

Fish Research Licence FAQs

Fish Research Licences

1. In what cases do I need to apply for a Fish Research Licence (FRL)?

Anyone (person, agency or institution) whose work involves collecting, holding or sampling fish for inventory, research, educational or promotional purposes in Alberta must obtain an FRL. Under the Federal Fisheries Act, "fish" includes:

- parts of fish
- shellfish, crustaceans, marine animals and parts of shellfish, crustaceans and marine animals
- the eggs, sperm, spawn, larvae, spat or juvenile stages of fish, shellfish, crustaceans and marine animals.

2. Who do I contact for submitting an application? What if I receive an out-of-office reply from that individual?

Applications can be submitted via email to the Fisheries Management Area contacts found at:

[//http://srd.alberta.ca/AboutESRD/ESRDContacts-FisheriesManagementAreaContacts-Sep2012.pdf](http://srd.alberta.ca/AboutESRD/ESRDContacts-FisheriesManagementAreaContacts-Sep2012.pdf)

Most areas will have more than one contact identified on the Fisheries Management Area Contact Map. If you receive out-of-office replies from both and they do not provide an alternative contact you will have two options: (1) If the request is not urgent/emergency and the individual(s) will be back in the office (based on their out-of-office response) in time to process your request then nothing more is required as the area contacts will process your request as soon as they return or (2) if urgent/emergency or the individual(s) will not be back in the office prior to scheduled field work then you should contact the Area office to see who might be available to help with your request or, if stated, the alternative contact named in the out-of-office reply.

Note that Fisheries Management Branch shall always strive to process FRL applications in the timeliest manner; however, applicants are encouraged to submit applications well in advance of proposed works (at least 10 business days) and that Fisheries Management Branch may take up to 10 business days to process requests.

Area office phone numbers can be found at:

[//http://srd/alberta.ca/AboutESRD/ESRDContacts/FishandWildlifeOfficeContacts.aspx](http://srd/alberta.ca/AboutESRD/ESRDContacts/FishandWildlifeOfficeContacts.aspx)

3. My project spans more than one Area. Do I send my application to both Fisheries Management Area contacts?

Projects frequently span two or more Fisheries Management Areas. Submit your electronic application to all the contacts in the same e-mail. The Area contacts will be responsible for coordinating which Area will issue the FRL within a timely manner. If an out-of-office reply is received from one of the Area contacts you are encouraged to forward this out-of-office information to the other area contacts on the original submission.

4. If I have information that does not 'fit' into the loadform should I submit it (such as digital photos)?

While not required, if the information is relevant and provides clarity to the survey results, feel free to submit digital photos or other information that is not compatible with the loadform. The local Area contact may be able to keep this in local files for future reference or future inclusion into FWMIS.

5. I found additional data files that were accidentally omitted in my original FWMIS loadform submission. Can I still submit it?

Yes. Contact the Area Fisheries Contact with this information. They will either take this information from you or request you to revise the submitted loadform with this 'new' information and re-submit it.

6. Can I have a licence that is valid for the entire year (or span multiple years)?

Depending on the works proposed it is valid to have a licence for the entire FISCAL year (April 1st to March 31st), however, Fisheries Management staff first must review the methodologies proposed, locations, species that may be encountered (or targeted), possible closures or restricted activity periods, along with other information in the application to determine the suitability of the activity dates proposed. Thus an application that specifies an entire year may not be approved based on review of the above factors. Fisheries Management Branch staff will provide rationale for their decision in such cases.

Fish Research Licences, as a standard practice, are not approved past the FISCAL year (March 31st). On multi-year projects this gives Fisheries Management staff the opportunity to review data returns from the project on an annual basis and this way if there are any issues with their collection practices, data return, fish identification, etc we can address them before we issue the next licence. Only in rare cases will an FRL extend past March 31st and will typically only do so by less than 30 days. An example is a winter angler/creel surveys commenced in one fiscal year that are proposed to be completed in early April of the next fiscal year.

7. Is there an accelerated process for receiving licences? In some instances, such as fish rescues, 10 working days is too long to wait.

There is no accelerated process for receiving a Fish Research Licence. Fisheries Management staff strive to review and process all applications in the timeliest manner possible that accounts for other workload demands. Applicants shall always be encouraged to provide adequate time for processing applications (which is the reason for requesting applicants to apply at least 10 business days in advance of most projects) as well as due diligence in anticipating where activities such as fish rescues may be necessary such that planning may be conducted well in advance.

In rare cases, such as emergencies or due to unforeseen circumstances, it may not be possible for applicants to provide such lead time. In these cases, the applicant should, on the application form indicate the reasons for requiring the Licence in an expedited manner. Applicants should also indicate the 'emergency' on the email subject line (if applying by email) and preferably contact the Area Fisheries Contact by phone prior to application. Fisheries Management staff will strive to meet the request as best as possible within normal business hours.

8. Is there anything I can do to reduce the review and processing time?

A fully completed application form is the most important way to reduce the review and processing time. It is also recommended that maps and/or digital shapefiles accompany the application as it may reduce staff time plotting and reviewing these locations (particularly when many sites are involved). Contacting the area office prior to submitting an application will also give the applicant a better idea of the processing time particularly on larger projects. In the case of large projects (EIA assessments) or research projects the proponent is HIGHLY encouraged to discuss such projects with the Area Fisheries Contact well in advance (> 30 days) prior to submitting an application.

9. My application this year is for the same work I received a licence for last year. Do I have to submit another application or can I just have the dates amended?

Yes, you will be required to submit a new application, however, on the application check mark the box that states "Renewal of existing Application: Provide FRL #:" and provide your previous FRL number as this will assist in processing the application and reduce the amount of processing time. As a Fisheries Management standard licences are not typically issued beyond fiscal years (April 1st to March 31st).

10. I have more than one fisheries crew working on a project under an FRL. Can they have copies of the FRL with them (I would only have 1 original)?

Yes, however, copies must have the signature of the Fisheries Management Branch contact and the signature of the applicant (the person identified as the Applicant on the application form) for the licence to be valid. The person(s) carrying the licence must be one identified on the Fish Research Licence as an authorized holder of the licence (either the applicant or as an additional person identified under the permit). Note that in cases where multiple crews are working in the same general area, each crew shall have a copy of the signed licence.

11. I am treaty Indian – do I need to apply for a FRL for research/inventory work being done on a First Nation Indian Reserve or outside of a First Nation Indian Reserve?

Yes, Treaty members would need to apply for a Fish Research Licence as Treaty Indians are able to collect/harvest fish for subsistence purposes only. Collecting fish for research/inventory/fish salvage purposes are not considered to fall into that category.

12. Why do I need to notify the Area Fisheries Management Branch office prior to conducting field work?

Notification is necessary so that the Area Fisheries contact and/or District Fish and Wildlife officer are able to conduct site visits. In addition, notification assists in responding to public reports received under the Report A Poacher program.

13. What happens if I don't submit my return?

Should a licence holder not submit the FRL data return within the 90 day period after the expiry date, Fisheries Management staff will do the following:

(1) e-mail the Primary Contact person notifying them that their data return is overdue and that they are currently in non-compliance with their condition of licence, and that the licensee has 30 days from the date of the email to comply with the data return requirements,

(2) if a response to the email has not been received within 30 days, the primary contact person and/or organization will be contacted by phone, followed by a formal registered letter being sent to the applicant/company advising that they are currently in non-compliance with their condition of licence. The letter will also indicate that the District Fish and Wildlife officer has been notified of the non-compliance under the *Alberta Fisheries Act*.

(3) if after the expiry of the date given in the registered letter no response has been received, the company **and** applicant shall be issued a letter indicating that no further fish research licences shall be approved/issued until such time as compliance is achieved for outstanding licences. The letter will indicate that the District Fish and Wildlife officer has been notified of the non-compliance under the *Alberta Fisheries Act* and shall be to their discretion in regarding to proceeding with legislative action.

14. Can I receive my FRL digitally (by email) and use it immediately (versus waiting for the paper copy to arrive)? Do I have to come to the Area office to pick it up?

Yes, Fisheries Management staff will issue your Fish Research Licence via email in a secure format that does not allow the licence to be altered. Any alteration to the original licence shall cause the licence to be invalid. A licence received via email must be signed by the applicant before it is valid, after which it may be used within the activity dates printed on the licence. A hardcopy of the licence will typically be mailed to the applicant as well.

It is not necessary for the applicant to come into a district office and pick up the licence. A scanned copy or fax copy will be sent to the client. A hard copy will follow in the mail.

15. Am I notified when my data return is received (and when it is entered into FWMIS)?

You will not be notified when your data return has been received or when it has been entered into FWMIS. If you wish to receive confirmation that your data return has been received you must request this when submitting your data return. You may be contacted, however, if there are questions regarding your data return.

16. When is my data return loaded and available to view on the Internet Mapping Framework (or captured in a FWMIS request)?

Your data return is reviewed by the issuing office and if complete will be sent to Fisheries Data Management. There, the data return is put in queue, waiting to be loaded. From the time a complete data return is received until it is available to view on the Internet Mapping Framework is typically less than one year.

17. In what cases would my application be denied?

The application may be denied for reasons including, but not limited to: (1) the project NOT providing new information, (2) the project having excessive negative impacts on fish species, (3) the research is proposed to be conducted in sensitive habitats or during times of restrictive activity, (4) the applicant not meeting competency requirements, or (5) the applicant currently being in non-compliance with an existing Fish Research Licence within Alberta. Other aspects that may be considered are (a) whether the potential risk to the public, researcher or infrastructure and/or risk of negative public perception is determined to be too great and (b) there are multiple applications for the same or similar activities. Changes to timing, location, equipment, techniques or other aspects of the proposal may be required for approval of the application.

18. Is an FRL the only approval I require to work on fish anywhere in Alberta?

Not in all cases. Other permits or approvals from other agencies and organizations may be required to access or conduct research and/or engage in collection activities on other lands within the province. Such permits or approvals could include:

- o Those relating to accessing Provincial Parks lands – contact Alberta Tourism, Parks, and Recreation.
- o Those relating to accessing Indian Reserves or Métis Settlements – contact the respective band administration office.
- o Those relating to accessing, research or collection on Federal lands – contact the appropriate Federal agency (example Parks Canada).
- o Those relating to a Species at Risk under the Species at Risk Act (SARA) – contact the appropriate Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) office.

19. If I sub-contract work approved in an FRL, is the FRL transferable to that sub-contractor?

No. The licence is only valid for the company and/or individuals listed on the licence. In this case a sub-contractor would be required to submit their own FRL application and shall in the application reference the original (or primary) contractor's FRL number. The original (or primary) contractor should also contact the Area Fisheries contact to advise that the approved works will no longer be completed by them and surrender their Licence, in order to ensure the sub-contractor's application is not denied for reasons of duplication of works (see FAQ on reasons for denial of application).

20. I have captured a fish species that is not on the ESRD List of Native and Naturalized Fish Species in Alberta, should I notify anyone?

Invasive species can harm an aquatic ecosystem irreversibly, displace native or naturalized species, and damage infrastructure. As a condition of licence, any fish species captured that is not on the List of Native and Naturalized Fish Species in Alberta requires immediate notification to the Area Fisheries contact and will require photo and voucher specimen submission for positive confirmation unless otherwise agreed to by the Area Fisheries contact. Note that two species on List of Native and Naturalized Fish Species, if captured, are also requested to provide the same notification. The Area Fisheries contact may, at their discretion, require similar notification of species, that while considered native or naturalized in Alberta, may be considered 'invasive' or 'unwanted' and suspected of being present in water bodies where work is being proposed. An example is the suspected presence of yellow perch in a trout stocked water body. Such notification assists ESRD in management of unwanted fish species in Alberta.