

---

# 2022-23 Sportfishing Regulation Engagement

What We Heard Report



MARCH 2022

Alberta 

Cover Photo: Amanda Derksen



# Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| <b>Introduction</b> .....   | 4  |
| Engagement Purpose and Design .....   | 4  |
| <b>Summary of Engagement Feedback</b> .....   | 5  |
| <b>Survey Results</b> .....   | 6  |
| Alberta’s Proposed Approach to Protecting Fish During Periods of Low Flow<br>and High Temperatures..... | 6  |
| Northern Alberta Sportfishing Regulations .....   | 6  |
| Wadlin Lake.....  | 6  |
| Minnow Lake.....  | 7  |
| Smoke Lake .....  | 8  |
| Lesser Slave Lake.....  | 9  |
| Southern Alberta Sportfishing Regulations .....   | 10 |
| Pine Coulee Reservoir .....   | 10 |
| Crawling Valley Reservoir .....   | 10 |
| Clear Lake.....   | 11 |
| Sherburne Reservoir.....  | 11 |
| Brazeau Canal.....  | 12 |
| Demographic questions .....   | 12 |
| <b>Appendix – Engagement Background References</b> .....  | 14 |
| General Fisheries Resources .....   | 14 |
| Fisheries Management Updates .....  | 14 |
| Southern Alberta Resources.....   | 14 |
| Northern Alberta Resources .....  | 14 |
| Related .....   | 14 |
| Educational Webinar Statistics .....  | 15 |

## Introduction

From January 10 to February 7, 2022 Alberta Environment and Parks invited public feedback on proposed changes to the 2022-23 sportfishing regulations. A survey was posted on the public engagement section of Alberta.ca that collected participant feedback on four topics: Angling regulation options in flowing waters for periods of low flows and high temperatures; Southern Alberta fishing regulation changes, Northern Alberta fishing regulation changes, and general participant demographic information.

Throughout the engagement, roughly 5,000 people visited the engagement project webpage on Alberta.ca and the online survey had 2,227 responses. The survey was supplemented with a series of educational webinars to provide Albertans with opportunities to interact directly with AEP fisheries management staff. Feedback provided by Albertans through these tools were considered during the development of the 2022-23 Alberta Sportfishing Regulations. For more information about how feedback was considered in specific regulation changes, please find a link to the 2022-23 Sportfishing Regulation Engagement Regulation Changes Summary on our engagement web page at <https://www.alberta.ca/2022-23-sportfishing-regulations-engagement.aspx>.

## Engagement Purpose and Design

The objectives of the 2022-23 sportfishing regulation engagement are to:

- Obtain public feedback on options to address impacts to fisheries from high temperatures, low flows and angling, such as closing fishing during afternoon periods,
- Obtain public feedback on fishing regulation options for 9 waterbodies (consultation items),
- Inform the public of proposed fishing regulation changes at 10 waterbodies (notification items), and
- Provide updates on previously engaged upon items, including harvest slot limits, the pilot for electronic special harvest licence tags, gear regulation (barbless hooks), and the walleye stocking program.

The 2022-23 sportfishing regulation engagement was conducted entirely through on-line events and tools to comply with province-wide COVID-19 restrictions. The survey and its accompanying background resources were available to the public on the public engagement section of Alberta.ca. The engagement was announced to stakeholders via email, Alberta ReLM and social media.

The online survey was designed for participants to select areas of interest to provide their feedback on. If a participant opted in to a section of the survey, all questions were mandatory with a “no opinion” option for respondents who did not have feedback on the issue. The online survey allowed participants to skip portions of the survey for which they had no interest. As a result, there is variation in the numbers of responses provided to each question.

Online webinars, an ask the expert tool, and direct emails were utilized to provide further interaction with Albertans in lieu of in-person events. The webinars facilitated direct interaction between AEP fisheries management staff and the stakeholders on the proposed changes and current fisheries management issues.

The table below summarizes the tools employed for this engagement process and the participation rates for each:

| Tool          | Participation  | Comments  |
|---------------|--|---|
| Public Survey | 3,174 visits to the online engagement tool page<br>2,227 contributions to the survey | <i>Affiliations</i> with a hunting, fishing or conservation club – affiliated (19.4%), not affiliated (71.2%) and prefer not to say (9.4%)<br><i>Demographic</i> – 15 or younger (0.4%), 16-34 (22.4%), 35 to 64 (64.9%), 65 or older (11.4%) with prefer not to say (0.8%).<br><i>Geography</i> – survey respondents were from all regions of Alberta, with the majority located in south (52%). A majority were from rural communities (56%) versus urban (44%). Fisheries Management Zone Eastern Slopes 1 was the most population place survey participants went fishing. |

| Tool                   | Participation  | Comments   |
|------------------------|--|--|
| Webinars (7)           | 787 total registrations received; 446 direct interactions with AEP; 109 questions answered live. | Three 90-minute webinars were held between January 12 and 19. Webinars included an approximately 30 minute presentation followed by a question and answer period. Topics included: Southern Alberta 2022-23 Sportfishing Regulation Engagement (211 attendees), Northern Alberta 2022-23 Sportfishing Regulation Engagement (141 attendees), and Provincial Fisheries and Sportfishing Update (178 attendees). |
| Background Information | 642 Factsheet PDF Downloads  | AEP provided numerous reference documents and resources in relation to the engagement. These documents were available to engagement participants through the Alberta.ca engagement page. They are listed in Appendix A.  |
| Ask the Expert         | 17 questions submitted by stakeholders through Alberta.ca.                                       | Questions were referred to experts among the Fisheries Management staff and answered publically and privately on Alberta.ca.   |

## Summary of Engagement Feedback

### Angling Restrictions during Low Flow and High Temperature Events:

There was a slight majority to stay status quo with the current sportfishing regulations and have no Time-of-Day angling closures implemented during low flow and high temperature events. There was greater support for a semi-fixed Time-of-Day closure, compared to a fixed Time-of-Day closure.

### Northern Alberta Sportfishing Regulations:

- **Wadlin Lake:** Respondents indicated support to implement Special Harvest Licenses to support recovery of the walleye population (Sustainable Harvest Fisheries Management Objective).
- **Minnow Lake:** Respondents indicated support for stocking walleye into Minnow Lake with the intention of creating and maintaining a walleye put-grow-and-take fishery. The majority of respondents supported changing the sportfishing regulations and Fisheries Management Objective to one walleye over 50 cm (Liberal Harvest Fisheries Management Objective).
- **Smoke Lake:** A slight majority indicated support to keep the current harvest limit of zero possession limits (catch and release) to support continued recovery for walleye (Sustainable Harvest Fisheries Management Objective).
- **Lesser Slave Lake:** The majority of survey respondents supported a harvest slot size for walleye between 45cm and 50cm (Experimental Fisheries Management Objective), with a possession limit of one fish per day in both the open water and winter seasons (May 15 – March 31).

### Southern Alberta Sportfishing Regulations:

- **Pine Coulee Reservoir:** Majority of survey respondents supported the implementation of sportfishing regulations to be open April 1 to October 31, allow the harvest of one rainbow trout larger than 50cm, prohibit the use of bait and bait fish, and adjust the current rainbow trout stocking program (Quality Stocked Fishery Management Objective).
- **Crawling Valley Reservoir:** A slight majority of survey respondents supported changing the sportfishing regulations and Fisheries Management Objective to one walleye over 50 cm (Sustainable Harvest Fisheries Management Objective).
- **Clear Lake:** Majority of respondents supported changing the Northern pike sportfishing regulations and Fisheries Management Objective to zero possession limit (catch and release)–Old Growth/Trophy Fisheries Management Objective.
- **Sherburne Reservoir:** The majority of respondents supported changing the sportfishing regulation and Fisheries Management Objective to one walleye over 50 cm (Sustainable Harvest Fisheries Management Objective).
- **Brazeau Canal:** The majority of survey respondents supported stocking walleye into Brazeau Canal with the intention of creating a put-grow-and-take harvest fishery.

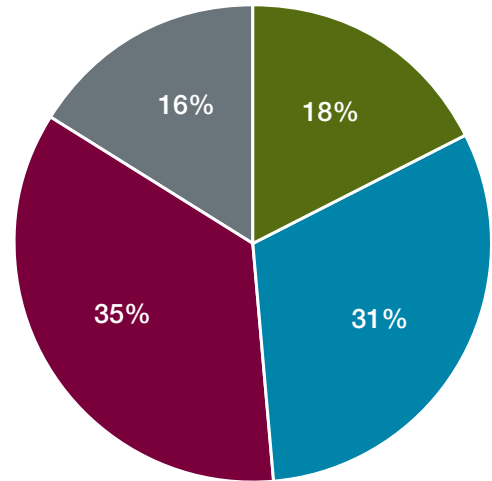
Participants in the 2022-23 sportfishing engagement expressed a desire for more engagement on angling guide licences. AEP is currently planning for further engagement to inform the development of the new program.

# Survey Results

## Alberta’s Proposed Approach to Protecting Fish During Periods of Low Flow and High Temperatures

Which regulation approach would you support if implemented on the Bow River and ES1 Flowing Waters to mitigate stress to fish during periods of low flows and high temperatures?

- **Time-of-Day Angling Closures - Fixed Period:** Bow River from Banff to Bassano, and portions of ES1 flowing waters to be closed to all angling daily between 2:00 p.m. and 12:00 a.m. from July 1 to August 31.
- **Time-of-Day Angling Closure - Semi-Fixed Period:** Bow River from Banff to Bassano, and portions of ES1 flowing waters to be closed to all angling daily between 2:00 p.m. and 12:00 a.m. from July 1 to August 31 BUT potentially ending with an “in-season” re-opening of the Time-of-Day closure based upon evaluations of observed flow and temperature conditions.
- **No Time-of-Day Angling Closure (Status Quo):** AEP would continue to issue voluntary angling advisories during periods of high temperature and low flow conditions.
- **No Opinion**



Responses: 1690

### Additional Comments

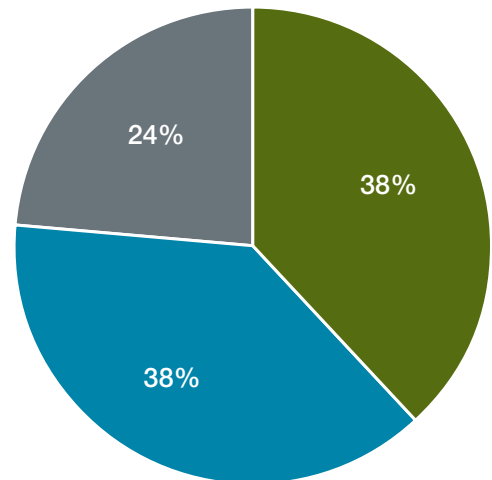
There were 460 additional comments received. The main theme of these comments (over 40%) centered around the desire for greater flexibility in implementing a time of day closure. Other themes included:

- Suggested changes in gear restrictions (10.0%), and
- Desire to improve enforcement actions to support fish management (4.6%).

## Northern Alberta Sportfishing Regulations

Which walleye sportfishing regulation and management objective do you support at Wadlin Lake?

- **Zero possession limit (catch and release) to support recovery of the population to meet a Sustainable Harvest Fisheries Management Objective.**
- **Special Harvest Licence (SHL) as a recovery tool (Sustainable Harvest Fisheries Management Objective)**
- **No opinion**



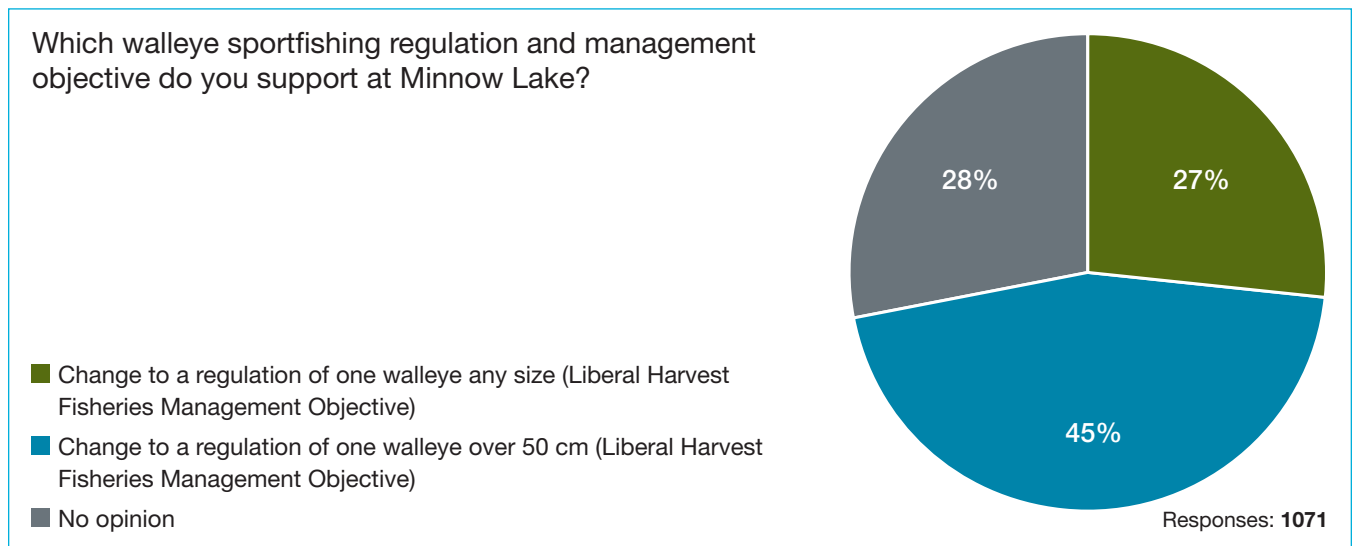
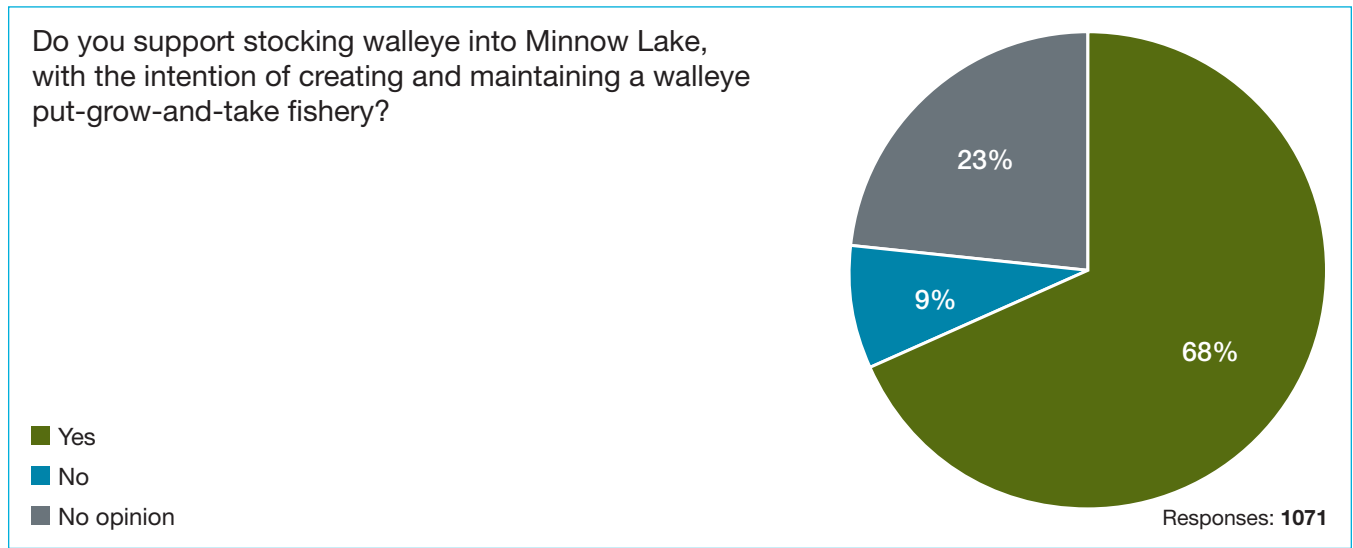
Responses: 1072

### Additional Comments

There were 146 additional comments received. The main theme of these comments (35%) was related to Indigenous harvest of fish. Other notable themes included:

- support for the actions being taken and/or generally positive comments (18%),
- calls for more enforcement and concerns about illegal harvest (10%),
- suggestion that walleye be eliminated and the lake returned to its natural state (6%), and
- desire to have walleye stocked (6%).

Other comments included calls for slot size on walleye, to keep regulations the same, and general questions on fisheries management.



### Additional Comments

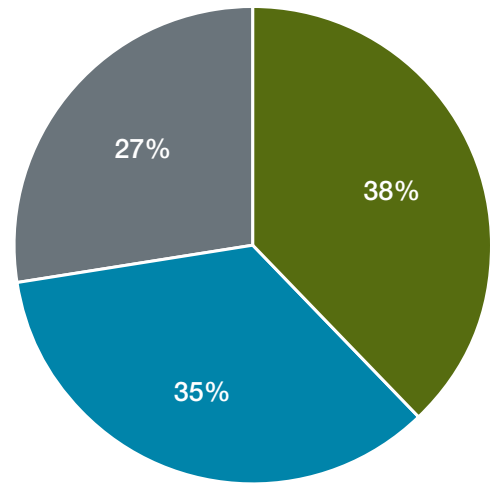
There were 101 additional comments received. The main theme of these comments (33%) provided general feedback to support their survey selections. Other notable themes included:

- the use of slot size regulations (27%),
- support for a maximum size limit (9%),
- concern about the uncertainty of success and impacts of the proposed stocking (18%),
- a desire for fisheries management to focus on native fish species instead of stocking (10%), and
- concern about the costs and resources required for stocking walleye (10%).

Other comments included topics such as not stocking walleye, yellow perch management, and enhancement of education and enforcement.

Which walleye sportfishing regulation and management objective do you support at Smoke Lake?

- Keep the current harvest limit of zero possession limits (catch and release) for walleye (Sustainable Harvest Fisheries Management Objective).
- Re-instate the use of special harvest licences to allow a small number of walleye for harvest to anglers (Sustainable Harvest Fisheries Management Objective).
- No opinion



Responses: 1070

### Additional Comments

There were 82 additional comments received. The main theme of comments (21%) provided feedback on the implementation of slots sizes as a management tool. Other themes included:

- feedback on maintaining catch and release to achieve a faster recovery (15%), and
- support for re-introduction of the special harvest licensing (15%).

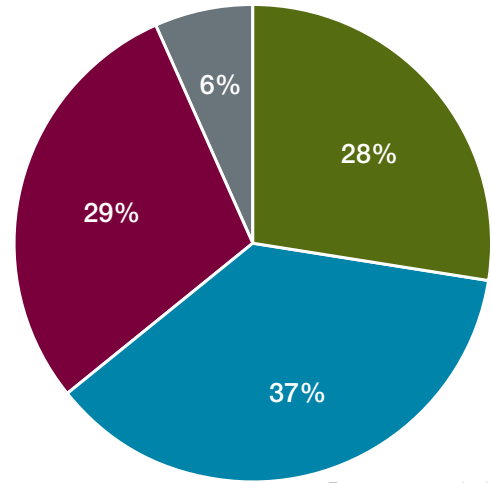
Other comments included topics such as stocking walleye, Indigenous harvest management, and the exploration of creative regulations as alternatives to current regulation options.





Which walleye harvest size regulation do you support at Lesser Slave Lake?

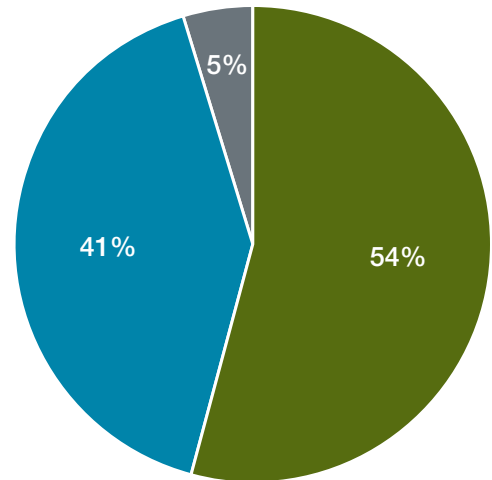
- Harvest of fish over 50 cm (Sustainable Harvest Fisheries Management Objective)
- Harvest of fish between 45 cm and 50 cm (Experimental Harvest Fisheries Management Objective)
- Harvest of fish between 50 cm and 55 cm (Experimental Harvest Fisheries Management Objective)
- No opinion



Responses: 1070

Which walleye possession limit do you support at Lesser Slave Lake?

- Harvest of one fish per day in both the open water and winter seasons (May 15 – March 31)
- Status quo. Harvest of one fish per day in the open water season (May 15 to October 31) and two fish in the hard water winter season (November 1 to March 31).
- No opinion



Responses: 1070

**Additional Comments**

There were 205 additional comments received. The main theme of comments (36%) provided feedback on the sportfishing regulations, including support or concern regarding harvest slot limits, minimum size limits, bag limits and special harvest licenses. Other themes included:

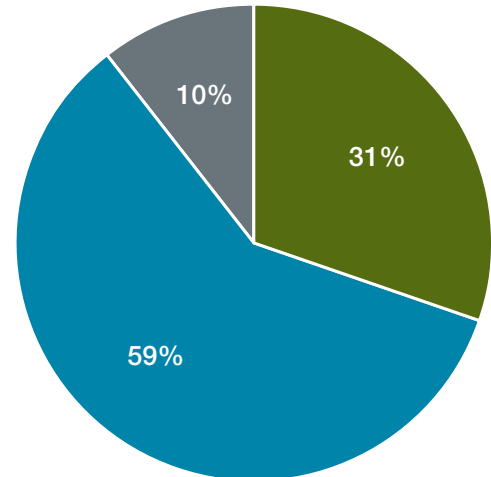
- the need for increased enforcement presence to ensure regulation compliance and address concerns of illegal harvest visible at campgrounds and access points (29%), and
- concern around Indigenous harvest (20%).

Other comments included concerns about declining water quality, development impacts on fish and fish habitat, and walleye stocking as a recovery tool.

## Southern Alberta Sportfishing Regulations

Which trout sportfishing regulation and management objective do you support at Pine Coulee Reservoir?

- Keep the regulations as is (five trout, open all year, bait and baitfish allowed) to continue managing Pine Coulee as a stocked Put-and-Take Trout Fishery.
- Implement regulations to be open April 1 to Oct 31, allow the harvest of one rainbow trout larger than 50cm, prohibit the use of bait and bait fish, and adjust the current rainbow trout stocking program (Quality Stocked Fishery Management Objective).
- No opinion



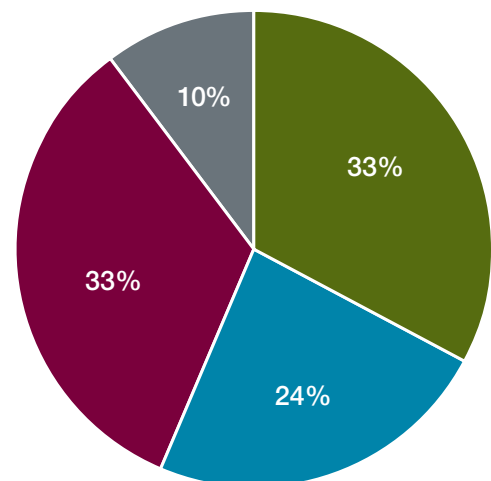
Responses: 1005

There were 159 additional comments received. The main theme of comments (32%) were around the proposed length of the angling season, with respondents asking for it to be open year-round (17.6%) or suggesting different variations on the provided options in the survey (14.5%). Other notable themes included:

- Support for a catch and release fishery (6.9%),
- Suggested changes in gear restrictions (5.0%),
- Desire to return to a stocked walleye fishery (3.8%) and
- Desire to stock other species in the reservoir (3.1%).

Which walleye sportfishing regulation and management objective do you support at Crawling Valley Reservoir?

- Keep the current regulation of zero possession limit (catch and release) for walleye (Old Growth/Trophy Fisheries Management Objective)
- Change the regulation to Special Harvest Licence (Sustainable Harvest Fisheries Management Objective)
- Change regulation to one walleye over 50 cm (Sustainable Harvest Fisheries Management Objective)
- No opinion



Responses: 1004

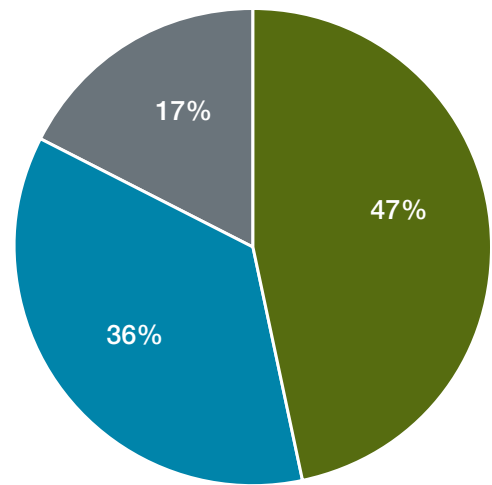
There were 121 additional comments received. The main theme of comments (33%) provided feedback that consideration be given for harvest slot size regulations for walleye and concern of overharvesting large breeding sized fish. Other notable themes included:

- Support for managing walleye in terms of a quality-trophy fishery and maintaining catch and release regulations (15%),
- Comments on managing walleye with a Special Harvest Licence (11%),
- The need for greater enforcement at this waterbody (7%), and
- mention of how this reservoir used to be managed for a rainbow trout fishery (3%).

The remaining comments covered topics such as stocking walleye, gear restrictions (barbless hooks, no treble hooks, bait ban), allowing for pike harvest and generally more liberal harvest opportunities for fish from this reservoir.

**Which Northern pike sportfishing regulation and management objective do you support at Clear Lake?**

- Change the regulation to zero possession limit (catch and release) - Old Growth/Trophy Fisheries Management Objective
- Change the regulation to one Northern pike over 63 cm to maintain a Sustainable Harvest Fisheries Objective
- No opinion



Responses: 1004

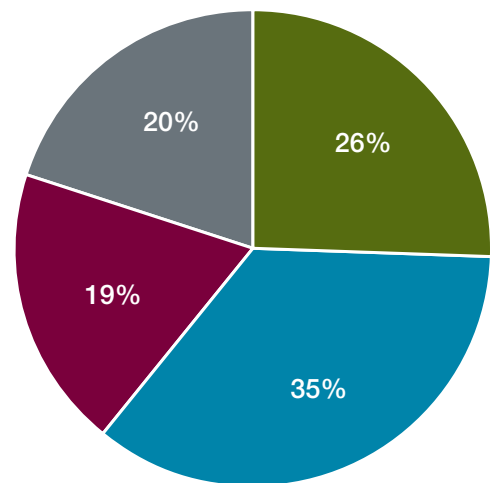
There were 94 additional comments received. The main theme of comments (24%) provided feedback in full support of maintaining the quality fisheries management objective for Northern pike at Clear Lake. Other notable themes included:

- Consideration should be given for a harvest slot size regulation instead of the two listed options (22%),
- Comments on harvesting smaller sized pike with a maximum size regulation and avoidance of killing big breed fish (10%),
- Consideration of further gear and fishing restrictions (6%) be considered such as: single barbless hooks, bait ban, fly fishing only, no ice fishing/winter closure, and
- Mentioning of habitat concerns on water supply and levels (6%) were also shared.

The remaining comments covered topics such as stocking of other fish species, leave the regulation as is, support for the 1 over 63cm pike regulation, and on greater enforcement needed.

**Which walleye sportfishing regulation and management objective do you support at Sherburne Reservoir?**

- Change regulation to zero possession limit (catch and release) - Old Growth/Trophy Fisheries Management Objective
- Change the regulation to one walleye over 50 cm - Sustainable Harvest Fisheries Management Objective
- Change the regulation to Special Harvest Licence (SHL) - Sustainable Harvest Fisheries Management Objective
- No opinion



Responses: 1004

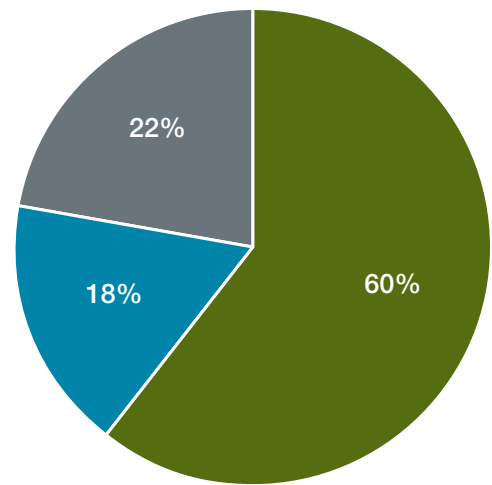
There were 91 additional comments received. The main theme of these comments (27%) provided feedback that consideration be given for harvest slot size regulations for walleye and concern of overharvesting large breeding sized fish. Other notable themes included:

- Feedback that supported managing walleye with a minimum size regulation of 1 over 50cm (19%).
- Comments on pike regulations to allow harvest and regulations for perch and burbot (10%), and
- Support for managing walleye with a Special Harvest Licence – walleye tags (9%) were also shared.

The remaining comments covered topics such as supporting changing the walleye management objective to a quality fishery with a catch and release regulation, walleye stocking, gear or fishing restrictions (i.e. single barbless hooks), boat launch access, and need for increased enforcement at this reservoir.

Do you support stocking walleye into Brazeau Canal, with the intention of creating a put-grow-and-take harvest fishery?

- Yes
- No
- No opinion



Responses: 1004

There were 67 additional comments received. The majority of comments (55%) were provided by respondents who were opposed to stocking walleye in Brazeau Canal to create a put-grow-and-take fishery. Other notable themes included:

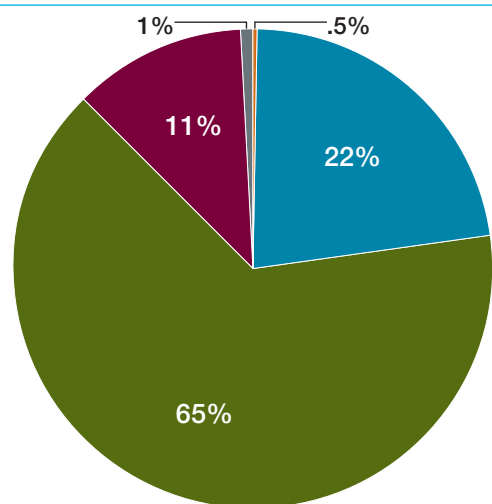
- concern about the impact of stocking walleye on the existing Northern pike fishery (27%),
- a desire for fisheries management to focus on native fish species instead of stocking (10%), and
- opposition to walleye stocking in general or the preference for other species to be stocked instead (21%),
- concern about the costs and resources required for stocking walleye (10%).
- concern about the uncertainty of success and impacts of the proposed stocking (18%),

Other comments included suggestions for changes to Northern pike management, questions about the suitability of Brazeau Canal to support walleye, and requests for other regulation tools (e.g. barbless hooks and Special Harvest Licences (SHL)).

## Demographic questions

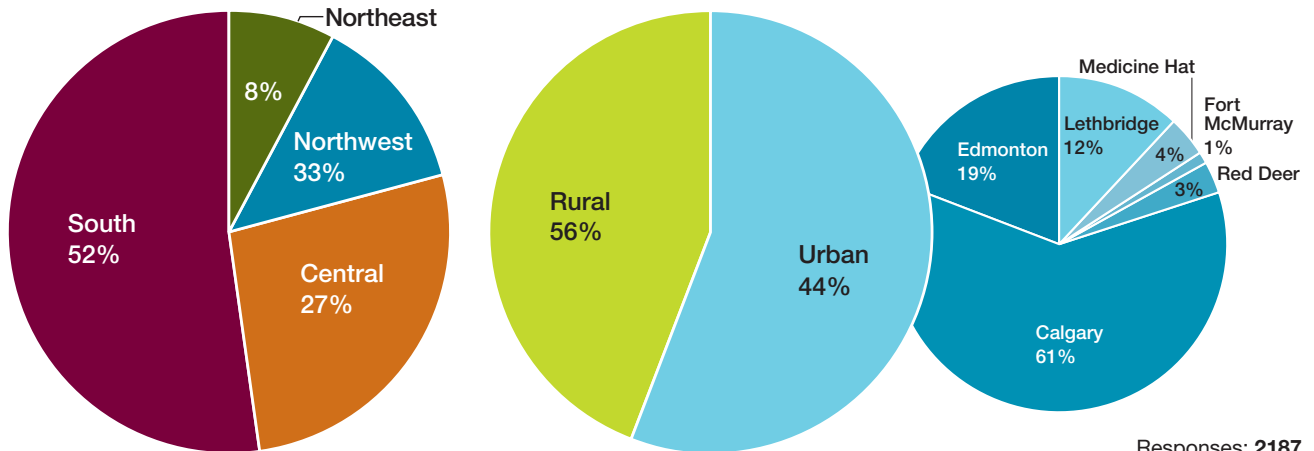
What is your age range?

- 15 or younger
- 16 - 34
- 35 - 64
- 65 or older
- Prefer not to say



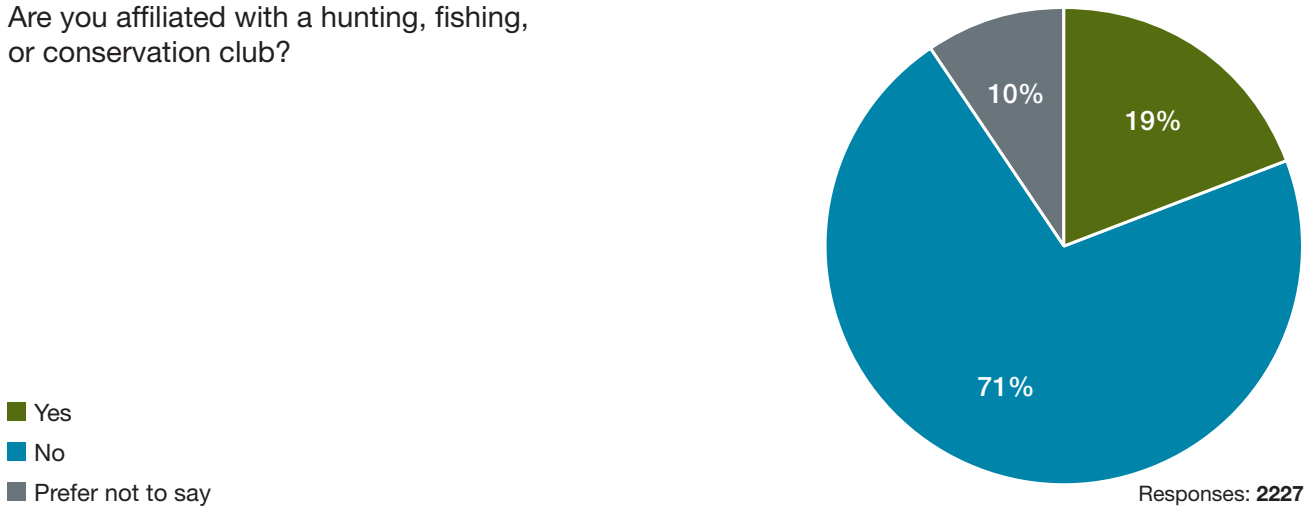
Responses: 2227

What is your postal code?



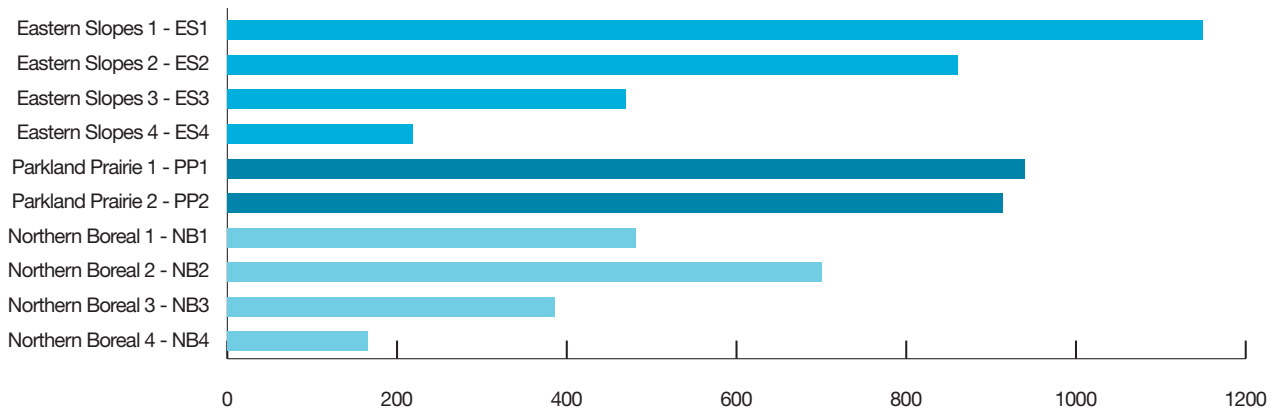
Responses: 2187

Are you affiliated with a hunting, fishing, or conservation club?



Responses: 2227

In which Fish Management Zones do you go fishing?



Responses: 2227

## Appendix – Engagement Background References

The following informational resources were available to participants through the Alberta.ca engagement page. They were provided to inform and educate participants on a range of topics related to the content of this engagement.

### General Fisheries Resources

- Annual sportfishing regulation engagement factsheet: <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/annual-sportfishing-regulation-engagement>
- Fisheries management: <https://mywildalberta.ca/fishing/fisheries-management/default.aspx>
- Fall Index Netting: <https://www.alberta.ca/fall-index-netting.aspx>
- Angling guide licence: <https://mywildalberta.ca/buy-licences/fishing-licenses-fees/angling-guide-licence.aspx>
- Native trout recovery: <https://www.alberta.ca/native-trout-recovery.aspx>
- Fish stocking: <https://mywildalberta.ca/fishing/fish-stocking/default.aspx>
- Fish conservation and management strategy: <https://www.alberta.ca/fish-conservation-and-management-strategy.aspx>

### Fisheries Management Updates

**Webinar recording** – Provincial Fisheries and Sportfishing Update: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ge9le3qxOs>

#### Consultation items:

Angling restrictions during periods of low flow and high temperatures

#### Updates:

- Angling Guide Licence
- Assessing harvest slot limit regulations
- 2021 walleye stocking program
- Competitive fishing event licence updates
- E-tag pilot for walleye special harvest licences

### Southern Alberta Resources

**Webinar Recording** – Southern Alberta 2022-23 Sportfishing Regulation Engagement: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q5l6nv-NR9k>

#### Consultation Items:

- Brazeau Canal
- Clear Lake

- Crawling Valley Reservoir
- Pine Coulee Reservoir
- Sherburne Reservoir

#### Notification Items:

- Clearwater River and North Saskatchewan River
- Forty Mile Coulee Reservoir

### Northern Alberta Resources

**Webinar Recording** – Northern Alberta 2022-23 Sportfishing Regulation Engagement: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C\\_OL4Wm6lbA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_OL4Wm6lbA)

#### Consultation Items:

- Lesser Slave Lake (Walleye)
- Minnow Lake
- Smoke Lake
- Wadlin Lake (Walleye)

#### Notification Items:

- Gods Lake
- Country Sportsplex Pond
- Lesser Slave Lake (Northern pike)
- Lesser Slave Lake Tributaries
- Shiningbank Lake
- Talbot Lake
- Wadlin Lake (Northern pike)

### Related

- Fisheries engagements: <https://www.alberta.ca/fisheries-engagements.aspx>
- 2021-22 Sportfishing regulations engagement: <https://www.alberta.ca/2021-22-sportfishing-regulations-engagement.aspx>
- Fish and wildlife regulations and resources: <https://www.alberta.ca/fish-wildlife-regulations-and-resources.aspx>
- My Wild Alberta Fishing Regulations: <https://mywildalberta.ca/fishing/regulations/default.aspx>

## Educational Webinar Statistics

| Title   | Link  | Views (at time of engagement close) | Watch time (hours) | Average view duration |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Provincial Fisheries and Sportfishing Update                | <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ge9le3qxOs">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ge9le3qxOs</a> | 346                                 | 85.5               | 14:48                 |
| Southern Alberta 2022-23 Sportfishing Regulation Engagement | <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q5l6nv-NR9k">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q5l6nv-NR9k</a> | 427                                 | 110.4              | 15:26                 |
| Northern Alberta 2022-23 Sportfishing Regulation Engagement | <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_OL4Wm6lbA">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_OL4Wm6lbA</a> | 326                                 | 67.7               | 13:02                 |

Alberta 