

LIVE RELEASE WORKSHOP

Summary and recommendations

October 26-27, 1999

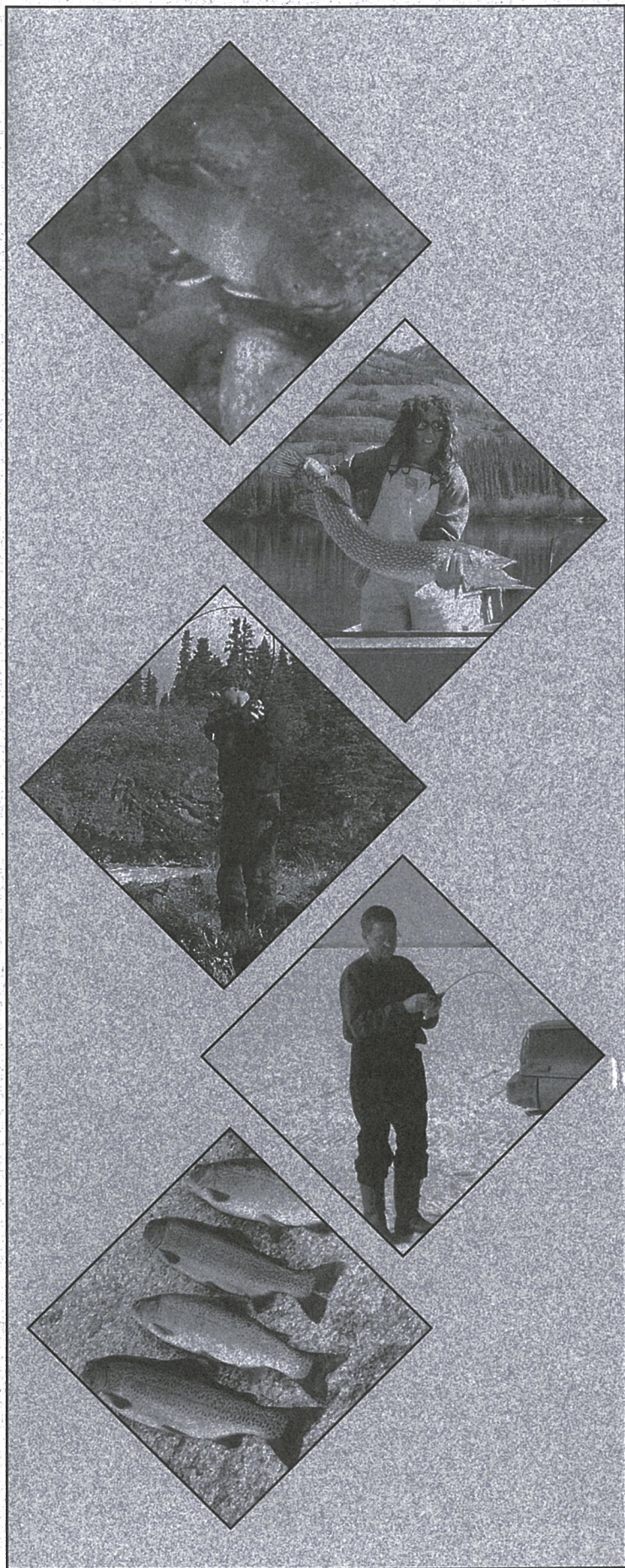


Prepared by the

Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board

March 2001

LIVE RELEASE SERIES, REPORT #4



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Photographs provided by the Yukon Department of Renewable Resources and Adam Skrutkowski, Yukon Fish and Game Association.

Also available in the Live Release Series

#1: The importance of fishing and fish harvesting to Yukon First Nations people, a summary, by Stephanie Muckenheim, August 1998

#2: An evaluation of hooking mortality resulting from live-release fishing practices, by Laberge Environmental Services, October 1998

#3: Social and economic values of angling in the Yukon, June 1999

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ABSTRACT

On October 26-27, 1999, at the High Country Inn, Whitehorse, a Live Release Workshop was hosted by the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board on behalf of the Live Release Working Group. This working group has representation from the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, the Renewable Resources Councils, the Yukon government and the Salmon Committee. Financial support for the workshop was provided mainly by the Yukon Department of Renewable Resources and also by the Board and the Salmon Committee.

The workshop represented the final phase of public consultation on the Live Release issue and the culmination of two years of preparation by the Board in the form of three projects and reports. Discussion at the workshop focussed on the purpose of live release angling and means of improving its practice in the Yukon, as well as recognizing its advantages and limitations as a management tool.

The workshop was attended by a broad cross section of the Yukon public including angling retailers, lodge owners, guides, the Yukon Fish and Game Association, First Nations people, plus representatives from Federal, Yukon Territorial and First Nation governments.

Focussed discussions were held on the following components of live release fishing: tackle, species, environment, methods, enforcement, salmon, research, derbies, spawning, stocked lakes, and ethics. Since many of the recommendations from the workshop would obviously require further examination and implementation, it was agreed to form a Live Release Think Tank which would be comprised of representatives of Yukon angling interests, and would be administered by the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board. The Think Tank would further refine recommendations and propose various programs and recommendations to the Board for implementation. The Think Tank was activated early in 2000.

PRAYER and WELCOME



Opening, Prayer Day 1: Doug Hnatiuk

Opening, Prayer Day 2: Clyde Blackjack

Lawrence Joe, Chair of the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, welcomed everyone to the workshop. He noted that the purpose of this workshop is to gain an understanding of the issues

related to Catch and Release (or Live Release) angling, and to examine the differences of opinion and look for areas of common thinking upon which to build solutions. Lawrence then introduced Doug Urquhart, the facilitator. Participants introduced themselves.

BACKGROUND and INTRODUCTION

Catch and Release or Live Release Angling (LRA) has been a long-standing issue in the Yukon, going back at least eight years and before land claims. The Fish and Wildlife Management Board established a Catch and Release Working Group to study this issue. The members included Lawrence Joe (YFWMB), Shirley Ford as Chair (YFWMB), Louise Naylor (DFO), Art Johns (YFWMB), Al LaValle (Alsek Renewable Resources Council), Don Toews (YTG), Susan Thompson (YTG) and Jodi McKinnon (Salmon Committee).

During the long course of public debate, the issues related to LRA had become over simplified and confusing. The Working Group's first task was to assemble and make available sound information on the subject.

Over a two-year period, three background reports were prepared and distributed to the public for feedback in the summer of 1999. An angling focus group, convened in February 1999, included lodge owners, guides, and tackle shop owners. The present workshop included a broader cross-section of participants.

The goal of this workshop was to develop recommendations for the use of Live Release Angling (LRA). The Board then planned to print these recommendations for public discussion in December.

Currently, there are 17,000 anglers in the Yukon, of whom approximately 9,000 (excluding children who need no licence) are Yukon residents. To provide a perspective on the basic principle of LRA, the facilitator used hunting as a contrast. In big game hunting, a hunter has the opportunity to "preselect" which animal to harvest. A fisher does not have the same opportunity to make a "selective" decision (for size, species, etc.) until after the fish is caught.

Live Release is the management tool used for selective harvesting. LRA involves an ethical dimension related to catching a fish for "sport," but it must be recognised that LRA is essential to managing fish harvests.

First, and foremost, we must respect fish as a resource, but it is also essential to respect all people of the Yukon by providing useful information so that anglers can manage fish better.



ANGLING OVERVIEW

Don Toews (Chief of Yukon government, Fisheries) provided the following overview of the technical information related to angling in the Yukon.

LICENSED ANGLING INDUSTRY

This is a very important activity to the Yukon, providing recreational and economic benefits as well as a source of food. One in three Yukoners fish; approximately 300,000 fish are caught, of which 80,000 are consumed. Approximately \$15 million is spent annually (this includes equipment, flying, etc.). The five-year angling survey reveals that the number and size of fish caught ranks, in importance, lower than the opportunity to be outdoors. Many are casual anglers, who fish a few times a year and do not want to break the law. But they also do not want to take the time to learn complex regulations and angling techniques or be bogged down by regulations and information. Approximately 95% of the freshwater fish harvested in the Yukon is by anglers, while approximately 65% and 30% of salmon harvested in the Yukon is by commercial users and First Nations members, respectively. First Nation fish harvest needs and trends are expected to change and should be factored into recommendations and management programs.

Note: Some participants felt that the definition of "sport fishing" or "recreational" fishing creates confusion between fishing for recreation versus fishing for food.

1. Fish biology

A lake trout and a Chinook salmon, of similar-size, were on display. There are significant differences between these two species in terms of biology and life history, which affect how each should be managed.

Salmon are born in freshwater but grow up in the ocean where food is abundant; they spawn once at approximately 5-6 years of age and then die.

Lake trout are born and grow up in freshwater, where food is less plentiful. Lake trout grow slowly, mature later and may live to 35-40 years. They begin to spawn at 10-12 years and will continue to spawn throughout their lives. The older, large lake trout are very important as predators. Once the older lake trout decline, other species (such as whitefish, burbot and suckers) increase in number. Lake trout are vulnerable and very sensitive to human activities. Successful management of lake trout should indicate good management of other species. Major harvesters of lake trout are anglers. Where a lake becomes accessible to anglers, the lake trout stock declines and takes a very long time to rebuild. Many Yukon lakes are naturally protected because they are large and long and access is often limited to only one end. This means that fishing pressure does not cover the whole lake because it takes too long or may be too dangerous to boat to the far end.

YTG wants to encourage angling activity, as this will ensure public interest and involvement in resource management. The goal is to manage harvest without restricting angling activity. The biggest challenge facing a fish manager is to protect fish habitat (water quality, etc.) and the greatest asset is a public who values angling.

2. Management tools

Live Release is a management tool prescribed in the Fishing Regulations synopsis. "High Quality Lakes"* require a selective harvest; that is, all lake trout between a certain size must be released to protect "spawning" fish.

**High Quality Management (HQM) lakes refers to a special management regime that protects fish stocks with additional regulations involving live release for fish of certain size ranges (known as slot sizes). The term does not refer to the quality of fishing on the lakes.*

When looking at management tools, it is important to look at the whole picture (ecosystem management) and consider all factors that affect fish stocks, e.g. global warming, environmental impact on water temperature and food sources, beaver dams, and increased number of anglers. Changes to fish communities can also be caused by a reduction in predatory fish. A high number of fish being caught indicates that the resource is relatively healthy. Effectiveness of the slot system must be evaluated by monitoring both fish populations and changing ecosystem factors.

As angling for sport becomes more popular in the Yukon, we may have to consider other options, e.g. closures, as even the mortality associated with LRA may make this an inappropriate management tool in extreme situations. An injured fish is generally a keeper. If it is within the slot range, and is dead or likely to die, it should be kept and reported to a Conservation Officer.

Education and Communication are critical components to management, because nothing will change until anglers are informed and “buy in.”

There are two challenges: a resident population who has been here for a long time versus a turnover/transient population who is here for a very limited time. Non-resident harvesters catch a lot of fish and there may be only one opportunity for education. The Tourism Association is trying to disseminate information to tourists before they come to the Yukon. Many anglers are already misinformed by television shows that provide inaccurate information.

3. Gear and methods

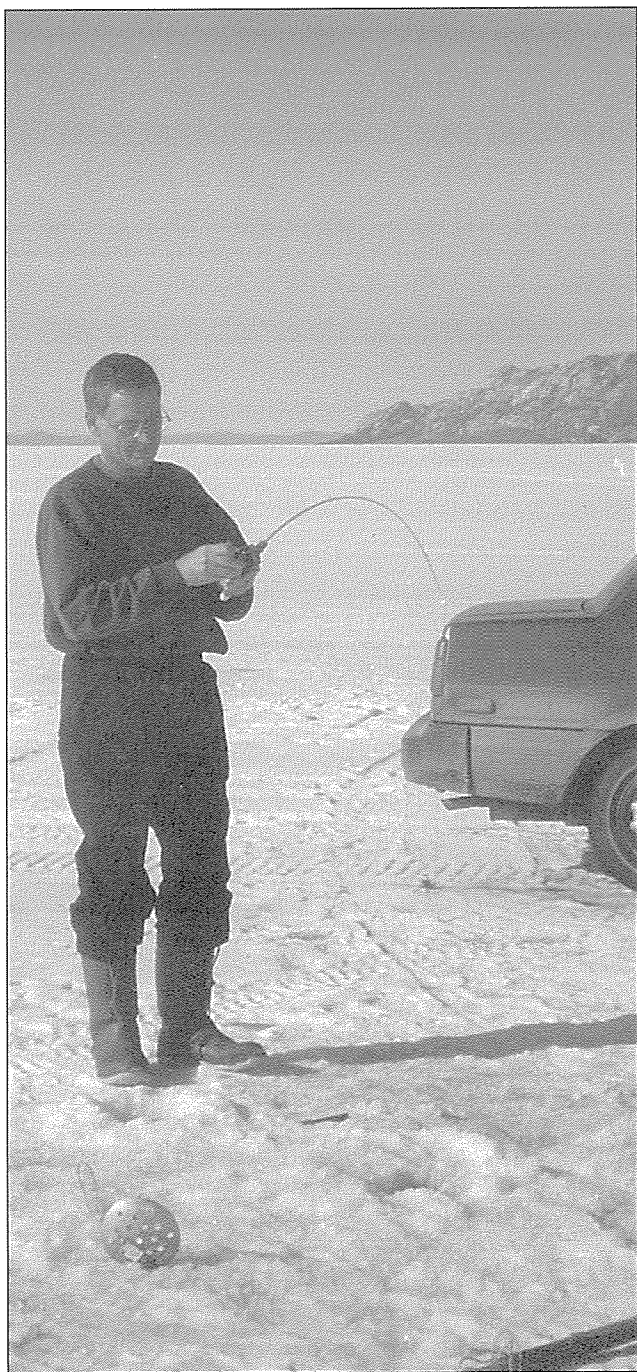
The mortality rate associated with LRA can vary significantly, depending on gear and methods used. It can be as low as 0% or as high as 70-80%, depending on how fish are hooked and caught, as well as how fish are handled after being caught. This is one aspect that can be managed through education.

Habits and thinking are changing, but not at the same pace for everyone. Remembering our old habits will help with educating others who may still have them. An historic perspective should be applied for comparison, when monitoring.



WORKSHOP FORMAT

In order to focus discussions on key components of LRA, the workshop was divided into a number of basic issues. An introduction was given by Don Toews and was followed by a question period. The session ended with a series of key points and recommendations.

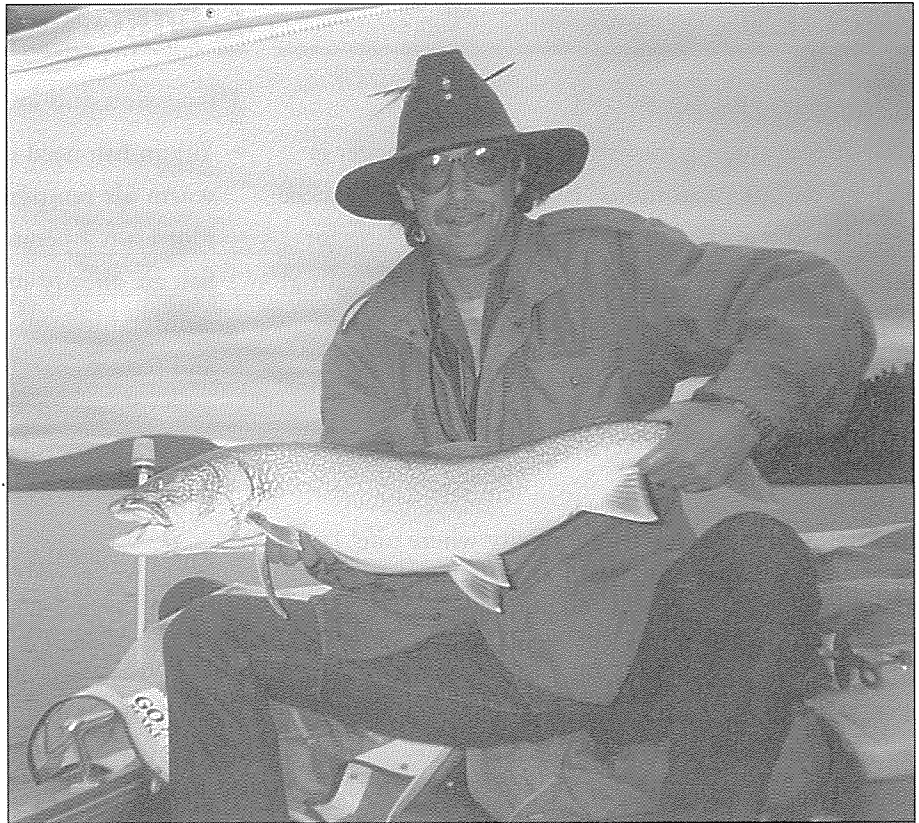


TACKLE

Discussion and key points

- The type of gear used and how fish are handled can affect mortality significantly.
- For live release: Avoid lethal injury to fish, especially injury to brain, eye and gills. **Minimize handling of fish and time out of water.**
- Every angler should be prepared to live release (because of slot limit, species, etc) and use appropriate tackle for that purpose.
- There is a need to educate anglers that barbless (live release) hooks are also effective for catching fish to eat.
- Relate size of hook to size of fish. Generally, **smaller hooks** are better for all fish.
- Examples of appropriate and inappropriate lures were on display. Recommend small, **barbless** lures/hook (either single or treble). Use pliers to pinch down barbs or remove barbs all together. This will improve the removal/release of lures, without affecting ability to catch fish.
- Special requirements for live-release fishing: **no natural bait** (exception when using a jig with bait for lake trout).
- Consider two types of licences: conservation or harvest.
- Contact “resource” people in communities about what gear to use.
- Some individuals who fish for food do not support Live Release and may not want to recommend single barbless hooks in case it gives the appearance of supporting LRA.

- Regardless of personal beliefs and ethics, it is important to recognise that there are a lot of people who will use LRA and we must all try to minimize the mortality.
- It is important to educate retailers about fishing tackle.
- Information can be included in the synopsis or with license.
- Employ public education that really works, e.g. posters on the inside of outhouse doors in campgrounds and **keep the message simple!**
- This workshop is a good thing but do not rush process; two days is not enough to hear all concerns and opinions.



Public evening session

- Single hooks are hard to find. Manufacturers are not making barbless hooks because this involves expensive retooling. There are only 6 manufacturers world-wide and North American demand for barbless is small in comparison. **Don't let manufacturers off the "hook." Contact and educate them.**
- Opportunity to influence anglers via retailers: inexperienced non-residents get most of their information from retailers. Need to educate with the retailers.
- Getting anglers to pinch barbs right in the store is a good way to educate them.
- Europeans are well intentioned but if they buy barbed hooks, they may not debarb them.

- Many people who fish for food prefer barbed hooks. However, many will be faced with an LRA situation where they can't take the fish for food and must return it to the water; **therefore, everyone should use less damaging hooks.**

Recommendations for consideration by the Think Tank

In general, for people who practice live-release fishing, promote the following:

- Single barbless hooks are best.
- Smaller hooks are better than big.
- Provide people with an educated choice: are they fishing for food or recreation, and if so, what are the best techniques to use.
- Increase fishing line strength because this results in less playing time and stress on fish.

SPECIES

Discussion and key points

Live release angling for fish caught in deep water is limited to “physostomous” fish like lake trout, whose stomach and air bladder are connected allowing for rapid equalization of pressure when a fish is caught at depth and brought to the surface.

- Temperature is a critical factor — cold air and water temperatures are better for Yukon fish than warmer air and water.
- Angling is a multi-species activity where one cannot preselect a fish. Selective harvest can be used to protect a particular species from being harvested at all or to protect certain-sized fish in a population.
- If harvest of one species needs to be restricted for conservation, then LRA must be used to conserve that species. The only other option is to close down the lake system to all fishing.
- **Live release has its limits; excessive LRA can cause significant mortality.** For populations at risk, consider public notification and “season” closures.
- The length of time spent fighting on a hook and line requires significant energy which may weaken the fish. It actually increases the body temperature of some fish, however, this is believed to have minimal effects on survival of freshwater fish.

Recommendations for consideration by the Think Tank

- Encourage diversification of species for angling.
- Reduce pressure on certain species and areas by promoting use of stocked lakes.
- Live release is a management tool that allows selective harvesting of species. Use LRA for “species” selection.

ENVIRONMENT

Discussion and key points

- Yukon fish need cold water. **Warm waters and warm air temperatures are most detrimental.** Hottest temperatures occur in July and August; fish are already stressed by warm water temperatures, and handling adds further stress and reduces survival (this is supported by both scientific and traditional knowledge). LRA at this time requires minimal handling and a quick return to cold water to improve survival rate of fish.
- Emphasize LRA methods related to warm/cold water.
- Provide anglers with an educated choice on what to do on “hot days” – for instance they may want to fish less that day to protect fish or only fish in the early morning or late evening when it is not so hot.
- During hot weather, lake trout seek cold water and just come up for food, usually at night, unlike salmon which cannot escape from warm water in rivers.
- What is impact on water temperature caused by beaver dams?

Recommendations for consideration by the Think Tank

General rules:

- When it is hot, minimize the amount of time a fish is landed and handled (suggestion was made to put fish in a cooler with cold water in the boat for handling). In most cases, hooks can be removed without taking the fish out of the water or handling the fish.
- Consider doing something else on hot days, or fish in early morning or evening only.

METHODS

Discussion and key points

- What is the effect of raising fish from deep water?
- TV influence often conflicts with recommended practices.

Public evening session

- Most Yukon anglers are concerned about fish stocks and intend to practice LRA. Many do it effectively but some don't because they don't know how. There is a need for education.
- First Nations people who are strictly harvest oriented not concerned with the recreational aspect. We must recognise that LRA is being done. If done with respect for the resource, then fish will be treated right. Lifestyles and attitudes are changing, and interest in LRA is increasing.

Recommendations for consideration by the Think Tank

- LRA instruction or course, prior to receiving fishing license.
- Do not use bait for live release angling – exception being jigging for trout in winter.
- Promote use of the special release tool which is commercially available.
- Shorten landing time.
- Promote “gentle” respect in all aspects of angling.

ENFORCEMENT

Discussion and key points

- Do laws educate and change behaviour? With 17,000 anglers, the chance of “being caught” is slim. It is important that laws are reasonable and understandable, so anglers comply willingly.
- There are some laws that are very important but very difficult to enforce; they still have an educational value, e.g. it's illegal to transfer one species of fish from one body of water to another.
- Enforcement deals with a small percentage of people who abuse laws; public abiding laws depends primarily on voluntary compliance which involves education.
- Enforcement is an education tool. Most violations involve people who are “ignorant” of the regulations. Anglers are interested in protecting fish resources.
- There are some aspects of LRA that are enforceable, e.g. no tethering, releasing injured fish. It is felt that education is more valuable in long run than issuing a ticket.
- Anglers don't believe that they can catch as many fish with barbless hooks, until they give them a fair try.
- Enforcement needs to be “visible” to discourage illegal activity. **There must be a reasonable expectation of being caught.** More conservation officers, fewer policy people.
- Conservation officers duties have increased as laws and regulations have increased but the number of staff has stayed the same or declined.
- *Limit fishing to fish limit.* In other words, do not continue to fish using LRA after limit has been caught, because release of any injured fish that die will be the same as taking more than your limit. Other jurisdictions are able to enforce this.

- A major problem with non-compliance is that abusers are gone by the time the conservation officer is advised and arrives on the scene. Also fines/penalties are too low to be a deterrent – should be higher.
- U.S. border personnel can enforce Canadian laws on illegal catch being removed from Canada (Lacey Act).
- From a political perspective, is the new regulation/law realistic and is it enforceable?
- Best enforcement is to make people feel responsible for the resource.
- Partner with other groups, e.g. Tourism, to manage fish. When people understand the risk to the resource, they are more willing to comply.
- One-day license fees @ \$5.00 create extra work for retailers, where client is fishing only 2-3 days and separate daily licences have to be issued for each day. Recommend that daily rate be increased to \$10.00 so that it would be cheaper to buy a 6-day or seasonal licence rather than a number of daily licences; this daily fee would still be cheaper than any other jurisdiction.
- Put LRA logo on angling licenses, posters, and provide education material/support to retailers so they can help educate anglers to make better choices.

Public evening session

- People from outside have been through this before, and are concerned, but do not want to read regulations. Most non-residents are from areas where fish stocks are in decline, and already practice LRA. People are bewildered and scared by complex regulations.
- Europeans appreciate regulations in their own languages.
- Have different limits for tourists/residents (there was a strong difference of opinion on this one — for instance, the difference in costs for resident and non-resident for Salmon Catch cards upset people).
- When Teslin Lake catch limit was reduced from 3 to 2 in 1993 and then to 1 in 1999, non-residents accepted and approved reduction; however, this limit was applied equally to everyone (universal restriction).
- The more that is known about a resource (numbers, management), the more rules can be relaxed. There is a lot of controversy because there is no accurate information on fish numbers.

Recommendations for consideration by the Think Tank

- Renewable Resources should recruit volunteer enforcement “monitors” (game guardians), e.g. guides, to increase enforcement presence, especially at lakes under harvest pressure. Use “peer” pressure to encourage compliance. Enhancement Trust Fund may be a source of funding for monitors/educators.
- Look at “group” angler limits.
- Review all fishing regulations (including High Quality Waters)
- Develop clear laws for fishing in transboundary waters (BC /Yukon).
- **Keep regulations simple (e.g. NWT) and reasonable and understandable (use pictures, etc).**

SALMON

Discussion and key points

There was representation from the Salmon Committee at the workshop. This committee is looking at LRA issues for salmon and will consider recommendations. The Committee recognizes the importance of LRA as a management tool but is against the tethering of fish for later release or high-grading of the catch.

- The percentage of salmon harvested by anglers is very small compared to lake trout. Management of salmon focuses on the commercial harvest (which takes place on the Yukon River), while recreational angling is less regulated. Any closures apply first to commercial, then recreational, then First Nation harvesting.
- Harvest and LRA of salmon take place very close to spawning grounds, when salmon are already tired and under stress from their return trip.
- A problem was noted with the impact of LRA on salmon which migrate in pairs and become separated when one is caught and released, especially in turbid water. This in turn may affect the salmon's ability to spawn.
- For every salmon that returns to the spawning grounds and spawns (females produce about 10,000 eggs) only four will survive and return as adults from the ocean. All anglers must consider impact of LRA on spawning salmon and viability of future stock.
- Salmon are negatively affected by all human activities, such as logging, oil spills, etc. Everyone must do their part to ensure survival of salmon.
- At Tatshenshini, only First Nation and recreational fishing takes place, but they happen in close proximity; there have been conflicts in times of conservation concerns.
- LRA versus subsistence needs: concern with overcrowding and access for fishing for food when people are recreational fishing all day. Consider limiting duration of LRA in salmon streams.
- Television news and shows have an impact on opinions.
- Salmon stocks vary from one year to next, and may vary within a season, so regulations/closures must be imposed quickly.
- There are bad practices of LRA at Dalton Post and Tatchun Creek. The rate of snagging salmon is very high at some spots, especially at Dalton Post. Some injured salmon have to be released (regulations require release). A closure on LRA of salmon may be justified but must take into consideration that anglers may move and increase pressure in other areas.
- There is a perception that some individuals may be live releasing over 35 salmon in a day. It is believed that the number is much lower but more people are angling so, overall, LRA is increasing. There is the option to use different gear, etc. to minimize stress and harassment to salmon.
- Consider closing salmon fishing until stocks are up.
- Require guides for foreigners fishing for salmon.
- Beware of what is being promoted outside, e.g., if the Yukon is touted as a salmon fishing paradise this will put more stress on the resource.
- Are we compromising the salmon resource to satisfy public needs, i.e. allowing LRA of salmon to satisfy anglers? What about the priority and viability of salmon? Salmon resource is paramount and all human behaviour must respect this.
- Educate anglers on clean up, e.g. line/roe bags left behind which cause harm to other wildlife.

- **Make sure everything is considered in the salmon equation.** Include wildlife needs for salmon, e.g., bears in addition to human also U.S. versus Canadian needs.

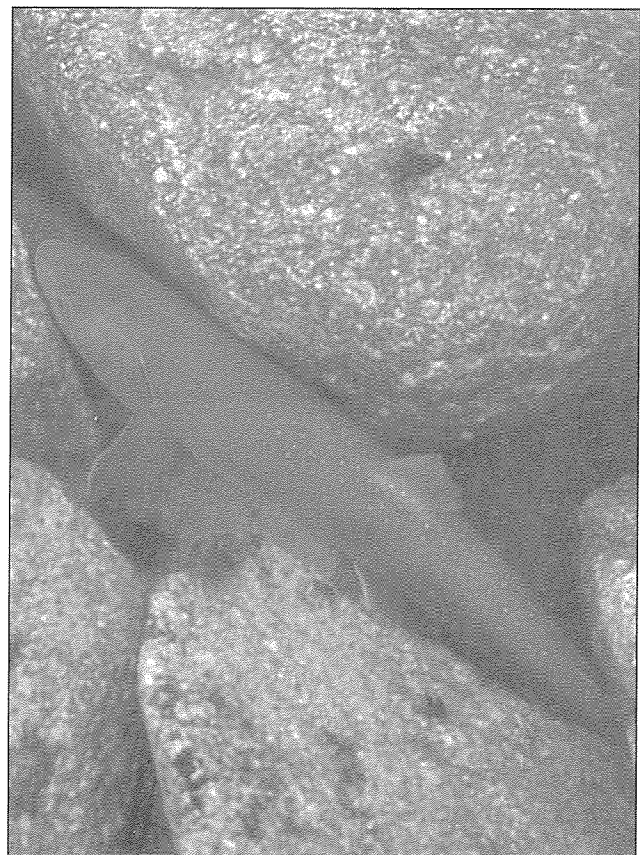
Recommendations for consideration by the Think Tank

- Consider establishing a point en route to spawning grounds ("home free") where LRA is not longer permitted to protect salmon from over-exhaustion.
- When one species is at great risk but another is not, federal law can vary catch limit to 0, which permits LRA for that species or total closure for all species. Revise salmon harvest regulations to be able to limit LRA.
- Maintain or increase DFO/CO/enforcement presence at Dalton Post.
- Maintain salmon LRA but this **must be done very carefully**. Educate on proper techniques of LRA in order to minimize mortality of salmon, especially when limit is reached.
- Keep all snagged fish.
- Salmon Committee should hold a special Salmon Workshop

RESEARCH

Discussion and key points

- YTG Fisheries has gathered a large body of information on different aspects of LRA. **Research** provides an **understanding** but does not provide answers. Management of a resource requires a plan and the plan is influenced by research.
- A little work has been done in the Yukon, using tagged fish, to assess the effects of LRA. All eight sonar-tagged fish survived and behaved "normally" for the year they were tracked.
- Purpose of "slot" system was explained – that is fish in a certain size range or "slot" must be returned as they are the primary reproducers in the population.
- Need to monitor fish populations and incorporate a historic perspective in conjunction with ecosystem factors (global warming, beaver dams), to get a good idea of the status.



- Changes to fish environment from reduction in numbers of large predatory fish. Loss of large predators results in increase of other fish – this has recently been noted by elders for Kluane Lake and is an indicator that predators (like lake trout) have been depressed. Studies of lakes can be used to provide additional details to such local observations and concerns.
- Aspects of LRA that need research attention are:
 - Effect of raising fish from deep.
 - Effect on fish of exhaustion due to landing activity/time.
 - Effect on fish of repeated live releases.
- Forest fire affects water quality in watershed but we do not know long-term impacts of fires on fish populations.
- Does research on survival reflect reality? LRA is effective if proper techniques are used, but many or most anglers are using poor techniques, which increases mortality rate. Maybe the studies should focus on fish released by Joe-average anglers.

Recommendations for consideration by the Think Tank

- Education/Communication Strategy for research/management should focus on:
 - (1) residents
 - (2) non-residents
 - (3) other jurisdictions' successes and/or failures – must be relevant to Yukon experience.
- Keep the big picture (whole ecosystem) in monitoring and research. Do not focus on one species/aspect because everything interacts, e.g., global warming, beaver dams, etc.
- Monitor and follow-up on actions and recommendations to assess effectiveness.

DERBIES

Discussion and key points

- The Department of Renewable Resources does not promote but does sanction derbies. A license is required for derbies and conditions can be applied by Fisheries. Fisheries discourages derbies during hot weather and tries to encourage fishing species other than lake trout. Derbies, which would involve killing and keeping lake trout, are not permitted.
- Derby organizer must consult with or have approval of community, especially for a first-time derby.
- "Family Ice Fishing" Day, hosted by Yukon Fish and Game Association, is not a derby. Few fish are caught and kept and there are no prizes. This is an educational opportunity and a social activity. Fishing licenses are available for sale at the time.
- Derbies need to be monitored.

Recommendations for consideration by the Think Tank

- Restrictions based on "air" and "water" temperatures. Discourage derbies in July and August.
- Ensure that activities and practices are least detrimental to the fish.
- Use derby as an educational opportunity, especially with children.
- Switch to more winter derbies.

SPAWNING

Discussion and key points

- There is poor understanding about spawning areas (e.g., anglers wading in spawning streams for grayling in spring).
- High risk of anglers focussing on spawning grounds.
- More information is needed before season can be closed for spawning periods.
- A closure was imposed on two stocked lakes this fall during the spawning season because the stock was vulnerable.
- Fisheries has some knowledge of spawning times for certain species but has also encountered some strange exceptions.

Recommendations for consideration by the Think Tank

- Precautionary management: limit or close angling if activity is heavy during spawning season.

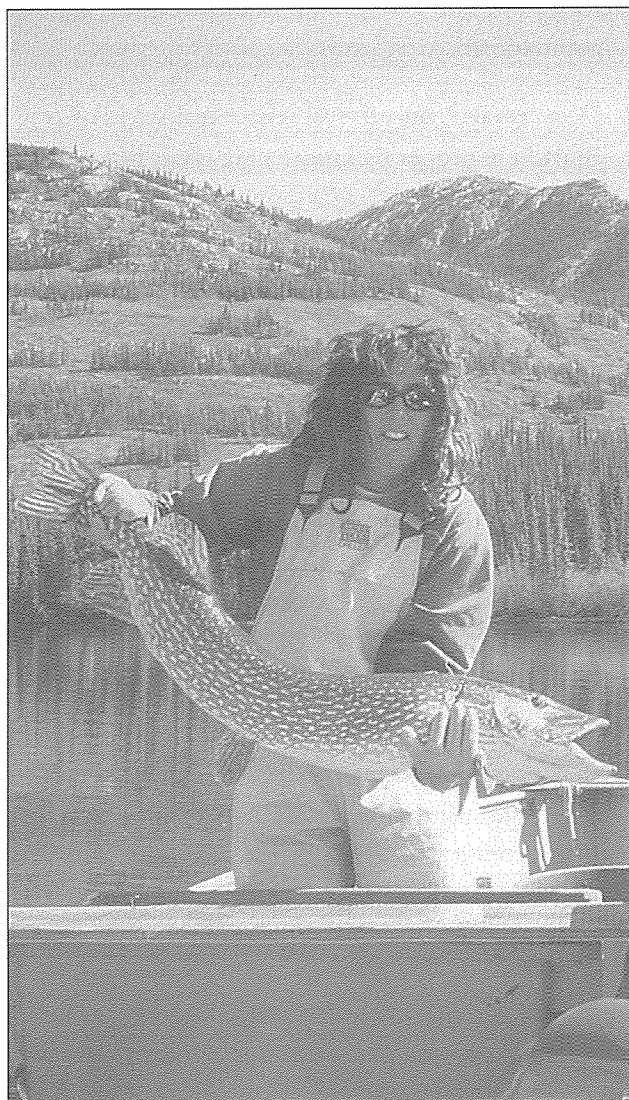
STOCKED LAKES

Discussion and key points

- There are approximately 20-25 stocked lakes in the Yukon. These are lakes with no water outlets and are located near communities.
- These lakes are stocked for anglers with disease-free fish and catch limits are liberal.

Recommendations for consideration by the Think Tank

- Maintain stocked lakes to remove pressure on natural fish stocks in lakes that are not stocked.



ETHICS

A lengthy discussion took place on the ethics of angling after food needs have been met. There are two types of people who fish: those who fish to eat, and those who fish for recreation. Some people feel that LRA is “playing with fish” and shows disrespect. Nobody has all the answers on ethics for everyone.

Discussion and key points

It was agreed to use the term “licensed angling” instead of “sport fishing.” The main themes are **respect, sharing resources → sharing respect.**

LRA as recreation

- Angling is the only way most people can fish, and live release is a key component of angling.
- Although LRA may be legislated, it basically boils down to a personal choice and it should be an educated choice.
- Is accommodating as many anglers as possible an acceptable plan? Is this approach workable, i.e., accommodating angling opportunities over conservation of fish? Need to balance angling activity with capacity of resource. Rights of fish versus rights of anglers.
- “Keep all that we catch” will deplete stocks much faster than LRA.
- **RESPECT: how we treat a fish reflects how we treat ourselves and each other. Respect cultural differences.**
- Cultural beliefs and personal values vary among First Nations.
- One participant noted that fishing, as a recreation activity, is good for the soul and provides stress relief.
- Regardless of personal beliefs, everyone is here to ensure the survival of live-released fish. **Respect is shared by everyone — First Nation and non-First Nation anglers.**

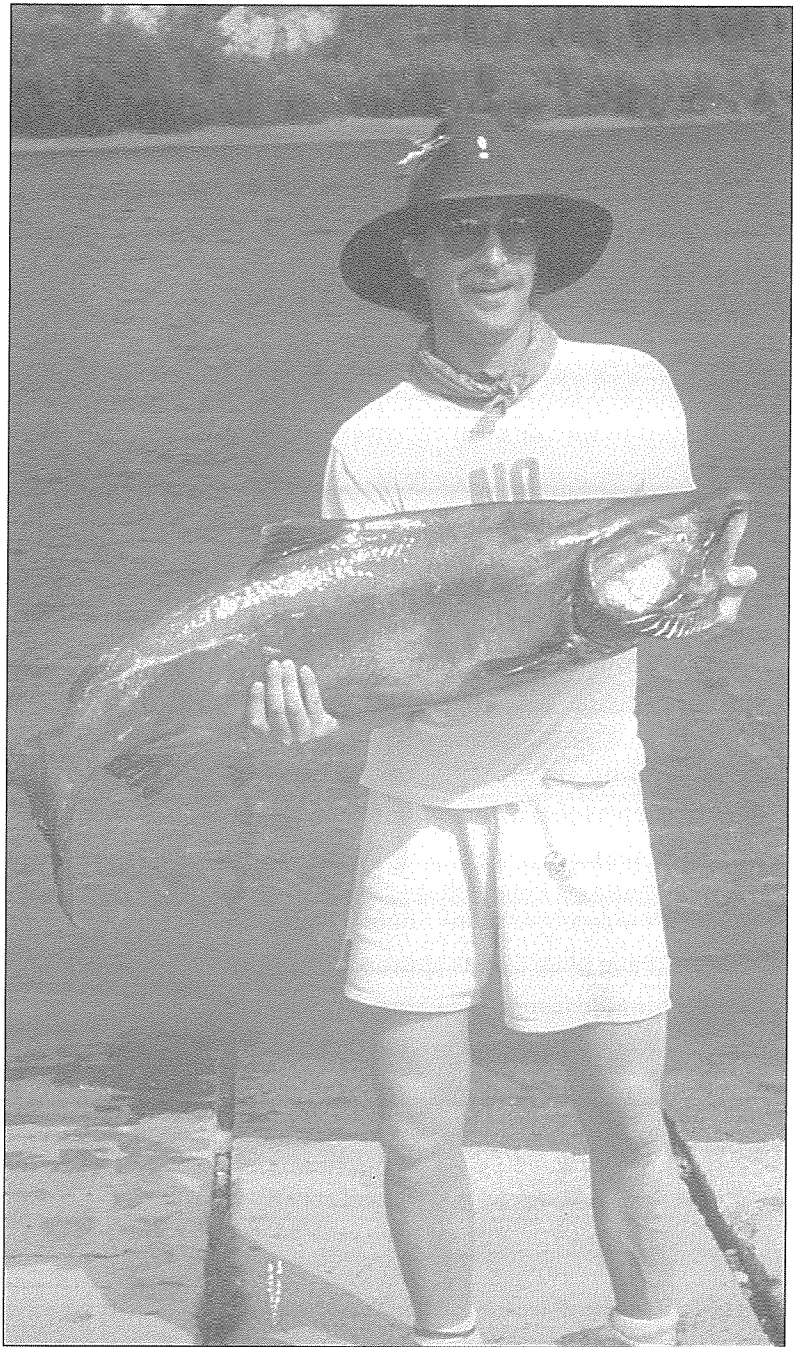
LRA as management tool

- Conservation ethic is changing. 20-30 years ago, there was no conservation ethic and all fish caught were killed. This seems to have turned around to the point where some people believe all fish should be released. Need more balance and moderation. Social change takes time. Government messages try to articulate social changes – need a plan.
- LRA is a viable management tool for conservation. It is not government policy. Our challenge is to make LRA the least detrimental to fish as possible.
- Live release as a management tool for selective harvesting versus live release for sport/recreation: The lack of government restrictions has made LRA a recreational activity left in the hands of individual anglers. It has become an individual ethical decision. If we are unable to educate individual anglers with “good” thinking and practices, then we must consider other tools/solutions.
- The only 100% solution is 100% no harvesting. No LRA after catch limit reached.
- Consider relating the catch limit to LRA by allowing the live release of double the number of fish you can catch – for a catch limit of two you could live release only four.
- Non-fishing public does not care about fish (unlike seals, etc. which are cute and people will feel compassionate for).
- Government does impose ethical standards, e.g., fair chase, no harassment, etc.
- Preserving resources is costly.

- Use the public to preserve what we have; however, ground-based (stewardship) management/monitoring requires financial support.
- Is LRA too optimistic a management tool? Look at reality, not ideal situations. Look at other tools. Consider harassment of fish from fishing practices and what is “realistic” in terms of LRA use and acceptability.
- Conservation is top priority. Avoid the need to use LRA, and not just rely on good LRA.
- There are less fish now than 20-30 years ago, due to environmental factors, etc., over which we have no control; we need to focus on the factors that we can improve.

Education

- Little Salmon First Nation takes children out to show them how to fish and take care of fish; LRA is not part of demonstration.
- Need to educate youth on the land (through programs).
- Need First Nation information on land observations.
- First Nation fishing (nets) will provide indicators because they will detect changes in the fish populations.
- Media messages are often contrary to “conservation.” Need strong communication/delivery to counter values/messages from media/TV shows.
- Is education enough or do we need further regulations? Will education alone solve all of our problems?
- Base on respect, conservation and sharing.



In attempting to clarify the context of LRA, the following comparisons were made

Fish plentiful

Non LRA food fisher: keeps every fish because it is a gift and it is an insult not to accept. Fishes as long as fish caught can be consumed.

LRA fisher: may be fishing for food but if catches an “illegal” fish will return it. Either stops fishing when has caught what can be consumed or releases all fish after has caught what can be consumed.

Fewer fish – limits imposed

Non LRA food fisher: stops fishing when limit is reached.

LRA fisher: either stops at limit or continues to fish after limit but releases everything.

Very few fish

Catch limit is zero for a species; can occur where populations very vulnerable.

Non LRA food fisher: does not fish or fishes for another species.

LRA fisher: will not fish if only fishing for food or will fish for other species. May fish for protected species and release all if only fishing for recreation.

Recommendations for consideration by the Think Tank

- Use same term, either Catch and Release or Live-Release Program.
- Provide information so that anglers can make an “educated” choice, including First Nation history and history of lake.
- Respond to crisis situation: close down fishing first, figure out what to do, then act.
- Lakes should be closed to fishing if stocks are being depleted.
- It is important to improve LRA techniques, but it is also important to recognise that some areas should be off limits to LRA because of cultural values and/or vulnerability of fish.
- Use education system to teach children proper way; show “big” picture.
- Educate Yukon anglers on proper techniques of LRA.
- Use local residents/retailers to educate non-residents on LRA.
- Establish fish e-mail observation page for local people to log observations (like bird club bird observations).
- Have kiosks at boat/plane landings to provide information on fish in that lake.

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC EVENING SESSION

The attendees at the evening session included members of media, two retailers and one lodge owner, plus one avid angler in Whitehorse to co-ordinate the alpha phone book. Two participants had attended the February workshop.

Discussion and key points

- The two retailers promote single barbless hooks and encourage anglers to debarb hooks.
- Retailers are open to educational and promotional materials. There is interest in LRA but not enough information. Retailers have a great opportunity to educate.
- There are few manufacturers of hooks world-wide. The demand for barbless hooks is small and therefore they are not being manufactured.
- Clients are willing to comply but do not want to spend time reading regulations and do not want complex rules. **Keep it simple** and apply **universal** restrictions.
- Europeans especially appreciate regulations in their own languages.
- There was discussion but no agreement on applying different limits for resident and non-residents. Non-residents do not like paying higher fees for salmon catch card.
- To promote proper use of LRA, a full-page listing was offered, free of charge, in the alpha phone book.



LIVE RELEASE THINK TANK

It was recognised that any recommendations coming out of the workshop would require further thought and planning to be implemented. A proposal was put forward to establish a Live Release Think Tank, consisting of a small group of dedicated people, representing a broad range of fishing interests, for the purpose of developing strategies to improve live-release techniques. This would be co-ordinated by Fish and Wildlife Management Board because of its experience and capacity to carry out such programs and is expected to be a long-term activity, taking two or more years. Any participants interested in being part of this group were invited to submit their names to the Board.

A number of criteria were established for this “think tank.”

- Requires commitment by individuals and funding from agencies
- Government support of group (YTG/FN/DFO).
- Establish clear goals and objectives.
- Endorsement of all interests.
- Timeframe research support must be established.
- Consider impacts on cultures and businesses.
- Monitor effectiveness of actions on all user groups and on lakes and related ecosystems.
- Maintain humility and openness to learning.
- Encourage public involvement including monitoring/reporting, e.g. Monitoring “box” @ lake site.
- Consider Southern Lakes Program as “model.”
- Instill “ownership”/pride in resource.
- Education: How do we influence the angler – intensive campaign. Education requires more than pamphlets, etc. Expand awareness; increase public information/promotion (include trade shows); “Handout” with suggestions about effect LRA methods.
- Effective communication. (Use a credible spokesperson).



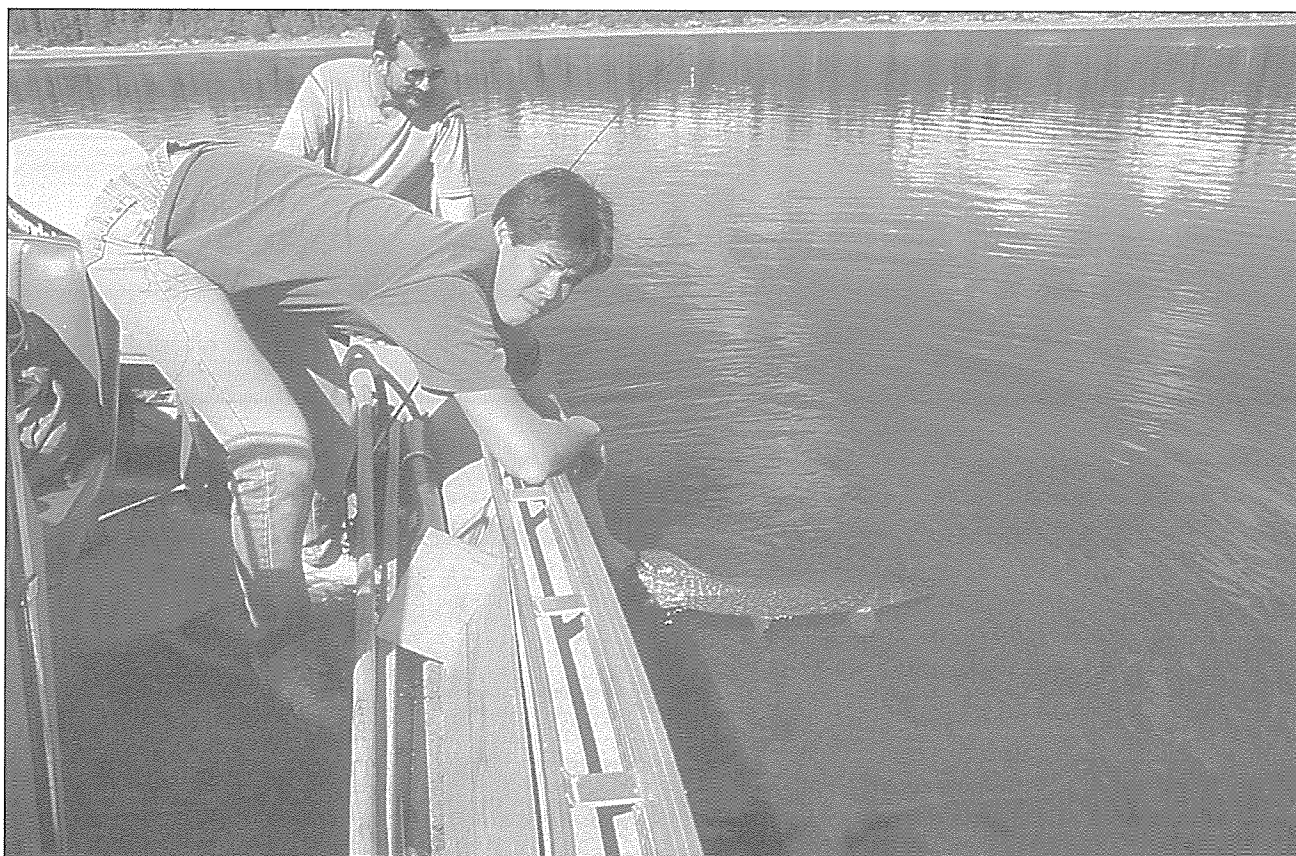
CLOSING REMARKS

A number of participants expressed their satisfaction at the conduct and outcome of the workshop. It was noted that the workshop had shown that all interests in the Yukon could get together and search for solutions that would benefit the fish resource and show respect for each other. The workshop, therefore, represented the end point of two years work by the Board

to undertake a full and fair public discussion of Live Release Angling. The next step is to take this information and turn it into programs and recommendations to government. This will be the task of the Think Tank and the Board.

Closing Prayer: Clyde Blackjack

Adjourned at 3:15 PM



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The Importance of Fish and Fish Harvesting to Yukon First Nations People. Stephanie Muckenhiem, Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, Live Release Series, Report #1, August 1998

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