

Arctic Bay Harbour Development- Nunavut Water Board (NWB) Licence Amendment Request

Fisheries and Oceans Canada – Small Craft Harbours (DFO-SCH)

Executive Summary

Fisheries and Oceans Canada – Small Craft Harbours (DFO-SCH) is requesting an amendment to its Nunavut Water Board (NWB) Type B Water Licence for the Arctic Bay Harbour Development project. The original licence, issued in December 2021, reflected early-stage project planning and included restrictions on water use and construction activities. Project delays due to unsuccessful contractor procurement in 2021 postponed implementation; however, a contractor was successfully secured in 2025, prompting both a renewal of the licence timeline (to December 2029) and the need for updated operational authorizations.

The amendment aligns the licence with finalized construction plans and supports the transition to active construction beginning in 2026. It seeks authorization for activities not previously approved, including direct water use, construction camp development, quarry operations, material hauling, equipment maintenance, and waste management. These activities are essential for delivering the harbour infrastructure and associated facilities near Arctic Bay, Nunavut.

A key component of the amendment is the proposed water use. DFO-SCH is requesting approval for up to 36 cubic metres of water per day, combining municipal and natural sources. Approximately 13 m³/day will be supplied by the Hamlet of Arctic Bay for camp use, while up to 23 m³/day will be intermittently withdrawn from the Alternate Water Supply Lake for construction purposes such as dust suppression, compaction, and equipment cleaning, and other construction-related activities. Water withdrawals will occur only during open-water periods and will use screened pump systems designed to protect aquatic life.

Environmental impacts are anticipated to be minimal. The volume of water withdrawn represents a very small proportion of the lake's estimated capacity, and use will be temporary and intermittent. Although the lake may support fish populations, mitigation measures—including fish-screened intake systems and controlled withdrawal rates—will minimize risks to aquatic habitat. Additional environmental protection will be ensured through implementation of comprehensive management plans covering spill response, erosion and sediment control, traffic management, quarry operations, and overall construction practices.

The amendment also includes minor infrastructure modifications, such as installing a culvert along a quarry access road to maintain natural drainage patterns. This location is not associated with a fish-bearing watercourse, further reducing environmental concerns.

Overall, the requested amendment updates the licence to reflect current project requirements while maintaining strong environmental safeguards. Approval will enable DFO-SCH to proceed with the Arctic Bay Harbour Development in a compliant and environmentally responsible manner, supporting infrastructure development in the region with limited anticipated environmental impact.