

2024 Fisheries Engagement Questions

TOP 5 MOST COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. How do we receive a higher price for our harvest?

Many of you commented about how we can ensure the best financial return for fish. There are elements of the fishery and its compensation that we can control, and elements that we cannot. The best thing that our fishery can do is to provide the highest quality of product possible. This means fishing sustainably, keeping fish on ice, ensuring quick processing and storage of the harvest, etc.

Beyond that, the Fisheries Department is currently making progress in establishing more opportunities for our community and its harvest, including more processing options and value-added products. It takes time to develop these projects, but we hear that this is important to you, and we are taking action!

2. When will there be a list of fishing infractions and penalties?

Enforcement is an integral part of our fishery, and we are working hard to clearly define infractions, penalties, and procedures when rules are broken. This is a process that involves the community, the department, and the fisheries committee. It takes time but we are close to finalizing our Enforcement Policy and will be sharing it shortly!

3. How do we improve Fish Days and infrastructure at Papermill Dam?

We received many questions about Fish Days, Papermill Dam, and associated developments. The department is taking the approach that every year Fish Days should be better than the year before. We are hoping to announce some projects at the site shortly and appreciate the interest from the community. We will also be taking opportunities this year to remind those in attendance that impairment due to drugs or alcohol use is not acceptable at any community event, including Fish Days, as many of you shared your concerns around drugs and alcohol. It is important that Papermill Dam be a safe space for all community members!

4. Will we be able to get forms and copies of important documents online?

We recognize that not everyone is able to make it into the office to pick up forms or has computer/internet access. Therefore, in time we are hoping to offer all forms from the Fisheries Department (such as: fish requests, consent forms for youth participation at Fish Day, rules and regulations etc) online.

We are currently in talks to make these changes and hopefully they can be finalized soon. We would like to make the Department as accessible as possible!

5. Is it possible to have more options at fish distributions for processed products, particularly for Elders/Disability who may not have the ability to easily clean and store fish?

We would love to see this as an option in the future! Everything comes at a cost however, and processing large volumes of fish for the community isn't easily accomplished without funding and staff. We are currently pursuing some options for what increasing the diversity of processed fish products look like and will share with the community once we find some viable options.

FISH DAYS

6. Will there be more Fish Days?

Fish days are determined by several factors, primarily run size and escapement requirements. The number of Fish Days will always vary year over year, and we have no way of knowing how many events there will be.

7. Can Fish Days have more paid workers and support?

The department is looking to increase its capacity this year, and this will translate to greater support at Fish Days. We expect the community experience of Fish Days will improve every year moving forward.

8. Is there a way to make Fish Days go faster?

The speed of community distributions is always based on the number of fish to be distributed and the amount of community members that are present. Sometimes this is a faster process than other times, but we always strive to get distributions done as quickly and effectively as possible.

9. Why has the participation in Fish Days grown from a relatively small number to such a large group?

Our community is growing. With more community members aging into eligibility and more out of town Tseshaht members return for distributions, the demand increases. We hope to see more people at Fish Day every year because it means our community is thriving!

10. Is there a way to improve parking at Papermill Dam, including designated parking for people with disability and accessibility concerns?

The demand for parking has long exceeded the availability of parking at Papermill Dam. This is an issue that Fisheries can bring forward to the Public Works department for

further analysis to see what our options are. We agree that parking and access could be improved.

11. Helpers at Fish Day should participate in as many sets as they can, not just one so that they receive extra fish. Is there a way to remind people that they are volunteering for the day and not just a set, and should there be a cut-off for signing up? Helpers should have a sign-in and sign-out, so they don't just leave after getting their share.

Sign-up, sign-in, and sign-out sheets are all a good idea and help us track participation in Fish Days. We are hoping to implement more robust monitoring of Fish Day volunteers and will be issuing a reminder about volunteer involvement and what it entails prior to the first event.

12. It would be nice if there was an "opening day feast" or community event tied to the first Fish Day of the year, including a song/statement from Elders, Elected Chief and Council, or Hereditary Chiefs. Is something like this possible?

This is a great idea, and we would love to see something like this in the future. We can take this to Council for feedback and see if there is interest in pursuing a more formal opening ceremony and community event.

13. There should be signs at Papermill Dam reminding the community that there is a No Drugs, No Alcohol policy for public spaces and community events. Can something like this be installed?

We strongly agree. We will work with our Public Works department on this issue for further feedback.

14. Sometimes it feels like there is a stigma against people with addictions. Unless you are being a nuisance, isn't it alright to attend Fish Days?

We empathize strongly with those who are going through active addiction, as well as their family members. For the safety of our community and out of respect for the many of us that have been touched by the harmful impact of drugs and alcohol, we must adopt a zero-tolerance policy for impairment at community events and in public spaces.

If you or anyone you know is struggling with addiction, please reach out to the appropriate support network (ADAPS, Crisis Line, Counselling Support, etc.).

15. Why do the Fishing Rules say you have to be 16 years old to fish, but at Fish Days a 12 year old can participate? Are you following child labor laws and WCB protocols? Parents should have to stay if they have signed up their child to help with sets.

There is no requirement for those younger than 16 to participate in Fish Days, it is strictly volunteer and not subject to Child Labor or WCB protocols. Many in our community have asked for opportunities for their children to participate in their cultural heritage, and Fish Days is a great opportunity for that. There are required forms and waivers for parents to sign so that all parties are giving informed consent to volunteer their time.

16. If known drug dealers show up, can they be removed?

Fisheries Department are not police officers, and we cannot detain anyone for any reason. If there is evidence of any criminal offences taking place during Fish Days, or during fishing, then the appropriate authorities (RCMP) will be contacted.

17. Some impairments and disabilities are non-visible, what can we do to ensure that people who have non-visible impairments are still treated the same as other disabilities? Why is a doctor's note needed?

It is true that not all disabilities are visible, however in the case of any serious disability it should be possible to obtain a statement from a medical professional that validates the need for prioritized access. Please contact your physician or Telehealth services.

18. Fish Days should have a designated area for smoking out of respect for children, Elders, and non-smokers. This is normal at most outdoor events and public spaces.

We agree! We will consult with our Fisheries Committee about developing a designated smoking area.

FISHING

19. Is there anything we can do to encourage buyers to keep their prices up?

As discussed during our Fisheries Engagement, there is little we can do to control the pricing of our product in its current state. Prices are set by markets, and we do not control the market. The best course of action is for our fishery to work hard in providing the best quality product that we can. This means proper harvesting and storage.

But harvesting is only one link in the supply chain, and if we want to receive a great amount of compensation for our fish, the answer is in controlling more links of the chain through avenues like value-added products, processing of the harvest, marketing, and distribution.

20. The launch pass is getting more expensive, is there anything that we can do to help reduce this cost for our fishing community?

We hear the concern about this rising cost, and we are looking into options for the future to help reduce this expense.

21. How are we going to address our growing fishing fleet? Should there be a barrier for entry?

Boat inspections serve as a barrier for entry, and these inspections will become more robust over time. So long as an inspection is passed, and the regulations of the fishery are adhered to, a fisherman will have the right to fish in the openings.

22. Is there any update on the green algae?

Environmental analysis regarding green algae is an ongoing process. The Fisheries Department has a water quality and nutrient/chemical testing program, as well as support from NTC biologists, to help understand the root causes of this issue. The short answer is that algae like we are seeing in the Somass River and Kitsuksis Creek is typically the result of “nutrient loading”, which is the buildup of nutrients in the system. We are currently exploring options for treatment and/or removal.

23. Is there any information regarding salmon run size available yet?

We haven't received any numbers yet, but tentatively we are expecting the salmon run size to be comparable to last year.

24. Is the fishing boundary still 10 Mile Point?

Yes. However, boundaries will always be shared on the fishing license for an Economic Opportunity (EO) (and these boundaries can be subject to change).

25. What are the anticipated off-loading stations for Tseshaht fisherman this year?

Same as last year! Off-loading can be done at Clutesi Haven Marina, Dock+ (at Fisherman's Harbor) and at designated packers.

26. How do we deal with active addiction, drug, and alcohol use during economic openings?

If anyone on the water is seen openly consuming drugs or alcohol, then the relevant authorities will be contacted. We are continuing to refine our Enforcement Protocols and will publish a document with infractions, fees, and suspension timelines once completed.

27. Will the new off-loading program be separate jobs, or tied into the monitor positions?

They are separate jobs, but the monitors will be there in a supporting role.

28. Can we sign the fisher's contract online each year, instead of in-person?

It is the preference of the Fisheries Department to have the contracts signed in person. This allows us to do boat inspections, fee processing, and contract signing all in the same place at the same time.

29. Will we be able to get online copies of forms related to fishing, Fish Days, enforcement rules, etc.?

We are currently working on making available via the Tsashaht.com website, copies of all necessary forms (Fish Requests, Consent for Minors at Fish Day, etc.). In the interim forms can be acquired at the band office through the Fisheries department.

30. Is there a way to limit spring salmon fishing to 2 permits and 2 nets per boat? It's disheartening to see some fisherman with bigger boats setting 4+ nets during openings.

Rules and regulations are decided by committee and enforced by the Fisheries Department, any infractions and their associated penalties will be outlined in our Enforcement Protocols (which will be available soon!).

31. Will we be required to pay for boat inspections again, and is it an annual fee in perpetuity?

A boat inspection is required every year to ensure equipment is in good working order. The fee is to be paid annually.

32. Why are we not allowed to use powered gear or hydraulic drums while fishing? Are there any plans for this to change?

Currently there are no plans to allow the use of powered gear. We strive for equitable fishing opportunities within the nation. Limiting the gear to non-powered ensures that all community members have the same access to fishing opportunities on the water. If it becomes a priority for the nation to pursue the use of power gear, then the Department will do everything in its power to help make this transition and safely and environmentally support the change.

33. What gear and/or licensing/forms do we need to long-line for halibut and cod?

Any questions about gear and licensing will depend on the vessel you are operating and the area you are fishing. Please feel free to reach out to the Fisheries Department and schedule a meeting if you would like to know more, we are happy to help!

34. What is the possibility of a clam fishery for Tseshaht?

Absolutely! The department is constantly working on new programs to help increase access for members. We will always update the community about new opportunities.

35. Will there be more on-water guardianship/enforcement this year during openings?

Yes! We are expanding our monitoring and water quality testing programs this year, so you will likely see an increased Tseshaht Fisheries presence throughout the system. Our new monitoring program will be primarily engaged in boat counts, both of our fisherman as well as recreational fisherman in the territory. We are also hoping to add more Guardians and are pursuing funding opportunities.

36. Jiggers: Do they use pink slips to sell fish and what days? Fish Days or Gill-netters days?

Pink slips can only be obtained through designated landing sites during EO openings.

ENFORCEMENT

37. There needs to be strict consequences for those who break the rules of the fishery. It isn't fair for people to not obey the rules of the fishery and still get equal access. When can we expect to see enforcement protocols formalized?

The Fisheries Committee and Fisheries Department have worked together to develop rules for the season. We will be distributing copies of enforcement protocols to the community once they are approved.

38. Abandoned boats and gear are a problem on the Somass River. What is the process for having these items dealt with? If members are caught leaving boats and gear in the water, polluting, and not respecting the environment, what are the consequences to these actions?

This process is outlined in our forthcoming Enforcement Protocols. For now, the best practice is to contact Lead Guardian John Ross, or Fisheries Assistant Tamara Mack to report any abandoned boats and gear so that it can be dealt with.

39. Will drones be used for enforcement?

We do not have any current plans to use drones for enforcement.

40. Is there a possibility of coordinating enforcement between Tseshaht and Hupacasath in the future?

If there is interest from both parties, then collaboration is always possible. Tseshaht and Hupacasath Guardians do currently work together informally, but there may be a way in the future for further coordination. Our incoming monitoring program will see a Tseshaht and a Hupacasath monitor on the water working together to observe recreational and community fisheries, which is a step in the direction of greater partnerships between our two Nations.

OTHER QUESTIONS

41. Some have expressed concern over the safety of people selling fish on the roadside. Are there any alternative locations or safety precautions that can be made?

This may be a problem better suited to Public Works, but it has certainly been mentioned by several community members. We will discuss what options there are and if there is anything Fisheries can do to support those selling roadside. The safety of our community is of the utmost importance.

42. Helpers need more encouragement, is there a way that we can show appreciation?

We agree that all volunteers should be acknowledged and celebrated, and as such they do currently receive extra fish from the distributions. We will investigate further supporting their efforts during Fish Days.

43. Is it possible to make Papermill Dam more developed? Some improvements could include safety lights to make the launch clearer when it's dark out, and a fish cleaning station for returning fisherman.

There are currently projects in the early stages of development for improving Papermill Dam. We are hoping to share these with the community soon!

44. Has the department ever considered offering youth scholarships or bursaries?

Scholarships and bursaries fall under the jurisdiction of the Education Department, but there may be room for collaboration between Fisheries and Education in the future.

45. Is it possible to have more processed fish options for Elders and disability? Vacuum packed fillets, canned fish, etc.?

This is a great idea, and something we would like to pursue in the future. There are financial realities associated with processing, packaging, etc. but we are looking into ways to incorporate more processed options into our distributions.

46. Can you please explain the financial arrangements with the hatchery? What was the profit from the ESSR?

The hatchery ESSR program is managed by PICFI and alternates selecting buyers between Hupacasath and Tseshaht. Profits are shared between nations and can be requested through the proper channels.

47. Why was there 2000 fish sold to Hupacasath and who approved that sale?

This information is incorrect as we did not sell any fish to Hupacasath during the 2023 season.