

Special Harvest Licence for Walleye

What is a Special Harvest Licence?

The Special Harvest Licence (SHL) program began in 2006, and was modelled after Alberta's hunting draw process. It allows limited harvest opportunities of walleye at waterbodies where regular size and bag limits would be unsustainable. It is a way to share fish among anglers, and provide harvest opportunities at waterbodies that would otherwise have a catch and release regulation. Walleye are currently the only species managed through the SHL program.

Why do we need a Special Harvest Licence for Walleye?

Walleye are a very popular sportfish in Alberta. Managing walleye in Alberta is challenging:

- there are relatively few waterbodies that support the species, and
- Alberta's relatively cool climate results in low productivity for walleye and other fish compared to places with warmer climates, like eastern Canada.

This program is currently in place at 18 lakes in Alberta, and has been successful in recovering or maintaining sustainable walleye populations and fisheries.

How does it work?

Fisheries biologists monitor fish populations through surveys, such as Fall Index Netting assessments. These surveys allow biologists to estimate the number of fish present in each waterbody and their sizes. From this information, biologists calculate how many fish can be removed (harvested) from the population, while still sustaining a healthy population. SHL opportunities change year-to-year based on the status of the fish population in each waterbody.

While SHLs can be an effective management tool for other high-risk fish populations, the rate of recovery is slower compared to catch and release regulations.



Obtaining a Special Harvest Licence

Walleye SHLs are divided into three size classes:

- Class A (>50cm),
- Class B (43-50cm), and
- Class C (<43cm).

Not all size classes are available at all lakes.

Anglers can apply for a Class A (>50cm) or a Class B (43-50cm) SHL at preferred lakes, through a draw system. If successfully drawn, applicants can purchase a licence for two Class A or two Class B tags.

Class C licences for two walleye <43cm are available for purchase on a first-come first served basis. Undersubscribed Class A or B licences can be purchased once the draws are completed.

Successful SHL drawn applicants will also be able to purchase an additional undersubscribed SHL licence later in the season. Applicants will be limited to one undersubscribed licence, in addition to a drawn SHL.

Priority points are given to anglers who apply for a Class A or B SHL, but do not receive one that year. Priority points increase your likelihood of being drawn for a SHL – the more points you have, the better your chances. Once you are drawn for a SHL, your priority points drop to zero. If you do not apply for a SHL, you do not gain any priority points for that year.

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Log in to your [AlbertaRELM account](#) to view important dates, and to purchase your draw, special harvest licence, or undersubscribed licence.