

Measures to avoid causing harm to fish and fish habitat

To protect fish and fish habitat, including aquatic species at risk, efforts should be made to avoid causing serious harm. The following advice will help you avoid causing harm and comply with the Fisheries Act and the Species at Risk Act.

You do **not** need to come to us for a project review if:

- you're able to incorporate the relevant measures to avoid harm into your project **and**
- you're certain that there won't be impacts to fish and fish habitat resulting from your project

However, please consult our guidance on [regulatory partnerships](#) to find out if you should submit your project to other provincial or federal agencies.

If you can't completely avoid impacts to fish and fish habitat, consult our guidance on [project types and waterbodies where our review isn't required](#).

Measures

▼ Project planning

▼ Timing

- Time work in water to respect [timing windows](#) to protect fish, including their eggs, juveniles, spawning adults and/or the organisms upon which they feed.
- Minimize duration of in-water work.
- Conduct instream work during periods of low flow, or at low tide, to further reduce the risk to fish and their habitat or to allow work in water to be isolated from flows.
- Schedule work to avoid wet, windy and rainy periods that may increase erosion and sedimentation.

▼ Site selection

- Design and plan activities and works in waterbody such that loss or disturbance to aquatic habitat is minimized and sensitive spawning habitats are avoided, and impacts to SARA-listed aquatic species, their residences or critical habitat are avoided.

- Design and construct approaches to the waterbody such that they are perpendicular to the watercourse to minimize loss or disturbance to riparian vegetation.
- Avoid building structures on meander bends, braided streams, alluvial fans, active floodplains or any other area that is inherently unstable and may result in erosion and scouring of the stream bed or the built structures.
- Undertake all instream activities in isolation of open or flowing water to maintain the natural flow of water downstream and avoid introducing sediment into the watercourse.

▼ Contaminant and spill management

- Plan activities near water such that materials such as paint, primers, blasting abrasives, rust solvents, degreasers, grout, poured concrete or other chemicals do not enter the watercourse.
- Develop a response plan that is to be implemented immediately in the event of a sediment release or spill of a deleterious substance and keep an emergency spill kit on site.
- Ensure that building material used in a watercourse has been handled and treated in a manner to prevent the release or leaching of substances into the water that may be deleterious to fish.

▼ Erosion and sediment control

- Develop and implement an Erosion and Sediment Control Plan for the site that minimizes risk of sedimentation of the waterbody during all phases of the project. Erosion and sediment control measures should be maintained until all disturbed ground has been permanently stabilized, suspended sediment has resettled to the bed of the waterbody or settling basin and runoff water is clear. The plan should, where applicable, include:
 - Installation of effective erosion and sediment control measures before starting work to prevent sediment from entering the water body.
 - Measures for managing water flowing onto the site, as well as water being pumped/diverted from the site such that sediment is filtered out prior to the water entering a waterbody. For example, pumping/diversion of water to a vegetated area, construction of a settling basin or other filtration system.
 - Site isolation measures (e.g., silt boom or silt curtain) for containing suspended sediment where in-water work is required (e.g., dredging, underwater cable installation).
 - Measures for containing and stabilizing waste material (e.g., dredging spoils, construction waste and materials, commercial logging waste, uprooted or cut

aquatic plants, accumulated debris) above the high water mark of nearby waterbodies to prevent re-entry.

- Regular inspection and maintenance of erosion and sediment control measures and structures during the course of construction.
- Repairs to erosion and sediment control measures and structures if damage occurs.
- Removal of non-biodegradable erosion and sediment control materials once site is stabilized.

▼ Shoreline/bank re-vegetation and stabilization

- Clearing of riparian vegetation should be kept to a minimum: use existing trails, roads or cut lines wherever possible to avoid disturbance to the riparian vegetation and prevent soil compaction. When practicable, prune or top the vegetation instead of grubbing/uprooting.
- Minimize the removal of natural woody debris, rocks, sand or other materials from the banks, the shoreline or the bed of the waterbody below the ordinary high water mark. If material is removed from the waterbody, set it aside and return it to the original location once construction activities are completed.
- Immediately stabilize shoreline or banks disturbed by any activity associated with the project to prevent erosion and/or sedimentation, preferably through re-vegetation with native species suitable for the site.
- Restore bed and banks of the waterbody to their original contour and gradient; if the original gradient cannot be restored due to instability, a stable gradient that does not obstruct fish passage should be restored.
- If replacement rock reinforcement/armouring is required to stabilize eroding or exposed areas, then ensure that appropriately-sized, clean rock is used; and that rock is installed at a similar slope to maintain a uniform bank/shoreline and natural stream/shoreline alignment.
- Remove all construction materials from site upon project completion.
- **Species at Risk** Do not remove riparian vegetation if the riparian area is identified as part of critical habitat of an aquatic listed species at risk.

▼ Fish protection

- Ensure that all in-water activities, or associated in-water structures, do not interfere with fish passage, constrict the channel width, or reduce flows, or result in the stranding or death of fish.
- Retain a qualified environmental professional to ensure appropriate protocols are applied, and applicable permits for relocating fish are obtained and to capture any fish trapped within an isolated/enclosed area at the work site and safely relocate them to an

appropriate location in the same waters. Fish may need to be relocated again, should flooding occur on the site.

SARA-listed aquatic species

Any capture and relocation of an endangered or threatened aquatic species at risk will require approval from DFO. See the protocols for [the detection and relocation of certain aquatic species at risk](#).

- Screen any water intakes or outlet pipes to prevent entrainment or impingement of fish. Entrainment occurs when a fish is drawn into a water intake and cannot escape. Impingement occurs when an entrapped fish is held in contact with the intake screen and is unable to free itself.
 - In freshwater, follow these measures for design and installation of intake end of pipe fish screens to protect fish where water is extracted from fish-bearing waters:
 - Screens should be located in areas and depths of water with low concentrations of fish throughout the year.
 - Screens should be located away from natural or artificial structures that may attract fish that are migrating, spawning, or in rearing habitat.
 - The screen face should be oriented in the same direction as the flow.
 - Ensure openings in the guides and seals are less than the opening criteria to make “fish tight”.
 - Screens should be located a minimum of 300 mm (12 in.) above the bottom of the watercourse to prevent entrainment of sediment and aquatic organisms associated with the bottom area.
 - Structural support should be provided to the screen panels to prevent sagging and collapse of the screen.
 - Large cylindrical and box-type screens should have a manifold installed in them to ensure even water velocity distribution across the screen surface. The ends of the structure should be made out of solid materials and the end of the manifold capped.
 - Heavier cages or trash racks can be fabricated out of bar or grating to protect the finer fish screen, especially where there is debris loading (woody material, leaves, algae mats, etc.). A 150 mm (6 in.) spacing between bars is typical.
 - Provision should be made for the removal, inspection, and cleaning of screens.
 - Ensure regular maintenance and repair of cleaning apparatus, seals, and screens is carried out to prevent debris-fouling and impingement of fish.
 - Pumps should be shut down when fish screens are removed for inspection and cleaning.

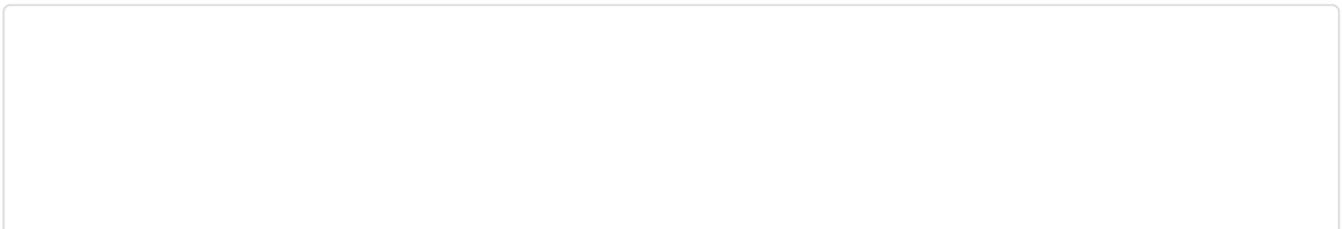
- Avoid using explosives in or near water. Use of explosives in or near water produces shock waves that can damage a fish swim bladder and rupture internal organs. Blasting vibrations may also kill or damage fish eggs or larvae.

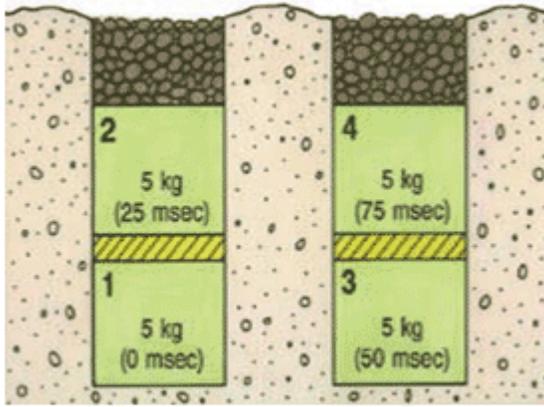
SARA-listed aquatic species

Do not use explosives where SARA-listed aquatic species, their residences or critical habitat occur, without review by DFO.

- If explosives are required as part of a project (e.g., removal of structures such as piers, pilings, footings; removal of obstructions such as beaver dams; or preparation of a river or lake bottom for installation of a structure such as a dam or water intake), the potential for impacts to fish and fish habitat should be minimized by implementing the following measures:
 - Time in-water work requiring the use of explosives to prevent disruption of vulnerable fish life stages, including eggs and larvae, by adhering to appropriate fisheries timing windows.
 - Isolate the work site to exclude fish from within the blast area by using, for example, bubble/air curtains (i.e., a column of bubbled water extending from the substrate to the water surface as generated by forcing large volumes of air through a perforated pipe/hose), cofferdams or aquadams.
 - Remove any fish trapped within the isolated area and release unharmed beyond the blast area prior to initiating blasting
 - Minimize blast charge weights used and subdivide each charge into a series of smaller charges in blast holes (i.e., decking) with a minimum 25 millisecond (1/1000 seconds) delay between charge detonations (see Figure 1).
 - Back-fill blast holes (stemmed) with sand or gravel to grade or to streambed/water interface to confine the blast.
 - Place blasting mats over top of holes to minimize scattering of blast debris around the area.
 - Do not use ammonium nitrate based explosives in or near water due to the production of toxic by-products.
 - Remove all blasting debris and other associated equipment/products from the blast area.

Figure 1: sample blasting arrangement





Per Fig. 1: 20 kg total weight of charge; 25 msecs delay between charges and blast holes; and decking of charges within holes.

▼ Operation of machinery

- Ensure that machinery arrives on site in a clean condition and is maintained free of fluid leaks, invasive species and noxious weeds.
- Whenever possible, operate machinery on land above the high water mark, on ice, or from a floating barge in a manner that minimizes disturbance to the banks and bed of the waterbody.
- Limit machinery fording of the watercourse to a one-time event (i.e., over and back), and only if no alternative crossing method is available. If repeated crossings of the watercourse are required, construct a temporary crossing structure.
- Use temporary crossing structures or other practices to cross streams or waterbodies with steep and highly erodible (e.g., dominated by organic materials and silts) banks and beds. For fording equipment without a temporary crossing structure, use stream bank and bed protection methods (e.g., swamp mats, pads) if minor rutting is likely to occur during fording.
- Wash, refuel and service machinery and store fuel and other materials for the machinery in such a way as to prevent any deleterious substances from entering the water.
- **Species at Risk** Do not ford, place crossing materials or operate machinery on the bed of a waterbody where SARA-listed shellfish occur, or critical habitat or residences of freshwater SARA-listed aquatic species occur.

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