

Phase II Consultation Report (October – November 2008)

Skeena Quality Waters Strategy

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1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 Background

For years, resident anglers, non-resident anglers, guides, members of the Ministry of Environment's Sport Fish Advisory Committee, members of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' Sport Fish Advisory Board, and local Fish and Game Clubs have told the Ministry of Environment that some waters in the Skeena River system have persistent steelhead angler-use issues — crowding, disproportionate numbers of non-resident anglers or guided anglers, lack of opportunities for resident anglers, illegal guiding, and poor angler etiquette — leading to a degraded quality of angling experience.

In response to these concerns, the ministry implemented the Quality Waters Strategy in the Skeena Region in 2006. The Quality Waters Strategy is a province-wide process that aims to maintain and improve the angling experiences offered in BC's waters, by managing angler-use. The strategy includes a community engagement process, to help identify waters of concern that require new or revised regulations.

1.2 Process

From January to March 2008, the Phase I consultation process was held in the Skeena River watershed to identify concerns and issues from the public and stakeholders regarding sportfishing for steelhead. Participants in the consultation process were also invited to identify problems on area rivers and suggest potential solutions to address those problems.

From April to June 2008, three stakeholder-based Working Groups met to help develop a draft Angling Management Plan for the 13 priority waters of the Skeena River watershed: Kitsequecla, Kitwanga, Suskwa, Skeena IV upstream from Kitwanga Bridge, Kispiox, Babine, Bulkley, Morice, Zymoetz I, Zymoetz II, Kitsumkalum, Lakelse, and Skeena IV downstream from Kitwanga Bridge.

With the release of the draft Angling Management Plan on October 17, 2008, a second consultation process (Phase II) was undertaken. This report presents the results of the Phase II consultation process.

The Phase II consultation process asked the public and stakeholders the following questions:

- What do you like about the draft Angling Management Plan?
- What don't you like about the draft plan?
- How should the plan be changed to better address the issues the community has raised?

The goal of the Phase II consultation process was to gather feedback on the draft Angling Management Plan. This feedback was collected for the Working Groups to use in revising the draft plan to better reflect all community interests.

The Phase II consultation process began with the release of the draft plan on October 17, 2008, and ended on November 30, 2008. The general public and stakeholders were informed of the Phase II consultation process through the following means:

- Series of “news updates” and letters to a database of more than 500 email addresses
- Series of newspaper display advertisements in six area newspapers over a three-week period
- Regular updates to the Skeena Quality Waters Website
- Four-page Synopsis of the draft plan that was made available at Public Open Houses
- Display panels on the draft plan that were used at the Public Open Houses
- Slide presentation that was shown at the Public Open Houses

The general public and stakeholders were able to provide their input to the process through the following channels:

- A total of 28 sectoral stakeholder meetings held in the communities of Houston, Smithers, Hazelton, Terrace, Kitimat and Prince Rupert in October and November 2008; 228 people attended
- Six Public Open Houses held in November 2008 in the major urban areas of the watershed with 145 people attending
- An online Response Form; 428 respondents participated who were divided into five User-Groups: resident angler (144), non-resident alien (NRA) (207), non-resident Canadian (NRC) (36), local business (26), and guide (15)
- About 350 emails sent directly to the facilitator
- Phone calls with the facilitator

1.3 Results

The majority of people who took part in the Phase II consultation process responded to the draft Angling Management Plan at a more general level rather than on an individual river basis.

1.3.1 Limited-day licence lottery

Limited-day licence lotteries involve the capping and allocating of limited-day licences for non-guided, non-resident anglers, either immediately or at some point in the future (triggered by a target number of non-resident anglers). The limited-day licence lottery received more attention than any other Management Alternative.

Response Forms clearly show that local business, NRAs, and NRCs who responded did not support a limited-day licence lottery. The reasons for rejecting this alternative focused more on the lottery than the eight-day licence. Reasons given for not supporting this Management Alternative include the following:

- Lack of flexibility and predictability for non-resident anglers to determine where and when they are going to be fishing
- Hospitality sector of the local economy in the Skeena watershed, which depends on non-resident anglers, will be devastated and some businesses will likely close

- No demonstrated crowding or angling quality problem so this sort of regulation is unnecessary

Response forms indicated that guides were weakly supportive of limited-day licence lotteries on some of the rivers, but not others.

Resident anglers were the only group that was strongly in support of a limited-day licence lottery. Resident angler respondents suggested that this measure would spread anglers over the season, reduce crowding at peak times, and lead to better quality angling. However, these respondents offered the following caveat: they cautioned that taking restrictive measures on only certain rivers in the watershed would result in a transfer of effort to less-regulated waters in the system. As a result, they suggested that if limited-day licence lotteries were going to be implemented, they need to be implemented on all Classified Waters or on a watershed-wide basis.

1.3.2 Limited-day licence only

A number of respondents from all User-Groups said that whether or not they supported the lottery alternative, a limited-day licence for non-guided, non-resident anglers could be an effective and useful tool on its own. As the draft plan combines limited-day licences (such as an eight-day licence) with the lottery alternative, the Response Form results give no information on the interest in a limited-day licence on its own. Comments from respondents in favour of this alternative included: this measure would make it difficult for illegal guides because they would need to move all the time; if limited-day licences are implemented, they should be implemented on all Classified Waters; and an angler should be able to purchase a limited-day licence for more than one river.

1.3.3 Resident-only zones

Response form results indicated that spatial zones for resident-only anglers (no non-residents, no guiding) received support from resident anglers, mixed support from local business and guides, and no support from either group of non-residents. Resident anglers felt this was an excellent way of addressing resident-priority although some suggested that resident-only zones might get crowded at times.

1.3.4 Resident-only times

Response Form results indicated that neither non-resident User-Group was supportive of resident-only times. However, during stakeholder meetings held in Hazelton and Smithers, comprised largely of non-residents, there was general support for a resident-only weekend day. Response Form results indicated that guides who responded were mostly not supportive of this Management Alternative. Resident anglers were overwhelmingly supportive of this alternative on all rivers, and local business was supportive on most rivers except the Kispiox and the Lakelse.

Three general comments emerged from all User-Groups in support of resident-only times:

- There needs to be more consistency across the watershed for the resident-only weekend times.

- A large number of non-resident anglers might be “pushed” to waters that do not have a resident-only day on the weekend, thereby creating a crowding problem on those waters.
- Guide “changeover days” might end up all happening on the same day, causing problems for scheduling and potentially creating problems for airline flights and helicopter bookings.

1.3.5 Mandatory Steelhead Stamp extensions

The Response Form indicated that all User-Groups were supportive of this alternative. Respondents offered the following reasons for supporting mandatory Steelhead Stamp extensions:

- It reflects the time steelhead are actually in the river
- Values the steelhead sport fishery more appropriately
- Brings in additional revenue to the province (although most respondents were very clear that they wanted this money to be directed to Skeena watershed steelhead management)

Some respondents expressed concerns about anglers who were targeting salmon and would be required under this Management Alternative to pay for something they would not be using.

1.3.6 Classified Water period extensions

There was a mixed response from User-Groups on this Management Alternative. Response Form results indicated that resident anglers and local business owners generally supported Classified Waters extensions. However, neither non-resident group supported this Management Alternative and guide responses were mixed.

Comments in favour of extending Classified Water periods included:

- Classified Waters period better reflects the time when steelhead are in the river and when the river is open to angling
- Increased angler fees might reduce crowding
- This measure would allow for the collection of more angler-use data
- This measure would lead to better management of guided rod-days by bringing “shoulder seasons” under tighter regulation

Guide respondents suggested that if the Classified season were longer, the ministry should allocate more rod-days. They noted that some guides are guiding on these rivers outside the Classified season now and they do not require rod-days. Hence, guide respondents felt that if the season were extended, the guides who are presently guiding outside the Classified season should be the ones to receive additional rod-days.

1.3.7 Guide restrictions

A number of the recommended Management Alternatives included restrictions on guiding activity that can be implemented as a condition of a guide licence:

- Distributing guiding effort over the whole Classified Water period
- Limiting the number of clients of a guide or assistant guide
- Limiting the number of boats of a guide or assistant guide

- Limiting the number of guided anglers per boat

Response Form results revealed that all User-Groups supported these types of restrictions except the guides who were more varied in their responses. Comments from non-guide respondents included:

- Guided anglers contribute to crowding and changes should be made so their activity is reduced at crowded times.
- Guide restrictions need to be more consistently applied between different rivers.
- Guided anglers need to be regulated for activity because they tend to “hit the fish harder.”

1.3.8 Guide regulations

The draft plan contained two proposed recommendations that would require changes to the Wildlife Act, BC Regulation 125/90, which applies to Angling Management Plans:

- Increasing the number of guided rod-days that are allocated on a particular river
- Reducing the maximum number of guides that could have rod-day allocations on a particular river

Response Form results indicated that no User-Groups were supportive of increasing rod-day allocations for guides on any river. There was one exception and that was mixed responses by guides to four new opportunities on Skeena IV below Kitwanga Bridge.

Comments from non-guides on increasing rod-day allocations included:

- Increasing allocation to guides is not the answer; guides already have substantial allocations on these rivers
- If anything the total number of rod-days allocated should be reduced
- Any future allocation of rod-days should go to new guides
- Working Groups that contain guides should not be recommending increases in rod-days or any regulations that favour guides

The main comment from guides on increasing rod-day allocations was that they felt the proposed increases were not high enough to compensate for extensions to Classified Water seasons or creation of guided-only waters. In the case of Skeena IV, some guides commented that considerably more rod-days could be allocated because the carrying capacity of the river could accommodate that.

1.3.9 Ministry review of guided rod-days

A ministry review of guided rod-days was proposed on two waters. Response Form results indicated that only resident anglers were supportive of a review of guided rod-days by the ministry. Respondents opposed to the review had lots to say about: the whole process of how rod-days were originally allocated to guides in 1990; the need to change the system so that rod-days are no longer a “commodity”; and the desire to see rod-days belong to the Province of BC and “leased” back to guides. The nature of these comments suggests that unless the ministry’s policy regarding the allocation of rod-days

to guides changes, there would be little or no support for any kind of review by the ministry.

1.3.10 Guided only for non-residents

Response Form results showed that resident anglers strongly supported this alternative, guides supported it less strongly and both groups of non-residents and local business were strongly opposed. Comments from those opposed to guided only for non-residents included:

- Too intrusive, too restrictive a regulation; non-guided, non-residents should have some opportunities to fish
- Will have negative implications on the local economy
- Guides on Working Group were “looking after themselves”

Comments from those respondents in favour of guided-only for non-residents included that it was the only way to maintain quality angling on some fragile or wilderness (Class I) systems.

1.3.11 Process concerns

Process concerns fall into three broad categories.

1. Quality Waters Strategy process – Respondents expressed the following concerns regarding the process:

- Working Group composition created an unbalanced, unrepresentative and biased plan
- No local business representation on Working Groups and too many guides
- Tool box of regulations is too restrictive
- Process should include fish management in addition to angler management
- Confusion about what resident-priority actually means and how it translates into the planning process
- Quality Waters 2005 document was not always followed

2. Rationale for Skeena Quality Waters Strategy – Respondents expressed the following concerns regarding the rationale for the process:

- Where is the data to say there is crowding?
- What prompted this process? What groups brought forward the issue of crowding?
- How do you measure a quality angling experience and where is the data to demonstrate that angling quality has deteriorated?
- Lack of participation by resident anglers due to “burnout” from previous management planning processes

3. Phase II consultation process in Skeena Region - Respondents expressed the following concerns regarding the Phase II consultation process:

- The business community has not been adequately heard in the process
- There is a lack of trust for the process and in particular there is a desire to have an opportunity to review the revised draft plan

- There were concerns that local businesses are “bullying” the ministry
- Stakeholder meetings were not well advertised and not enough notice was given in some communities
- Meetings were purposefully timed so non-residents would be unable to attend
- Non-residents should not be part of the consultation process
- There was a desire for multi-stakeholder meetings or public meetings where everyone gets to hear what everyone else is saying

General process concerns and questions included:

- Will the ministry actually have the political will and the resources (staff and funding) to implement a draft plan?
- Will the ministry have the staff and funding to enforce new regulations when they do not seem to have resources to do that for existing regulations?
- The whole process was dividing the community and pitting different groups and businesses against each other
- Lack of visible consultation process with First Nations
- There were not enough Working Group meetings

While many respondents restricted their comments to what they did or did not like about the Management Alternatives set out in the draft plan, some offered their own ideas on how the plans could be changed. Some of these ideas included:

- Set a four-consecutive-day limit for non-guided, non-residents with a mandatory day off in between every four-day stretch
- More angler education
- River Guardian programs for monitoring, data collection and assistance with enforcement
- E-licensing in place and functioning
- Increased enforcement
- Postpone the whole process until three things are in place: economic impact assessment for Skeena Steelhead tourism industry; hard data to determine the exact nature of the crowding problem; and a broader range of stakeholders is included in the Working Groups
- Re-classify all Class 2 rivers to Class 1 from September 15 to October 15
- Resident-only days on rivers throughout the watershed
- Better access to the rivers
- Ban or restrict powerboats
- If a lottery, need provision that allows a resident to obtain a permit to accompany a NRC
- Areas of rivers set aside with no angling at all to protect spawning and resting steelhead
- Lottery just for four-week peak of season
- Change fee structure to “tiered” pricing – costs more for each additional eight days fishing
- Make legal guide boats and guides more visible
- Stagger guide changeover days

- Province should say which tools it supports: additional tools should be considered
- Collect more and better data on carrying capacity, crowding, and angler quality through creel censuses, River Guardians, e-licensing, and other programs

The report presents detailed river-specific comments for each Management Alternative proposed in the draft plan.

1.4 Conclusions

The challenge of the draft Angling Management Plan is that it needs to address multiple interests related to steelhead angler management in the Skeena River watershed. Certain Management Alternatives do not always work for everyone. Any final decisions will have to find the best mix of Management Alternatives that meets the needs of most members of the User-Groups. The results of the Phase II consultation process suggest that it will not be possible “to please all of the people all of the time.”

During the Phase II consultation process and the preparation of this report, the facilitator talked with hundreds of people at stakeholder meetings, open houses and on the phone, read hundreds of pages of email submissions and online Response Form comments, and analyzed the results of closed questions in the Response Forms from the five main User-Groups in the watershed.

This Phase II Consultation Report attempts to triangulate all the different information gathered in the consultation process and draw a number of conclusions about which regulations and recommendations would be:

- Acceptable to the greatest number of people
- Consistent with the principles of the Quality Waters Strategy
- Address the angling-use issues raised by the community

The conclusions cover a broad spectrum of options from those that are directly related to the regulations from the Quality Waters tool box that are proposed in the draft Angling Management Plan, to those regulations that are clearly outside the tool box of the Quality Waters Strategy, to those that are important recommendations that need to be documented.

One strong over-arching conclusion that was heard from many respondents was that it is not possible to develop a comprehensive Angling Management Plan, implement it, and then walk away from it. Respondents said that it would be preferable to implement smaller measures in an Angling Management Plan, monitor the results including collecting information on angler satisfaction, and then determine whether problems have been addressed by the plan. If the problems have not been addressed, then there is good reason to re-visit the plan and incorporate regulations that will better address the problems.

1.4.1 Limited-day licences allocated by lotteries

The results indicate that all the major User-Groups (local business, NRAs, NRCs, and guides for some of the rivers) except resident anglers were not supportive of lotteries as a Management Alternative. In spite of this lack of current support for lotteries, many respondents suggested that with more data collection in the future, the ministry might need to move towards some sort of management that restricted the number of non-resident anglers on the water.

1.4.2 Limited-day licence on its own

Many respondents indicated that they would accept a limited-day licence on its own without a lottery for non-guided, non-resident anglers. One of the main issues raised by local tourism businesses is that anglers desire the flexibility to decide when and where they want to fish. An eight-day licence provides this flexibility.

Many respondents indicated that they felt these sorts of tools needed to be implemented on all the Classified Waters of the Skeena River system, rather than just specific rivers that are experiencing crowding. They suggested that if any sort of restrictions were placed on one river, then angling pressure would transfer to a less-regulated river. Eight days was the most commonly discussed length of time for a limited-day licence, so it will be used for discussion purposes here.

Three options emerged regarding eight-day licences:

1. Each non-guided, non-resident angler gets eight days of fishing on each river. This is either eight consecutive days on an eight-day licence or eight one-day licences. So each angler is capped at eight days fishing on each river during the Classified Water season but they can fish whenever they choose.
2. Each non-guided, non-resident angler gets eight days of fishing on each river and then can buy an additional eight days at a higher fee on each river. The third eight days fishing would cost more again. There would be no limit on the total number of eight-day licences that an angler could buy on any one river during the Classified Water season. There would also be one-day licences with rates that increased after each increment of eight-days fishing was reached. Anglers can fish whenever they choose.
3. Each non-guided, non-resident angler can buy as many eight-day or one-day licences on any river. However, if they buy a licence (eight-day or one-day) during the peak of the Classified Water season on that river (usually September 15 to October 15), the licences would cost more.

1.4.3 Non-resident Canadians and non-resident aliens

During both the Phase I consultation process and this Phase II consultation process, respondents were quite clear that Canadians from outside British Columbia (NRCs) should be treated differently from non-residents from outside Canada (NRAs). They offered the following suggestions:

- NRCs should pay more than resident anglers but less than NRAs
- NRCs should have the same access to the sport fishery as resident anglers
- Hence, if limited-day licences were implemented, a separate fee and access

structure would need to be set up for NRCs and NRAs

1.4.4 Guiding

Most participants in the consultation process felt that, with the possible exception of the West Working Group rivers, there are few Management Alternatives in the draft Angling Management Plan that address the role guides play in crowding and angling quality. Two measures were suggested that could help address the peak in guiding activity in the late-September, early-October period:

1. Distributing guiding activity throughout the Classified Water period
2. Placing restrictions on the number of boats, number of clients per boat, or number of guides or assistant guides on a river on the same day

1.4.5 Classified Waters and Steelhead Stamp

A number of Management Alternatives recommended extending Classified Water periods to better reflect the time that steelhead are in the river, to gather more accurate data through the provincial Steelhead Harvest Analyses survey, and to provide more money to direct at steelhead angler management and fish management issues. Extending Classified Water seasons was well supported by most User-Groups although guides did not support this Management Alternative on all waters. Respondents noted that extending Classified Water seasons is a relatively easy thing to do.

In parallel with the suggestion of extending the Classified Water seasons, a number of Management Alternatives recommended extending the time that Steelhead Stamps are mandatory. This Management Alternative was well supported by most User-Groups for many of the same reasons that were suggested for the extension of Classified Waters. Respondents felt this Management Alternative could be considered on a number of rivers. One exception to the support for Steelhead Stamps was in the case where anglers are targeting salmon and not interested in steelhead. Most respondents felt that in these cases, the Steelhead Stamp would create an additional fee that was unfair to salmon anglers.

1.4.6 Ensuring resident-priority

There was strong support for having regulations in place to ensure that resident anglers have some exclusive fishing opportunities on the rivers. The main option put forward over and over again was to provide a weekend day for resident-only fishing either weekly or every other week on all waters during the Classified Water period. Respondents suggested that Working Groups will need to look carefully at which days and which rivers, to ensure that non-residents are not displaced to a limited number of rivers and that guides do not all change clients on the same day.

1.4.7 Changes to licence fees

Fees for licences and surcharges (Steelhead Stamps) were suggested as a way to create a financial disincentive to angling. Rationale for this idea was that a fee increase would reduce the number of people fishing on the rivers and hence reduce crowding. The fee increases were directed at NRAs and NRCs, although most respondents indicated that NRCs should pay less than NRAs. Local business respondents felt that in

a time of increased economic uncertainty, raising fees may not be the best route to follow. However other business respondents noted that the value of the Canadian dollar against its American counterpart might help offset an increase in fees.

1.4.8 Manage anglers on a watershed basis

There was strong consensus in and outside the community that the steelhead sport fishery needs to be managed more on a watershed basis. Respondents suggested that managing anglers on one part of the watershed has potentially significant effects on angler-use in other parts of the watershed.

1.4.9 Economic impact study needed for steelhead sport fishery

Many respondents suggested that there is a need to have a much better understanding of the steelhead sport fishing economy, including both the guiding industry and other businesses that depend on non-guided, non-resident anglers. They suggested that this sort of study would answer the question: Where does the money come from and where does it go?

1.4.10 Relationship of quality angling to the tourism economy

Discussions with a range of stakeholders revealed that the Skeena Region offers a diversity of steelhead angling opportunities. All these different activities contribute to the local economy in different ways.

Respondents said that there are activities such as illegal guiding, long-term or illegal camping, trespassing, and poor angler etiquette that lead to poor quality angling experiences and also probably lower tourism revenues for the communities.

Some respondents, notably guides, suggested that tourism organizations and establishments need to have a better understanding of how to ensure that they will get the most tourism dollars flowing into the economy from non-resident anglers, while still offering a range of quality products and services to those anglers. They recommended that tourism organizations should work with other organizations and governments to address low-quality angling experiences that are both causing angling quality problems on the rivers and likely translating into sub-optimal tourism revenues.

1.4.11 Provide education programs for all anglers

In both the Phase I and Phase II consultation processes, many respondents highlighted the need for better angler education, because that would lead to a better quality angling experience. A number of tourism organizations have indicated a desire to partner with the ministry to develop education materials and programs. Suggested topic areas include:

- Proper catch and release and handling of fish
- Angler etiquette — working a pool, rotational angling, sharing the river with gear or fly
- Fish identification
- What is illegal guiding and how you can help prevent it
- Boat safety

1.4.12 Implement River Guardian programs

River Guardian programs that were set up on some of the local rivers have received rave reviews from all User-Groups. It was suggested that revenue generated by local licence sales and other charges should be used to pay for these programs, which have the potential to provide a number of different functions including:

- Monitor implementation of Angling Management Plan
- Collect angler satisfaction data on quality of angling experience
- Conduct creel censuses and collect data on angler density, carrying capacity, and breakdown of anglers by place of origin
- Increase presence of ministry on the river
- Report regulation infractions problems to Conservation Officers

1.4.13 Address illegal guiding

Illegal guiding has been raised over and over again and there are clear indications through US and European websites that it is taking place. However, it is difficult to determine what impact this issue is actually having. A few suggestions were brought up to deal with illegal guiding:

- Re-define guiding in the Wildlife Act so it does not include the transfer of money
- Have legal guides identify themselves on the river through signage or flags
- Limited-day licences, depending on how they were structured, would make illegal guiding more difficult because illegal guides and their anglers would be forced to move around more

1.4.14 Improve access

Many respondents felt that improving access on the rivers would reduce crowding by better dispersing anglers, although some respondents worried that it might result in crowding in previously uncrowded areas where access is limited. Respondents suggested that there seem to be some opportunities to work with other agencies (tourism, local governments, First Nations, Integrated Land Management Bureau, private land owners) to provide more access to area rivers. Given the dislike by many anglers of powerboats and the impact that they have on a quality angling experience, one respondent suggested that it might make sense to focus an access plan on opening up the river for walk-in anglers and those that plan to float the river without powerboats.

1.4.15 Address use of powerboats on rivers

Many anglers mentioned that powerboats were an issue on the rivers. They said that jet boat noise and other aspects interfere with the quality experience that many anglers expect and jet boats can also negatively affect fish spawning habitat. The possibility of restricting powerboats on some rivers of the Skeena watershed for safety and environmental reasons under the federal Navigable Waters Act or provincial Wildlife Act, as suggested by one respondent, should be explored. Most anglers felt that the focus should be on removing jet boats from the smaller rivers in the watershed and allowing jet boats on the main stem of the Skeena because of the size of the river, the distances between fishing holes and the lack of access in certain stretches of the river.

1.4.16 Implement e-licensing

There was strong support from everyone who took part in the Phase II consultation process to move e-licensing along and ensure that it can sell licences including the possibility of capping the number of licences in the future, collecting fisheries and angler satisfaction data, and monitoring angling pressure and other parameters.

1.4.17 Improve the Quality Waters Strategy

The Skeena Angling Management Planning process was the first, large scale “field test” of the Quality Waters Strategy since it was launched in 2005. During the Phase II consultation, respondents suggested a number of changes to the policy to make it more effective and useful:

- Regional Committees and Working Groups need to have full stakeholder representation
- Regulations tool box needs to be broader
- Planning and consultation process should include fish management with angler management
- Allocation of guide rod-days in 2005 document (MWLAP 2005) must be harmonized with present ministry policy on rod-day allocation

1.4.18 Address conservation of steelhead

There are serious concerns around the conservation of steelhead populations in the Skeena River system and a number of people raised some of the different issues that are impacting or could potentially impact the species in the future.

The ministry has ongoing programs looking at population dynamics and other aspects of steelhead biology and management. Recent funding through the Pacific Salmon Foundation and the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund are adding to the ability to effectively manage salmonids in the Skeena River watershed.

Two suggestions came up a number of times that are directly related to angler-use in the Skeena rivers and these are:

- Consider closing fishing for steelhead at spawning times in certain rivers and at times when fish are very vulnerable to mortality from catch and release
- Study impact of catch and release on mortality of steelhead at different times of year

1.4.19 Address illegal camping

One of the things that became apparent as more and more community conversations took place is that there is an identifiable group of non-residents who come to rivers in the Skeena watershed and camp for long periods of time to fish for steelhead. Respondents noted that some of these people camp on Crown land either legally or illegally and that there is a sense that this tourism group contributes very little to the local economy, but may be responsible for some of the crowding and angling-related conflicts on the rivers. Respondents suggested that cooperation with tourism organizations, Ministry of Forests and Range, the Integrated Land Management Bureau, and other agencies to ensure campers are not overstaying their welcome or camping on

Crown land illegally would be a productive route to explore.

1.4.20 Improve enforcement

While ministry officials have continually stated they do not have the resources to add more conservation officers to monitor anglers during the steelhead season, public and stakeholder respondents continue to ask for more enforcement. Respondents noted that River Guardians, though not equipped with all the powers of conservation officers, could assist in dealing with some of these enforcement problems. Better education on the regulations was also deemed important.

1.4.21 Review and revise guided rod-day allocations

Most User-Groups (except guides) were not in favour of allocating any new rod-days to guides. Some respondents indicated they were comfortable allocating new rod-days to new guides rather than existing guides. Some non-guide respondents were concerned that two rivers — the Babine and the Morice — needed a reduction in the total number of rod-days allocated to guides.

Generally, respondents talked a lot about the need to ensure that the whole system of rod-day allocation to guides was reviewed. In particular, respondents noted that:

- Rod-days should remain the property of the province and not become a commodity
- Rod-days should be leased to licensed guides through a fair and equitable system that allows new guides to enter the business as well as ensuring that existing guides can remain in a viable business
- Recommending increases or decreases in rod-days should not be done by Working Groups that contain guides because that is a perceived conflict of interest

The report also draws some individual river-specific conclusions.

2.0 Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank all the members of the public, especially the local residents of the Skeena River Watershed and other parts of British Columbia, but also those from all over the world, who took the time to participate in the Phase II consultation process.

Paddy Hirshfield, biologist for the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy accompanied me to all the stakeholder meetings and took notes, assisted at all the Public Open Houses, and provided invaluable advice and support on all aspects of the consultation process from design, to implementation, to reviewing this report.

Ministry of Environment staff from Skeena Region, including Tom Bell, Dana Atagi, Jeff Lough and Dean Peard, assisted with the Public Open Houses, setting up the displays, answering questions, discussing issues with the public, and documenting comments.

Members of the three Working Groups and members of the Regional Committee attended a number of the stakeholder meetings and Public Open Houses.

Paddy Hirshfield, Dana Atagi, Jeff Lough, Sandra Bicego and Dorli Duffy reviewed earlier drafts of this report.

Lizzette Namox from the Ministry's Skeena office looked after the front desk at the Smithers and Hazelton Public Open Houses and John Coutts of BC Parks in Terrace did the same for the Terrace meeting.

Rob Fiddler maintained the website and transferred data from the online Response Form to a spreadsheet.

Keith Douglas provided photography for the displays and Synopsis that were used at the Public Open Houses. Noreen Dennis designed the display panels and the Synopsis and Tom Grasmeyer of ArcheType Enterprises produced the displays with very little lead-time.

3.0 Introduction

3.1 Quality Waters Strategy and Angling Management Plans

For years, resident anglers, non-resident anglers, guides, members of the Ministry of Environment's Sport Fish Advisory Committee, members of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' Sport Fish Advisory Board, and local Fish and Game Clubs have told the Ministry of Environment that some waters in the Skeena River system have persistent steelhead angler-use issues — crowding, disproportionate numbers of non-resident anglers or guided anglers, lack of opportunities for resident anglers, illegal guiding, poor angler etiquette — leading to a degraded quality of angling experience.

In response to these concerns, the ministry implemented the Quality Waters Strategy on the Skeena River in 2006. The Quality Waters Strategy is a province-wide process that aims to maintain and improve the angling experiences offered in BC's waters, by managing angler-use. The strategy includes a community engagement process, to help identify waters of concern that require new or revised regulations.

The end-product of the engagement process is an Angling Management Plan (AMP) that recommends revisions to current sport fishing regulations for steelhead angler-use issues on priority waters in the Skeena River watershed. The AMP does not address steelhead population status and conservation issues; those are addressed through other initiatives.

The Quality Waters Strategy is a stakeholder-driven process with a provincial Quality Waters Committee and a regional Skeena River committee (Regional Quality Waters Management Committee or Regional Committee) that both have representation from resident anglers, the guiding community, and the Ministry of Environment. The Regional Committee plays an important role in overseeing the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy.

3.2 Phase I consultation process

From January to March 2008, the Phase I consultation process was held in the Skeena River watershed to identify concerns and issues from the public and stakeholders regarding sportfishing for steelhead. Participants in the consultation process were also invited to identify problems on area rivers and suggest potential solutions to address those problems. The results of that process were published in "Consultation Report Phase I (January – March 2008 Skeena Quality Waters Strategy)" on March 31, 2008 by Alan Dolan & Associates (available at www.env.gov.bc.ca/skeena/qws/).

3.3 Draft Angling Management Plan

From April to June 2008, three stakeholder-based Working Groups met to help develop a draft Angling Management Plan for the 13 priority waters of the Skeena River watershed. With the guidance of independent facilitators, they used the Phase I Consultation Report, angling use data, and their local knowledge and experience on the rivers, to develop the draft plans. The results of their volunteer efforts were published on

October 17, 2008 in “Draft Angling Management Plan, Skeena Quality Waters Strategy” by Alan Dolan & Associates (also available at www.env.gov.bc.ca/skeena/qws/).

4.0 Overview of Process

4.1 Background

Background information on the Quality Waters Strategy and in particular the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy is summarized in the Phase I Consultation Report (Dolan 2008a). Additional documentation, including ministry data on angler-use, is available on the website (www.env.gov.bc.ca/skeena/qws/).

4.2 Purpose of the consultation process

After the release of the draft Angling Management Plan on October 17, 2008, a second consultation process (Phase II) was undertaken. This report presents the results of that Phase II consultation process.

The Phase II consultation process asked public and stakeholders the following questions:

- What do you like about the draft Angling Management Plan?
- What don't you like about the draft plan?
- How should the plan be changed to better address the issues the community has raised?

The goal of the Phase II consultation process was to gather feedback on the draft Angling Management Plan. This feedback was collected for the Working Groups to use in revising the draft plan to better reflect all community interests.

4.3 Approach of consultation process

One of the underlying principles of this consultation process is that people feel free to speak their minds about what they think. Many people indicated that they had not felt comfortable speaking during the Phase I consultation process at both the stakeholder meetings and the public meetings, which were held early in 2008. They said they felt intimidated by the strong points-of-view of some participants, and more importantly, they did not want to have public conflicts with the friends and neighbours who are part of their community.

Accordingly, a consultation model was adopted that used a public open house format and stakeholder meetings were organized by the following sectors:

- Resident anglers with no direct financial interests in the "steelhead economy"
- Guides
- Local tourism economy including business and economic development organizations, tourism organizations and local governments
- Non-residents

While the stakeholder meetings were primarily designed and promoted for a particular sector, people from other sectors often attended and were invited to be part of the process.

4.4 Informing public and stakeholders

The Phase II consultation process began with the release of the draft plan on October 17, 2008, and ended on November 30, 2008. The general public and stakeholders were informed of the Phase II consultation process through the following means:

- Series of “news updates” and letters to a database of more than 500 email addresses (See Appendix P for dates and content of those emails)
- Series of newspaper display advertisements in six area newspapers over a three-week period (See Appendix Q for a list of papers, insertion dates and a copy of the advertisement)
- Regular updates to the Skeena Quality Waters Website
- Four-page Synopsis of the draft plan that was made available at Public Open Houses (See Appendix R)
- Display panels on the draft plan that were used at the Public Open Houses (See Appendix S)
- Slide presentation that was shown at the Public open Houses (See Appendix T)

4.5 Channels for public and stakeholder input

The general public and stakeholders were able to provide their input to the process through the following channels:

- Sectoral stakeholder meetings (resident anglers, local business and tourism, guides, and non-residents) were held throughout the watershed in October and November 2008.
- Public Open Houses were held in the major urban areas of the watershed
- An online Response Form was available for anyone to fill out and submit (online and paper versions were also available at the Public Open Houses).
- Emails were sent directly to the facilitator.
- Some information was collected during phone calls with the facilitator. This information is summarized with the email submissions

4.6 Response Forms

The closed questions in the Response Form are answered using a five-point Likert scale: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. Whenever there is a reference in the results section that a particular group “agrees” with a Management Alternative, that agreement is based on a combination of the “agree” and “strongly agree” data. Similarly, “disagree” means a combination (addition) of “strongly disagree” and “disagree” responses. Mixed responses mean that responses were spread all over the scale including the “neutral” category.

Appendix A features a copy of the Response Form. Appendices B – F present the results of the closed questions by User-Group. Appendices G – K present the open question comments by User-Group. Responses to individual questions are summarized in the Results section (5.0).

4.6.1 Response Form bias and sample size

It is important to note that those who filled out Response Forms do not in any way

represent a random sample of the population. While every attempt was made to direct people to the Response Forms, results are biased in favour of those individuals who took part in the consultation process and chose to fill out a form. Quantitative information of this sort is very valuable but needs to be interpreted carefully. The opinions and comments in the Response Form are those of the respondents and cannot be extrapolated to the community as a whole.

It should also be noted that sample size (number of respondents) for some User-Groups, in particular guides (N=15), are quite small, which limits the reliability of any conclusions drawn from the data. For instance, a group with a small number of respondents is greatly influenced by extreme answers when results are summarized. Conversely, groups with a greater number of respondents are more robust to erratic answers as these responses are usually blended with average responses.

4.7 Email submissions

About 350 emails were received during the Phase II consultation period. Some of these emails were directed to the facilitator; others were copied to the facilitator and either sent directly to the Minister or other addresses, or were part of a large email discussion list. All of the information from all the emails is summarized for residents in Appendix N and for non-residents in Appendix O.

4.8 Bulkley Steelhead Anglers

During the summer of 2008, a website appeared called Bulkley Steelhead Anglers Community, which was sponsored by the Fort Telkwa Riverfront RV Campground. Using a leaked early rough draft of the Angling Management Plan, the site launched two questionnaires — one for steelhead anglers and one for tourism-based business owners. Using a set of questions that was similar to those in the Response Form for the Quality Waters Phase I consultation process in the winter of 2008, the site sought to provide some additional information to the consultation process.

5.0 Results

5.1 Preamble

The results section includes:

- General results from the meetings, open houses and Response Forms (5.2-5.4)
- General comments for all the rivers (5.5, 5.6)
- River-specific comments (5.7)

Both the general and the river-specific comments are organized as much as possible by the three main questions that were being asked in the consultation process:

- What do you like about the draft Angling Management Plan?
- What don't you like about the draft plan?
- How should the plan be changed to better address the issues the community has raised?

The stakeholder and meeting summaries in the appendices also follow the framework of the three main questions that were asked in the consultation process.

Because demographic and principal activity information were collected in the Response Forms, the information gleaned from the forms can be divided into User-Groups and one can get a sense of "who was saying what." With information received by email, it was often difficult to determine which User-Group someone belonged to. For example, an email would be received and the sender would say where they lived, but not necessarily whether they were a guide, an angler or a businessperson. Similarly, even though stakeholder meetings were put forward as sectoral meetings, many people who were from another sector often attended, so it was difficult to say whether a comment from a particular sectoral stakeholder meeting necessarily reflected that sector or not.

In the draft Angling Management Plan, a distinction was made between tool box regulations in the Quality Waters document (MWLAP 2005) and what were referred to as non-regulatory recommendations. In this report, all ideas and solutions are presented together. Regulatory comments, either in the tool box, in other legislation, or in another agency's legislation are listed together with non-regulatory measures such as changing conditions of angling guide licences, or working with other agencies or organizations to implement a Management Alternative.

The order of rivers is the same as in the draft Angling Management Plan:

Central Working Group

1. Kitseguella
2. Kitwanga
3. Suskwa
4. Skeena IV upstream from Kitwanga Bridge
5. Kispiox

East Working Group

- 6. Babine
- 7. Bulkley
- 8. Morice
- West Working Group
- 9. Zymoetz I
- 10. Zymoetz II
- 11. Kitsumkalum
- 12. Lakelse
- 13. Skeena IV downstream from Kitwanga Bridge

There was considerable media coverage on the process (see Appendix U)

5.2 Stakeholder meetings

A total of 28 stakeholder meetings were held in the communities of Houston, Smithers, Hazelton, Terrace, Kitimat and Prince Rupert with 228 people attending. Details of each meeting and notes from those meetings can be found in Appendix L.

5.3 Public Open Houses

Six Public Open Houses were held as summarized below.

Date	Time	Location	Number attending
November 13, 2008	5:00 – 9:00 pm	Prince Rupert	15
November 14, 2008	5:00 – 9:00 pm	Kitimat	8
November 15, 2008	12:00 – 4:00 pm	Terrace	41
November 17, 2008	5:00 – 9:00 pm	Smithers	52
November 18, 2008	5:00 – 9:00 pm	Hazelton	26
November 19, 2008	5:00 – 9:00 pm	Houston	3
		TOTAL	145

Notes from the Public Open Houses are summarized in Appendix M.

5.4 Response Forms

A total of 428 Response Forms was received. Based on their responses to a series of general questions, respondents were divided into five User-Groups:

User-Group	Description	Sample size
Resident anglers	Anglers from all of BC with no financial interests derived from steelhead angling	144
Non-resident aliens	Non-resident, non-Canadians (NRA)	207
Non-resident Canadians	Non-residents from the rest of Canada outside BC (NRC)	36
Local business	Accommodation providers, restaurants, bait and tackle stores, and others with business interests directly or indirectly related to steelhead, as well	26

	as tourism, business and economic development organizations	
Guides	Guides or assistant guides licensed by the province	15
TOTAL		428

Note: references in this report to “non-resident anglers” refer to both NRA and NRC anglers.

Based on the total sample of responses, fishing activity (Question 3 [Q03] on the Response Form) was as follows:

< Eight days	19%
8 – 14 days	25%
>14 days	47%
Did not fish	9%

Resident anglers, NRAs and local business had similar fishing activity to the total sample. Not surprisingly, most guides (93%) who responded fished for more than 14 days. NRCs who responded tended to fish for a shorter period of time with 42% fishing for fewer than eight days and 28% fishing for between eight and 14 days.

More than half of the respondents from all User-Groups had read the summary of the draft plan and at least part of the draft plan itself (Q04).

5.5 General comments (all rivers): What do you like? What don't you like?

The majority of people who took part in the Phase II consultation process responded to the draft plan at a more general level rather than on an individual river basis. This section contains a summary of comments for generalized groups of Management Alternatives. Response Form results are summarized and then comments from all the different parts of the consultation process (Response Forms, emails, stakeholder meetings and Public Open Houses) are added.

The graphs for the answers to all the Response Form closed questions by User-Group are presented in Appendices B – F.

5.5.1 Limited-day licence lottery

Limited-day licence lotteries involve the capping and allocating of limited-day licences for non-guided, non-resident anglers, either immediately or at some point in the future (triggered by a target number of non-resident anglers). The limited-day licence lottery received more attention than any other Management Alternative.

The draft plan recommends immediate limited-day licence lotteries for non-guided, non-resident anglers for the following waters:

- Kispiox (except a status quo zone)
- Two zones on Skeena IV above Kitwanga Bridge
- Zymoetz II

The draft plan recommends that limited-day licence lotteries would be “triggered” when a target number of non-guided, non-resident anglers is reached two years out of three for the following waters:

- Kitsequecla, Kitwanga
- Suskwa
- Bulkley (two options)
- Morice (two options)
- Lakelse
- Skeena IV downstream from Kitwanga Bridge

Response Forms clearly show that local business, NRAs, and NRCs who responded did not support a limited-day licence lottery. For example, 67% of local business and 92% of NRAs disagreed with this alternative for the Kispiox River, 71% of local business and 92% of NRAs for the Bulkley River (average use option) and 54% of local business and 90% of NRAs for Zymoetz II.

The reasons for not supporting limited-day licence lotteries focused more on the lottery than the eight-day licence. The following are some of the reasons respondents gave for not supporting this Management Alternative:

- Too intrusive a tool; should not be in the tool box
- Lack of flexibility and predictability for non-resident anglers to determine where and when they are going to be fishing (has a synergistic effect with bad weather and “blow outs” that already impact the availability of some rivers for angling)
- Non-resident anglers would not return to the Skeena Region if this proposed regulation were in place (many business owners produced considerable documentation of clients saying they would not come back and many emails were received directly to the consultation process that said the same thing)
- Regulation sends a strong negative message to non-resident anglers that they are not welcome in BC and it will severely impact tourism in the region
- The hospitality sector of the local economy in the Skeena watershed, which depends on non-resident anglers, will be devastated and some businesses will likely close
- Particularly given the economic downturn, anything that negatively impacts tourism in the region is not a good thing
- Need for an economic impact study to show where steelhead angling money comes from and where it goes
- No demonstrated crowding or angling quality problem so this sort of regulation is unnecessary
- Unfair to focus on non-residents as there is no proof or data to indicate they are the problem
- Anglers will not be happy fishing on the shoulder seasons, because there are not as many fish around
- Will impact guides as well because it reduces the flexibility of those anglers who come and fish both with a guide and without
- Skepticism that the ministry will be unable to pay for it

- If Americans stop coming they may also stop funding major conservation efforts in BC
- Non-resident landowners, who are often very much part of local communities, will not be able to fish on local rivers for very many days and will likely sell and leave, which could have a negative effect on land values

There was a small number of non-residents who were supportive of limited-day licence lotteries, making comments such as:

- Would distribute anglers over the season
- Would make a better fishing experience for residents
- Would provide better quality angling
- Most non-resident anglers could live with a limited number of days
- Managing angler impact is part of the bigger conservation picture
- Support this but residents need to be part of the lottery as well and resident-only alternatives should not be included

Response Forms indicated that resident angler respondents were the only group that was strongly in support of limited-day licence lotteries. For example, 74% of this group agreed with this Management Alternative for the Kispiox River, 71% for Zymoetz II, and 84% for Lakelse.

The main reason resident angler respondents supported limited-day licence lotteries was that they felt this Management Alternative would definitely reduce crowding at peak times in certain rivers where this is a problem. They cautioned however, and this was stated by other User-Groups as well, that taking restrictive measures on only certain rivers in the watershed would result in transfer of effort to less-regulated rivers in the system. Many respondents felt that if these sorts of limited-day licence lotteries are going to be implemented they need to be implemented on all Classified Waters or on a watershed-wide basis.

Response Forms indicated guides had weak support for limited-day licence lotteries on some rivers. For example, 60% of guides said they agreed with this alternative for the Kispiox, 54% for the Bulkley and 55% for the Zymoetz II. Guide respondents did not support limited-day licence lotteries on Skeena IV upstream from Kitwanga Bridge, Morice and Lakelse.

One comment received that is relevant to all the rivers where a target carrying capacity was developed either for immediate or future implementation, was that the target calculations need to take into account the amount of time a river is usually available or fishable throughout the season. Different weather conditions, high water levels and increased water turbidity all mean that the availability of the rivers for fishing is reduced and the carrying capacity needs to take this into account by utilizing some sort of conversion factor.

5.5.2 Limited-day licence only

As the draft plan combines limited-day licences (such as an eight-day licence) with the lottery alternative, the Response Form results give no information on the interest in a limited-day licence on its own for non-guided, non-residents. A number of people from all User-Groups said that whether they rejected or accepted the lottery alternative, a limited-day licence for non-guided, non-residents could well be an effective and useful tool on its own. Some of the comments included:

- Would make it difficult for illegal guides because they would need to move all the time
- Should be on all Classified Waters
- Eight-day licence is acceptable as long as you could buy one for each individual Classified Water
- Eight-day licence is acceptable as long as the days are not consecutive, hence non-guided, non-resident anglers would have a cap of eight days on a river but those eight individual days could be used at any time during the Classified Water period
- Should apply to guided anglers too
- Some said eight-day is too short; others said eight-day is too long

5.5.3 Resident-only zones

Spatial zones for resident-only anglers (no non-residents, no guiding) were recommended in the draft plan for the following waters:

- Babine - Between Nichyeskwa Creek and Nilkitkwa River
- Bulkley - Telkwa River
- Bulkley - At mouths of following three waters
 - Chicken Creek
 - Toboggan Creek
 - Telkwa River
- Kitsumkalum - Glacier Creek to Kitsumkalum Lake (Saturdays)

Not a lot of feedback was received on resident-only zones in the waters where it was proposed. Using the Response Form results, which will be discussed in more detail in the river-specific results, resident anglers were in favour of sections of the river being zoned resident-only. Local business and guides tended to be mixed in their response and NRAs and NRCs did not support resident-zones.

Resident angler respondents felt resident-only zones were an excellent way of addressing resident-priority and supported the suggested zones on all rivers. Other comments from resident anglers included:

- Resident-only zones might in fact get crowded with too many residents and that could lead to a decline in angling quality
- Resident-only zones near urban areas are a good idea

5.5.4 Resident-only times

Resident-only angling times (no non-residents, no guiding) were proposed for the following waters:

- Kitsequecla, Kitwanga, Suskwa, Kispiox – Saturdays
- Zymoetz II – Saturday and Sunday
- Kitsumkalum – Sunday
- Lakelse – March 1 to May 31

Three common general comments from all User-Groups about resident-only times were that:

- There needs to be more consistency across the watershed for the resident-only weekend times
- A large number of non-resident anglers might be “pushed” to waters that do not have a resident-only day on the weekend, creating a crowding problem
- Guide “changeover days” might end up all happening on the same day, causing problems for scheduling and even possibly problems with airline flights and helicopter bookings

The Response Forms indicated that both NRCs and NRAs were not supportive of resident-only times. Details can be found in the river-by-river sections. There was not a great number of direct comments as to why non-residents did not support this Management Alternative. Some of the general comments on resident-only times included:

- There are more residents who benefit from weekends being open to non-residents than residents who want resident-only fishing on weekends
- Think it should be resident-only weekends on all waters; much better than lottery

However, there was general support for a resident-only weekend day at stakeholder meetings comprised largely of non-residents held in Hazelton and Smithers.

Guides who responded to the Response Forms indicated that they were mostly not supportive of resident-only times.

Resident anglers indicated in the Response Forms that they were overwhelmingly supportive of resident-only times on all rivers and local business was supportive on most rivers except the Kispiox and the Lakelse. Comments from resident anglers on resident-only times included:

- Cramming locals into weekend fishing does not provide enough opportunity
- Desire for more resident-only time, so change it to the whole weekend or even the whole season as resident-only for the Kitwanga, Kitsequecla and Suskwa
- Resident-only weekend day, usually Saturday, on all Classified Waters

5.5.5 Mandatory Steelhead Stamp extensions

Changes to when anglers are required to have a Steelhead Stamp were recommended for Skeena IV upstream from Kitwanga Bridge, Zymoetz I and Zymoetz II. All User-Groups were supportive of this alternative. Reasons put forward included:

- It reflects the time steelhead are actually in the river
- Values the steelhead sport fishery more appropriately
- Increases data capture for provincial Steelhead Analysis questionnaire

- Brings in additional revenue to the province (although most respondents were very clear that they wanted this money to be directed to Skeena watershed steelhead management)

Concerns expressed by some respondents regarding mandatory Steelhead Stamps included:

- Anglers who were targeting salmon would have to pay for something they would not be using and that would be unfair (this was particularly stated by resident anglers who don't fish for steelhead anymore because they cannot retain them)
- Some anglers wanted to extend the period when a Steelhead Stamp is required even longer

5.5.6 Classified Water period extensions

Extending the Classified Water season was proposed for Zymoetz I, Zymoetz II, and Lakelse (changing to all year long). There were several reasons for these extensions:

- Better reflected the time when steelhead were in the river and when the river was open to angling
- Fee to angler would increase and that might reduce crowding
- Would allow for collection of more angler-use data

Response Form results identified that resident anglers and local business owners generally supported extensions to Classified Water seasons. However NRAs and NRCs did not support this Management Alternative and guide responses were mixed. The river-specific sections provide more detailed information on support for this alternative.

Positive comments for extending Classified Water periods included similar reasons noted above for mandatory Steelhead Stamps. Respondents also said that this Management Alternative could allow better management of guided rod-days by bringing the “shoulder seasons” under tighter regulation, especially on rivers such as Zymoetz II during the August steelhead fishery.

Some negative comments regarding extending Classified Water periods were similar to comments on the lottery where respondents felt that extending seasons or trying to move anglers to the part of the season when there are not as many steelhead to catch would not lead to quality angling.

Guide respondents suggested that if the Classified season were longer, the ministry should allocate more rod-days. They noted that some guides are guiding on these rivers outside the Classified season now and they do not require rod-days. Hence, guide respondents felt that if the season were extended, the guides who are presently guiding outside the Classified season should be the ones to receive additional rod-days.

Some guide respondents also expressed a concern that angling on the shoulder seasons is not as successful but lower costs for licences allows them to offer the opportunity to anglers at a lower fee.

5.5.7 Guide restrictions

A number of the recommended Management Alternatives included various different types of restrictions on guiding activity. Many of these restrictions can be accomplished as conditions of guide licences, which are issued annually by the ministry.

Recommended restrictions of this sort include:

- Distributing guiding effort over the whole Classified Water period
- Limiting the number of clients a guide or assistant guide can have on any one day
- Limiting the number of boats that a guide operation can have on any one day or in any one place
- Limiting the number of guided anglers per boat

Response Form results revealed that all User-Groups supported these types of guide restrictions except the guides who were more varied in their responses. Some of the relevant comments from the groups who supported guide restrictions included:

- Guided anglers contribute to crowding and changes should be made so their activity is reduced at crowded times on certain rivers and their effort is distributed over the entire Classified Water season
- There needs to be more consistency between rivers with regard to guide restrictions
- Guided anglers need to be regulated for activity because they tend to “hit the fish harder”
 - Spending more of the season and more of any day on the river
 - Tending to use boats more often
 - Generally catching more fish than non-guided anglers
 - Favouring the most popular places on the rivers

5.5.8 Guide regulations

There were two recommendations that would require changes to the Wildlife Act, BC Regulation 125/90:

- Increasing the number of guided rod-days that are allocated on a particular river
- Reducing the maximum number of guides that could have rod-day allocations on a particular river

Response Form results indicated that no User-Groups were supportive of increasing rod-day allocations for guides on any river. There was one exception and that was guides having mixed responses to four new opportunities on Skeena IV below Kitwanga Bridge.

Comments from respondents other than guides on increasing rod-day allocations included:

- Increasing allocation to guides is not the answer; guides already have substantial allocations on these rivers
- If anything the total number of rod-days allocated should be reduced on rivers such as the Bulkley, Babine, Zymoetz I and Zymoetz II

- If there is any future allocation of rod-days it should go to new guides, not existing guides, New guides should be
 - New to the business
 - Trying to increase number of different rivers where they can guide
 - Trying to enter the Classified Waters “market”
- If guided rod-days are increased and in the future monitoring reveals that restrictions will need to take place, guided rod-days must be reduced at that time
- Working Groups that contain guides should not be recommending increases in rod-days or any regulations that favour guides; this is a conflict of interest

The main comment from guides on increasing rod-day allocations was that they felt the proposed increases were not high enough to compensate for extensions to Classified Water seasons or creation of guided-only waters. In the case of Skeena IV, some guides commented that considerably more rod-days could be allocated because the carrying capacity of the river could accommodate that.

5.5.9 Ministry review of guided rod-days

A ministry review of guided rod-days was proposed on two waters — the Babine and the Morice. Response Form results indicated that only resident anglers were supportive of a review of guided rod-days by the ministry. Respondents opposed to the review had lots to say about:

- Whole process of how rod-days were originally allocated to guides in 1990
- Need to change the system so that rod-days are no longer a “commodity”
- Desire to see rod-days belong to the Province of BC and “leased” back to guides

The nature of these comments suggests that unless the ministry’s policy regarding the allocation of rod-days to guides changes, there would be little or no support for any kind of review by the ministry.

5.5.10 Guided-only for non-residents

This alternative was proposed for Kitsumkalum and Zymoetz I. Response Form results showed that resident anglers strongly supported guided-only for non-residents, guides supported it less strongly and NRAs, NRCs and local business were strongly opposed.

Comments from those opposed to guided-only for non-residents included:

- Too intrusive, too tough a regulation; non-guided, non-resident anglers should have some opportunities to fish
- Will have negative implications on the local economy
- Guides on Working Group were “looking after themselves”
- Would prefer a lottery to this alternative, if it came down to a choice

Comments from respondents in favour of guided-only for non-residents identified that it was the only way to maintain quality angling on some fragile or wilderness (Class I) systems

5.5.11 Process concerns (all rivers)

Process concerns fall into three broad categories — the consultation framework as set out in the provincial Quality Waters Strategy, the data and rationale for invoking the Quality Waters Strategy in Skeena Region, and the on-the-ground Phase II consultation process that took place in Skeena Region.

1. Quality Waters Strategy process – Concerns around the Quality Waters process included the following:

- Working Group composition (four resident anglers, three licensed guides and one ministry representative) created an unbalanced, unrepresentative and biased plan
 - No representation from business, hospitality and tourism sectors and their umbrella organizations
 - Too many guides or former guides and not appropriately balanced off with other interests; appearance that guides are driving the process
 - Conflict of interest situation created because guides involved in setting regulations that directly affect their livelihood, especially if recommending an increase in rod-day allocations or regulations to create guided-only waters
- Tool box of regulations is too restrictive and should include more things; ministry also needs to be absolutely clear around what it will accept, what it will not and what it can afford to implement
- Process should include fish management in addition to angler management; impossible to talk about angling use and angling quality without talking about fish abundance
 - Many believe that conservation is the more important issue and a greater threat to long-term steelhead survival and angling than angler-use issues
 - Concern about interception of steelhead by commercial fishery for salmon at mouth of the Skeena
- Confusion about what resident-priority actually means and lack of direction in the Quality Waters Strategy around translating that priority into a fair allocation of steelhead sport fishing opportunities between residents, non-residents and guided anglers.
- Quality Waters 2005 document was not followed
 - Straying from resident-priority in places
 - Allocation of rod-days
 - Protection of historical guide use

2. Rationale for Skeena Quality Waters Strategy – Concerns raised in this area included:

- Where is the data to say there is crowding?
- What prompted this process? What groups brought forward the issue of crowding
 - Guide led?
 - Resident angler led?
 - Where is the documentation for the need for this process?

- How do you measure a quality angling experience and where is the data to demonstrate that angling quality has deteriorated?
- Lack of participation by resident anglers due to ongoing nature of the issue
 - “Burned out” from previous processes that were not implemented
 - Not happy that fishery is a non-retention sport fishery (catch and release) and would like to keep a few steelhead to eat
 - Gear restrictions and bait bans
- Application process to get on Working Groups not fair

3. *Phase II consultation process in Skeena Region*

- Business community does not feel it has been heard
 - Some wanted comments to go directly to Working Groups and bypass the facilitator and the consultation report
- Those in the hospitality business and non-resident anglers do not trust the process and want to ensure they have been heard in the process, both by seeing the documentation in the Phase II Consultation Report and more importantly by having an opportunity to review the revised draft plan after the Working Groups have completed their changes.
- Concerns that local businesses were “bullying” the ministry
- Stakeholder meetings were not well advertised and not enough notice was given in some communities
- Meetings purposefully timed so non-residents unable to attend; not enough notification of non-residents
- Non-residents should not be part of the process
- Why aren’t minutes of stakeholder meetings distributed?
- Desire for multi-stakeholder meeting or public meetings where everyone gets to hear what everyone else is saying
- How will you incorporate survey that was done at bulkleyesteelheadanglers.com website?
- Misleading newspaper advertisements last winter did not frame issue in a way that would attract local business

There were some overall process concerns that included:

- Will ministry actually have the political will and the resources (staff and funding) to implement a draft plan, particularly the more intrusive and costly regulations such as lotteries and limited-day licences that require a fully functional e-licensing system?
- Will the ministry have the staff and funding to enforce new regulations when they do not seem to have resources to do that for existing regulations?
- The whole process was dividing the community and pitting different groups and businesses against each other
- Need to ensure that community is getting along when the whole process is completed
- Lack of visible consultation process with First Nations
- Not enough Working Group meetings
 - Not enough time to complete the work

- Not enough time to “compare notes” to ensure consistency between Working Groups

5.6 General comments (all rivers): How should the draft plan be changed?

While many respondents restricted their comments to what they did or did not like about the Management Alternatives set out in the draft plan, some offered their own ideas on how the plans could be changed. Some of these suggestions were individual Management Alternatives while others were “packages” of management ideas. There were many ideas that were similar; this section highlights the main themes.

- Set a four-consecutive-day limit for non-guided, non-residents with a mandatory day off in between every four-day stretch. This would give the fish a “rest,” encourage longer, varied and more leisurely tourist stays and not have a negative effect on guides or business people. After a couple of years, if this doesn't reduce crowding enough, make non-resident anglers take two days off in row.
- Regulate on a watershed basis rather than river-by-river
- More angler education with a focus on etiquette
 - Create a short-length video that is mandatory to watch before a licence is purchased. Video could cover how to step into a run that is already occupied (rotational fishing), how to give way to walk-ins if you are in a boat, how to properly handle a fish, and what the consequences are for a steelhead's survival if it is not treated properly
 - Mandatory course on fish handling and steelhead angling etiquette
 - Put angling regulations on the licences and signs
 - Online information on etiquette
- River Guardian programs
 - Monitoring
 - Data collection
 - Assistance with enforcement
- E-licensing in place and functioning
 - Collecting data and monitoring
- Increased enforcement
 - More conservation officers
 - Commitment from government to fund
- Postpone the whole process until three things are in place:
 - Economic impact assessment is done for the entire Skeena Steelhead tourism industry
 - Hard data is collected through surveys on the rivers in question to determine the exact nature of the perceived crowding problem, what portion of the anglers are unhappy and where they came from
 - Broader range of stakeholders is included in the Working Groups
- Classified Waters
 - Re-classify all Class 2 rivers to Class 1 from September 15 to October 15

- Extend Classified Water period into August and require Steelhead Stamp for longer periods
- Resident-only days
 - Saturday
 - Sunday
 - Both weekend days
 - Consider four resident-only Sundays during the prime season from mid-September to mid-October on at least three rivers that experience heavy use —Bulkley, Kispiox and Zymoetz
- Better access to the rivers
 - Need access plan
 - Improve boat launches (pay for with fee on licences?)
 - Access for walk-in and float boats only
- Ban or restrict power boats
 - Charge fees (to aliens only?)
 - Ban powerboats
- Changes to licences
 - No more than one eight-day licence for each water
 - Limit number of days you can fish on a particular river
 - Consider 12-day licence
 - Provision that allows a resident to obtain a permit to accompany a NRC
 - Phone and Internet-based reservation system for Classified Waters but no limit on the number of days
 - Make it a condition of a Steelhead Stamp for all classes of anglers to report the river and date of fishing activity. This will provide data on all classes and on all rivers, all season. This places the burden of data collection on the anglers not on the under-funded ministry.
 - Canadian licences should cost less than non-Canadian licences
- More areas of rivers should be closed to angling to protect spawning and overwintering steelhead
- Create resident-only zones at “hot-spots”
- Lottery should be utilized only for the four-week peak in the Classified Water period
- Changes to fees
 - Change fee structure to “tiered” pricing – costs more for each additional eight days fishing
 - Any increase in revenues from licences and fees to stay in Skeena Region for management and enforcement of steelhead
 - Use increased fees to buy-out commercial fishery
 - Use the extra revenue from the daily licences to fund a River Guardian program and conduct creel surveys
 - Higher fees at “peak” season
 - Canadian licences should cost less than non-Canadian licences
- Guiding
 - Make legal guide boats and guides more visible
 - Stagger changeover days

- No increases to guided rod-days (some guides say increase)
- Make it a licensing requirement that guides distribute their rod-days evenly over the entire classified season
- Establish guide-free areas like on the Thompson
- Guides off river by 4:30 pm
- Quality Waters Strategy tools
 - Province should say which ones it will support
 - Additional tools should be considered
- Collect more and better data through creel censuses, River Guardians, e-licensing, and other programs to address:
 - Carrying capacity
 - Crowding
 - Angler quality

5.7 River-specific comments

This section contains a summary of river-specific comments for each Recommended Management Alternative in the draft Angling Management Plan. The description and the number of the Management Alternative from the Response Form questions (Appendix A) are provided for reference. Response Form results (closed questions) are summarized and then comments from all the different parts of the consultation process (Response Forms open question comments, emails, stakeholder meetings and Public Open Houses) are added. At the end of each river section, suggested changes to the plan, specific to the river(s) in question, are summarized.

Most comments cannot be attributed to a particular User-Group. The Response Forms are the only data source where people identified their User-Group. Stakeholder meetings were organized as sectoral meetings, but User-Groups from different sectors often attended. Email comments could be divided between residents and non-residents but no further breakdown could be made.

5.7.1 Kitseguecla and Kitwanga

*Recommended Management Alternative: 5. Start with **resident angler-only fishing on Saturdays** and leave everything else as status quo*

The Response Form results revealed that resident anglers and local business people who responded were in favour of resident-only fishing on Saturdays, while NRAs, NRCs and guides were not.

Some of the positive comments on resident-only fishing on Saturdays included:

- Support this; good for resident-priority

Negative responses on resident-only fishing on Saturdays included:

- Very underutilized rivers, why regulate at all?
- Should be resident-only all weekend or even all year long
- These are marginal streams; residents should get resident-only days on higher-quality rivers

*Recommended Management Alternative: 6. If angling pressure by non-guided, non-residents exceeds 342 angler-days for two years out of three on the Kitwanga or 228 angler-days for two years out of three on the Kitsequecla, that would **trigger** a move to an **eight-day licence lottery** with caps of two anglers per day on the Kitwanga and one angler per day on the Kitsequecla, spread evenly over the Classified Waters period from September 1 – October 31*

Of those who completed the Response Forms, only resident anglers were supportive of a trigger to an eight-day licence lottery (71% agreed).

Some of the general comments on a trigger to an eight-day licence lottery included:

- Anglers may come to these rivers when other rivers such as the Kispiox are regulated and these regulations will not respond fast enough to the crowding
- Why put all this energy into regulating these small streams?
- Targets are too high because rivers are not available all the time

Many other comments about lotteries are summarized in the general comments for all rivers (5.5.1).

Suggested changes to the draft plan for the Kitsequecla and Kitwanga include:

- Should be guided-only for non-residents
- Resident-only year round

5.7.2 Suskwa

*Recommended Management Alternative: 8. Start with **resident angler-only fishing on Saturdays** and leave everything else as status quo*

Similar to the Kitsequecla and the Kitwanga, the Response Forms identified that resident anglers (64% agreed) and local business (53% agreed) were supportive of resident-only fishing on Saturdays. The comments from respondents on the Suskwa were very similar to those for the Kitsequecla and Kitwanga.

One respondent noted that the Suskwa is one of the last rivers to “go out” after heavy rainfall, which means that in certain weather conditions it gets crowded. Another respondent commented that the Suskwa has less available wading water and anglers run the risk of stepping on salmon redds and disturbing spawning salmon at certain times of year.

*Recommended Management Alternative: 9. If non-guided, non-resident angling pressure exceeds 399 angler-days for two years out of three, it would **trigger** a move to an **eight-day licence lottery** with caps of two anglers per day, spread evenly over the Classified Waters period from September 1 – October 31*

Response Form results for a trigger to an eight-day licence lottery were similar to those for the Kitsequecla and the Kitwanga. A total of 73% of resident anglers supported this alternative; all the other User-Groups did not support it. Comments were also similar to

those received for the Kitseguetla and Kitwanga. See also the general comments in 5.5.1.

Suggested changes to the draft plan for the Suskwa include:

- Should be guided-only for non-residents
- Resident-only year round

5.7.3 Skeena IV upstream from Kitwanga Bridge

*Recommended Management Alternative: Implement a **limited-day licence lottery immediately** for non-guided, non-residents with a total of 180 eight-day licences spread evenly over the Classified Waters period (July 1 – October 31) in the following two zones (questions 11 and 12); rest of Skeena IV outside two zones is status quo:*

11. From mouth of Salmon River to Four-Mile Bridge

12. From triangular markers below the mouth of the Bulkley River to the Kitwanga Bridge

Response form results indicated:

- Support for a limited-day licence lottery from resident anglers (65% agreed with the first zone [11] and 69% agreed with the second zone [12])
- Strong lack of support from non-residents (91% and 91% of NRCs disagreed; 90% and 92% of NRAs disagreed)
- Strong lack of support from local business (67% and 73% disagreed)
- Lack of support from guides (40% and 22% disagreed)

General comments can be found in 5.5.1. Some of the river-specific comments on a limited-day licence lottery included:

- Need a separate lottery for each of the two zones so anglers are distributed over both zones and not concentrated in one place
- Support this Management Alternative but lottery should be for entire Skeena IV
- Prefer current regulations

*Recommended Management Alternative: 13. **Mandatory Steelhead Stamp** from September 1 – October 31*

Members of all User-Groups who completed Response Forms supported a Mandatory Steelhead Stamp. Comments included:

- Agree with this increase in fee as long as revenues are directed towards Skeena steelhead management
- This is unfair to local coho anglers who are not targeting steelhead because they will have to pay an additional licence fee surcharge

Suggested changes to the draft plan for Skeena IV upstream from Kitwanga Bridge include:

- Create a zone for limiting non-guided, non-residents from the Shegunia (Salmon) to the Bulkley confluence

5.7.4 Kispiox

*Recommended Management Alternative 15. Implement an **eight-day licence lottery immediately** for non-guided, non-resident anglers based on a target of 795 angler-days in the Classified Waters period, which equates to 99 eight-day licences spread evenly over the season (on entire river except status quo zone)*

Based on the Response Forms, local business, NRAs and NRCs did not support an eight-day licence lottery. Resident anglers supported this Management Alternative (74% agreed) and so did guides (60% agreed).

Many of the reasons for support and lack of support of an eight-day licence lottery have already been covered in the general section (5.5.1), but comments on this Management Alternative specific to the Kispiox included:

- Do not believe there have ever been 100 anglers on the river
- Carrying capacity calculation may be inaccurate so the non-guided, non-resident target could be higher and number of anglers including non-residents in the status quo zone could be higher as well
- Unacceptable solution, no flexibility, what happens when the river blows out?
- Support eight-day licence on its own
- Like to fish both guided and non-guided so this would not work for me, because if guided time was booked, there are no assurances of being able to fish unguided in the same time period
- Have property on river and have come from outside BC for many years and this would seriously curtail my fishing experience
- Reducing the number of non-guided, non-residents would seriously impact tourism in the Hazelton area and this area is already very economically depressed
- Missing accurate and up-to-date data on who is using the river and when (need for an up-to-date creel census)
- Needs to be an exception for non-resident property owners
- Lottery does not address whole problem; guides also contribute to crowding problem

*Recommended Management Alternative: 16. **Status quo zone** in an area of the river from 20.2 kilometres along Kispiox Valley Road to 29.5 kilometres along Kispiox Valley Road*

None of the User-Groups answering the Response Form questions agreed with the Status quo zone. Comments from respondents included:

- Zone itself would become very overcrowded and not a place for quality angling
- Access is a problem because all of the land adjacent to the zone is privately owned and there are few places to access the river, and none at the upstream end of the zone

- Section has some of the most popular fishing spots and has had crowding and other problems, so it should be regulated like the rest of the river
- Does not make sense to push all the non-guided, non-residents into one small section of the river except for a few who are lucky enough to get a spot in the lottery on other parts of the river

*Recommended Management Alternative: 17. **Resident-only angling on Saturdays** on entire river including status quo zone; hence no guided anglers on Saturdays during the Classified Waters period*

Based on Response Form results, all groups except resident anglers (70% agreed) did not support resident-only on Saturdays. Comments were limited but included:

- Excellent idea
- NRA and NRC anglers would lose some flexibility
- Do it only on one part of the river
- Not many residents even use this river
- Not fair, non-residents are our economy here

It is interesting to note that while non-residents who answered the Response Forms did not agree with resident-only on Saturdays, comments at stakeholder meeting of mostly non-residents in Hazelton and Smithers, and also comments made by non-resident anglers on an informal email list that the facilitator was copied on, suggested that most non-residents could accept resident-only times on many of the rivers, including the Kispiox.

Suggested changes to the draft plan for this river include:

- Disperse guided angler effort throughout the entire river, so guiding is not concentrated in certain locations
- Extend Classified Water season to November 30
- Rotate location of status quo zone to different areas of the river
- Change classification of the river to Class I
- Have three days for everyone, two days for non-residents, and two days for residents

5.7.5 Babine

*Recommended Management Alternative: Creation of **three zones** (questions 19, 20 and 21) on the Babine River during the Classified Waters period:*

19. Resident and non-resident anglers permitted upstream of Nichyeskwa Creek to 80 metres below the smolt-counting fence under status quo regulations but no guiding will be permitted in that zone

20. Resident anglers only will be permitted to angle between Nichyeskwa Creek and Nilkitkwa River. No guiding will be permitted in that zone

21. Open to all licence classes and permitted guides downstream of the Nilkitkwa

River confluence with the Babine

Response Form results indicated that resident anglers (72%) and NRC anglers (58%) agreed with the first zone (19). Interestingly NRAs completing Response Forms did not agree with this zone. Local business and guides also did not support this zone. One comment was that the only crowding that occurred in this zone was in August, associated with sockeye fishing by NRAs and NRCs.

The Response Form results showed that the resident-only zone (20) was supported only by resident anglers (78% agreed) and not by any other User-Groups.

Comments from resident anglers on the resident-only zone included:

- Recognizes resident-priority
- The size of the zone should be increased

Comments from other guides on the resident-only zone included:

- Guiding should not be excluded because there is not a crowding problem; only when Nilkitkwa blows out
- Zone has accessibility and grizzly bear problems

The third zone (21) is essentially no change from the status quo and Response Form results indicated that it was supported by all User-Groups except resident anglers who had somewhat mixed results.

*Recommended Management Alternative: 22. The ministry **should review and rationalize guided rod-days** on the Babine (used and unused) and seek to reduce the total allocation.*

Based on Response Form results, 79% of resident anglers agreed with a ministry review of rod-days. The rest of the User-Groups did not support this Management Alternative.

There were many comments about the guiding situation on the Babine, mainly by resident anglers. They included:

- Much of river is dominated by guides, especially downstream from Nilkitkwa River; very difficult for anglers to find water to fish
- Action needs to be taken because the river has too many guided rod-days; compare to Bulkley, which has a much higher carrying capacity
- None of the ministry's angling-use data really speaks to the problems on the Babine in the section where most of the guiding takes place
- Working Groups need to make specific recommendations on guided rod-days on this river

Non-resident email comments barely mentioned problems specific to guide-use and management on the Babine.

Guides, at stakeholder meetings and in email submissions made a number of

comments:

- If more access is created to bring in residents, then wilderness value of Babine will be lost
- Guides voluntarily distribute their effort over the river and the total number of guides on the river has decreased since late 1980s

Suggested changes to the draft plan for the Babine include:

- Improve access at the following locations:
 - Develop old bridge site past Nilkitkwa Creek
 - Upgrade trail on south side down to Nichyeskwa
 - Deactivate road at Gale Creek
- Decrease guided rod-days on this river
- Extend Classified Water period into August
- BC Parks should stagger launch of recreational or non-commercial floatcraft

5.7.6 Bulkley

*Recommended Management Alternative: 24. **Zoning for resident-only weekends** during the Classified Waters period for the following easily accessible waters, where they meet the Bulkley River:*

- *Chicken Creek*
- *Toboggan Creek*
- *Telkwa River*

(Note the actual text of the draft AMP said resident-only for the entire Classified Water season, not just weekends. An error occurred when that information was transferred to both the Executive Summary of the draft AMP and the Response Form question.)

Response Form results for resident anglers, guides and local business showed agreement for resident-only weekends (68%, 58%, and 59% respectively). NRA and NRC respondents were not in support of this Management Alternative.

Comments in support of resident-only weekends in three zones included:

- Why not make resident-only zones larger?
- Entire Bulkley should be resident-only on weekends instead
- How large will the zones actually be?

Comments not in support of resident-only weekends in three zones included:

- Concentrates resident anglers in these three places
- No guided or non-guided, non-residents fish these areas, so what evidence is being used to make resident-only?
- Property owner at Trout Creek forbids public access except to a few guides who have made an arrangement
- These are not very quality waters
- Two of these locations also function as boat launches (Chicken Creek and Telkwa River)
- Does not adequately address resident-priority
- Telkwa mouth zone must extend from the bottom of the "Eddy" run to the top of

the “burn” or “cement plant” run

*Recommended Management Alternative: 25. Make **Telkwa River a resident-only zone for the Classified Waters period***

Based on the Response Forms, resident anglers were in favour of this resident-only zone (59% agreed), NRAs and NRCs were not in favour (79% of NRCs disagreed and 89% of NRAs disagreed) and guides and local business had mixed responses.

Comments by respondents not in support of making the Telkwa resident-only included that it was a waste of time, that there was no crowding on the Telkwa, and that it is not a significant angling area.

It is interesting to note that while non-residents who answered the Response Forms did not agree with resident-only zones, at stakeholder meetings of mostly non-residents in Hazelton and in Smithers and also comments made by many non-resident anglers on an informal email list suggested that most non-residents could accept resident-only zones on many of the rivers.

*Recommended Management Alternative: If a non-guided, non-resident angler-day target were exceeded twice in three years, it would **trigger a lottery with limited-day licences**. The licences would be spread evenly over the Classified Waters period. There are two threshold target options being considered (questions 26 and 27):*

26. Option 1 (high use) – The lottery would allocate 1,716 angler-days in limited-day licences to non-guided, non-residents

27. Option 2 (average use) – The lottery would allocate 814 angler-days in limited-day licences to non-guided, non-resident anglers

Response Form results indicated that local business, NRAs and NRCs were strongly opposed to a limited-day licence lottery, no matter which option. Guides and resident anglers did not agree with the high use option but did support the average use option. Most of the comments have already been summarized in the general section (5.5.1) but some river-specific comments on this Management Alternative were:

- Want lottery to start immediately because there is already a problem and if Kispiox is regulated anglers will come here
- Dean River lottery model does not work for Class II rivers
- Differing opinions as to whether there is a crowding problem or not
- Concern for why Bulkley Angling Use Plan was not implemented
- Calculation of targets does not take into account bad weather conditions that render the river unfishable

Suggested changes to the draft plan for the Bulkley include:

- Just have lottery on specific zones of the river

- Resident-only on Saturday
- Ministry purchase Trout Creek boat launch
- Provide more access points
- Entire river should be resident-only

5.7.7 Morice

*Recommended Management Alternative: If a non-guided, non-resident angler-day target were exceeded twice in three years, it would **trigger a lottery with limited-day licences**. There are two threshold target options (questions 29 and 30) that are being considered:*

29. Option 1 (high use) – The lottery would allocate 617 angler-days in limited-day licences to non-guided, non-resident anglers.

30. Option 2 (average use) – The lottery would allocate 449 angler-days in limited-day licences to non-guided, non-resident anglers.

Based on Response Form results, resident anglers agreed with the average-use option for the limited-day licence lottery, guides did not support this Management Alternative, and NRAs, NRCs and local business were strongly opposed to either options for a limited-day licence lottery.

Most comments have been summarized already (5.5.1) but some river-specific additional comments from resident anglers who supported the limited-day licence lottery include:

- Option 1 is too high, crowding already exists
- Prefer Option 2 and implement it now
- As with Bulkley, lotteries on other rivers will push angling pressure to this river, which is another reason to implement it now

*Recommended Management Alternative: 31. Request that Ministry of Environment conduct an **Angling Guide Management Review** to look at the number of rod-days allocated, used, and unused.*

Based on the Response Form results, resident anglers and local business agreed with an Angling Guide Management Review and NRAs, NRCs and guides did not. Respondents throughout the consultation process had lots to say about guiding on this river including comments such as:

- Review should include an overall reduction in guiding on the river
- Guides are part of the crowding problem and also need to be regulated; suggest some regulations similar to those proposed by West Working Group on the Zymoetz and Kitsumkalum
- Some guides only operate at very peak times, which contributes to crowding problems

Suggested changes to the draft plan for the Morice include:

- Extend Classified period from August 15 to November 15
- Develop more access points
- Resident-only angling on Saturdays at specific locations
 - Canoe Point
 - Bymac Campground to junction of Little Bulkley
 - Aspen Campground to Owen Flats
- Upper river should be resident-only or possibly closed

5.7.8 Zymoetz I

*Recommended Management Alternative: 33. **Extend Classified Waters period to begin on August 1 and continue until the end of the steelhead season on December 31.***

All User-Groups agreed with extending the Classified Waters period based on results of the Response Form. Comments included:

- Will not necessarily address crowding; no crowding on shoulder seasons
- Perhaps should be closed earlier to protect steelhead that are holding on spawning ground; catch and release may cause a higher mortality at this time of year
- Does not make sense because in November weather is a big factor and in August there are very few fish in the river

*Recommended Management Alternative: 34. **Mandatory Steelhead Stamp from August 1 – December 31***

All User-Groups filling out the Response Forms agreed with a mandatory Steelhead Stamp. One comment was that it might cause problems for salmon anglers who are not targeting steelhead at this time of year.

*Recommended Management Alternative: 35. **Limit three existing guides to the use of one boat per guide per day***

All User-Groups supported one boat per guide per day in their answers to the Response Form.

*Recommended Management Alternative: 36. **Limit three existing guides to a maximum of three anglers per boat***

All User-Groups supported three anglers per boat in their answers to the Response Form. Comments included suggesting that it should be one or two anglers per boat.

*Recommended Management Alternative: 37. **All non-residents must be guided***

Based on the Response Forms, resident anglers and guides supported the recommendation that all non-residents must be guided but NRAs, NRCs and local

business did not. General comments on this Management Alternative are summarized in 5.5.8.

Comments from resident anglers in support of all non-residents being guided included:

- Beneficial to guides and local economy
- Agree with this alternative; need to decrease number of non-residents because fishing experience of residents is being compromised

Other comments from respondents who were not supportive of this Management Alternative included

- Too “deep” a cut to non-resident angling
- Prefer a lottery for non-guided, non-residents

*Recommended Management Alternative: 38. Three **existing guides** hold 58 rod-days and their allocation will be increased by 10 rod-days each for a total of **30 additional rod-days** to accommodate increased demand because non-residents must be guided*

All groups that filled out Response Forms were opposed to allocating additional rod-days to guides.

Non-residents, resident anglers and local business had the following comments on increasing rod-days:

- Any new rod-days should go to new guides, not existing guides
- If river is crowded, why are we allocating more rod-days to guides?
- Was this a trade-off for reducing the number of clients and boats per guide?
- There are already too many guided anglers on this section of the river
- Not justified just because season is longer unless there are some ways of spreading guide activity out as well
- This is why there is a problem with guides on the Working Groups
- Will lead to more helicopters and decreased wilderness values

Comments from guides on increasing rod-days included:

- Allocation of new rod-days should follow process set out in the Quality Waters Strategy document (MWLAP 2005)
- Allocation is not high enough, should go to maximum for river in regulations (250 rod-days)
- No new guides should be on this river

*Recommended Management Alternative: **Residents may be restricted** if carrying capacity is exceeded over a set period of time. The Ministry of Environment is directed to establish effort levels for this trigger, consistent with the concept that the levels must be exceeded two times in three years, before any restrictions are put in place.*

(Note this alternative was in the draft plan but not in the Response Form.)

Comments on restricting resident anglers were all not supportive and included:

- This goes contrary to the resident-priority of the Quality Waters Strategy
- Guide rod-days should be reduced before resident angler-days are reduced

Suggested changes to the draft plan for Zymoetz I included:

- Change boundary between Zymoetz I and II to downstream of Clore and make Clore part of Zymoetz I
- Consider resident-only Saturday
- Monitor and possibly regulate helicopter use

5.7.9 Zymoetz II

*Recommended Management Alternative: 40. **Extend Classified Waters period from August 1 to May 31 and retain Class II Classified Water status. This reflects the time that steelhead are in the river.***

Response Forms revealed that resident anglers, NRCs and local business agreed with extending the Classified Waters period. NRAs and guides had much more variable responses. Comments included:

- Will not address crowding
- Not needed as few anglers on shoulder seasons

*Recommended Management Alternative: 41. **Mandatory Steelhead Stamp required for this longer classified period***

All User-Groups that filled out Response Forms were supportive of a mandatory Steelhead Stamp. One comment was made that coho anglers will have to buy a stamp even though they are not targeting steelhead, and that is unfair because there is an added cost involved.

*Recommended Management Alternative: 42. **Include Clore River with Zymoetz II Classified Waters***

In the Response Forms, all User-Groups except NRAs supported including the Clore with Zymoetz II. NRAs had mixed responses. Comments included:

- Need to determine carrying capacity of the Clore as it is a very fragile system
- Perhaps just below the mouth of the Clore could be boundary between Zymoetz I and II and make Clore part of Zymoetz I

*Recommended Management Alternative: 43. **No guiding or non-resident angling on weekends; hence weekends resident-only***

In the Response Forms, NRAs, NRCs and guides did not support resident-only weekends. Resident anglers strongly supported this Management Alternative and 50% of local business responses agreed with this alternative and 42% were neutral. Comments included:

- Strongly reflects resident-priority
- If whole weekend is taken up, it presents a problem for residents who have non-residents visiting and they want to take them out on one weekend day
- Will further concentrate guide effort on weekdays
- Very difficult to do guide changeover

*Recommended Management Alternative: 44. Maximum of **three anglers per guide** or assistant guide per day*

In the Response Forms, all User-Groups supported three anglers per guide except the guides who showed some support with 45% in agreement and 27% neutral. Comments included:

- Helps address crowding issue
- Still too many anglers per guide

*Recommended Management Alternative: 45. **Distribute guiding effort evenly** throughout the season by changing the conditions of guide licences*

Resident anglers, NRCs, and local business supported distributing guiding effort evenly in the Response Form results. NRAs gave mixed responses and guides did not support this Management Alternative. Comments included:

- Guides need to play a role in spreading out angling pressure and reducing crowding
- One guide indicated that he guides in the off-season not because there are many fish but there are very few people and people pay for that experience

*Recommended Management Alternative: 46. **Increase the current guide allocation** of five guides and 117 rod-days to five guides and 267 rod-days (increase of 30 rod-days per guide) to accommodate the extension of the Classified Waters period*

The Response Form results showed that none of the User-Groups agreed with increasing the current guide allocation. Comments from all User-Groups except the guides included:

- Increasing the guided rod-days defeats the purpose of this exercise, which is to reduce the number of non-residents
- Why not offer rod-days to new guides including First Nations people?
- Leave status quo of five guides and 117 rod-days but distribute them evenly over the season
- Would not want to see increased allocation unless good data was available
- Proposal would be OK only if guiding activity could be distributed over a longer Classified Water period
- Another example of why guides should not be involved in Working Groups

Comments on increasing the current guide allocation by guides included:

- Make sure Quality Waters document is followed with regard to rod-day allocation

- Allocation should be higher — 150 rod-days per existing guide — to more appropriately compensate for extension of the Classified Water season

*Recommended Management Alternative: 47. Implement a **limited-day licence lottery immediately** for non-guided, non-resident anglers with a target of 267 angler-days spread evenly over the Classified Waters period*

Guides and resident anglers supported a limited-day licence lottery in their comments on the Response Forms. NRAs, NRCs and local business did not. Many of the comments have already been recorded in the general section (5.5.1), but a few additional comments specific to this river include:

- Target should be lowered to 198 angler-days and then adjusted once more data has been collected
- Why is there a decrease in non-guided, non-resident anglers and an increase in guided non-resident anglers?

Suggested changes to the draft plan for Zymoetz II include:

- Classified Water should begin July 1
- Classified season should begin August 1 and end on December 31
- Mandatory Steelhead Stamp should be required from August 1 to December 31
- Guides should be limited to one boat per day to preserve the quality of the experience
- Suggest two groups of anglers per day per guide licence with a maximum of three guided anglers per group
- Downstream 17 kilometres from lower canyon to confluence with the Skeena open access to non-residents
- Upstream 17 kilometres above lower canyon restricted access to non-residents via electronic licensing allowing up to eight, non-guided anglers per day
- Resident-only on one weekend day

5.7.10 Kitsumkalum

*Recommended Management Alternative: 49. **All non-residents must be guided***

Guides and resident anglers supported the recommendation that all non-residents must be guided in the Response Form answers, but NRAs, NRCs and local business strongly opposed it. General comments on this Management Alternative are in section 5.5.8.

Resident angler respondents commented that making all non-residents guided clearly recognizes resident-angler priority.

Other User-Group respondents who did not support making all non-residents guided commented:

- How would residents take out their relatives and friends from other parts of Canada
- Very restrictive and will have implications on the local economy
- Total grab on the part of the guides

- Not a lot of non-residents and not a crowding issue; does not make sense

*Recommended Management Alternative: 50. Limit each licensed guide to **one boat in the upper river and one boat in the lower river** on any one day (Note: lower river on the Kitsumkalum refers to from below the lower canyon to the confluence with the Skeena; upper river refers to above the lower canyon.)*

Response Form results showed that resident anglers, local business and NRCs supported one boat in the upper river and one boat in the lower river. NRAs and guides did not.

Comments on this Management Alternative from all respondents included:

- Wonders whether guides could justify need for more boats in upper or lower river
- Increases resident-angler opportunities and resident-priority
- Key is spreading guided anglers out
- How does limiting boats help because if there are 11 guides, there could be 22 guide boats on any given day

*Recommended Management Alternative: 51. Maximum **four guided anglers per boat***

All User-Groups completing Response Forms supported four guided anglers per boat except guides who had mixed responses. A comment heard a number of times was that respondents would prefer to see three guided anglers per boat and they wondered why Zymoetz II was three anglers per boat and this river was four.

*Recommended Management Alternative: 52. **No guiding on Sundays** for entire river*

Response Form revealed that resident anglers and local business supported no guiding on Sundays, but guides did not. NRAs and NRCs had mixed responses. Comments included:

- Should be both Saturday and Sunday
- Increases resident-angler opportunity, recognizes resident-priority and addresses crowding
- Why is this inconsistent with other rivers? Why Sunday and not Saturday?

*Recommended Management Alternative: 53. **No guiding from Glacier Creek to Kitsumkalum Lake on Saturdays***

Based on Response Form results, local business and resident anglers supported no guiding on Saturdays in this zone, but guides did not. NRAs and NRCs had mixed responses. One comments was that a respondent wanted to see the entire river without guiding on Saturdays.

*Recommended Management Alternative: 54. **Reduction in the maximum***

number of guides allowed in the upper and lower river to 11 (regulation now allows 13)

Based on the Response Forms, local business, resident anglers and NRCs agreed with reducing the number of guides. Guides did not. NRAs had mixed responses. Comments included one person who preferred fewer guides and fewer anglers per guide.

Recommended Management Alternative: 55. Resident anglers only on Sundays

Response Form results indicated that resident anglers agreed with resident-only on Sundays and guides, NRAs and NRCs did not. Local business had a mixed response. Comments included:

- Would prefer resident angling only on entire weekend
- Why not make this recommendation consistent with other rivers?
- Would be OK if guide season extended to November 15

Suggested changes to the draft plan for the Kitsumkalum include:

- Open river to guiding all year long
- Non-residents, guided-only above the lower canyon
- Mandatory Steelhead Stamp from August 1 to June 1
- Resident-only on Sundays
- Two groups per day per guide licence
- Three guided anglers per boat
- Resident-only from November 15 to March 15

5.7.11 Lakelse

Recommended Management Alternative: 57. Class I Classified Water all year (change from Class II all year)

Resident anglers and guides supported Class I all year in their answers on the Response Forms, local business showed some support, and NRAs and NRCs did not agree with this Management Alternative.

Recommended Management Alternative: 58. Steelhead Stamp required from September 1 – May 31 (extension from present December 1 – May 31, to reflect actual time steelhead are in the river)

Response Form results showed that all User-Groups supported a longer season for the Steelhead Stamp except the NRAs, who had mixed responses. Comments included:

- Steelhead Stamp should not be mandatory because the river is not crowded with steelhead anglers, it is crowded with coho anglers and there needs to be a way to differentiate these anglers
- Making a Steelhead Stamp mandatory may provide misleading data on the Steelhead Harvest Analysis questionnaire because anglers would have to buy them even though they were not fishing for steelhead

*Recommended Management Alternative: 59. **Resident-only fishery March 1 – May 31 for entire river** (for steelhead and trout fishery); Non-residents can access fishery from June 1 – February 28*

Response Form results showed that resident anglers agreed with a resident-only season, NRAs and NRCs disagreed with it, and local business and guides had mixed responses. Comments included:

- Increases resident-angler opportunity and recognizes resident-priority
- Still does not deal with crowding by non-resident salmon anglers on the river
- Fishery should be closed during this period to protect overwintering steelhead
- Should be resident-only all year

*Recommended Management Alternative: 60. If non-guided, non-resident anglers exceed 100 angler-days, two years out of three, it would **trigger a limited-day licence lottery** would be implemented based on a target of 100 angler-days*

Response Form results showed that resident anglers supported a limited-day licence lottery, NRAs, NRCs, local business and guides did not support it. General comments are in section 5.5.1. One river-specific comment was that this Management Alternative increases resident-angler opportunity, recognizes resident-priority and addresses crowding.

Suggested changes to the draft plan for the Lakelse include:

- Resident-only all year round or non-residents guided-only
- Mandatory Steelhead Stamp September 1 to June 1

5.7.12 Skeena IV downstream from Kitwanga Bridge

*Recommended Management Alternative: 62. **Class I Classified Water all year** (change from Class II between July 31 and October 31).*

Response Form results revealed that resident anglers supported Class I all year, guides NRAs and NRCs did not, and local business had mixed responses. Comments included:

- How could you call a river that has a transcontinental railway on one shore and a major highway on the other, a wilderness experience?

*Recommended Management Alternative: 63. **Maintain the current Steelhead Stamp requirement**, which is only required when fishing for steelhead. This reduces the licensing impact on salmon anglers.*

Based on Response Form results, resident anglers and NRCs agreed with maintaining the current Steelhead Stamp requirement, guides disagreed, and NRAs and local business had mixed responses. Comments included:

- Should be mandatory Steelhead Stamp for all year round because steelhead are in the river all the time

- Should be mandatory Steelhead Stamp from August 1 to December 31

*Recommended Management Alternative: 64. Existing (pre-Angling Management Plan) **Skeena IV guides can guide in either reach** (downstream and upstream of the Kitwanga Bridge) of the new Skeena IV Classified Waters.*

All User-Groups responded to guiding in either reach of Skeena IV with mixed responses, probably because they did not understand the Management Alternative. For the purposes of this planning process, the Regional Committee divided Skeena IV into two sections, above and below the Kitwanga Bridge. This division has no impact whatsoever on guides who currently hold rod-days in Skeena IV.

*Recommended Management Alternative: 65. **Four new guide opportunities of 20 rod-days each would be made available (total 80 new rod-days).***

All User-Groups did not support four new guide opportunities in the Response Form except guides who gave mixed responses.

Comments from non-guides on four new guide opportunities included:

- There should be no further allocation of guided rod-days in this part of the river
- We are trying to decrease pressure, why are we adding more guides?
- Much needs to be resolved with the allocation of guided rod-days and until that has happened, we should not be allocating rod-days to new guides

Comments from guides on four new guide opportunities included:

- This is not enough rod-days; should be more (options ranged from a total guided allocation of 350 to 2,000 rod-days)

*Recommended Management Alternative: 66. **Existing Skeena IV guides from the Terrace area** (four guides who presently hold a total of 85 rod-days) would be issued **30 additional rod-days.***

None of the User-Groups supported additional rod-days for Terrace guides in the Response Forms.

Comments from non-guides on additional rod-days for Terrace guides included:

- Totally disagree with issuing more rod-days to existing guides
- This is one of the last areas in the watershed that is not over-run with guides; it should be left as it is
- Working Group guides have a conflict of interest if they are recommending increasing their quotas

Comments from guides on additional rod-days for Terrace guides included:

- This allocation should be higher
- Not fair because upstream guides are not included

*Recommended Management Alternative: 67. **If total non-guided, non-resident***

*angler effort exceeds 1,000 angler-days, two years out of three, it would **trigger a limited-day licence lottery with a target of 1,000 angler-days.***

Guides and anglers supported a limited-day licence lottery in the Response Form. NRAs, NRCs and local business did not. See 5.5.1 for general comments. River-specific comments included:

- The angler-day target is too high; should be reduced to from 1,000 to 670
- Need to align this with the other part of Skeena IV, which was the responsibility of the Central Working Group
- How will you tell who is fishing for salmon and who is fishing for steelhead?

Suggested changes to the draft plan for Skeena IV downstream from Kitwanga Bridge include:

- Mandatory Steelhead Stamp August 1 to June 1
- Lower boundary of Skeena IV should be moved to Lower Kitselas Canyon
- Area from Kitselas Canyon to lower boundary of Skeena IV should be no guiding

5.8 Bulkley Steelhead Anglers

The Bulkley Steelhead Anglers Community questionnaire, which was not part of the Quality Waters Phase II consultation process, had approximately 283 respondents and 84.5% of them were NRAs or NRCs. Similar to the Quality Waters Strategy Response Form in the Phase I consultation process, respondents to the questionnaire did not believe there was a crowding problem and were not supportive of a limited-day licence lottery approach to management. Full details can be found at www.bulkleysteelheadanglers.com.

The tourism-based business questionnaire had about 20 respondents. Similar to other results obtained in the Phase II consultation process, business owners who responded to the questionnaire were not supportive of a limited-day licence lottery approach and felt that fewer non-resident anglers would come if these sorts of regulations were implemented. Full details can be found at www.bulkleysteelheadanglers.com.

Care needs to be taken when interpreting the results of the Bulkley Steelhead Anglers questionnaires, because there are a number of biases present in addition to those previously discussed as part of the Phase II Response Form (see 4.6.1). The Bulkley Steelhead Anglers questionnaires were:

- Based on two version of the draft plan — an early, leaked, draft of the plan; and the draft plan that was released to the public on October 17, 2008 for the consultation process
- Housed at a website that clearly did not support the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy process and was full of information that reflected that point-of-view
- Based on respondents who were drawn to the site by sources who also did not support the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy process

6.0 Conclusions

The challenge of the draft Angling Management Plan is that it needs to address multiple interests related to steelhead angler management in the Skeena River watershed. Certain Management Alternatives do not always work for everyone. Any final decisions will have to find the best mix of Management Alternatives that meets the needs of most members of the User-Groups. The results of the Phase II consultation process suggest that it is not possible “to please all of the people all of the time.”

During the Phase II consultation process and the preparation of this report, the facilitator talked with hundreds of people at stakeholder meetings, open houses and on the phone, read hundreds of pages of email submissions and online Response Form comments, and analyzed the results of closed questions in the Response Forms from the five main User-Groups in the watershed.

This Phase II Consultation Report attempts to triangulate all the different information gathered in the consultation process and draw a number of conclusions about which regulations and recommendations would be:

- Acceptable to the greatest number of people
- Consistent with the principles of the Quality Waters Strategy
- Address the angling-use issues raised by the community

The conclusions cover a broad spectrum of options from those that are directly related to the regulations from the Quality Waters tool box that are proposed in the draft Angling Management Plan, to those regulations that are clearly outside the tool box of the Quality Waters Strategy, to those that are important recommendations that need to be documented.

The first section examines conclusions of a more general nature (6.1) and the second section looks at river-specific conclusions (6.2).

6.1 General conclusions – all rivers

One strong over-arching conclusion that was heard from many respondents was that it is not possible to develop a comprehensive Angling Management Plan, implement it, and then walk away from it. Respondents said that it would be preferable to implement smaller measures in an Angling Management Plan, monitor the results including collecting information on angler satisfaction, and then determine whether problems have been addressed by the plan. If the problems have not been addressed, then there is good reason to re-visit the plan and incorporate regulations that will better address the problems.

6.1.1 Limited-day licences allocated by lotteries

The results indicate that all the major User-Groups (local business, NRAs, NRCs, and guides for some of the rivers) except resident anglers were not supportive of lotteries as a Management Alternative. In spite of this lack of current support for lotteries, many respondents suggested that with more data collection in the future, the ministry might

need to move towards some sort of management that restricted the number of non-resident anglers on the water. Some of the key concerns raised regarding lotteries were that:

- Lotteries are too intrusive
- Too large a perceived impact on the tourism economy, especially with downturn in economy
- Proposed regulations are too complex
- Can the ministry pay for these regulations?
- Should start with smaller steps, monitor to see whether they work, and modify if necessary

6.1.2 Limited-day licence on its own

Many respondents indicated that they would accept a limited-day licence on its own without a lottery for non-guided, non-resident anglers. One of the main issues raised by local tourism businesses is that anglers desire the flexibility to decide when and where they want to fish. An eight-day licence provides this flexibility.

Many respondents indicated that they felt these sorts of tools needed to be implemented on all the Classified Waters of the Skeena River system, rather than just specific rivers that are experiencing crowding. They suggested that if any sort of restrictions were placed on one river, then angling pressure would transfer to a less-regulated river. Eight days was the most commonly discussed length of time for a limited-day licence, so it will be used for discussion purposes here.

Three options emerged regarding eight-day licences:

1. Each non-guided, non-resident angler gets eight days of fishing on each river. This is either eight consecutive days on an eight-day licence or eight one-day licences. So each angler is capped at eight days fishing on each river during the Classified Water season but they can fish whenever they choose.
2. Each non-guided, non-resident angler gets eight days of fishing on each river and then can buy an additional eight days at a higher fee on each river. The third eight days fishing would cost more again. There would be no limit on the total number of eight-day licences that an angler could buy on any one river during the Classified Water season. There would also be one-day licences with rates that increased after each increment of eight-days fishing was reached. Anglers can fish whenever they choose.
3. Each non-guided, non-resident angler can buy as many eight-day or one-day licences on any river. However, if they buy a licence (eight-day or one-day) during the peak of the Classified Water season on that river (usually September 15 to October 15), the licences would cost more.

6.1.3 Non-resident aliens and non-resident Canadians

During both the Phase I consultation process and this Phase II consultation process, respondents were quite clear that Canadians from outside British Columbia (NRCs) should be treated differently from non-residents from outside Canada (NRAs). They offered the following suggestions:

- NRCs should pay more than resident anglers but less than NRAs
- NRCs should have the same access to the sport fishery as resident anglers
- Hence, if limited-day licences were implemented, a separate fee and access structure would need to be set up for NRCs and NRAs

6.1.4 Guiding

Most participants in the consultation process felt that, with the possible exception of the West Working Group rivers, there are few Management Alternatives in the draft Angling Management Plan that address the role guides play in crowding and angling quality. Two measures were suggested that could help address the peak in guiding activity in the late-September, early-October period.

1. Distributing guiding activity throughout the Classified Water period (as a condition of guide licence)
2. Placing restrictions on the number of boats, number of clients per boat, or number of guides or assistant guides on a river on the same day (as a condition of guide licence)

6.1.5 Classified Waters and Steelhead Stamp

A number of Management Alternatives recommended extending Classified Water periods to better reflect the time that steelhead are in the river, to gather more accurate data throughout the entire steelhead fishery, and to provide more money to direct at steelhead angler management and fish management issues. Extending Classified Water seasons was well supported by most User-Groups although guides did not support this Management Alternative on all waters. Respondents noted that extending Classified Water seasons is a relatively easy thing to do.

In parallel with the suggestion of extending the Classified Water seasons, a number of Management Alternatives recommended extending the time that Steelhead Stamps are mandatory. This Management Alternative was well supported by most User-Groups for many of the same reasons that were suggested for the extension of Classified Waters. Respondents felt this Management Alternative could be considered on a number of rivers. One exception to the support for Steelhead Stamps was in the case where anglers are targeting salmon and not interested in steelhead. Most respondents felt that in these cases, the Steelhead Stamp would create an additional fee that was unfair to salmon anglers.

6.1.6 Ensuring resident-priority

There was strong support for having regulations in place to ensure that residents have some priority times to fish on the rivers. The main option put forward over and over again was to provide a weekend day for resident-only fishing either weekly or every other week on all waters during the Classified Water period. Respondents suggested that Working Groups will need to look carefully at which days and which rivers, to ensure that non-residents are not displaced to a limited number of rivers and that guides do not all change clients on the same day.

6.1.7 Changes to licence fees

Fees for licences and surcharges (Steelhead Stamps) were suggested as a way to create a financial disincentive to angling. Rationale for this idea was that a fee increase would reduce the number of people fishing on the rivers and hence reduce crowding. The fee increases were directed at NRAs and NRCs, although most respondents indicated that NRCs should pay less than NRAs. Local business respondents felt that in a time of increased economic uncertainty, raising fees may not be the best route to follow. However other business respondents noted that the value of the Canadian dollar against its American counterpart might help offset an increase in fees.

6.1.8 Manage anglers on a watershed basis

There was strong consensus in and outside the community that the steelhead sport fishery needs to be managed more on a watershed basis. Respondents suggested that managing anglers on one part of the watershed has potentially significant effects on angler-use in other parts of the watershed.

6.1.9 Economic impact study needed for steelhead sport fishery

Many respondents suggested that there is a need to have a much better understanding of the steelhead sport fishing economy, including both the guiding industry and other businesses that depend on non-guided, non-resident anglers. They suggested that this sort of study would answer the question: Where does the money come from and where does it go? A study prepared for the Pacific Salmon Foundation (Counterpoint 2008) was a start, but steelhead economic information was combined with all sport fish from both fresh and salt water, including the salmon angling fishery.

6.1.10 Relationship of quality angling to the tourism economy

Discussions at stakeholder meetings revealed that the Skeena Region offers a diversity of steelhead angling opportunities. There are high-end lodges, motels, bed and breakfasts and campgrounds; there are guided and non-guided options; and there are wilderness fishing experiences and angling opportunities right next to urban centres. All these different activities contribute to the economy of the communities in different ways.

Respondents said that there are activities such as illegal guiding, long-term or illegal camping, trespassing, and poor angler etiquette that lead to poor quality angling experiences and also probably lower tourism revenues for the communities.

Some respondents, notably guides, suggested that tourism organizations and establishments need to have a better understanding of how to ensure that they will get the most tourism dollars flowing into the economy from non-resident anglers, while still offering a range of quality products and services to those anglers. They recommended that tourism organizations should work with other organizations and governments to address low-quality angling experiences that are both causing angling quality problems on the rivers and likely translating into sub-optimal tourism revenues.

6.1.11 Provide education programs for all anglers

In both the Phase I and Phase II consultation processes, many respondents highlighted the need for better angler education, because that would lead to a better quality angling experience. A number of tourism organizations have indicated a desire to partner with the ministry to develop education materials and programs. Suggested topic areas include:

- Proper catch and release and handling of fish
- Angler etiquette — working a pool, rotational angling, sharing the river with gear or fly
- Fish identification
- What is illegal guiding and how you can help prevent it
- Boat safety

6.1.12 Implement River Guardian programs

River Guardian programs that were set up on some of the local rivers have received rave reviews from all User-Groups. It was suggested that revenue generated by local licence sales should be used to pay for these programs. River Guardian programs were suggested for the Kispiox, Zymoetz I and II, Bulkley and Morice, Babine, Skeena IV, Kitsumkalum, and Lakelse. These programs have the potential to provide a number of different functions including:

- Monitor implementation of Angling Management Plan
- Collect angler satisfaction data on quality of angling experience
- Conduct creel censuses and collect data on angler density, carrying capacity, and breakdown of anglers by place of origin
- Increase presence of the ministry on the river
- Report regulation infractions to Conservation Officers

6.1.13 Address illegal guiding

Illegal guiding has been raised over and over again and there are clear indications through US and European websites that it is taking place. However, it is difficult to determine what impact this issue is actually having. A few suggestions were brought up to deal with illegal guiding:

- Re-define guiding in the Wildlife Act so it does not include the transfer of money
- Have legal guides identify themselves on the river through signage or flags
- Limited-day licences, depending on how they were structured, would make illegal guiding more difficult because illegal guides and their anglers would be forced to move around more

6.1.14 Improve access

Many respondents felt that improving access on the rivers would reduce crowding by better dispersing anglers, although some respondents worried that it might result in crowding in previously uncrowded areas where access is limited. Respondents suggested that there seem to be some opportunities to work with other agencies (tourism, local governments, First Nations, Integrated Land Management Bureau, private land owners) to provide more access to area rivers. Given the dislike by many anglers of powerboats and the impact that they have on a quality angling experience,

one respondent suggested that it might make sense to focus an access plan on opening up the river for walk-in anglers and those that plan to float the river without powerboats.

6.1.15 Address use of powerboats on rivers

Many anglers mentioned that powerboats were an issue on the rivers. They said that jet boat noise and other aspects interfere with the quality experience that many anglers expect and jet boats can also negatively affect fish spawning habitat. The possibility of restricting powerboats on some rivers of the Skeena watershed for safety and environmental reasons under the federal Navigable Waters Act or provincial Wildlife Act, as suggested by one respondent, should be explored. Most anglers felt that the focus should be on removing jet boats from the smaller rivers in the watershed and allowing jet boats on the main stem of the Skeena because of the size of the river, the distances between fishing holes and the lack of access in certain stretches of the river.

6.1.16 Implement e-licensing

There was strong support from everyone who took part in the Phase II consultation process to move e-licensing along and ensure that it can sell licences including the possibility of capping the number of licences in the future, collecting fisheries and angler satisfaction data, and monitoring angling pressure and other parameters.

6.1.17 Improve the Quality Waters Strategy

The Skeena Angling Management Planning process was the first, large scale “field test” of the Quality Waters Strategy since it was launched in 2005. During the Phase II consultation, respondents suggested a number of changes to the policy to make it more effective and useful:

- Regional Committees and Working Groups need to have full stakeholder representation
- Regulations tool box needs to be broader
- Planning and consultation process should include fish management with angler management
- Allocation of guide rod-days in 2005 document (MWLAP 2005) must be harmonized with present ministry policy on rod-day allocation

6.1.18 Address conservation of steelhead

There are serious concerns around the conservation of steelhead populations in the Skeena River system and a number of people raised some of the different issues that are impacting or could potentially impact the species in the future. These include the longstanding issue of the commercial salmon fishery bycatch at the mouth of the Skeena, coalbed methane extraction proposals in the headwaters, salmon farming, and the development of independent run-of-the-river hydro power plants.

The ministry has ongoing programs looking at population dynamics and other aspects of steelhead biology and management. Recent funding through the Pacific Salmon Foundation and the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund are adding to the ability to effectively manage salmonids in the Skeena River watershed.

Two suggestions came up a number of times that are directly related to angler-use in the Skeena rivers and these are:

- Consider closing fishing for steelhead at spawning times in certain rivers and at times when fish are very vulnerable to mortality from catch and release
- Study impact of catch and release on mortality of steelhead at different times of year

6.1.19 Address illegal camping

One of the things that became apparent as more and more community conversations took place is that there is an identifiable group of non-residents who come to rivers in the Skeena watershed and camp for long periods of time to fish for steelhead. Respondents noted that some of these people camp on Crown land either legally or illegally and that there is a sense that this tourism group contributes very little to the local economy, but may be responsible for some of the crowding and angling-related conflicts on the rivers. Respondents suggested that cooperation with tourism organizations, Ministry of Forests and Range, the Integrated Land Management Bureau, and other agencies to ensure campers are not overstaying their welcome or camping on Crown land illegally would be a productive route to explore.

6.1.20 Improve enforcement

While ministry officials have continually stated they do not have the resources to add more conservation officers to monitor anglers during the steelhead season, public and stakeholder respondents continue to ask for more enforcement. Respondents noted that River Guardians, though not equipped with all the powers of conservation officers, could assist in dealing with some of these enforcement problems. Better education on the regulations was also deemed important.

6.1.21 Review and revise guided rod-day allocations

Most User-Groups (except guides) were not in favour of allocating any new rod-days to guides. Some respondents indicated they were comfortable allocating new rod-days to new guides rather than existing guides, particularly on Skeena IV. Some non-guide respondents were concerned that two rivers — the Babine and the Morice — needed a reduction in the total number of rod-days allocated to guides.

Generally, respondents talked a lot about the need to ensure that the whole system of rod-day allocation to guides was reviewed. In particular, respondents noted that:

- Rod-days should remain the property of the province and not become a commodity
- Rod-days should be leased to licensed guides through a fair and equitable system that allows new guides to enter the business as well as ensuring that existing guides can remain in a viable business
- Recommending increases or decreases in rod-days should not be done by Working Groups that contain guides because that is a perceived conflict of interest

6.2 River-specific conclusions

Based on the Phase II consultation process, the conclusions outlined in this section for each river are regulations and recommendations that are believed to be acceptable to the broadest range of User-Groups, consistent with the principles of the Quality Waters Strategy, and would address the angling-use issues identified by the community. Regulations currently in place on these rivers, which are not discussed below, would likely remain status quo.

Kitseguecla and Kitwanga

- Resident-only weekend day, every weekend during Classified Water period to address resident-priority

Suskwa

- Resident-only weekend day, every weekend during Classified Water period to address resident-priority

Skeena IV (below and above Kitwanga Bridge combined)

- This section of the Skeena must be approached as one zone and not two
- Resident-only weekend day, every weekend during Classified Water period
- Mandatory Steelhead Stamp from September 1 to October 31
- Distribute guide rod-day usage over Classified Water period

Kispiox

- Resident-only weekend day, every weekend during Classified Water period
- Distribute guide rod-day usage over Classified Water period

Babine

- Resident-only weekend day, every weekend during Classified Water period
- Distribute guide rod-day usage over Classified Water period
- Reduce total guided rod-days allocated and maximum rod-days allowed under BC Regulation 125/90 to a level that is consistent with other rivers in the Skeena watershed

Bulkley

- Resident-only weekend day, every weekend during Classified Water period
- Distribute guided rod-day usage over Classified Water period

Morice

- Resident-only weekend day, every weekend during Classified Water period
- Distribute guided rod-day usage over Classified Water period

Zymoetz I

- Resident-only weekend day, every weekend during Classified Water period
- Distribute guide rod-day usage over Classified Water period
- Extend Classified Waters period from August 1 to November 30
- Extend mandatory Steelhead Stamp period from August 1 to November 30

- Reduce maximum number of guided rod-days allowed under BC Regulation 125/90 to 58 from 250

Zymoetz II (includes Clore River)

- Resident-only weekend day, every weekend during Classified Water period
- Distribute guide rod-day usage over Classified Water period
- Extend Classified Waters period from August 1 to November 30
- Extend mandatory Steelhead Stamp period from August 1 to November 30
- Reduce maximum number of guided rod-days allowed under BC Regulation 125/90 to 117 from 200

Kitsumkalum

- Resident-only weekend day, every weekend during Classified Water period
- Distribute guide rod-day usage over Classified Water period
- Reduce number of guides allowed under BC Regulation 125/90 to 11 from 13

Lakelse

- Resident-only weekend day, alternating weekends during Classified Water period

7.0 References

(all available at www.env.gov.bc.ca/skeena/qws)

- Counterpoint. 2008. Economic Dimensions of Skeena Watershed Salmonid Fisheries Prepared for the Pacific Salmon Foundation. October 2008.
- Dolan, A. 2008a. Consultation Report Phase I (January – March 2008). Skeena Quality Waters Strategy. Alan Dolan & Associates March 2008.
- Dolan, A. 2008b. Draft Angling Management Plan, Skeena Quality Waters Strategy. Alan Dolan & Associates. October 2008.
- Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection. 2005. Quality Waters Strategy Resource Document.

Appendices A – O (separate document)

- A. Response Form
- B. Resident Anglers: Response Form closed question results
- C. Local business: Response Form closed question results
- D. Non-resident aliens: Response Form closed question results
- E. Non-resident Canadians: Response Form closed question results
- F. Guides: Response Form closed question results
- G. Resident Anglers: Response Form comments
- H. Local business: Response Form comments
- I. Non-resident aliens: Response Form comments
- J. Non-resident Canadians: Response Form comments
- K. Guides: Response Form comments
- L. Stakeholder meeting summaries
- M. Public Open House summaries
- N. Summaries of email submissions (residents)
- O. Summaries of email submissions (non-residents)

Appendices P – U (separate document)

- P. Stakeholder email updates
- Q. Newspaper advertising
- R. Synopsis of draft Angling Management Plan
- S. Display panels from Public Open Houses
- T. Presentation at Public Open Houses
- U. Media coverage