

DFO Protocol for Winter Water Withdrawal In the Northwest Territories

Rationale

In the Northwest Territories, winter activities such as access road construction, exploratory drilling and camp operations often require large amounts of water. Excessive amounts of water withdrawn from ice covered waterbodies or watercourses can lead to oxygen depletion, loss of over-wintering habitat and/or reductions in littoral habitat. The potential for such negative impacts to over-wintering fish and fish habitat has made winter water withdrawal a critical issue for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) in the Northwest Territories. To address the issue of water withdrawal, and to provide standardized guidance to water users, including volume limits for certain water source types, DFO has developed this protocol in conjunction with industry and other regulators.

This protocol pertains to works and activities where a total water volume greater than or equal to (\geq) 100m^3 is required from any given waterbody or watercourse during one ice-covered period.

This protocol will **not** apply to the following:

- Winter water withdrawal from the Mackenzie River;
- Any other waterbody or watercourse that is exempted by DFO (i.e. Great Bear Lake, Great Slave Lake, Gordon Lake, and others as and when determined by DFO), and;
- Any waterbody (not including watercourses) from which less than 100m^3 is to be withdrawn over the course of one ice-covered period.

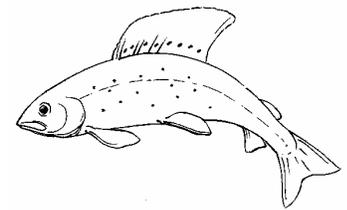
Water Withdrawal from Waterbodies:

For the purposes of this protocol, a **waterbody** is defined as any water-filled basin that is potential fish habitat. A waterbody is defined by the ordinary high water mark of the basin, and excludes connecting **watercourses** (see definition in **Water Withdrawal from Watercourses** below). In order to establish a winter water withdrawal limit for a given waterbody, the following criteria must be adhered to:

1. In one ice-covered season, total water withdrawal from a single waterbody is not to exceed 5% of the available water volume calculated using the appropriate maximum expected ice thickness provided in Table 1.
2. In cases where there are multiple users withdrawing water from a single waterbody, the total combined withdrawal volume is not to exceed 5% of the available water volume calculated using the appropriate maximum expected ice thickness provided in Table 1. Therefore, consistent and coordinated water source identification is essential.
3. Only waterbodies with maximum depths that are $\geq 1.5\text{m}$ deeper than their corresponding maximum expected ice thickness should be considered for water withdrawal (Table 1). Waterbodies with less than 1.5m of free water beneath the maximum ice are considered to be particularly vulnerable to the effects of water withdrawal.
4. Any waterbody with a maximum expected ice thickness (Table 1) that is greater than, or equal to, its maximum depth (as determined from a bathymetric survey) is exempt from the 5% maximum withdrawal limit.

To further mitigate the impacts of water withdrawal, water is to be removed from deep areas of waterbodies ($>2\text{m}$ below the ice surface) wherever feasible, to avoid the removal of oxygenated surface waters that are critical to over-wintering fish. The littoral zone should be avoided as a water withdrawal location. Water intakes should also be properly screened with fine mesh of 2.54 mm (1/10") and have moderate intake velocities to prevent the entrainment of fish. Please refer to the *Freshwater Intake End-of-Pipe Fish Screen Guideline* (DFO, 1995) which is available upon request, or at the following internet address: www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/Library/223669.pdf.

In order to determine the maximum water withdrawal volume from an ice-covered waterbody and thereby conform to this protocol, the following information must be provided to DFO for review and concurrence, prior to program commencement.



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Water Source Identification

1. Proposed primary and secondary access routes for all project activities, with proposed water source and crossing locations clearly identified on a map, with geographical coordinates (latitude/longitude and/or UTM) included.
2. Documented watercourse connectivity (permanently flowing and/or seasonal) between the proposed water source and any other waterbody or watercourse.
3. Aerial photos or satellite imagery of the water sources if available.
4. Estimated total water withdrawal requirement for work or activity and estimated total water withdrawal per water source (in m³).

Bathymetric Survey Results

1. For all waterbodies: One longitudinal transect, connecting the two farthest shorelines, is to be conducted regardless of waterbody size. **Note: a longitudinal transect may be straight or curved in order to accommodate the shape of a lake (see Figure 1).**
2. For waterbodies equal to or less than 1km in length: a minimum of one longitudinal transect and two perpendicular transects are to be conducted. Perpendicular transects should be evenly spaced on the longest longitudinal transect, dissecting the lake into thirds (Figure 1).
3. For lakes greater than 1km in length: a minimum of one longitudinal transect is to be conducted. Perpendicular transects (min. of 2) should be evenly spaced on the longest longitudinal transect at maximum intervals of 500m.
4. Additional transects should be run as required to include irregularities in waterbody shape such as fingers or bays (Figure 1).
5. All longitudinal and perpendicular transects are to be conducted using an accurate, continuous depth sounding methodology, such as open water echo sounding, that provides a continuous depth recording from one shore to the farthest opposing shore (Figure 1). Any alternative technology should be reviewed by DFO prior to implementing for bathymetric surveys.

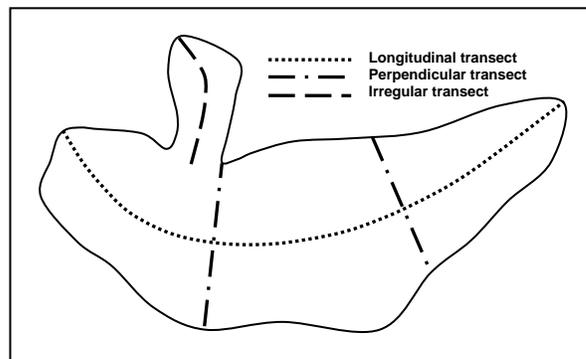
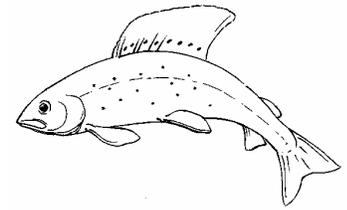


Figure 1. Minimum transect layout for a lake that is less than 1 km in length, with an irregularity.

Volume Calculations

1. Document the methods used to calculate surface area. If aerial photos or satellite imagery were used, provide the date (day/month/year) taken, as surface area may change depending on the time of year. If maps were used, provide the year that they were surveyed.
2. Detail the methods used to determine the total volume of free water, incorporating the relevant bathymetric information.
3. Calculate the available water volume under the ice using the appropriate maximum expected ice thickness, i.e. $Total\ Volume_{lake} - Ice\ Volume_{max\ thickness} = Available\ Water\ Volume$ (see Table 1 for maximum ice thickness).
4. For programs where ice-chipping is used, the total ice volume to be removed from the waterbody should be converted to total liquid volume and incorporated into the estimate of total water withdrawal requirement per water source.



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Table 1. Maximum expected ice thickness, and corresponding water depth requirements, for different regions in the Northwest Territories.

Area	Maximum Expected Ice Thickness (m)	Minimum Waterbody depth Required for 5% Water Withdrawal (m)
Above the Tree Line	2.0	≥3.5
Below the Tree Line - North of Fort Simpson	1.5	≥3.0
Deh Cho –South of Fort Simpson	1.0	≥2.5

Water Withdrawal from Watercourses:

For the purposes of this protocol, a **watercourse** is defined as a channel through which water flows and is potential fish habitat. A watercourse is defined by the ordinary high water mark of the channel, and excludes connecting waterbodies or watercourses. In order to establish a winter water withdrawal limit for a given watercourse, the following criteria must be adhered to:

1. Total water withdrawal for all activities is not to exceed 5% of the instantaneous flow rate of a single watercourse at the time of withdrawal.
2. In cases where there are multiple users withdrawing water from a single watercourse, the total combined withdrawal rate is not to exceed 5% of the instantaneous flow rate at the time of withdrawal. Therefore, consistent and coordinated water source identification is essential.

To further mitigate the impacts from water withdrawal, water intakes should be properly screened with fine mesh of **2.54 mm (1/10")** and have moderate intake velocities to prevent the entrainment of fish. Please refer to the *Freshwater Intake End-of-Pipe Fish Screen Guideline* (DFO, 1995) which is available upon request, or at the following internet address: www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/Library/223669.pdf.

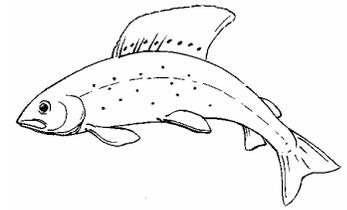
In order to determine the maximum water withdrawal rate from an ice-covered watercourse and thereby conform to this protocol, the following information must be provided to DFO for review and concurrence, prior to program commencement. DFO will only consider watercourses to be used as water sources if no suitable alternatives exist.

Water Source Identification

1. Proposed primary and secondary access routes for all project activities, with proposed water crossings and water source locations clearly identified on a map, with geographical coordinates (latitude/longitude and/or UTM) included.
2. Aerial photos or satellite imagery of the water sources if available.
3. Estimated total water withdrawal requirement for work or activity, and estimated total water withdrawal per water source (in m³).

Stream Survey Requirements

1. Location and date of survey (day, month, and year).
2. Photos of the stream location where withdrawal is to occur.
3. An accurate measurement of flow rate (to be confirmed immediately prior to water withdrawal commencing).
4. Stream survey should include; profile (minimum of ten evenly spaced points), depth, width, and flow rate.
5. Survey effort should reflect channel width: <2m wide, three vertical stations; 2-10m, 10 vertical stations; >10m, 20 vertical stations.
6. Pump specifications (type, model, horsepower, and max discharge rate).
7. Information on substrate type, in-water vegetation, riparian vegetation, and bank description is also requested.



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A brief project summary report documenting and confirming total water volume used per water source, withdrawal rates, flow rates per source and corresponding dates should be submitted to DFO within 60 days of project completion. Information should be provided in the following format (this information would also be useful as part of the project description):

Lake ID	number and/or name
Coordinates	latitude and longitude and/or UTM coordinates
Surface area	in m ²
Total Lake Volume	in m ³
Under Ice Volume	in m ³ (based on max ice thickness for region)
Max expected ice thickness value used	in m
Calculated 5% Withdrawal volume	in m ³
Total required water volume extracted	in m ³
Photograph of waterbody	
Bathymetric Map(s) of waterbody	

Any requests deviating from the above must be submitted to DFO and will be addressed on a site-specific basis.

Please note that adherence to this protocol does not release the proponent of the responsibility for obtaining any permits, licences or authorizations that may be required.

[For more information contact DFO at \(867\) 669-4900.](#)