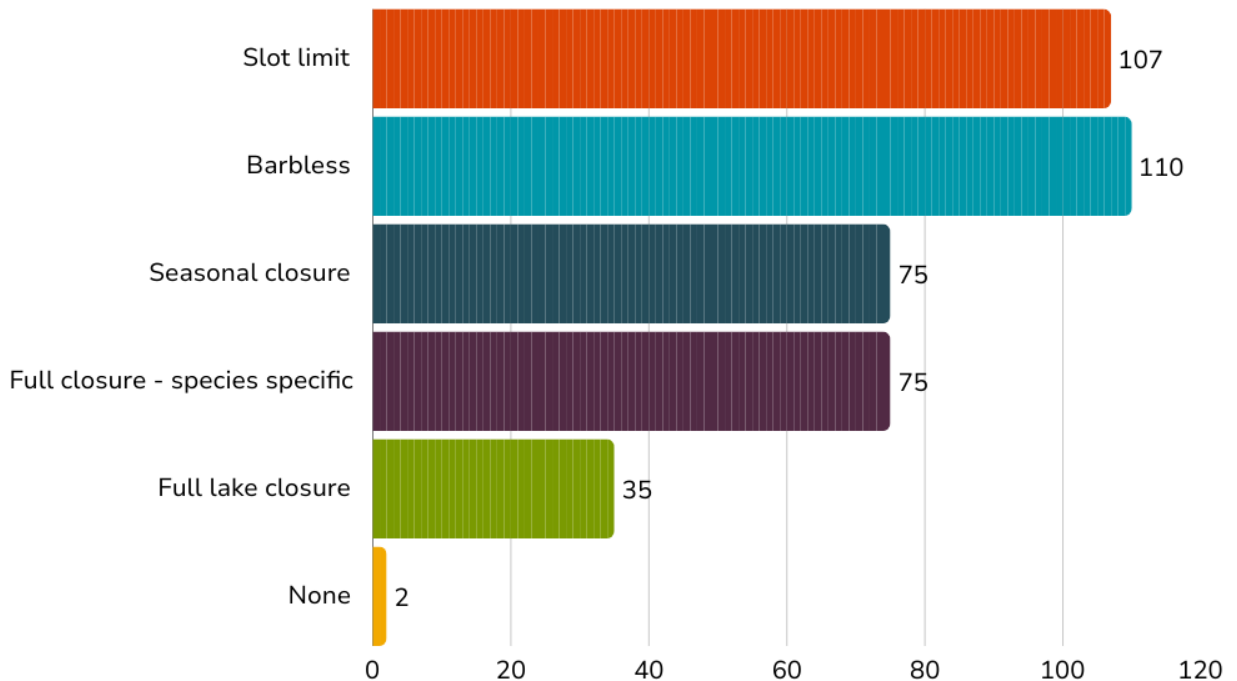


Figure 7. Survey responses to the question: In general, which of the following measures do you support to rebuild a fish population (select all that apply).

Enforcement

Enforcement was a recurring topic, with respondents emphasizing the need for increased enforcement at Little Atlin Lake. Several respondents indicated that they were concerned these new measures would not be followed by the public, and enforcement action is required to ensure compliance.

Broad versus targeted measures

The proposed measures prompted several comments about whether these measures would be targeted to Little Atlin Lake or used Yukon-wide. While the proposed regulation changes are only targeted to Little Atlin Lake, there was varied opinions on the use of lake-specific measures to monitor and protect single species, versus a broader approach to all Yukon lakes. Support during these conversations and comments focused on species and lake-specific regulations. However, it was noted that a lake and species-specific approach requires improved education, as mentioned previously, to ensure that the public is aware of any changes.

Other feedback

Additional feedback not related to the public engagement topic was received during the in-person information sessions and in survey responses. This feedback has been retained for consideration outside of this engagement.

What's next?

The feedback received from all rounds of engagement was used to determine the level of support for the proposed regulation change. If implemented, the new measures will be included in the [Yukon fishing regulations summary](#) and a copy of the order varying the federal regulations will be posted on Yukon.ca.

The Government of Yukon's [fishery status report](#) and the [fishery status report summary](#) outlines a monitoring and education plan. This plan includes monitoring the status of the lake trout population, as well as developing and implementing a northern pike monitoring program, to determine the effectiveness of these measures.

The Government of Yukon remains committed to working with our management partners, Yukon First Nations and the public to ensure our freshwater fish populations remain sustainable for future populations.