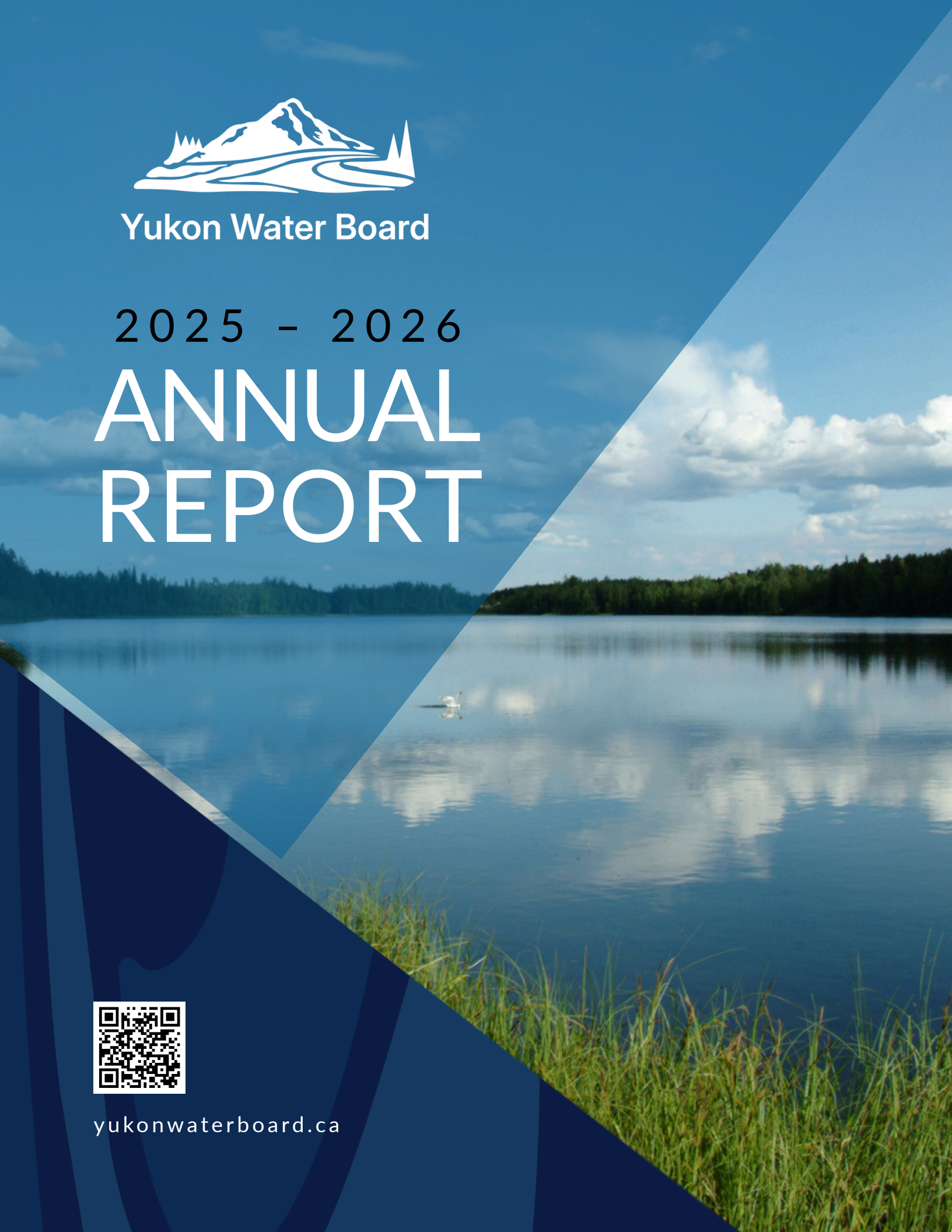
Yukon Water Board

2025 – 2026

ANNUAL REPORT



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Yukon River
Photo credit: Government of Yukon / Andrew Strain

Front cover photo credit: Government of Yukon

Yukon Water Board

2025 – 2026
Annual Report

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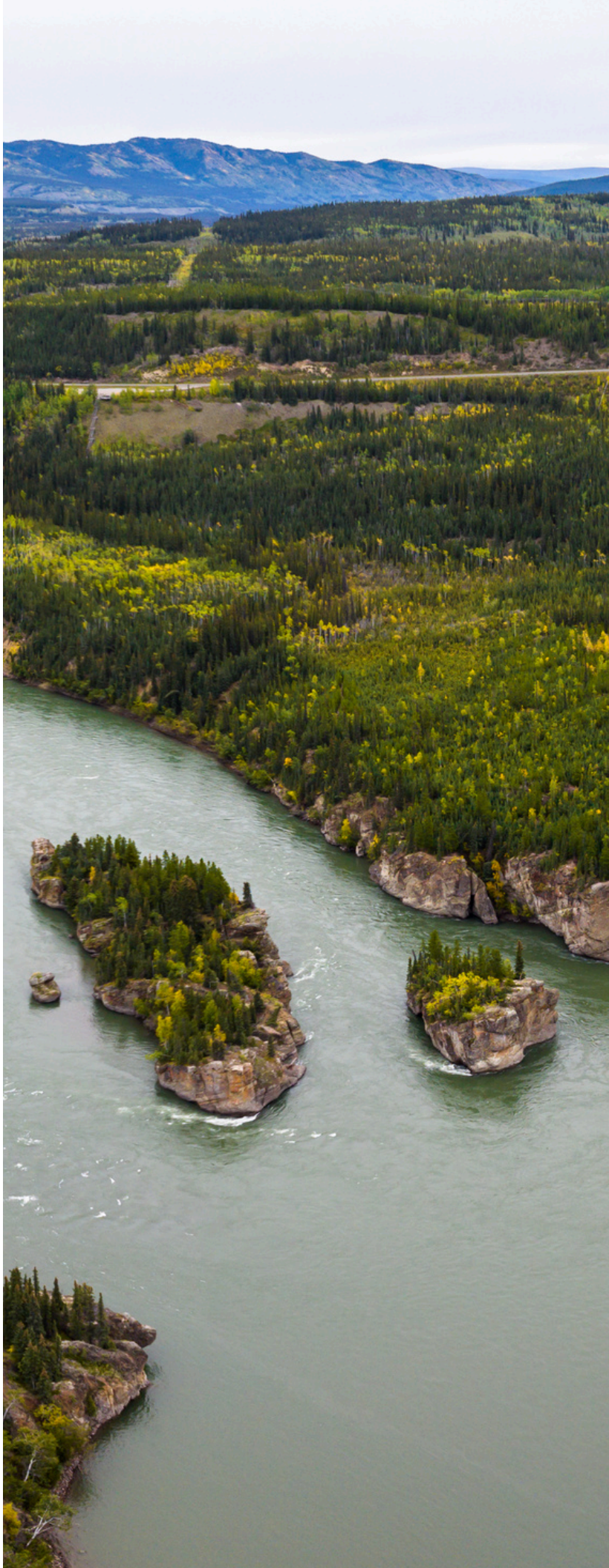




Message from the Chair

On behalf of the Yukon Water Board, I am pleased to present the 2025 – 2026 Annual Report.

It was a pleasure to join the Board as Chair during the final quarter of 2025 – 2026. I have been impressed by the dedication and hard work of our small team operating within a highly complex and evolving regulatory framework.

This year saw a significant increase in renewal applications for water licences and Class 4 placer land use approvals, following the twentieth anniversary of the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act. While Class 4 placer applications remain the Board's most common application type, the Board spends a significant amount of time reviewing applications and post-licensing deliverables for quartz mining, hydro-electric, municipal, and agricultural projects. This report will touch on the quantity of applications received by the Board and provide insight on several application and licensing requirements that, while submitted less frequently, often require more extensive review.

In addition to reviewing applications, the Board also remained focused on reviewing the June 2024 Eagle Gold Mine heap leach failure. From its water management perspective, the Board closely examined the findings and recommendations of the Independent Review Board's July 2025 report and considered how the recommendations may be applied in the licensing process.

During the 2025 – 2026 year the Board implemented several initiatives to improve efficiency and transparency in the licensing process. These included launching a new website, developing plain-language guidance for participants in the licensing process, and reducing the need for paper submissions to the public register.

Where possible, the Board seeks opportunities to collaborate with regulatory partners to improve efficiencies and enhance transparency in the licensing and approvals processes, while maintaining its independence and commitment to procedural fairness.

I would like to offer my sincere gratitude to the Board, Secretariat staff, industry, regulatory partners, proponents, and interveners for your continued participation in the regulatory process. The contributions of those involved help support effective water management and informed decision-making throughout the Yukon.

Sincerely,

Brooke Rudolph
Chair, Yukon Water Board



Message from the Vice Chair

On behalf of the Yukon Water Board, I am pleased to reflect on the Board's work during the 2025 – 2026 reporting period.

This reporting period marked a significant transition in Board membership. I was honoured to assume the role of Vice Chair during the year and we were pleased to welcome Brooke Rudolph as Chair, and Stacey Hassard, Pamela Hine, and Clarence Timmons as members of the Board. Their knowledge, perspectives, and commitment to public service have already strengthened the Board's work. At the same time, we extend our sincere appreciation to former Chair, Piers McDonald, former Vice Chair, Russ Smoler, and former members Wesley Barrett, Robert McIntyre, Mike Pemberton, and Sam Wallingham, whose terms concluded during the reporting period. Through their dedication and thoughtful contributions, they helped guide the Board's decisions on matters important to Yukoners and to the responsible management of water resources.

In addition to reviewing water licence and Class 4 placer land use applications, the Board considered several significant and complex matters during 2025 – 2026. Considerable attention was devoted to post-licensing oversight, which included reviews of Reclamation and Closure Plans, Adaptive Management Plans, and Monitoring and Adaptive Management Plans for major projects. The Board also considered four submissions for licence amendments on an emergency basis and addressed the conclusion of the Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation Water Use Dispute.

The Board allocated substantial resources to reviewing four applications and conducting two public hearings related to Yukon Energy Corporation hydro-electric projects. The Board first considered two applications proposing 60-day terms, followed by applications seeking 20-year and 5-year terms, respectively. Two multi-day public hearings were held for the longer-term applications – with the Board and Secretariat contributing significant efforts to ensure the licensing process proceeded through December holidays.

The volume and complexity of matters before the Board contributed to a significant increase in workload during the reporting period. I would like to acknowledge both former and current Board members for their expertise, dedication, and commitment to principled decision-making within an increasingly complex and evolving regulatory environment. I also extend my sincere appreciation to Secretariat staff for their professionalism, expertise, and unwavering support of the Board's work and their commitment to the licensing and approvals processes.

Sincerely,

Bruce Warnsby
Vice Chair, Yukon Water Board

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 of Executive Council Office ("ECO") will table the report annually in the Legislative Assembly and the Board will publish it on its website.

The 2025 – 2026 Annual Report provides an overview of the Board's key initiatives and regulatory activities during the period of April 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026.

About the Yukon Water Board

Legislated Responsibilities

The Yukon Water Board ("Board") plays a vital role in the stewardship and sustainable use of water resources in the Yukon. The Board's 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.

The Board is an independent administrative tribunal responsible for regulating the use of water and deposit of waste to water. It operates under the authority of the *Waters Act* and Chapter 14 of Yukon First Nations' Final Agreements. Its licensing and approval decisions must also meet obligations under the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act ("YESAA").

Additionally, the Board carries delegated authority as Chief of Placer Land Use for Class 4 placer operations, including issuing and amending operating plans ("Approvals"), determining security, and authorizing assignments.

All Board proceedings follow the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness; the Board's processes are guided by its Rules of Procedure and guiding principles.



Henderson Creek
Photo credit: Brooke Rudolph

Board Members

A defining feature of the Yukon Water Board is its citizen-based board structure. The Board has four to nine members nominated by the Government of Canada, the Government of Yukon, and the Council of Yukon First Nations.

Board members come from a variety of backgrounds with a range of knowledge and experience, all lending to the Board's strong decision-making and duty of fairness. Members are independent of their nominating bodies; they act independently and do not represent their nominating bodies or any special interest.

Current Board Members

(terms between April 1, 2025 – March 31, 2026)



Brooke Rudolph
Chair



Bruce Warnsby
Vice Chair



Stacey Hassard
Member



Pamela Hine
Member



Anne Leckie
Member



Carl Sidney
Member



Clarence Timmons
Member

Past Board Members
(terms ended between April 1, 2025 – March 31, 2026)

Board Member	Title	Latest Term of Appointment
Piers McDonald	Chair	Sep 21, 2017 to Dec 18, 2025
Russ Smoler	Vice Chair	May 15, 2018 to Feb 24, 2026
Wesley Barrett	Member	Apr 20, 2023 to Apr 20, 2026
Robert McIntyre	Member	Apr 1, 2021 to Sep 30, 2025
Mike Pemberton	Member	Feb 27, 2025 to Jun 24, 2025
Sam Wallingham	Member	Sep 18, 2018 to Jan 31, 2026



Flats along the Klondike Highway
south of Dawson City
Photo credit: Brooke Rudolph

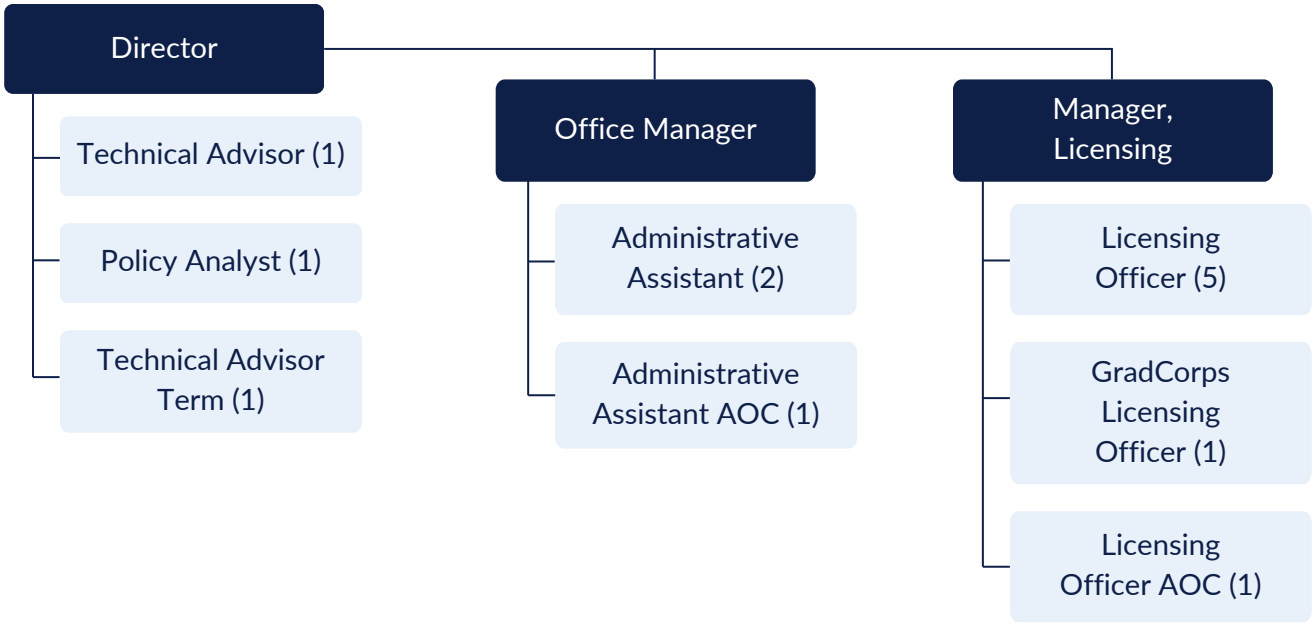
Secretariat

Pursuant to the *Waters Act*, the Minister of ECO provides staff and support for the Board's operations. The Secretariat's main functions are to support the daily operations of the Board and assist applicants throughout the licensing and Approvals processes.

In the 2025 – 2026 reporting period, the Secretariat had 14 full-time staff positions and two Auxiliary On Call ("AOC") positions.

To inform its decision-making process, the Board also retained professional and technical advisors.

Secretariat Organization Chart





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

Year in Review

Board and Secretariat Activities

Board Meetings

In the 2025 – 2026 reporting period, the Board convened 81 days to address both regulatory proceedings and policy matters.

22 days
Monthly Meetings
Application review and Board administration

20.5 days
Special Sittings
Application review

7 days
Policy Meetings
Strategic initiatives and licensing efficiency

19.5 days
Public Hearing-Related Meetings
Pre-hearing preparation and post-hearing deliberations

12 days
Public Hearings
Public input and evidence related to a licence proceeding or other matter



88% more meeting days
in 2025 – 2026 compared to the previous year.

Learnings

Throughout the year, the Board hosted presentations on various topics relevant to the licensing and Approvals processes. The presentations provided the Board with expert insight, technical clarification, and practical context to support its evidence-based decision-making.

Presentations included, but were not limited to, the following:

2025 Yukon Placer Industry Overview
Government of Yukon, Energy, Mines and Resources, Yukon Geological Survey

Independent Review Board ("IRB") Recommendations Overview
Government of Yukon, Energy, Mines and Resources

Victoria Gold Corporation ("VGC") in receivership one-year lookback
PwC Canada

VGC Eagle Gold Mine Heap Leach Failure – IRB Investigation Summary
Hutchinson Environmental Sciences Ltd.

VGC Eagle Gold Mine Heap Leach Failure
IRB, Mark E. Smith, M.Sc., P.E., P.Eng. (YT)

Casino Mine Overview
Casino Mining Corporation

Introduction to the Faro Mine Remediation Project
Government of Canada

QZ23-015 Water Use Dispute – Compensation Support
Kingston Ross Pasnak Chartered Professional Accountants

Outreach

Members of the Board and Secretariat staff attended various community events in the 2025 – 2026 reporting period. Each event offered an opportunity to exchange information – promoting informed participation and transparency in the Yukon's assessments and regulatory processes.

Outreach activities included, but were not limited to, the following:

Yukon Geoscience Forum and Trade Show | November 2025
'Yukon Regulatory Roadmap – Timelines and Wish Lists for Mineral Exploration and Development in Yukon' panel discussion

Umbrella Final Agreement Boards and Committees Workshop | January 2026

Government of Yukon, Energy, Mines and Resources, Compliance, Monitoring and Inspections Branch All-staff Meeting Presentation | January 2026

Ecological Cumulative Effects Framework Working Sessions | March 2026

Licensing Improvement Initiatives

The Board implemented several initiatives to improve efficiencies and transparency in the licensing and Approvals processes.

Website Refresh

Working with the Government of Yukon, ECO, the Board launched its updated website in April 2025. Built to provide users with the information they need for the water licensing and Approvals processes, the site offers a fresh new look and user-centered approach.

Digitization in the Licensing and Approvals Processes

The Board adjusted its licensing and Approvals processes in an effort to reduce the use of paper and promote a more efficient, digital system. In July 2025, the Board decommissioned its fax machine, reducing paper use in fax communications. In October 2025, it issued a directive and began accepting electronic copies of post-licensing deliverables such as reports and plans, where they were previously required in print.

Notice of Application to Yukon First Nations

In October 2025, the Board initiated a new approach to notifying Yukon First Nations of water licence applications. Pursuant to the Board's obligation under the *Waters Act* and Yukon First Nations' Final Agreements, it emails notice of application to Yukon First Nations whose traditional territory the proposed undertaking is located within. Notices invite interventions and claims for compensation and provide information on how to submit both.

Waterline, the Board's public register, continues to provide notice of application to users who sign up for an account and set their preferences to receive notifications.

Guidelines for Interveners

The Board launched new guidelines for interveners on its website in January 2026. This plain-language document provides information on interventions and assists interveners in submitting evidence for proceedings.

Guidelines for Public Hearing Participants

In January 2026, the Board also launched new guidelines for public hearing participants. This plain-language document outlines when the Board must hold a public hearing, how to participate in public hearings, and what to expect at a public hearing.



Tagish Lake
Photo credit: Kathy Schmidt

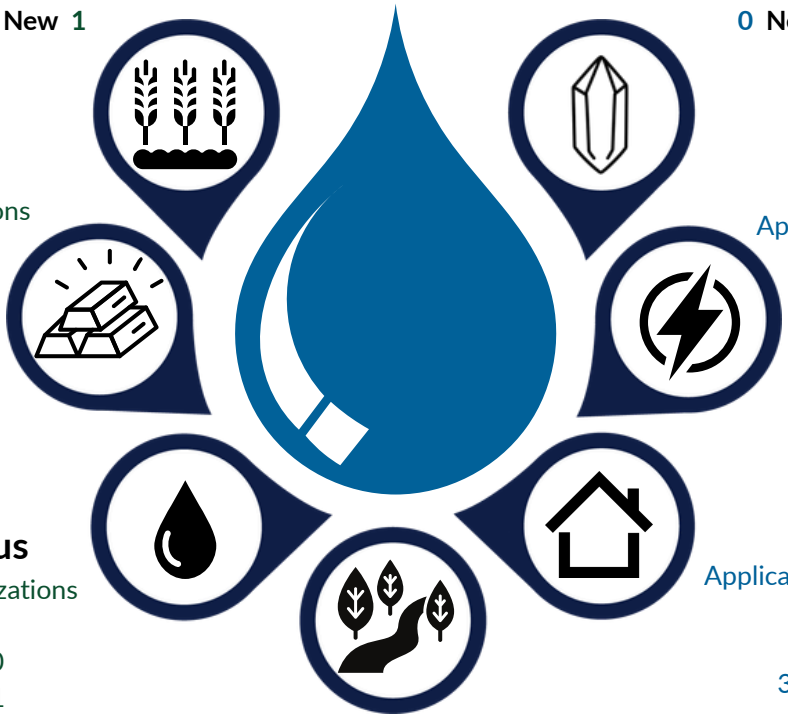
Water Licence Statistics

Water Licence Applications and Authorizations* by Undertaking

Agriculture
Applications | Authorizations
0 New **1**

Quartz Mining
Applications | Authorizations
0 New **0**

Placer Mining
Applications | Authorizations
50 New 21
51 Renewal 23
29 Assignment 19
11 Amendment 10
4 Cancellation 2
145 Total **75**



Power (Hydro)
Applications | Authorizations
1 Renewal 4
1 Amendment 1
2 Total **5**
-
2 Type A **5**

Miscellaneous
Applications | Authorizations
7 New 6
1 Assignment 0
0 Cancellation 1
8 Total **7**

Municipal
Applications | Authorizations
3 New 2
2 Renewal 1
3 Amendment 1
8 Total **4**
-
1 Type A **1**

Recreational
Applications | Authorizations
1 Assignment **0**

*Authorizations include approved water licences and cancellation of water licences.

4 **Submissions** for licence amendments on an emergency basis
3 power (hydro) undertakings and 1 municipal undertaking

2 **Authorizations** for amended licences on an emergency basis
1 power (hydro) undertaking and 1 municipal undertaking

Applicants withdrew 14 placer mining applications*

*The number of applications withdrawn may not correlate with the number of applications received. For example, applications received in 2024 – 2025 may be withdrawn in 2025 – 2026.

2025 marked the twentieth anniversary of the Yukon Environmental and Socio-Economic Assessment Board ("YESAB"). In the 2025 – 2026 reporting period, the Yukon Water Board saw an increase in renewal applications stemming from the Class 4 placer mining undertakings which were assessed through YESAB for the first time two decades ago. This cyclical renewal of 10-year water licences is informally known as the 'placer bubble'.

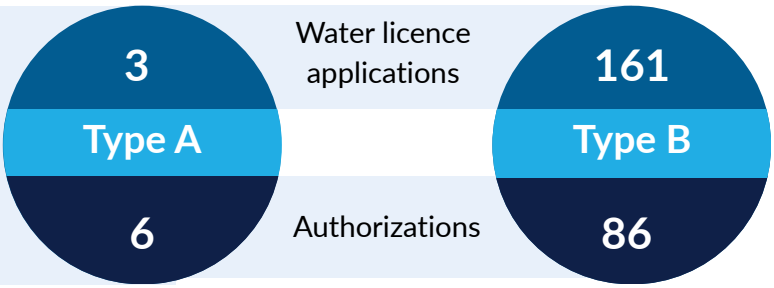


48% more applications

received in 2025 – 2026 compared to the previous year.

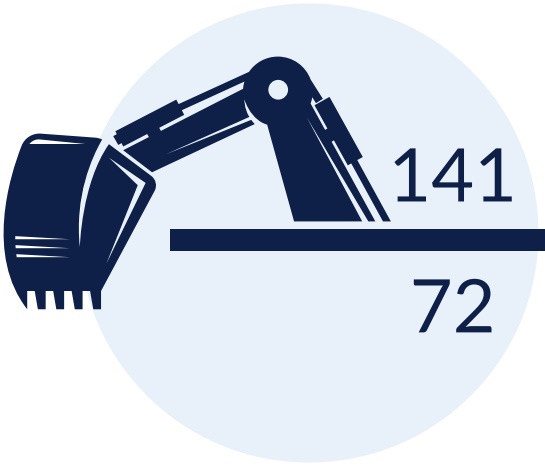
Water Licences by Type

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



Class 4 Placer Land Use Operation Statistics

Applications and Approved Operating Plans issued for Class 4 placer land use operations:



141 Applications

50 new
51 renewal
29 assignments
11 amendments

72 Approved Operating Plans issued

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 RCPs, AMPs, and MAMPs were in various stages of adequacy and review during the 2025 – 2026 reporting period:

HY22-016 Yukon Energy Corporation Aishihik Generating Station
Monitoring and Adaptive Management Plan

QZ18-044 Alexco Keno Hill Mining
2025 Reclamation and Closure Plan

QZ20-035 Selwyn Chihong Mining
2025 Reclamation and Closure Plan

QZ21-012 Elsa Reclamation and Development Corporation
Adaptive Management Plan



Beaver Creek
Photo credit: Government of Yukon / Andrew Strain

Key Regulatory Highlights

Yukon Energy Corporation Applications

Whitehorse Rapids Generating Station and Lewes Control Structure

Following its review of Yukon Energy Corporation's ("YEC") application to renew the water licence for operation of the Whitehorse Rapids Generating Station and Lewes Control Structure ("WRGS"), the Board issued a 60-day water licence (HY25-021) on June 1, 2025.

The Board subsequently considered YEC's application for a 20-year licence renewal of the same operation (HY24-061). The proceedings included:

- two claims for compensation; and
- ten interventions from various individuals, community committees and councils, Yukon First Nation governments, and the Government of Yukon.

The Board and parties participated in an administrative pre-hearing conference on June 20, 2025. The Board then convened the 7.5-day public hearing at the Yukon Inn, Whitehorse on July 2, 2025 and subsequently issued a water licence on July 31, 2025.

Mayo Generating Station

Following its review of YEC's application to renew the water licence for operation of the Mayo Generating Station ("MGS"), the Board issued a 60-day water licence (HY25-088) on December 30, 2025.

The Board subsequently considered YEC's application for a 5-year licence renewal of the same operation (HY25-027). The proceedings included:

- two claims for compensation; and
- five interventions from various individuals, community organizations, Yukon First Nation governments, and the Government of Yukon.

The Board and parties participated in an administrative pre-hearing conference on January 28, 2026. The Board then convened a 4.5-day public hearing at the Yukon Inn, Whitehorse on February 2, 2026 and subsequently issued a water licence on February 27, 2026.



To prepare for public hearings, the Board holds multi-day special sittings and one or more pre-hearing conferences with the parties to the proceeding.

Additional sittings are held after public hearings to enable Board deliberation and licensing decisions.

Independent Review Board Report

Since the publication of the Independent Review Board ("IRB") report in June 2025, the Board has taken a strong interest in examining the report's findings on reducing the risk of future heap leach failures. In considering the report, the Board has focused on how it may apply relevant IRB recommendations during the water licensing process.

As part of this work, the Board received a technical overview of the report and met with one of the report's authors, Mark Smith, to further its understanding of the findings and recommendations.

In the fall of 2025, the Board received updates from the Government of Yukon's Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, as well as from PwC Canada in its role as receiver for the Eagle Gold Mine. These discussions further informed the Board's understanding of operational, regulatory, and environmental considerations associated with the Eagle Gold Mine heap leach failure, and more broadly, major mine projects in the Yukon.

The Board recognizes the importance of ensuring that lessons learned from the Eagle Gold Mine failure are considered in future regulatory decision-making.



Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation Water Use Dispute Conclusion

During the 2025 – 2026 reporting period, the Board continued its consideration of the Water Use Dispute ("WUD") submitted by Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation ("LSCFN") in February 2023. The application (QZ23-015), filed under section 14 of the LSCFN Final Agreement and sections 16 and 19 of the *Waters Act*, concerned water licence QZ19-055 issued to Mount Nansen Remediation Limited Partnership. As only the second WUD received by the Board, and the most significant to date, the application led to the development of several precedent-setting procedures, including new Rules of Procedure and related processes.

Throughout the proceeding, the Board held a number of application management conferences to gather input from the parties on procedural matters. These conferences informed several Board decisions regarding how the dispute would be reviewed and adjudicated.

The proceeding required the Board to carry out two distinct roles simultaneously: its regulatory responsibilities under the *Waters Act* and its adjudicative responsibilities under the LSCFN Final Agreement.

The Board had scheduled a public hearing for September 2025; however, it later cancelled the hearing when the parties reached agreement on several key issues. In July 2025, the parties jointly submitted a proposed amendment to the water licence for the Board's consideration.

Following its review of the proposed amendments, the Board issued water licence MS25-107 in December 2025 as a renewal of water licence QZ19-055.



Bonnet Plume Lake
Photo credit: Government of Yukon

Financial Statements

Pursuant to the *Waters Act*, the Minister of ECO provides staff, technical advisors, 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.

Statement of Revenues and Expenditures April 1, 2025 – March 31, 2026			
REVENUE			
Water Licence Fees	(49,865)		
Total Revenues			**-$49,865**
EXPENDITURES			
Wages and Benefits	1,724,557		
Board Meetings	371,524		
Advertising	30,885		
Office Expenses	11,498		
Training	9,169		
Service Contracts	579,779		
Outreach	19,700		
Public Hearings	799,679		
Total Expenditures			**$3,546,790**
Net Expenditures			**$3,496,926**



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

Back cover: Annie Lake
Photo credit: Government of Yukon



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