

# Ministry of Environment Response to Working Group Recommendations for Skeena Angling Management Plans

Skeena Quality Waters Strategy  
April 23, 2010



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## 1.0 Skeena Quality Waters Strategy

The Skeena Quality Waters Strategy is a process that was initiated to develop thirteen river-specific Angling Management Plans in the Skeena Region. The goals of these plans are to maintain and enhance the quality of experience associated with the recreational steelhead fishery and to address angler use issues. The endorsed recommendations outlined in this document will form the basis of Angling Management Plans. Direction, policy and procedures for this process was provided by the Quality Waters Strategy Resource Document (2005). This process involved significant volunteer effort, from Working Groups composed of resident anglers, angling guides, business and tourism interests, and from members of the public. The Ministry of Environment would like to formally thank everyone for their time and input devoted to this challenging task.

### 1.1 Phase I Consultation Process

The Phase I Consultation Process for the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy (QWS) began in 2008. The ministry met with the public from January to March to ask what the problems were, what the potential solutions were and what the public and stakeholders thought of the consultation process. Input from this consultation process was gathered through face-to-face meetings, public meetings, on-line response forms, phone calls, email etc. and summarized in the Phase I Consultation Report. This report is available at:

<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/skeena/qws/docs/Phase1ConsultReptFinal.pdf>

### 1.2 Formation of Working Groups

During the Phase I Consultation Process, the public was solicited to apply for Working Group positions. Working Groups members were selected through a vetting process conducted by the Regional Quality Waters Committee (Regional Committee). Applications were evaluated and successful individuals were selected based on their knowledge of the waters under discussion, endorsement by their peers, ability to focus on local-level planning and agreement with the principles, goals, and rules of engagement. Following the Phase I Consultation Process, three Working Groups were formed in the communities of Smithers, Hazelton and Terrace (East, Central and West respectively). For a list of Working Groups members, please visit:

[http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/skeena/qws/planning/working\\_groups.html](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/skeena/qws/planning/working_groups.html)

For more information on the Regional Committee, please visit:

<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/skeena/qws/committee.html>

The purpose of Working Groups was to develop recommendations for thirteen river-specific Angling Management Plans. It was important that these recommendations maintain and enhance the quality of experience associated with the recreational steelhead fishery and address angler use issues. Further, it was crucial that these recommendations balance all stakeholder interests. To achieve this, Working Groups were required to read and reference the Phase I and II Consultation Reports when developing their recommendations.

### **1.3 Draft Recommendations for Angling Management Plans**

During the summer of 2008 Working Groups developed draft recommendations for Angling Management Plans. These recommendations were posted on the Skeena Quality Waters website in October 2008 and can be found at:

<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/skeena/qws/docs/SkeenaAnglingManagementPlan.pdf>

### **1.4 Phase II Consultation Process**

Following the creation of draft recommendations for Angling Management Plans, it was necessary to gather input from the public. To achieve this, the Phase II Consultation Process was conducted. From October to November 2008, the public was asked what was liked, what was not liked and what could be changed in the draft recommendations for Angling Management Plans. Similar to the Phase I Consultation Process, input was gathered through face-to-face meetings, public meetings, on-line response forms, phone calls, email etc. This information was then summarized in the Phase II Consultation Report and posted on the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy website for review. This report is available at:

<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/skeena/qws/docs/PhaseIIConsultRept.pdf>

During the Phase II Consultation Process, input was received that the QWS process could be improved by additional representation from the business community. The ministry and the Regional Committee reviewed this feedback. After much discussion, the decision was made to modify the Working Group structure to include representation from the business and tourism sectors. Concerns were raised from the Regional Committee to maintain resident priority in the QWS process. The Working Group composition was revised to include one business representative, one tourism representative and one additional resident angler representative.

### **1.5 Final Recommendations for Angling Management Plans**

Following the Phase II Consultation Process, the modified Working Groups (including business and tourism interests) reconvened to revise the draft recommendations for Angling

Management Plans. This occurred from April to June 2009. As part of the revision process, it was important that input received from the public during the Phase II Consultation Process was taken into consideration. The final recommendations for Angling Management Plans were posted on the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy website in October 2009 and can be found at:

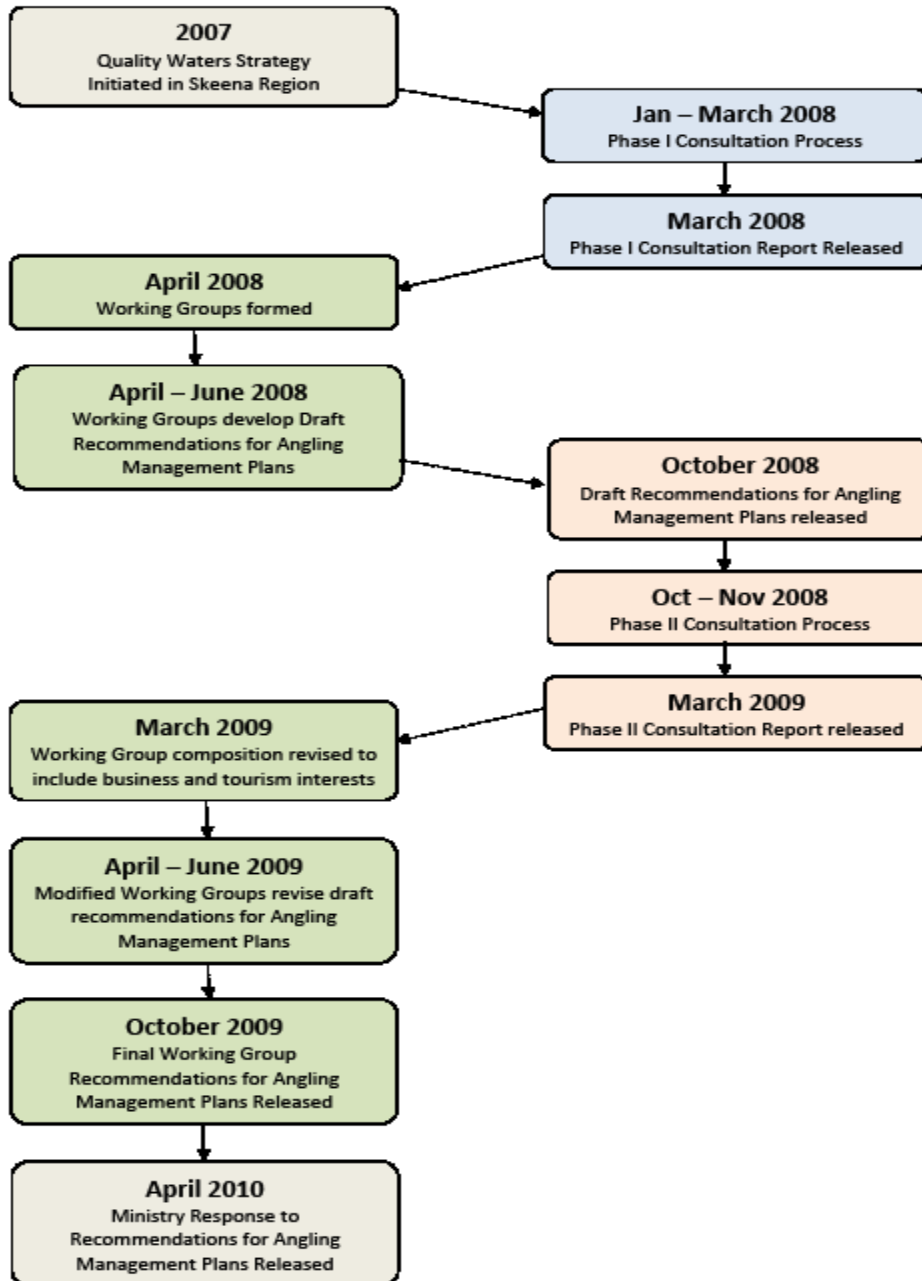
<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/skeena/qws/docs/WGRecommendations.pdf>

### **1.6 Ministry Review and Response to Final Recommendations**

In November 2009, the ministry met with all three Working Groups to review their final recommendations. During this meeting, the ministry received input from the Working Groups which required further consideration. For this reason, there was a delay in posting the ministry response (this document) for public review.

The task of developing recommendations for Angling Management Plans has now been completed. As such, all Working Group positions have ended. The ministry will now work on completing Angling Management Plans based on endorsed recommendations. Endorsed recommendations are presented in the following sections of this document and are intended for implementation on April 1, 2011.

## Timeline of the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy 2007 to Present



## 2.0 Working Group Recommendations

The East, Central and West Working Groups made recommendations for thirteen river-specific Angling Management Plans. Rivers included the Babine, Bulkley, Kispiox, Kitseguecla, Kitsumkalum, Kitwanga, Lakelse, Morice, Skeena IV downstream of the Kitwanga bridge, Skeena IV upstream of the Kitwanga bridge, Suskwa, Zymoetz Class 1 section and Zymoetz Class 2 section.

Overall, there were many recommendations put forward that the ministry endorsed. There were some recommendations, however, that the ministry was unable to endorse – for financial reasons and out of fairness to balance all interests. The endorsed recommendations will form the basis of Angling Management Plans. These plans are intended for implementation on April 1, 2011.

### 2.1 Long Term Recommendations

In several instances, Working Group members proposed long term recommendations on both a system wide basis and at a river-specific level. The intent of such recommendations was to identify a regulation or “tool” which may be needed in the future but was not required for immediate implementation. In such instances, Working Group members recommended that these regulations be implemented in an adaptive fashion in the future.

## 3.0 Ministry Review Process

### 3.1 Criteria Considered During Review of Working Group Recommendations

When the ministry reviewed the Working Groups recommendations, the following factors were considered:

- Fairness & Equity: finding the balance amongst competing interests
  - Cost: ministry administrative considerations and fees to anglers
  - Regulations Complexity: consistency/harmonization, regulatory simplification
- Enforceability: applies to both Ministry of Environment, the Conservation Officer Service and potentially Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

For the ministry to endorse a recommendation, it was crucial that it balanced the greatest number of interests, addressed angler use issues and provided for a quality angling experience.



## 4.0 Ministry Response to System-Wide Regulation Recommendations

Working Groups made system-wide recommendations with the intent that they would be applied to all thirteen rivers part of this process. These recommendations include a limited-day licence, Skeena steelhead stamp and a rod-day booking system for long term consideration.

### 4.1 Skeena Steelhead Stamp

During consultation with the public, and during Working Group meetings, the Skeena steelhead sport fishery was consistently identified as undervalued. Many individuals expressed that the cost to participate in this world-class resource was considerably cheaper than comparable fishing opportunities for wild steelhead.

The Working Groups proposed creating a Skeena steelhead stamp. This new stamp would be in addition to the existing steelhead conservation surcharge currently in place. The purpose of this new stamp would be 1) to direct revenue to local management of the steelhead resource and 2) to better reflect the value of the Skeena steelhead fishery relative to other international destinations for wild steelhead.

**Ministry Response** – The ministry does not currently have the ability to direct revenue from conservation surcharges toward specific regional fisheries management objectives. Revenue currently collected from surcharges for sturgeon and steelhead (for example) are pooled and directed to the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation (HCTF). These funds help support fisheries projects across the province (for more information, please visit <http://www.hctf.ca/Projects/projects.html>). As this recommendation seeks to direct revenue back to the Skeena Region, and as the ministry already has an existing provincial steelhead stamp in place, this recommendation was not endorsed in the short term. Pending further monitoring, and future changes, this recommendation may be considered in the future.

### 4.2 Limited Day Licence (i.e. 8-Day Licence) Only

The purpose of a limited day licence recommendation was to restrict non-guided, non-resident anglers to a limited number of days per river during the Classified Waters period. This recommendation was made to ensure these anglers moved between rivers, thereby addressing concerns of long-term camping for example. This recommendation would also act as a deterrent for illegal guides, as they would not be able to set up operations on a specific river for the season. Working Groups also indicated it would function as a precursor for a rod-day booking system, by requiring non-residents to plan their fishing trip in advance. The Working Groups acknowledged that e-licensing is not currently capable of limiting non-guided, non-

resident anglers by the number of days for a particular river. Also, enforcement of this recommendation was identified as potentially challenging.

**Ministry Response** – The ministry does not currently endorse this recommendation. The impact to non-resident alien anglers was considered too great when combined with restrictions during resident-only times and zones. In the long term, if monitoring indicates resident-only times are ineffective, this type of regulation could be considered in conjunction with an analysis of impacts on the business community.

#### **4.3 Long Term: Rod-Day Booking System**

The Working Groups proposed a rod-day booking system as a long-term tool to fairly distribute non-guided, non-resident angler effort, control illegal guiding and to track use and angler effort.

When the Phase II Consultation Report was released, it was evident that there was a lack of overall support for implementation of a lottery-style management approach (see section 1.4.1). However, Working Groups stressed that the provincial government has already made a huge investment in the Skeena Angling Management Planning process and a rod-day booking system would best respond to the issues being faced in the region. Working Group members also realized that public acceptance for this type of measure would take time and a public change in attitude will be required for this measure to be successful. Working Groups concluded by recommending that the Ministry of Environment not reject the idea of a rod-day booking system simply because it cannot be implemented in the near term. They recommended working towards building and implementing such a system over time. Based on this, a rod-day booking system was recommended for the long-term when Angling Management Plans are reviewed in the future (for more background, see Section 2.3 of the final Working Group recommendations).

**Ministry Response** – The rod-day booking system was proposed for long-term consideration by the Working Groups. The ministry sees merit in this concept but there are substantial infrastructure challenges that make implementing not possible at this time. This management approach may be considered in the future if monitoring results dictate the necessity and capability is developed. Also, a rod day booking system is not currently used in BC for fisheries management. In one instance, a lottery is used to allocate angling opportunities to non-resident alien anglers in BC (Dean River). The functional differences between a lottery and rod day booking system, however, are not clear. Also, the costs to develop a system of this type, or how it would function within the e-licensing system are uncertain.

## 5.0 Ministry Response to River-Specific Regulation Proposals

Working Groups made river-specific recommendations with the intent that they would be applied on a river-specific basis. These included water re-classification (change from Class 2 to Class 1), extension of the classified water season (change of dates), mandatory steelhead stamp requirements, management and restriction of angling guides and resident-only times and zones. **In general, the ministry accepted all of these recommendations.** In some cases, however, changes were made to ensure regulations were consistent between certain rivers while attempting to fulfill (as much as possible) the original intent of the recommendations.

### 5.1 A Note Regarding Resident-Only Times and Zones

A number of recommendations were put forward for resident-only times and zones (Appendix A). These recommendations were intended to provide access for BC resident anglers and restrict non-guided, non-resident Canadian and non-guided non-resident alien anglers at specific time and zones.

In December 2009, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) reviewed the final Working Group recommendations and responded to the ministry with feedback. DFO identified that the resident-only times and zones overlapped salmon fisheries on a number of rivers. DFO indicated that it was their mandate to provide equal access for all Canadians to recreational salmon fisheries, rather than for BC residents only.

Recognizing the overlap between salmon and steelhead fisheries, and acknowledging DFOs mandate, the ministry endorses the concept of resident-only times and zones, and supports Canada's proposal that such regulations allow access for both BC residents and non-resident Canadians and restrict non-resident alien anglers.

**Based on this, all references to resident-only times and zones within this document will herein include BC resident anglers and non-resident Canadian anglers.** The rationale supporting the Working Group's recommendations for resident-only times and zones are presented in the following sections.

The ministry recognizes that resident-only angling regulations are not currently used to manage anglers in British Columbia. It will be important to monitor the use i.e. angler effort and effectiveness of resident-only times and zones for all rivers. Following implementation, monitoring will be conducted to determine the overall effectiveness of Angling Management Plans, including resident-only times and zones.

## **5.2 East Working Group Recommendations**

### **5.2.1 Bulkley, Babine and Morice rivers**

The East Working Group put forward three main river-specific recommendations collectively for the Bulkley, Babine and Morice rivers: reduction in guided rod-days, distribution of guide effort over the classified water period and resident-only angling at specified times and zones.

#### **1) Reduction of Guided Rod-Days on the Bulkley, Babine and Morice**

The Working Group recommended a reduction of guided rod-days on the Bulkley, Babine and Morice to bring guided use in line with an appropriate level of use for these rivers.

**Ministry Response** - The ministry endorses this recommendation and will work to resolve the discrepancy of 80 rod-days for the Babine River and the 53 permit days on the Bulkley River upstream of the CNR Bridge.

#### **2) Distribution of Guide Effort over the Classified Waters Period**

The Working Group also recommended that guides distribute their effort over the classified water period on the Bulkley, Babine and Morice to help alleviate crowding at certain times of the year and certain parts of the river.

**Ministry Response** - The ministry was unable to endorse this recommendation as the Working Group did not indicate how distribution of rod-days would occur i.e., how many rod-days per day/week/month or clients per guide/boat restrictions etc. Without an approach reached by consensus, it is a challenge for the ministry to implement this recommendation recognizing each angling guide requires flexibility depending on the size, location and timing of each operation.

#### **3) Creation of Resident-Only Angling on Telkwa River**

The Telkwa River is a tributary of the Bulkley River. As such, this recommendation was developed under recommendations for the Bulkley River. Working Group members proposed the creation of a resident-only zone on the entire Telkwa River upstream from the CN Rail bridge from September 1 to October 31. This zone would restrict non-guided, non-residents as well as guided anglers. Participants acknowledged that this recommendation would have little impact on angling guides, as the Telkwa is rarely subjected to guide activity. Working Group members felt that creating a resident-only zone was important to help maintain resident priority. This recommendation would also offer increased angling opportunities for resident anglers.

**Ministry Response** - The ministry endorses resident-only angling on the Telkwa River from September 1 to October 31. The ministry also endorses the no-guiding recommendation on the Telkwa River from September 1 to October 31.

#### **4) Creation of Resident-Only Angling on Saturdays**

Working Group members recommended resident-only angling on Saturdays for the Bulkley, Babine (in a zone) and Morice to help maintain resident priority, a principle of the Quality Waters Strategy. They felt that given the lack of support in the Phase II Consultation Report for limited-day licences allocated through a lottery system, there was a need to find management alternatives that provided some regulation of non-residents while offering increased angling opportunities for residents.

These recommendations also indicated that guiding could occur on the Bulkley and Morice rivers during resident-only angling times. However, it was recommended that guiding not occur during resident-only times on the Babine River, in a zone. This zone extends from the smolt-counting fence located at the outlet of Nilkitkwa Lake downstream to the confluence of the Nilkitkwa River with the Babine River. The draft recommendations for Angling Management Plans had originally recommended no guiding in this zone at any time during the Classified Waters period. Working Group members acknowledged that this approach was very intrusive to upper river guides who fish these waters regularly and sometimes rely on waters above the Nilkitkwa if that river “blows out” after heavy rainfall.

**Ministry Response** - When the ministry met with the Working Groups in November 2009 to review their final recommendations, input was received that creation of resident-only times for the Bulkley, Babine and Morice were not consistent with surrounding rivers. That is, the Central and West Working Groups generally recommended resident-only angling on Saturdays and Sundays (weekend) while the East Working Group recommended Saturdays only. Concern was expressed that resident-only Saturdays on the Bulkley, Babine and Morice may attract anglers from surrounding rivers on Sundays, elevate crowding, increase regulatory complexity (decreasing enforceability) and fail to provide resident opportunity for a quality experience.

The ministry considered a range of alternatives for implementing resident-only times including: resident-only Saturdays for the Bulkley, Babine and Morice; resident-only Saturdays system wide (all thirteen rivers); and resident-only weekends for the Bulkley, Babine and Morice. Given the considerations outlined above, the ministry has endorsed resident-only Saturday and Sunday for the Bulkley and Morice rivers. The ministry also endorses the Babine River resident-only zone on Saturdays and Sundays from the smolt-counting fence located at the outlet of Nilkitkwa Lake downstream to the confluence of the Nilkitkwa River with the Babine River; no guiding allowed.

## 5.2.2 Summary of Ministry Endorsed East Working Group Recommendations

### *Bulkley River*

- Resident-only on Saturday and Sunday from September 1 to October 31
  - Guiding allowed
- Telkwa River resident-only all week from September 1 to October 31
  - No guiding allowed
- Reduction in guided rod-days
  - Regional Manager to resolve 53 Permit Days (upstream of CNR bridge)

### *Morice River*

- Resident-only on Saturday and Sunday from September 1 to October 31
  - Guiding allowed

### *Babine River*

- Resident-only Saturday and Sunday from September 1 to October 31 in a zone from the outlet of Nilkitkwa Lake (smolt fence) downstream to the Nilkitkwa River confluence
  - No guiding allowed
- Reduction of rod-day quota (long term)
  - Regional Manager to resolve 80 rod-day discrepancy

## 5.3 Central Working Group

### 5.3.1 Kitwanga and Kitsegucla rivers

The Central Working Group recommended resident-only times for these two rivers. Working Group members were unable to arrive at a consensus regarding duration of resident-only times and recommended majority and minority options. The majority option recommended resident-only Saturday and Sunday and the minority option recommended resident-only Saturdays for these rivers. For an explanation of majority and minority options, see page 12 of the final Working Group Recommendations.

#### 1) Creation of Resident-Only Angling

Working Group members felt that the creation of resident-only times was important to help maintain resident priority on these small streams and provide a quality angling experience for resident anglers.

**Ministry Response** – The ministry endorses the majority option for resident-only times for these rivers. To avoid transfer of angler effort issues, and to harmonize regulations with surrounding rivers, the ministry endorses implementation of resident-only Saturday and

Sunday. These changes would be applicable during the Classified Waters period from April 1 to March 31.

### **5.3.2 Suskwa River**

The Working Group made two recommendations for the Suskwa River – resident-only times and a change in classification from Class 2 to Class 1.

#### **1) Creation of Resident-Only Angling**

Working Group members were unable to arrive at a consensus regarding duration of resident-only times and recommended majority and minority options. The majority option recommended resident-only Saturday and Sunday and the minority option recommended resident-only Saturdays for these rivers (see page 11 of the final Working Group Recommendations).

**Ministry Response** – The ministry endorses the majority options for resident-only times for the Suskwa River. To avoid transfer of angler effort issues, and to harmonize regulations with surrounding rivers (e.g. Kitsequecla and Kitwanga), the ministry endorses implementation of resident-only Saturday and Sunday. These changes would be applicable during the Classified Waters period from April 1 to March 31.

#### **2) Change in Classification from Class 2 to Class 1 River**

The Central Working Group also recommended that the Suskwa be reclassified as a Class 1 river as they felt it was a quality wilderness river with wild anadromous fish and its remote nature and limited road access raised the quality of the already high angling experience. The Working Group felt the higher fees charged for a Class 1 river would better value this fishery.

**Ministry Response** - The ministry endorses reclassification of the Suskwa River from Class 2 to a Class 1 river. The Suskwa meets criteria for a Class 1 river as it is a quality wilderness river with wild anadromous fish, it offers a high quality angling experience and it is remote, with limited rod access.

### **5.3.3 Kispiox River**

The following recommendations were made for the Kispiox River: resident-only Saturday and Sunday (majority option), resident-only Saturday (minority option), mandatory steelhead stamp extension from September 1 to December 31, distribute guided effort over the Classified Waters period in the long term, a Classified Waters period extension from August 15<sup>th</sup> to

November 15<sup>th</sup> in the long term (majority option) and no Classified Waters period extension in the long term (minority option).

### **1) Creation of Resident-Only Angling**

Similar to the Kitsequecla, Kitwanga and Suskwa, the Working Group did not arrive at a consensus regarding duration of resident-only times and recommended majority and minority options. The majority option recommended resident-only Saturday and Sunday and the minority option recommended resident-only Saturdays for these rivers (see page 11 of the final Working Group Recommendations).

**Ministry Response** – The ministry acknowledges that the Kispiox River differs from the Kitwanga, Kitsequecla and Suskwa rivers as it supports a number of businesses serving guided and non-guided steelhead anglers, particularly non-resident alien anglers. These businesses include lodges, bed and breakfasts, general services and guiding operations. The ministry also acknowledges that a number of non-resident alien anglers own property in the Kispiox River valley.

The ministry has received significant feedback from the public regarding crowding issues on the Kispiox River. It has been identified that non-resident alien steelhead anglers are the majority user group during the steelhead angling season (For more information, please visit [http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/skeena/qws/docs/SkeenaHistoricalDataSummary\\_Figures.pdf](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/skeena/qws/docs/SkeenaHistoricalDataSummary_Figures.pdf)).

When the ministry met with the Working Groups in November 2009, significant discussion took place regarding recommendations for resident-only times. Concerns were raised by Working Group members that if resident-only Saturdays was implemented, it would attract anglers from surrounding rivers on Sundays (transfer of effort) leading to an increase in crowding. Resident-only Saturday would also differ from resident-only Saturday and Sunday recommendations on surrounding rivers, increasing regulatory complexity and reducing enforceability.

Given the number of interests on the Kispiox River, it is important to achieve balance. The need to provide resident opportunity for a quality experience, and offer non-resident alien anglers (and the businesses they support) unrestricted access involves challenging trade-offs. After careful consideration, the ministry endorses resident-only Saturday and Sunday for the Kispiox River. These changes would be applicable during the Classified Water season from September 1 to October 31.

### **2) Extension of Mandatory Steelhead Stamp September 1 to December 31**

The Working Group also recommended a mandatory steelhead stamp extension from September 1 to December 31 citing it would generate more complete angler-use data and more



revenue for the Ministry of Environment. Members also felt it would stop anglers from claiming to be angling for species other than steelhead when they were actually targeting steelhead.

**Ministry Response** – The ministry does not endorse this recommendation as it is not consistent with nearby Classified Waters. In general, the mandatory steelhead stamp requirement is linked with the Classified Waters period. As the Working Group recommended no change to Classified Waters period in the short term, the ministry could not endorse implementing a mandatory steelhead stamp extension from September 1 to December 31 at this time.

When considered with the long term recommendation to extend the Classified Waters period from August 15 to November 15, the ministry would consider harmonization of the mandatory steelhead stamp time requirements if the Classified Water times were also changed in the future.

### **3) Long Term - Distribution of Guide Effort over the Classified Water Period**

The Central Working Group also recommended that in the long term i.e. when plans are reviewed, guided effort be distributed over the Classified Waters period. It was felt this was important to address the potential crowding from peaks in guide activity at certain times during the Classified Waters period. Working Group members proposed that this could be considered over the long term as it seemed unfair to restrict angling guides in the short term without implementing some sort of spatial or temporal restrictions on non-guided, non-resident anglers i.e. rod-day booking system.

**Ministry Response** – The ministry endorses this recommendation for consideration in the future. However, similar to the ministry response for the Bulkley, Babine and Morice rivers, it will be a challenge to implement as the Working Group did not reach an agreement on how to best distribute angling guide effort i.e. how many rod-days per day/week/month or clients per guide/boat restrictions etc. The ministry recognizes that each angling guide requires flexibility depending on the size, location and timing of each operation.

### **4) Extension of Classified Waters Period August 15 to November 15**

The final recommendation for the Kispiox River was to extend of the Classified Water season from August 15 to November 15 in the long term. The majority of the Working Group supported this recommendation, while a minority option was to maintain the status quo for the Classified Waters period. The Working Group members believed that extending the Classified Waters period would better reflect when steelhead were actually being targeted in the river. It was also seen as a way to potentially regulate guiding pressure in the future during the “shoulder seasons” i.e. August and November.

**Ministry Response** – The ministry will consider this recommendation in the future pending the results of further monitoring of angler use and guide effort. The ministry also identified that any change to the Classified Water Season would have potential impacts and require changes to the licensed guide rod day allocations. The Working Group did not provide recommendations as how many existing “shoulder season” rod days should be allocated resulting from an extension of the Classified Water season.

#### **5.3.4 Skeena River – Section IV Upstream of the Kitwanga Bridge**

The Central Working Group recommendations for Skeena IV above the Kitwanga Bridge presented in Section 5.5 of this document.

#### **5.3.5 Summary of Ministry Endorsed Central Working Group Recommendations**

##### *Kitwanga and Kitseguecla Rivers*

- Resident-only on Saturday and Sunday from April 1 to March 31
  - No guiding allowed

##### *Suskwa River*

- Change from Class 2 to Class 1 designation from April 1 to March 31
- Resident-only on Saturday and Sunday from April 1 to March 31
  - No guiding allowed

##### *Kispiox River*

- Resident-only Saturday and Sunday from September 1 to October 31
  - Guiding allowed

##### *Skeena River – Section IV Upstream of the Kitwanga Bridge*

- For the summary of ministry endorsed recommendations for Skeena IV, refer to Section 5.5

#### **5.4 West Working Group**

##### **5.4.1 Lakelse River**

The West Working Group made the following recommendations for the Lakelse River: change to class 1 year round, mandatory steelhead stamp extension from September 1 to May 31 and a resident-only zone from the power line crossing to the outlet of Lakelse Lake. The power line crossing is located 2.5 km upstream of the Lakelse River confluence with the Skeena River.

### **1) Change in Classification from Class 2 to Class 1 River**

The Working Group members indicated that reclassification of the Lakelse to Class 1 year round designates the river as “special”, recognizing the unique wilderness attributes of this river. Hence it may be better recognized in future land use planning processes, potentially providing increased protection for fish and fish habitat. Working Group members also felt that the corresponding increase in fees might help reduce angling pressure.

**Ministry Response** – The ministry endorses reclassification of the Lakelse River from Class 2 to Class 1 year round (April 1 to March 31).

### **2) Extension of Mandatory Steelhead Stamp September 1 to May 31**

The Working Group recommended a mandatory steelhead stamp extension from September 1 to May 31 to better reflect when steelhead are actually in the river and available to the sport fishery. Working Group members also felt that the corresponding increase in fees may also help to reduce angling pressure and provide more complete information for the annual Steelhead Harvest Analysis survey.

**Ministry Response** – The ministry endorses a mandatory steelhead stamp extension on the Lakelse River from September 1 to May 31.

### **3) Creation of Resident-Only Angling Zone**

Finally, the Working Group recommended a resident-only zone on the Lakelse from the power line crossing upstream to the outlet of Lakelse Lake year round (April 1 to March 31). The length of this zone is 18.5 km. The Working Group indicated that this zone would address resident priority, a principle of the Quality Waters Strategy. This river is very important to resident anglers of the nearby Terrace community and Working Group members felt this river has suffered from crowding and poor angler etiquette in the past. This resident-only zone would reduce overall opportunities for non-guided, non-resident anglers, but retain opportunities for those anglers in the lower 2.5 km of river where a substantial salmon fishery occurs each fall.

**Ministry Response** – The ministry endorses implementation of a resident-only zone from the power line crossing upstream to the lake outlet during the classified water period (April 1 to March 31).

#### **5.4.2 Zymoetz River – Class 1 Section (Zymoetz I)**

The West Working Group recommended the following for the Zymoetz I: Classified Waters period extension from July 24 to December 31, mandatory steelhead stamp extension from July

24 to December 31, guide restrictions – maximum three anglers per guided group and one group per day, decreased guided rod days in BC Regulation 125/90 from 250 to 100 – increase allocated rod days from 58 to 100, and limit access by non-guided, non-residents to two weekdays per week (majority, implement immediately; minority, triggered implementation based on an undefined angler use threshold).

### **1) Extension of Classified Waters Period July 24 to December 31**

The Working Group recommended an extended Classified Waters period from July 24 to December 31 because it reflects when steelhead are potentially in the river. It is also consistent with the recommendation for Zymoetz II. There are few salmon anglers in Zymoetz I, so Working Group members felt this recommendation would not negatively impact them. This recommendation may increase revenues as more Classified Waters licences would be sold, which Working Group members believe better values the steelhead resource.

**Ministry Response** – The ministry endorses implementation of an extended Classified Water season from July 24 to December 31. The ministry acknowledges that this recommendation could also be used to manage angling guides during the current shoulder seasons, should this be deemed necessary in the future.

### **2) Extension of Mandatory Steelhead Stamp July 24 to December 31**

The Working Group recommendation to extend the mandatory Steelhead Stamp from July 24 to December 31 on Zymoetz I was proposed to better reflect when steelhead are in the river and targeted by anglers. It is also consistent with the recommendation for Zymoetz II. The Working Group felt it may increase revenues and better value the steelhead resource. The stamp could yield more complete data for the Ministry of Environment to better manage the steelhead sport fishery, as more anglers would be included in the Steelhead Harvest Analysis survey at the end of the licence year. The Working Group did recognize that there could be an impact on some early season chinook salmon anglers as they would be required to purchase a steelhead stamp.

**Ministry Response** – The ministry endorses implementation of a mandatory steelhead stamp extension from July 24 to December 31 as it provides consistency with the extended Classified Waters period and with the recommendations for Zymoetz II.

### **3) Guide Restrictions - Maximum Three Anglers/Guided Group and One Group/Guide/Day**

The Working Group recommended guide restrictions – maximum three anglers per guided group and one group per guide per day - as this would better distribute guided effort over the Classified Waters period and avoid possible crowding situations related to high guiding activity on a particular day. The draft recommendations originally referred to anglers per boat, but by

using the word “group,” it covers all modes of access, from boats and helicopters to walk-in groups of guided anglers. Working Group members indicated that there are currently no problems with “peaks” in guide activity, but felt that concentrated guiding activity could lead to reduced angling quality in the future.

**Ministry Response** – The ministry endorses the recommendation to restrict guides to a maximum of three anglers per guided group and one group per guide per day.

#### **4) Modification to Number of Guided Rod-Days**

Working Group members felt that the maximum number of guided rod-days for Zymoetz I (250) in BC Regulation 125/90 was too high for the size of this river, particularly when compared to Zymoetz II (200). They proposed decreasing the total number of guided rod-days in regulation from 250 to 100. The current allocation to the three licensed guides is 58 rod-days. The Working Group proposed that this allocation be increased by 42 rod-days to 100 rod-days. The additional 42 rod-days is similar to the additional 30 permit days (10 for each guide) that have been granted annually by the ministry for the last two years, and hence anglers should see little change in guiding activity on the river.

**Ministry Response** – The ministry endorses the recommendation to decrease the maximum number of guided rod-days on Zymoetz I in BC Regulation 125/90 from 250 to 100 days. To achieve this, 42 rod-days would be allocated in addition to the existing 58 rod-days. The 30 permit days will no longer be issued. The allocation of these additional rod days will be consistent with Section 11 of BC Regulation 125/90.

#### **5) Limit Access by Non-Guided, Non-Residents to Two Weekdays per Week**

Working Group members felt that limiting access by non-guided, non-residents on Zymoetz I would provide a better balance between user-group interests and maintain angling quality. They recommended limiting access by non-guided, non-residents to two weekdays per week (Monday/Tuesday or Tuesday/Wednesday) during the Classified Waters period. The majority option was for immediate implementation and the minority option was triggered implementation after a threshold level of non-guided, non-resident angler effort was reached. The Working Group felt that this element was more in keeping with the hierarchy of exclusion in the Quality Waters Strategy and resident priority. Participants felt that limiting access by non-guided, non-residents to two weekdays per week, with or without a trigger, would also help to address concerns about long-term camping.

**Ministry Response** – The ministry endorses the creation of a resident-only Friday, Saturday and Sunday for the Zymoetz River, Class 1 section. This recommendation provides non-guided, non-resident alien anglers access to Zymoetz I for 4 days each week (Monday to Thursday). The

ministry acknowledges that consensus was not achieved regarding when to implement this option and also felt resident-only access five days of the week was too intrusive given resident-only provisions on surrounding rivers. The ministry also acknowledges that resident-only access five days of the week may have too great of an impact on the business community.

#### **5.4.3 Zymoetz River – Class 2 section (Zymoetz II)**

The West Working Group recommended the following for Zymoetz II: Extension of Classified Waters period from July 24 to May 31, extension of mandatory steelhead stamp from July 24 to May 31, guide restrictions - 1) maximum three anglers per guided group and one group per guide per day and 2) distribute guiding effort over the Classified Waters period (Option 1: guides use 30% or less of their rod-days per month over August, September and October, Option 2: guide activity remains at current level and any new rod-days are to be allocated during the former shoulder seasons i.e. not in September or October), resident-only weekends, limit access by non-guided, non-residents to three weekdays per week, no guiding on weekends, except in a zone on Saturdays.

##### **1) Extension of Classified Waters Period July 24 to May 31**

The Working Group recommended an extended Classified Waters period from July 24 to May 31 because it reflects when steelhead are in the river, does not seriously impact chinook salmon anglers, caps unregulated growth in guiding activity when waters are not Classified, could increase revenues through Classified Waters licence sales, increased angling guide fees and guided rod-day fees and better values the steelhead resource. The Working Group proposed July 24 because the chinook season closes on July 23 and there is limited guiding before this date, and May 31 was proposed in order to include the winter/spring steelhead sport fishery.

**Ministry Response** – The ministry endorses extending the Classified Waters period from July 24 to May 31. The start date of the Classified Water period is harmonized with Zymoetz I.

##### **2) Extension of Mandatory Steelhead Stamp July 24 to May 31**

The West Working Group recommended an extension of the mandatory steelhead stamp period from July 24 to May 31 on Zymoetz II as it better reflects when steelhead are in the river and targeted by anglers, aligns with the Classified Waters period and could yield more complete data for the Ministry of Environment to better manage the steelhead sport fishery. The Working Groups also felt this measure could potentially increase revenues and better values the steelhead resource.

**Ministry Response** – The ministry endorses extending the time period when a steelhead stamp is mandatory on Zymoetz II from July 24 to May 31.

### **3) Increase Guided Rod-Days to Compensate for Extended Classified Waters Period**

The Working Group recommended that the number of guided rod-days be increased to compensate for the extended Classified Waters period. As indicated in the final Working Group recommendations, guides who hold rod-days during the Classified Waters period do not need to “use” any of their rod-days to guide during “shoulder” seasons, when rod-day use is not restricted. With the extension of the Classified Waters period, guiding during the shoulder seasons would require rod-days. Accordingly, the Working Group members believed that in the interest of fairness, the ministry should allocate more rod-days to compensate for the restricted guiding opportunity. The West Working Group felt an increase in guided rod-days to compensate for extending the Classified Waters period would better regulate guiding activity over a longer season, because the amount of guiding in the shoulder seasons is presently unrestricted. The allocation of new rod-days would follow the procedure described in Section 11 of BC Regulation 125/90.

The initial Working Group recommendations indicated that the guided rod-day allocation should be increased by 150 additional days (see Section 5.13.5). When this recommendation was revisited, the increase to the number of guided rod-days was discussed in considerable depth. A range of increases were reviewed. The Ministry of Environment reported that guiding activity occurring during the shoulder seasons averaged about 239 rod-days from 2006-8. Unfortunately, the Working Group did not reach consensus on this recommendation. As consensus was not achieved, the Working Group left it to the ministry to determine an appropriate increase to the number of guided rod-days for Zymoetz II.

### **4) Guide Restrictions - Distribute Guiding Effort over the Classified Waters Period**

The Working Group made a recommendation to distribute guiding effort over the Classified Waters period via two options: 1) guides use 30% or less of their rod-days per month for August, September and October or 2) guide activity remains at current level during September and October and any new rod-days are to be allocated during the former shoulder seasons. It is important to note that the Working Groups did not reach consensus on these two options, deferring the final decision to the ministry.

**Ministry Response to Points 3 and 4** – The ministry recognizes that in the interest of fairness and equity to the guiding industry, it is necessary to allocate rod days during the shoulder seasons to compensate for lost or restricted opportunity for angling guides. The ministry endorses maintaining status quo guiding effort during September and October (117 rod-days) and allocating an additional 100 days from July 24 to August 31 and 50 days from November 1

to May 31. The ministry deemed that allocating the average 2006-8 effort of 239 guided rod days during the shoulder months was not appropriate. This allocation was considered to be too high. Further, the allocation of 150 rod-days reflects the intent of initial AMP recommendations made by the West Working Group.

#### **5) Guide Restrictions – Maximum Three Anglers/Guided Group and One Group/Guide/Day**

The Working Group recommended guide restrictions – maximum three anglers per guided group and one group per guide per day - to limit the number of anglers per guide and the number of groups per guide per day to better distribute guided effort over the Classified Waters period to avoid possible crowding situations due to high guiding activity on a particular day. The draft Working Group recommendations originally referred to anglers per boat, but by using the word “group,” it covers both boats and walk-in groups of anglers. Working Group members indicated that there were few problems with “peaks” in guide activity during September and October but there is a significant concern for guide activity in August and this contributes to reduced quality of angling experience.

**Ministry Response** – The ministry endorses this recommendation to restrict angling guides to a maximum of three anglers per guided group and one group per guide per day.

#### **6) Non-guided, Non-Residents Open Access Three Weekdays/Week**

The West Working Group made recommendations for Zymoetz II that limit access by non-guided, non-resident alien anglers to three weekdays per week. Functionally, this recommendation provides resident-only angling from Friday to Monday (4 days/week) and non-guided, non-resident alien anglers open access Tuesday to Thursday (3 days/week) during the Classified Waters period.

Working Group members believed that by allowing non-guided, non-resident anglers to have unrestricted access to Zymoetz II for three days per week (Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday) this recognizes the economic contribution that non-guided, non-residents make to the local sport fishery. Working Group members also felt it was important that the open access days for Zymoetz II be different from those days available to non-guided, non-resident anglers on Zymoetz I. The rationale for this was to retain weekday opportunity for non-guided, non-resident anglers on the Zymoetz River in either the Class II or Class I sections.

#### **7) Creation of Resident-Only Angling on Weekends**

The Working Group proposed a resident-only angling on Saturday and Sunday for all of Zymoetz II. Working Group participants felt that this restriction recognizes resident priority and significantly reduces crowding, but it would have an impact on non-guided, non-resident



anglers. The recommendation for resident-only access for four days of the week (Friday to Monday) was made to recognize resident priority and significantly reduce crowding.

### **8) Creation of a Guided Zone on Saturdays**

The Working Group also recommended that guiding be restricted on Saturday and Sunday during the resident-only times. On Saturday, guiding would be allowed in a zone from Matson Creek (23 km on Copper River FSR) to the Zymoetz River confluence with the Skeena River. This guiding zone is approximately one-third of the length of Zymoetz II. On Sunday, guiding would not be allowed. The rationale for this recommendation was to recognize and accommodate the interests of the guides and their need to have some access for their clients during the weekend period.

**Ministry Response to Points 6, 7 and 8** – The ministry endorses resident-only Friday, Saturday and Sunday for Zymoetz II with guiding allowed during the week (Monday to Friday). The ministry recognizes that non-guided, non-resident alien anglers contribute to crowding on this easily accessible Classified Water. Restricting non-guided, non-resident alien anglers to three days per week was considered too intrusive. As such, resident only on Friday, Saturday and Sunday was endorsed as a compromise. Resident-only times for Zymoetz II were harmonized with resident-only provisions for Zymoetz I to achieve regulatory simplification.

Further, the ministry endorses the recommendation for no guiding on weekends, with the exception to allow guiding on Saturday in a zone. This zone extends from the confluence of Matson Creek downstream to the Zymoetz River confluence with the Skeena River. This endorsement acknowledges that angling guides have compromised by agreeing to daily restrictions (group size and number of groups), and require flexibility to guide on Saturdays.

It is important to note that Matson creek is not a gazetted name, and this boundary may need to be modified to the nearest legally definable boundary.

### **5.4.4 Kitsumkalum River**

The West Working Group made the following recommendations for the Kitsumkalum River: mandatory steelhead stamp extension from August 7 to May 31, resident-only Saturdays in a zone (no guided allowed), resident-only Sundays (entire river, no guiding allowed), guide restrictions: maximum three anglers per guided group, one group per guide per day in the upper river and one group per guide per day in the lower river, modify dates of the no-guiding period (three options: October 16 – March 14, November 15 to March 14 and November 1 to April 1), and reduce the number of guides from 13 to 11.

### **1) Extension of Mandatory Steelhead Stamp August 7 to May 31**

The Working Group proposed a mandatory steelhead stamp extension from August 7 to May 31 on the Kitsumkalum to reflect the time when steelhead are present in the river. The extended season allows for the capture of more complete data by the ministry through the Steelhead Harvest Analysis Survey. The requirement for a Steelhead Stamp begins on August 7, as this is the day following the closure of the chinook salmon fishery. This date accommodates chinook salmon anglers who are not targeting steelhead but would otherwise have to purchase a Steelhead Stamp. It was recognized this recommendation could affect the coho fishery in some years.

**Ministry Response –** The ministry endorses implementing a mandatory steelhead stamp extension from August 7 to May 31.

### **2) Creation of Resident-Only Angling**

West Working Group members recommended resident-only Saturdays in a zone from Kitsumkalum Lake outlet to Glacier Creek confluence (no guiding allowed) and resident-only Sundays (entire river, no guiding allowed). The Working Group made these recommendations to recognize resident priority and acknowledge the importance of this river to local anglers. These recommendations would be applicable during the Classified Waters period, from April 1 to March 31. The Working Group chose resident-only Sunday because they felt many resident anglers had to work on Saturdays and so Sunday was the preferred day. Most businesses in Terrace are open on Sundays, so non-resident anglers would have other things to do, or they could fish elsewhere.

**Ministry Response –** The ministry endorses implementation of resident-only Saturdays in a zone. This zone extends from Kitsumkalum Lake outlet to Glacier Creek confluence, no guiding allowed. The ministry also endorses resident-only Sundays for the entire river, no guiding allowed. The ministry recognizes that this provision will provide angling guides and non-guided, non-resident alien anglers access to the Kitsumkalum River six days per week.

### **3) Guide Restrictions – Maximum Three Anglers/Guided Group and One Group/Guide/Day in the Upper River and One Group/Guide/Day in the Lower River**

The West Working Group recommended guide restrictions - maximum three anglers per guided group, one group per guide per day in the upper river and one group per guide per day in the lower river. The Working Group put forward these guide restrictions as a way to address crowding issues caused by angling guides. Working Group members indicated that there are currently “peaks” in guide activity (at certain times and locations). This recommendation could alleviate some of the guide-related crowding issues. The boundary between the upper and

lower Kitsumkalum is defined as the lower canyon, which is not navigable by boat. The canyon is located approximately 8 km upstream from the Highway 16 bridge.

**Ministry Response** – The ministry endorses implementation of guide restrictions to a maximum of three anglers per guided group, one group per guide per day in the upper river and one group per guide per day in the lower river.

#### **4) Reduction in Total Number of Guides in Regulation from 13 to 11**

The Working Group recommended a reduction of the maximum number of guides that could be licensed on the Kitsumkalum from 13 to 11. Working Group members felt that the current number of licensed guides (11) should not be allowed to increase to the maximum (13) as this could further increase guide-related crowding issues. Currently the entire rod-day quota (959 days) is fully allocated to 11 licensed guides.

**Ministry Response** – The ministry endorses a reduction to the maximum number of guides on the Kitsumkalum from 13 to 11 in BC Regulation 125/90. It is recognized that this change would have little impact on the existing Kitsumkalum River guides, and caps the number of guides at current levels.

#### **5) Modification to Dates and Duration of No-Guiding Period**

Finally, the West Working Group recommended a modification to the dates and duration of the no-guiding period on the Kitsumkalum River (status quo October 16 to March 14). Three options were proposed, however, consensus was not reached and the Working Group was divided. The angling guide interests desired a shortened no-guiding period (Option B) or a delay in the start of the no-guiding period (Option C) as this would acknowledge and compensate for the additional constraints imposed by guide restrictions and resident-only times. Resident angler interests proposed the status quo be maintained (Option A). The Working Group was unable to arrive at a consensus so three options were put forward for resident-only times during the winter season:

*Option A: October 16 – March 14 (status quo)*

*Option B: November 15 – March 14*

*Option C: November 1 – April 1*

The Working Group deferred the decision on this recommendation to the Ministry of Environment.

**Ministry Response** – The ministry endorses Option C, no guiding period from November 1 to April 1. The ministry endorses this option recognizing concessions made by guides on Saturdays (upper river) and Sundays (entire river). Also, this recommendation does not change the length of the no guiding period. This period remains the same as status quo (6 months in duration).

#### **5.4.5 Skeena River – Section IV Downstream of the Kitwanga Bridge**

The West Working Group recommendations for Skeena IV below the Kitwanga Bridge presented in Section 5.5 of this document.

#### **5.4.6 Summary of Ministry Endorsed West Working Group Recommendations**

##### *Lakelse River*

- Change from Class 2 to Class 1 designation
- Extension of mandatory steelhead stamp from September 1 to May 31
- Resident-only zone April 1 to March 31 from outlet of Lakelse Lake downstream to powerline crossing, located 3.5 km upstream of the Lakelse River confluence with the Skeena River

##### *Zymoetz (Class 1) River*

- Extension of Classified Waters period from July 24 to December 31
- Extension of mandatory steelhead stamp from July 24 to December 31
- Guide restrictions: maximum 3 anglers/group and 1 group/guide/day
- Increase allocation of guided rod-days from 58 to 100 days
- Decrease guided rod-day allocation from 250 to 100 in Schedule A of BC Regulation 125/90
- Resident-only on Friday, Saturday and Sunday from July 24 to December 31
  - Guiding allowed

##### *Zymoetz (Class 2) River*

- Extension of mandatory steelhead stamp from July 24 to May 31
- Guide restrictions: maximum 3 anglers/group and 1 group/guide/day
- Extension of Classified Waters period from July 24 to May 31
- Modify guided rod-day allocation to accommodate Classified Waters period extension
  - Maintain allocation of 117 rod-days from September 1 to October 31
  - Allocate 100 days from July 24 to August 31 and 50 days from November 1 to May 31
- Resident-only on Friday, Saturday and Sunday from July 24 to May 31
  - Guiding allowed on Friday and in a zone on Saturday from Matson Creek confluence downstream to the Skeena River confluence

##### *Kitsumkalum River*

- Extension of mandatory steelhead stamp from August 7 to May 31
- Guide restrictions: maximum 3 anglers/group; 1 group/guide/day in upper river and 1 group/guide/day in lower river
- Reduce total number of angling guides from 13 to 11

- Ministry decision to alter no guiding period to November 1 to April 1
- Resident-only from April 1 to March 31 on:
  - Saturday in zone from Kitsumkalum Lake outlet downstream to Glacier Creek confluence (no guiding allowed)
  - Sunday on the entire river (no guiding allowed)

*Skeena River – Section IV Downstream of the Kitwanga Bridge*

- For the summary of ministry endorsed recommendations for Skeena IV, refer to Section 5.5.

## **5.5 Combined Central and West Working Group Recommendations Skeena River Section IV**

The Skeena River, Section IV begins 1.5 km above the Zymoetz River confluence (near the town of Terrace) to the headwaters, a distance of approximately 450 kilometres. When the Regional Committee selected this river for Angling Management Plan development, they expressed concern about the large size of this Classified Water and they suggested splitting the water into two planning units, upstream and downstream from the Kitwanga (Highway 37) bridge crossing (near the community of Kitwanga). This divide also reflected the differing nature of the fishery above and below the bridge. This decision tasked the West and Central Working Groups to address Skeena IV issues closest to their communities.

The Central Working Group was responsible for developing Angling Management Plan recommendations for Skeena IV upstream of the Kitwanga Bridge and the West Working Group was responsible for developing Angling Management Plan recommendations downstream of the Kitwanga Bridge.

### **5.5.1 Central Working Group Recommendations – Upstream of the Kitwanga Bridge**

#### **1) Mandatory Steelhead Stamp September 1 to October 31**

Working Group members felt that a mandatory Steelhead Stamp from September 1 to October 31 was appropriate because it better reflected when steelhead were being targeted in the river, would yield more data for the Ministry of Environment, would not negatively impact salmon anglers because most of their fishing effort would be earlier in the season, and would stop anglers from “pretending” to be fishing for salmon when they are actually targeting steelhead.

#### **2) Creation of Resident-Only Angling**

The following majority and minority options were recommended by the Central Working Group for resident-only times and zones:

- Majority option: resident-only on Saturday and Sunday in a zone from confluence of the Shegunia (aka Salmon River) with the Skeena main stem downstream to the Kitwanga Bridge – guiding allowed but no guiding on change-over days
- Minority option: resident-only on Saturdays in two zones 1) from confluence of the Shegunia River (aka Salmon River) with the Skeena River main stem downstream to the Four-Mile Bridge on the Kispiox Valley Road and 2) from the confluence of the Bulkley River with the Skeena River main stem downstream to Kitwanga Bridge (Hwy 37) – guiding allowed in both zones, but no guiding on change-over days

Working Group members felt that creating resident-only times was important to help maintain resident priority, a principle of the Quality Waters Strategy. They felt that given the lack of support in the Phase II Consultation process for limited-day licences allocated through a lottery system, there was a need to find management alternatives that provided some regulation of non-residents while offering increased angling opportunities for residents. Working Group members believed that allowing both resident anglers and guides to fish at certain times while excluding non-guided, non-resident anglers was consistent with the hierarchy of exclusion as defined in the Quality Waters Strategy.

The Working Group felt that the majority and minority recommendations for resident-only times and zones could lower revenue derived from license sales. The majority option recommended resident-only Saturday and Sunday in a zone and the minority option recommended resident-only Saturday in two zones. Working Group members supporting the minority option felt that non-guided, non-resident alien anglers would not want to sit out two days in a row of fishing on Skeena IV.

### **3) No Guiding on Changeover Days**

This would be implemented as a condition of angling guide licences as a way to reduce congestion on changeover days. Guides typically, but not always, work on an eight-day schedule. So for example, if they bring in a client on a Thursday, the client might fish that day in the late afternoon and evening with a guide and then fish the following Thursday morning with a guide, leaving in the afternoon. Under this proposal, the client would not be guided on the Thursday afternoon and evening when they arrive or the Thursday morning when they leave, which results in a reduction in guiding effort of one day a week. Working Group members noted guides would still have the flexibility to determine the day of the week that would be the changeover day.

### **4) Change in Classification from Class 2 to Class 1 above Confluence of Shegunia River**

Working Group members proposed a reclassification of the Skeena River above the Shegunia (Salmon) River from Class 2 to Class 1. Working Group members believed that this section of

river supported wilderness values, and met the criteria for a Class 1 River. They felt that the resulting increase in fees with reclassification would act as a slight deterrent and reduce angling effort. In

addition, they believed that higher classification would mean that other agencies would better recognize these waters in their land-use planning processes. Working Group members felt a Class 1 designation would better protect this part of the Skeena in the future and that the reclassification acknowledges the quality of the angling experience. While the fee increase might be a weak disincentive in a part of the Skeena that is underutilized and it would result in increased guiding costs, Working Group members suggested that the increased costs would likely be passed on to the clients. It was felt that the higher fees would better value the resource and possibly result in fewer anglers participating in the sport fishery.

#### **5) Long term – Distribution of Guided Effort over the Classified Waters Period**

Working Group members felt it was important to address the potential crowding associated with peaks in guide activity at certain times during the Classified Waters period. An analysis of past guiding practices revealed that guiding effort was currently spread out through most of the current Classified Waters period, but it was felt that in the future it might change, which could become a problem. The Working Group decided to add a long-term recommendation that addressed the distribution of guided effort. As a condition of a guiding licence, all guides on Skeena IV would have to distribute their guiding activity over the Classified Waters period according to the following percentages: July – 0%; August – 10%; September 1-15 – 25%; September 16-30 – 25%; October 1-15 – 25%; October 16-31 – 15%. The percentages were derived from current guiding activity as reported to the ministry. Working Group members decided to make this element a long-term recommendation because it seemed unfair to invoke such an element on guides and not implement some sort of spatial or temporal regulations on non-guided, non-resident anglers.

#### **5.5.2 West Working Group Recommendations – Downstream of the Kitwanga Bridge**

##### **1) Extension of Classified Waters Period July 1 to December 31**

The West Working Group recommended an extended Classified Waters period from July 1 to December 31 on Skeena IV below Kitwanga Bridge because it reflects when steelhead are in the river, it increases revenues, and better values the steelhead resource. Further, December 31 is the closure of the Skeena mainstem above Cedarvale to fishing each year.

##### **2) Extension of Mandatory Steelhead Stamp July 1 to December 31**

The Working Group recommended a mandatory Steelhead Stamp from July 1 to December 31 on Skeena IV below Kitwanga Bridge for a number of reasons, including: it better reflects when steelhead are in the river, it allows for the capture of more data by the ministry through the

Steelhead Harvest Analysis Survey, it could increase revenues, it better values the steelhead resource, and it parallels the proposed Classified Waters period for consistency.

### **3) Increase Guided Rod-Days by 586 to a Total of 1,000 for Skeena IV in a Zone from Flint Creek Confluence Downstream to Chindemash Creek Confluence**

Working Group members felt that Skeena IV is underutilized and could accommodate some additional guided rod-days. In order to avoid the crowding “hot spots” that were identified for the steelhead sport fishery particularly in the upper parts of Skeena IV, Working Group members recommended restricting the 586 new rod-days to a presently underutilized zone bounded by Flint Creek and Chindemash Creek. These new rod-days would be distributed amongst 12 new guide licences with no single guide being allocated more than 50 rod-days. Guides would be limited to guiding only one group per day in this zone. The Working Group felt that by allowing guided activity in this part of the river it might reduce crowding (from guides) in the Terrace area (i.e. Skeena II and the unclassified sections of the Skeena main stem). In addition, although outside of its mandate, the Working Group suggested reducing the rod-day allocations in Skeena II by 586 days to offset the increases proposed for this zone of Skeena IV. Additionally, current guides could utilize the existing 414 rod-days anywhere on Skeena IV.

### **4) Creation of Resident-Only Angling in Two Zones: i) Shandilla Creek to Boulder/Sedan Creek and ii) Chindemash Creek to the Downstream Boundary of Skeena IV; No Guiding; Non-Resident Angler Access Three Weekdays per Week**

Working Group members proposed two resident-only zones on the Skeena IV below Kitwanga bridge: i) Kitwanga River mouth zone, from Shandilla Creek confluence downstream to Boulder/Sedan Creek confluence, and ii) Kitselas Canyon zone, from Chindemash Creek confluence downstream to the existing downstream boundary of Skeena IV (1.5 km upstream of Zymoetz River confluence). The zones would be resident-only with no guiding. Working Group members proposed that non-residents could fish in either of these zones for three weekdays each week. Members indicated that the ministry should make the decision on which three days. In addition, the resident-only zone from Shandilla Creek confluence downstream to Boulder/Sedan Creek confluence may address the issue of long-term camping by non-residents at the mouth of the Kitwanga.

#### **5.5.3 Ministry Response to Working Group Recommendations for Skeena IV**

Significant issues were identified during the ministry review of the two sets of Skeena IV recommendations. The overlapping nature of this river section between the Central and West Working Groups, and the arbitrary boundary at the Kitwanga bridge presented substantive issues including:



- Lack of harmonization and consistencies regarding dates of mandatory steelhead stamp and Classified Water season above and below Kitwanga bridge
- Proposed Class I section above Shegunia River had significant implications for management and allocation of guided rod-days. Specifically, the proposed Class I section would need to be considered as a separate Classified Water. This recommendation would also require development of a separate Angling Management Plan
- Overlap and inconsistencies existed between Working Group recommendations for resident-only zones upstream of the Kitwanga bridge

Based on the points above, the ministry has chosen to manage Skeena IV as a single Classified Water. The ministry reviewed recommendations for Skeena IV and endorsed the following:

- Extension of Classified Water period from July 1 to December 31
- Extension of mandatory steelhead stamp from July 1 to December 31
  - The dates for classified water season and steelhead stamp requirements were harmonized to reduce complexity, increase consistency, and manage administrative costs.
- The ministry endorses a Classified Water period and mandatory steelhead stamp from July 1 to December 31 as it covers the time when steelhead are present and best fits the approach to manage Skeena IV as a single Classified Water
- Increase guided rod-day allocation by 586 days amongst 12 new guide licenses in a zone from Flint Creek confluence to the Chindemash Creek confluence
  - Concern was expressed that allocation may be too high. Accordingly, these days will be offered on a limited term opportunity i.e. 20 years or less.
- Resident-only in two zones on Saturday and Sunday from July 1 to December 31
  - Zone 1: Shegunia River confluence downstream to Boulder Creek confluence
    - Guiding allowed
  - Zone 2: Chindemash Creek confluence downstream to 1.5 km upstream from Zymoetz River confluence
    - No guiding allowed
- The ministry endorsed resident-only angling on Saturday and Sunday in the two proposed zones as this was consistent with approaches taken on adjacent rivers. These zones address issues at several “hot spot” areas. The ministry did not endorse recommendations of the West Working Group for resident-only four days per week as this was believed to be too restrictive.

The ministry found it difficult to implement restrictions to guiding on change-over days. Part of the challenge is that not all guides operate in a similar fashion. Some lodges offer 8-day packages, while others do not. Change-over day restrictions will work for guides with

consistent schedules, but may disproportionately impact operators who book on a variable day basis.

The ministry also acknowledges that the Central Working Group made a long-term recommendation to distribute guided effort over the Classified Waters period. This recommendation was made for Skeena IV above the Kitwanga Bridge. The ministry recognizes that this recommendation would impact all Skeena IV angling guides, including operators from the Terrace area. It is also noted that the West Working Group did not recommend a distribution of guided effort below the Kitwanga Bridge. Given these issues, the ministry was not able to endorse this recommendation.

It is important to note that the recommendation to change Skeena IV from a Class 2 to Class 1 River above the Shegunia River was conceptually supported by the ministry. Unfortunately, administrative challenges including establishing a new Classified Water for the Class 1 section and necessary rod-day allocation proved problematic and this recommendation was subsequently not endorsed at this time.

#### **5.5.4 Summary of Ministry Endorsed Recommendations for Skeena IV**

##### *Skeena River – Section IV*

- Extension of Classified Water period from July 1 to December 31
- Extension of mandatory steelhead stamp from July 1 to December 31
- Increase guided rod-day allocation by 586 days amongst 12 new guide licenses in a zone from Flint Creek confluence to the Chindemash Creek confluence
  - Concern was expressed that allocation may be too high. Accordingly, these days will be offered on a limited term opportunity i.e. 20 years or less.
- Resident-only in two zones on Saturday and Sunday from July 1 to December 31
  - Zone 1: Shegunia River confluence downstream to Boulder Creek confluence
    - Guiding allowed
  - Zone 2: Chindemash Creek confluence downstream to 1.5 km upstream from Zymoetz River confluence
    - No guiding allowed

#### **6.0 Next Steps in the Process**

The endorsed Working Group recommendations will form the basis of thirteen river-specific Angling Management Plans. During 2010, the ministry will be working to finalize Angling Management Plans. These plans will be posted on the Quality Waters Strategy website.

## **6.1 Regulation Changes**

It is important to note that many of the changes outlined in this document require Order in Council submissions to cabinet and where fees are involved a submission to Treasury Board. This means that the ministry endorsed changes must be reviewed and approved by cabinet and in some cases, treasury board. The Ministry of Environment does not have control over these processes.

Pending approval of these regulation changes, the ministry will be working during 2010 to amend B.C. Regulation 125/90, the e-licensing system and conditions of guide licenses to implement the endorsed Working Group recommendations. These changes are expected to occur for April 1, 2011.

## **6.2 Monitoring Effectiveness of Angling Management Plans**

A key part of implementing Angling Management Plans will be to adaptively manage and monitor their effectiveness over time according to performance measures. Performance measures may include angler satisfaction, angling effort and participation, license sales and economic/tourism indicators, which will be used to inform the ministry and guide future management actions.

The Skeena Regional Quality Waters Committee will also continue to monitor Angling Management Plans and provide advice to the ministry.

## 7.0 Appendices

### Appendix A - Summary of Resident-Only Times and Zones

River	Resident-Only	When	Where	Guiding Allowed?
Bulkley	Weekend	Sept 1 - Oct 31	Entire River	Yes
Telkwa	CW Season	Sept 1 - Oct 31	Entire River	No
Morice	Weekend	Sept 1 - Oct 31	Entire River	Yes
Babine	Weekend	Sept 1 - Oct 31	Nilkitkwa Lake outlet (smolt fence) to Nilkitkwa River confluence	No
Kispiox	Weekend	Sept 1 - Oct 31	Entire River	Yes
Kitwanga	Weekend	Apr 1 - Mar 31	Entire River	No
Kitseguecla	Weekend	Apr 1 - Mar 31	Entire River	No
Suskwa	Weekend	Apr 1 - Mar 31	Entire River	No
Skeena IV	Weekend	Jul 1 - Dec 31	Two zones:	
			1) Shegunia River confluence to Boulder Creek confluence	Yes
			2) Chindemash Creek confluence to 1.5 km above Zymoetz River confluence	No
Zymoetz (Class 1)	Fri to Sun	Jul 24 - Dec 31	Entire Class 1 Section	Yes
Zymoetz (Class 2)	Friday	Jul 24 - May 31	Entire Class 2 Section	Yes
		Jul 24 - May 31	Entire Class 2 Section	Yes, from Matson Creek confluence downstream to Skeena River confluence only
	Saturday			
	Sunday	Jul 24 - May 31	Entire Class 2 Section	No
Lakelse	CW Season	Apr 1 - Mar 31	Lakelse Lake outlet to powerline crossing, located 3.5 km upstream of the Lakelse confluence with the Skeena River	No
Kitsumkalum	Saturday	Apr 1 - Mar 31	Kitsumkalum Lake outlet to Glacier Creek confluence	No
	Sunday	Apr 1 - Mar 31	Entire River	No

Note – weekend includes Saturday and Sunday

## **Appendix B – Ministry Endorsed River-Specific Recommendations**

### **1. Bulkley River**

- Resident-only on Saturday and Sunday from September 1 to October 31
  - Guiding allowed
- Telkwa River resident-only all week from September 1 to October 31
  - No guiding allowed
- Reduction in guided rod-days
  - Regional Manager to resolve 53 Permit Days (upstream of CNR bridge)

### **3. Morice River**

- Resident-only on Saturday and Sunday from September 1 to October 31
  - Guiding allowed

### **4. Babine River**

- Resident-only Saturday and Sunday from September 1 to October 31 in a zone from the outlet of Nilkitkwa Lake (smolt fence) downstream to the Nilkitkwa River confluence
  - No guiding allowed
- Reduction of rod-day quota (long term)
  - Regional Manager to resolve 80 rod-day discrepancy

### **5. Kitwanga and Kitsequecla Rivers**

- Resident-only on Saturday and Sunday from April 1 to March 31
  - No guiding allowed

### **6. Suskwa River**

- Change from Class 2 to Class 1 designation from April 1 to March 31
- Resident-only on Saturday and Sunday from April 1 to March 31
  - No guiding allowed

### **7. Kispiox River**

- Resident-only Saturday and Sunday from September 1 to October 31
  - Guiding allowed

### **8. Lakelse River**

- Change from Class 2 to Class 1 designation
- Extension of mandatory steelhead stamp from September 1 to May 31
- Resident-only zone April 1 to March 31 from outlet of Lakelse Lake downstream to powerline crossing, located 3.5 km upstream of the Lakelse River confluence with the Skeena River.

### **9. Zymoetz (Class 1) River**

- Extension of Classified Waters period from July 24 to December 31
- Extension of mandatory steelhead stamp from July 24 to December 31
- Guide restrictions: maximum 3 anglers/group and 1 group/guide/day
- Increase allocation of guided rod-days from 58 to 100 days

- Decrease guided rod-day allocation from 250 to 100 in Schedule A of BC Regulation 125/90
- Resident-only on Friday, Saturday and Sunday from July 24 to December 31
  - Guiding allowed

#### *10. Zymoetz (Class 2) River*

- Extension of mandatory steelhead stamp from July 24 to May 31
- Guide restrictions: maximum 3 anglers/group and 1 group/guide/day
- Extension of Classified Waters period from July 24 to May 31
- Modify guided rod-day allocation to accommodate Classified Waters period extension
  - Maintain allocation of 117 rod-days from September 1 to October 31
  - Allocate 100 days from July 24 to August 31 and 50 days from November 1 to May 31
- Resident-only on Friday, Saturday and Sunday from July 24 to May 31
  - Guiding allowed on Friday and in a zone on Saturday from Matson Creek confluence downstream to the Skeena River confluence

#### *11. Kitsumkalum River*

- Extension of mandatory steelhead stamp from August 7 to May 31
- Guide restrictions: maximum 3 anglers/group; 1 group/guide/day in upper river and 1 group/guide/day in lower river
- Reduce total number of angling guides from 13 to 11
- Ministry decision to alter no guiding period to November 1 to April 1
- Resident-only from April 1 to March 31 on:
  - Saturday in zone from Kitsumkalum Lake outlet downstream to Glacier Creek confluence (no guiding allowed)
  - Sunday on the entire river (no guiding allowed)

#### *12. Skeena River – Section IV*

- Extension of Classified Waters period from July 1 to December 31
- Extension of mandatory steelhead stamp from July 1 to December 31
- Increase guided rod-day allocation by 586 days amongst 12 new guide licenses in a zone from Flint Creek confluence to the Chindemash Creek confluence
  - Concern was expressed that allocation may be too high. Accordingly, these days will be offered on a limited term opportunity i.e. 20 years or less.
- Resident-only in two zones on Saturday and Sunday from July 1 to December 31
  - Zone 1: Shegunia River confluence downstream to Boulder Creek confluence
    - Guiding allowed
  - Zone 2: Chindemash Creek confluence downstream to 1.5 km upstream from Zymoetz River confluence
    - No guiding allowed