



**Yukon
Water Board**

2024 – 2025

ANNUAL REPORT



yukonwaterboard.ca



Pickhandle Lakes Habitat Protection Area
Photo credit: Government of Yukon / Andrew Strain

Front cover: Bonnet Plume River (Tsaih Tl'ak Njik)
Photo credit: Government of Yukon

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South Canol Road at Gravel Creek
Photo credit: Government of Yukon

Message from the Vice-Chairperson

On behalf of the Yukon Water Board and Secretariat, I am pleased to present the Yukon Water Board's inaugural Annual Report highlighting the Board's regulatory activities and responsibilities undertaken throughout 2024 – 2025. This report reflects the commitment of our operations to fair, transparent and effective decision-making that serves all Yukon communities and Canadians more broadly.

In addition to deliberating many applications for water licences and Class 4 placer land use operating plans, the Board was also faced with a broad range of significant issues requiring attention over the past year. From being involved in litigation relating to financial security, reacting to water related requirements at the Eagle Gold Mine and deliberating a water use dispute from Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation, the year seemed to go by quickly.

As can be noted from the above examples, the Yukon's industrial landscape continues to evolve, so too does the complexity of the licensing processes. Applications are increasingly intricate, interventions more substantive and policy considerations more plentiful. In response, the Board continues to build on working relationships with the Yukon's assessment and regulatory community to improve licensing efficiencies to meet growing demands and regulatory expectations.

I would be remiss if I didn't take a moment to thank all of the hard-working individuals, applicants, organizations and governments who contribute to the process to regulate our most precious resource in Yukon. I know that the Board is deeply appreciative of the professionalism and integrity shown by all.



Russ Smoler
Vice-Chairperson



Introduction

Pursuant to the Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Yukon and the Yukon Water Board signed December 18, 2023, the Board is required to provide an annual report. The Minister will table the report annually in the Legislative Assembly and the Board will post it publicly to its website.

The 2024 – 2025 annual report summarizes the function and structure of the Yukon Water Board and its Secretariat and provides an overview of the Board’s key initiatives and activities during the period of April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025. It is the first annual report issued by the Board.



North Klondike Highway bridge over the Yukon River at Carmacks
Photo credit: Government of Yukon / Andrew Strain

About the Yukon Water Board

Legislated Responsibilities

The Yukon Water Board (“Board”) serves as the impartial, independent regulator for licensing the use of water and the deposit of waste to water across Yukon.

As an administrative tribunal, the Board operates under authority delegated by the Government of Yukon through the *Waters Act* to provide for the conservation, development and utilization of waters in a way that delivers optimum benefits for all Canadians and particularly for the residents of Yukon.

The Board’s work is also shaped by its delegated responsibilities under Chapter 14 of the Yukon First Nations’ Final Agreements, whose purpose is to maintain the water of the Yukon in a natural condition while providing for its sustainable use.

In addition to its responsibilities for Yukon’s water, the Board is delegated certain obligations as the Chief of Placer Land Use regarding Class 4 placer land use operations. The Government of Yukon transferred authority to the Board to issue new, amended and renewed operating plans, determine security and authorize assignments for Class 4 placer land use operations.

When issuing water licences and Class 4 placer land use approvals (“Approvals”), the Board has further responsibilities and obligations under the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act* (“YESAA”).

Natural Justice and Procedural Fairness

The Board conducts all proceedings in accordance with the principles of procedural fairness and natural justice. This ensures that when making decisions that affect a person’s rights, privileges or interests, the Board follows fair and transparent processes.

The Board’s Rules of Procedure and Conflict of Interest Rules support its ability to adhere to the principles of natural justice. Guiding Principles developed by the Board direct its actions and decisions while conducting its business.

The Yukon Water Board plays a vital role in the stewardship and sustainable use of Yukon’s water resources. Its blend of legislated authority, citizen governance, commitment to public engagement and adherence to procedural standards make it a cornerstone of Yukon’s regulatory and environmental landscape.

Water Licensing and Approval Processes

The framework for the water licensing and Approvals processes is set out in the *Waters Act* and *Waters Regulation*, *Placer Mining Act* and *Placer Mining Land Use Regulation*, the Yukon First Nations’ Final Agreements, YESAA and the Board’s Rules of Procedure. Broadly, the process includes an adequacy review, public comment period, Board review and licensing and Approval decisions.

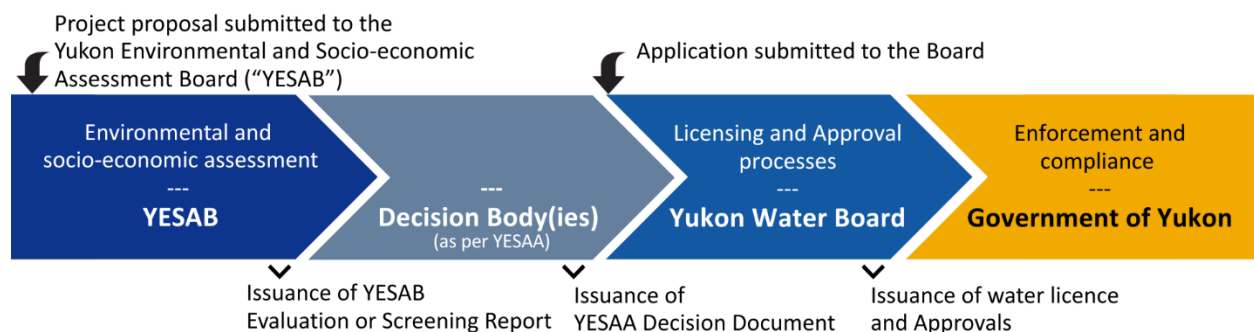
Figure 1: Licensing and Approvals process for applications made to the Board.



The Board’s Role in Yukon’s Assessment and Regulatory Environment

Yukon’s assessment and regulatory environment is made up of a unique configuration of boards, governments and the public which guide the review of projects from conception through assessment, licensing and enforcement. The Board plays a pivotal role in this process as the regulator issuing water licences and Approvals.

Figure 2: Assessment and regulatory processes for projects relating to water use or deposit of waste to water.



Board Members

A defining feature of the Yukon Water Board is its citizen-based board structure. Its four to nine members are nominated by the Government of Yukon, the Government of Canada and the Council of Yukon First Nations. The Commissioner in Executive Council, Government of Yukon appoints members to three-year terms. The Executive Council Office (“ECO”) Minister, in consultation with the Board, designates the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson.

Board members are independent of their nominating body; members act independently and do not represent the nominating body or any special interest.

Figure 3: Yukon Water Board membership during the 2024 – 2025 reporting period.

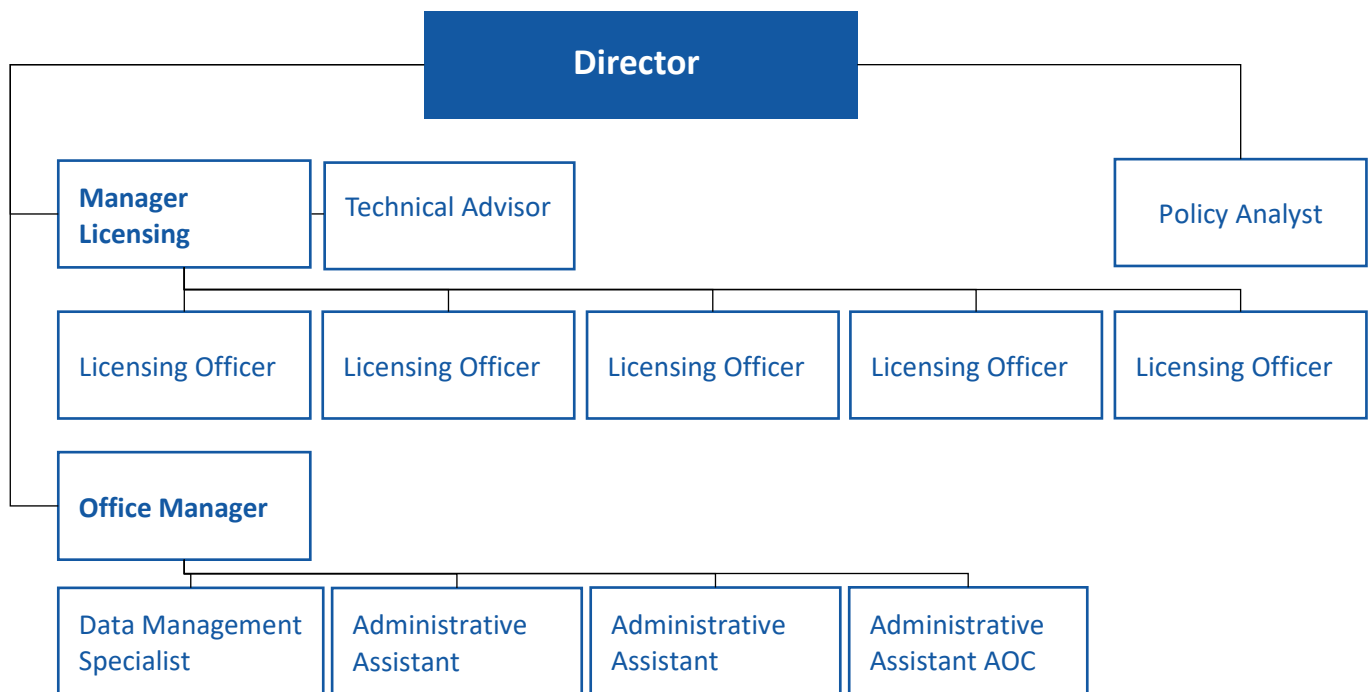
Board member	Title	Nomination	Latest consecutive term of appointment
Piers McDonald	Chairperson	Government of Yukon	September 21, 2017 to December 10, 2024 Term renewed in reporting period to December 11, 2027
Russ Smoler	Vice-Chairperson	Government of Yukon	May 15, 2018 to February 26, 2025 Term renewed in reporting period to February 26, 2028
Wesley Barrett	Member	Council of Yukon First Nations	April 20, 2023 to April 20, 2026
Anne Leckie	Member	Government of Canada, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs	April 28, 2017 to May 5, 2026
Robert McIntyre	Member	Government of Canada, Health	April 1, 2021 to September 30, 2025
Mike Pemberton	Member	Government of Canada, Environment and Climate Change	February 27, 2025 to June 24, 2025
Carl Sidney	Member	Council of Yukon First Nations	February 1, 2017 to April 20, 2026
Sam Wallingham	Member	Government of Yukon	September 18, 2018 to January 31, 2026
Bruce Warnsby	Member	Council of Yukon First Nations	August 13, 2019 to November 10, 2025

Secretariat

The Minister of ECO provides staff and support for the Board’s operations under the *Waters Act*. The Secretariat’s main functions are to support the daily Board operations and assist applicants throughout the licensing process. The Secretariat responds to public inquiries, manages the public register, manages the administration of the licensing process and hires consultants. The Secretariat serves as an impartial link between applicants, the public and the Board.

In the 2024 – 2025 reporting period, there were 14 staff positions at the Secretariat. To inform its decision-making process, the Board also retained professional and technical advisors.

Figure 4: 2024 – 2025 Yukon Water Board Secretariat organizational chart.



Year in Review

Board and Secretariat Activity



Board Meetings

In the 2024 – 2025 reporting period, the Board convened 43 meetings to address both regulatory proceedings and policy matters.

- **Monthly meetings:** Twenty-four (24) full day, regularly scheduled monthly meetings were held to address application reviews and management of the Board’s internal affairs and administration.
- **Special sittings:** Eleven (11) full-day special sittings focused on the Board’s review of evidence and post-licensing deliverables. At these meetings, the Board considered the:
 - Water use dispute application by Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation;
 - Victoria Gold Corporation 2022 Reclamation and Closure Plan;
 - Alexco Keno Hill Mining 2023 Reclamation and Closure Plan;
 - Yukon Energy Corporation five-year Monitoring and Adaptive Management Plan;
 - Victoria Gold Corporation’s application for amendment on an emergency basis; and
 - Yukon Energy Corporation’s application for the Whitehorse Rapids Generating Station licence renewal.
- **Policy meetings:** Additionally, the Board held two-day policy meetings, quarterly, to advance strategic initiatives and improve licensing efficiency.



Learnings

In May 2024, the Board and Secretariat participated in a facilitated retreat, building on initial discussions held in 2023. The retreat focused on identifying opportunities to improve internal processes and communication.

In August 2024, members of the Board and Secretariat staff completed wetlands training led by Ducks Unlimited Canada. The combined classroom and field training focused on identifying wetland classes using the *Yukon Wetland Field Guide*.

A regulatory workshop was held in December 2024 in collaboration with the Government of Yukon's Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and the Yukon Environment and Socio-Economic Assessment Board ("YESAB"). The workshop provided an interactive forum to review each organization's legal and regulatory frameworks, discuss challenges and propose solutions.

Throughout the year, the Board also hosted presentations on topics including:

- Remote sensing and drone technologies, Ducks Unlimited Canada
- Yukon's policy for the stewardship of wetlands, Government of Yukon
- YESAB panel review process, YESAB



Communications and Outreach

Members of the Board and Secretariat staff attended the following community events:

- Umbrella Final Agreement Boards and Committees meeting, January 2024
- Land Relationship Gathering, July 2024
- Pan-Territorial Environmental Assessment and Regulatory Board Forum, October 2024 (Secretariat)
- Yukon Geoscience Forum and Trade Show, November 2024

Working with Government of Yukon, the Board prepared to update its website in April 2025. Built to provide applicants and licensees with the information they need for the water licensing and Approval processes, the site is mobile-friendly and offers a user-centred approach.

Water Licence Statistics

In the 2024 – 2025 reporting period, the Board processed approximately 4% more water licence applications and issued approximately 18% more licences than in 2023 – 2024.

The tables below indicate water licence statistics for 2024 – 2025 and 2023 – 2024 (for comparison) by undertaking.

Figure 5: Water licence applications.

Undertaking	New		Renewal		Assign.		Amend.		Cancel.		Total	
	23-24	24-25	23-24	24-25	23-24	24-25	23-24	24-25	23-24	24-25	23-24	24-25
Agricultural	1	1		1							1	2
Conservation											0	0
Industrial											0	0
Miscellaneous	7	5	1	1	1				5		14	6
Municipal	1	2	1	1			1		1		4	3
Placer mining	28	25	16	41	21	20	12	10	5		82	96
Power (hydro)				2							0	2
Quartz mining	2*						3**	1***			5	1
Recreational				1					1		1	1
Total	39	33	18	47	22	20	16	11	12	0	107	111

*includes one application for water use dispute.

**includes two applications for amendment on an emergency basis.

***includes one application for amendment on an emergency basis.

Figure 6: Water licence applications by Type.

Undertaking	Type A		Type B	
	23-24	24-25	23-24	24-25
Agricultural			1	2
Conservation				
Industrial				
Miscellaneous			14	6
Municipal	1	1	3	2
Placer mining			82	96
Power (hydro)		2		
Quartz mining	1	1	4	
Recreational			1	1
Total	2	4	105	107

Figure 7: Water licence applications withdrawn.

Undertaking	Applications withdrawn	
	23-24	24-25
Agricultural		
Conservation		
Industrial		
Miscellaneous		
Municipal		
Placer mining	6	1
Power (hydro)		
Quartz mining		
Recreational		
Total	6	1

Note: the applications withdrawn may not directly correlate with the applications received in the reporting period. For example, applications received in 2022 – 2023 may be withdrawn in 2024 – 2025.

Figure 8: Water licences and cancellations.

Undertaking	New		Renewal		Assign.		Amend.		Cancel.		Total	
	23-24	24-25	23-24	24-25	23-24	24-25	23-24	24-25	23-24	24-25	23-24	24-25
Agricultural	1			1							1	1
Conservation											0	0
Industrial											0	0
Miscellaneous	2	7	1	1	2		3		1	2	9	10
Municipal	1	1		3				1		1	1	6
Placer mining	18	22	21	13	13	24	11	10	1	5	64	74
Power (hydro)											0	0
Quartz mining			1		1		2*	2**			4	2
Recreational	1			1							1	1
Total	23	30	23	19	16	24	16	13	2	8	80	94

*includes two amendments licensed on an emergency basis.

**includes one amendment licensed on an emergency basis.

Figure 9: Water licences and cancellations by Type.

Undertaking	Type A		Type B	
	23-24	24-25	23-24	24-25
Agricultural			1	1
Conservation				
Industrial				
Miscellaneous			9	10
Municipal		2	1	4
Placer mining			64	74
Power (hydro)				
Quartz mining		1	4	1
Recreational			1	1
Total	0	3	80	91

Public Hearings

There were no public hearings held in 2023 – 2024 and 2024 – 2025.

Type A Proceedings

Type A applications, while fewer in quantity, have complex considerations generally requiring more time and resources than applications for Type B licences.

Under the *Waters Act*, the Board must hold public hearings for Type A water licences, which require a 35-day notice period. Technical and administrative pre-hearing conferences may also be held.

Because of the technical complexity of Type A undertakings, the Board may engage technical advisors to support its understanding of evidence and post-licensing deliverables (e.g., Reclamation and Closure Plans and Adaptive Management Plans).

Class 4 Placer Land Use Operation Statistics

Applications and issuance of Approvals typically mirror applications and issuance of water licences for placer undertakings.

Figure 10: Applications and Approvals issued for Class 4 placer land use operations, reflective of water licences issued.

Undertaking	Applications										Approvals Issued	
	New		Renewal		Assign.		Amend.		Total		23-24	24-25
	23-24	24-25	23-24	24-25	23-24	24-25	23-24	24-25	23-24	24-25		
Class 4 Placer	28	25	16	41	21	20	12	10	77	96	63	69

Review and Approval of Water Licence Deliverables

As part of their water licensing conditions, some Type A and Type B licensees may be required to submit post-licensing deliverables, such as Reclamation and Closure Plans (“RCP”), Adaptive Management Plans (“AMP”) and Monitoring and Adaptive Management Plans (“MAMP”). The Board and Secretariat contribute a considerable amount of time and resources to review these complex and important planning documents.

The following table presents the RCPs, AMPs and MAMPs that the Board reviewed in 2024 – 2025.

Figure 11: RCPs, AMPs and MAMPs.

	2024									2025		
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
QZ14-041 Victoria Gold Corp. 2022 RCP	•	•			•							
QZ21-012 Elsa Reclamation and Development Company Ltd. AMP	•			•		•	•	•	•			•
QZ19-058-1 Fireweed Metals Corp. 2022 RCP	•	•	•	•	•							
QZ18-044 Alexco Keno Hill Mining Corp. 2023 RCP	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•		
QZ20-035 Selwyn Chihong Mining Ltd. 2023 RCP	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•		
HY22-016 Yukon Energy Corporation, five-year MAMP		•		•	•			•	•	•	•	

Legend

- Licence deliverable in the adequacy and Board review phases.
- Licence deliverable presented to the Board at monthly meetings or special sittings. Presentations range from updates to technical analyses.

Key Regulatory Highlights

Eagle Gold Mine

In the 2024 – 2025 reporting period, the Board engaged in several regulatory actions related to the Eagle Gold Mine (licence QZ14-041-1):

➤ **Review and Approval of the 2022 Reclamation and Closure Plan**

The Board approved the Victoria Gold Corporation’s (“VGC”) 2022 RCP in July 2024, marking the second collaborative review and approval with the Government of Yukon’s Department of Energy, Mines and Resources.

➤ **2020 Reclamation and Closure Plan Appeal**

In April 2024, the Supreme Court of Yukon (“SCY”) heard VGC’s appeal and judicial review of the Board’s 2020 RCP security order. Although the case was declared moot in September 2024 due to VGC’s receivership following the heap leach facility (“HLF”) failure, the SCY’s conclusions related to the disclosure of consultant deliverables were adopted into the Board’s procedures.

➤ **Heap Leach Facility Failure**

In response to the Eagle Gold Mine’s HLF failure in June 2024, the Board responded to a request from the First Nation of Na-cho Nyäk Dun to pause mining activity in its Traditional Territory. The Board acknowledged the gravity of the situation, delaying the licensing process on a case-by-case basis while it maintained its statutory obligations under the *Waters Act*.

➤ **Licence Amendment on an Emergency Basis**

The receiver, PricewaterhouseCoopers Inc., applied for an amendment to the mine’s water licence on an emergency basis in November 2024. The Board determined that the circumstances were an emergency and amended the licence in December 2024.

Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation Water Use Dispute

In February 2023, Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation (“LSCFN”) submitted a water use dispute application under section 14.11 of the LSCFN Final Agreement. The application (QZ23-015), concerning a water licence issued to Mount Nansen Remediation Limited Partnership (QZ19-055), was the second—and most substantive—water use dispute received by the Board. It has prompted the development of precedent-setting procedures, including the creation of Supplementary Rules of Procedure specific to application QZ23-015.

Yukon Energy Corporation Licence Renewal Applications

In October 2024, the Yukon Energy Corporation (“YEC”) applied to renew its Type A hydro (power) water licence (HY99-010-2) for the operation of the Whitehorse Rapids Generating Station and the Lewes Control Structure. YEC proposed the renewal with changes to the use, flow, quality and quantity of water for a 20-year term.

In March 2025, YEC applied to renew the same licence (HY99-010-2) for a 60-day term with no changes to the existing conditions. Under the *Waters Act* section 19(3)(b), the Board was not required to hold a public hearing due to the proposed 60-day term.

Financial Statements

Pursuant to the *Waters Act*, the Minister of ECO provides staff, technical advisers and administrative support to enable the Board’s work. The Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Yukon and the Board outlines the parties’ responsibility for the budget and financial activities of the Board.

Figure 12: Financial statements of the Board.

Statement of Revenues and Expenditures		
April 1, 2024 – March 31, 2025		
REVENUE		
Water Licence Fees	(48,443)	
Total Revenues		-\$48,443
EXPENDITURES		
Wages and Benefits	1,577,689	
Board Meetings	424,119	
Advertising	28,269	
Office Expenses	28,543	
Training	13,229	
Service Contracts	738,876	
Annual Report	-	
Outreach	8,395	
Public Hearings	-	
Total Expenditures		\$2,819,120
Net Expenditures		\$2,770,677





Kathleen Lake, Kluane National Park and Reserve, Cottonwood Trail
Photo credit: Government of Yukon


Back cover: Tsâwnjik Chu (Nordenskiöld) Habitat Protection Area
Photo credit: Government of Yukon / Andrew Strain



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