

Atlin Lake Storage Concept

Frequently Asked Questions



1. Why is Yukon Energy continuing to study the idea of a weir on the Atlin River, knowing that many local residents are opposed to it?

It's Yukon Energy's job to find enough clean, affordable and reliable power to meet energy demand. We are looking at all possible sources of clean energy and ways to conserve electricity, including geo-thermal, wind, biomass (waste to energy), hydro and Demand Side Management (energy conservation) programs. With 40 percent of the water that runs through our Whitehorse dam coming from Atlin, we cannot ignore the potential of using the water more efficiently. Without more clean power we will be forced to burn diesel, which will mean rate increases for Yukoners and additional GHG emissions in our northern air. We are currently doing studies to determine if there is a way of using the water from Atlin without causing significant adverse effects to the environment and to the users of this resource. We are asking Atlin residents to be patient and not pre-judge the concept before results of those studies are available.

2. Why doesn't Yukon Energy look at development in the Yukon instead?

Before we develop any new projects it is important that we use the resources we have now as efficiently as possible. That's why we are building Mayo B and installing a third turbine at our Aishihik plant. Both of these projects will allow us to produce more electricity through enhancements to our existing hydro facilities. Other hydro-related ideas we are studying include diverting more water through our Aishihik facility (the Gladstone Diversion Concept) and increased water storage on Marsh Lake. Slowing the release of water in the fall from Atlin and Marsh Lakes would allow us to make better use of the existing capacity of our Whitehorse plant during the winter.

In terms of new projects, we have studied a large number of sites in both Yukon and northwest B.C., but only a few of them have good hydro potential and could be developed at a reasonable cost at this time. As winter energy is a primary consideration, sites that do not provide sufficient storage and winter energy are less attractive. Sites that are located a long way from the existing transmission grid, such as Surprise Lake/Pine Creek and other sites in southeast Yukon for example would also require the construction of lengthy transmission lines, making many of these sites very expensive to develop. That being said, we continue to search for any viable options that would provide us with more clean electricity.

3. Because the southern part of Atlin Lake has been included within the Atlin Park boundaries, some people believe it would be illegal to significantly alter the resources in the lake. Has Yukon Energy sought a legal opinion on this?

Yukon Energy did seek legal advice before we started doing studies in the Atlin area and understands that there may be a requirement for a Park Use Permit, along with several other regulatory authorizations. The Corporation is examining all matters related to permits on a continuing basis and these issues will be part of the decision making process related to any potential project.

4. Why would residents and users of the lake support a project that appears to have no benefits to them?

On a global basis, climate change is an issue for everyone, particularly Northerners. As Canadians, we have some of the highest greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions per capita in the world. We feel it is our obligation to ensure, as much as possible, that the power we produce is from clean, renewable sources. We understand the reduction of green house gasses is a priority for B.C. as well. In that we have a shared vision. This concept would displace the production of up to 12,000 tonnes of CO₂ / year. This alone represents 2-3 percent of the Yukon's total greenhouse gas emissions in 2006. Yukon Energy is also interested in exploring opportunities for other potential benefits that might be created from, or in association with, such a concept.

5. Why doesn't Yukon Energy put the money it is spending on the Atlin River Concept into an energy conservation program for Yukoners?

Yukon Energy is developing an energy conservation (demand side management) program, which it will be ready to announce shortly. The Corporation believes this is part of the solution, but even with energy conservation it will need additional clean energy to meet expected loads.

6. If Yukon Energy builds a weir on the Atlin River, how will it ensure boats can get through?

It is a key design consideration that there must be boat passage. Engineers are exploring weir designs that would allow for boat passage without any sort of lock. If such designs prove to be unworkable they will look at building a boat lock into the weir.

7. Is Yukon Energy going to dredge a channel along the entire Atlin River?

No.

8. Yukon Energy's current concept doesn't see the Atlin Lake levels going above their natural highs but what about 10 or 20 years from now? Will it be coming back to Atlin with a proposal for an even bigger hydro project?

Yukon Energy has no plans to develop any project on Atlin Lake or in the Atlin River that would raise the lake levels above their natural highs.

9. In the past people have seen lake trout in the Atlin River and suspect that they migrate back and forth between Tagish and Atlin Lakes. How would a weir affect this migration?

Yukon Energy agrees this is an important question that must be adequately answered during the studies that are underway. Maintaining fish passage will be an important consideration in the design of any weir.

10. Why should residents and lake users consider trading the lake, the future, and livelihoods so that short-lived and in many cases not yet existing mines in the Yukon can be provided with power?

Yukon Energy understands that any project can only be seriously considered once all significant impacts can be addressed satisfactorily. It's important to note that the demand for electricity comes from all sectors (residential, commercial/institutional, and industrial). Our need to provide clean, reliable and affordable energy is based on a sustainability vision that is long-term, not just for a few years but for many decades into the future.

11. Under this concept the nature of Atlin Lake would be changed forever.

One of the key objectives of our studies is to determine what changes might occur and what that might mean for the environment and for people. It is important to have these questions answered and to have all interested parties adequately informed before any decisions are made about whether there is a viable project in Atlin and whether it should proceed.

Further questions? Comments?

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