

DRAFT

**Angling Management Plan
Skeena Quality Waters Strategy**

Executive Summary

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1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 Quality Waters Strategy

For years, people have told the Ministry of Environment that 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 on the Skeena River and its major tributaries. The Quality Waters Strategy is a province-wide process that aims to maintain and improve the angling experiences offered on BC's world-class waters, by managing angler use, through the development of Angling Management Plans.

The primary objective of an Angling Management Plan is to establish a water-specific regulatory regime utilizing the least restrictive measures possible to regulate angler use to levels that maintain the quality of the angling experience.

An Angling Management Plan is not intended as a conservation tool, and as such, does not have in its scope the ability to prescribe conservation-based regulatory measures. An AMP does not address steelhead stock abundance related issues.

The Skeena Regional Quality Waters Management Committee (the Regional Committee) is a group of local representatives of resident anglers, the guiding community, and the Ministry of Environment. The Committee has been meeting for the past two years to oversee implementation of the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy, the community engagement process, and development of the Angling Management Plan.

As part of the process, the Regional Committee selected priority waters to be covered under this Angling Management Plan.

1.2 Working Group process

Members of the Working Groups who helped develop this Angling Management Plan were chosen through a vetting process developed by the Regional Committee. To be eligible, group members needed to demonstrate:

- Knowledge of the waters under discussion
- Endorsement by their angling peers
- Ability to focus on local-level planning
- Agreement with the principles, goals, rules of engagement and timeline for the process

According to the guidelines of the Quality Waters Strategy, the three geographically based Working Groups were comprised of four resident anglers, three licensed guides, and a Ministry of Environment representative. Each Working Group was assisted by an independent, professional facilitator (see Appendix A).

The Working Groups met three times over three months, each time for a two-day period over a weekend. In April 2008, all three groups met together in Terrace. In May 2008, each group met separately in their “part” of the watershed — Terrace, Hazelton and Smithers. In June 2008, all three groups met in Smithers.

Working Group members were expected to represent all interests, not just those immediately around the table, but those in the community who were not sitting at the table — primarily from the tourism, accommodation and hospitality businesses that generate significant economic benefits from the steelhead angling fishery. Working Group members were expected to take part as members of the community, not as representatives of any particular sector. They were supposed to try and focus on issues and interests rather than personal agendas and points-of-view.

One of the critical ways that all interests were represented was by using the information collected in the Phase I consultation process, which took place from January to March 2008 and was summarized in Dolan (2008). One of the key objectives of the consultation process was to provide information to the Working Groups for use in the development of Angling Management Plans.

The Working Groups had a tool box of regulations that they could use in the development of the Angling Management Plan. When selecting regulatory options, the Working Group attempted to utilize the least restrictive tools necessary to achieve the desired objectives. Decision making was also supported by existing angler-use data.

Addressing angler-use problems for the steelhead sport fishery on the Skeena River system is a not a straightforward task due to the many “competing” interests. These competing interests include a strong sense of priority for BC resident anglers, which is also a fundamental principal of the Quality Waters Strategy. They also include a licensed guiding industry that offers a “high-end” product to clients who are mostly non-residents, and that produces economic spin-offs to the broader community as well.

The competing interests also include a local economy consisting of accommodations providers, restaurants, bait and tackle stores and others in the hospitality and tourism sector, who garner a significant proportion of their income from non-guided, non-resident steelhead anglers.

Any plan that attempts to address angler-use issues is challenged by these competing interests. The interests need to be clearly identified and articulated so that everyone knows what issues and concerns must be addressed in this problem-solving (or planning) process. In reality, an Angling Management Plan can neither solve all the problems perfectly, nor address everyone’s interests in a way that pleases them 100 per

cent. Instead, an Angling Management Plan seeks to optimize the results for all parties concerned, for all the interests around the table.

A Structured Decision Making process was used to address the range of competing interests in the steelhead sport fishery. Structured Decision Making is a systematic way to think about and resolve complex decision problems.

1.3 Angling Management Plan

The Skeena Angling Management Plan is intended to document the process considerations for the three Working Groups in developing their recommended management alternatives for each of the priority waters. The Angling Management Plan is enabled under Section 5.52(3) of the Wildlife Act and Section 5.11 of BC Regulation 125/90 Angling and Scientific Collection Regulation.

The report is organized by Working Group and then by priority water. Each priority water section is usually divided into the following sub-sections:

- Background information – brief description of the river
- Problems and issues - management and other issues identified on the river
- Management Elements considered – different management tools from the tool box that were considered by the Working Groups
- Management Element analysis – summary of why certain management elements were used and why others were not in the development of a recommended management alternative
- Target calculation – summary of how target number of anglers or angler days was calculated on certain rivers
- Recommended Management Alternative – final recommended management approach for a river

1.4 Overview of the problem

Following consultation with a broad range of stakeholders and members of the public as well as discussions with members of the Working Groups, the essence of the problem with steelhead angler use on the Skeena River system became clear. Some rivers at some times of year get very crowded. The most crowded parts of the season are usually the last two weeks in September and the first two weeks in October.

In the areas and times where angler-use issues are a problem, the Angling Management Plan relies on one main regulatory measure — the combination of a limited-day licence with a lottery system to allocate those licences evenly over the classified water period.

Working Groups considered a range of management options, but most of those options did not address the principal issue of trying to evenly distribute angling effort over the

entire Classified Waters period, so that there were not extreme peaks of angler use that caused crowding and poor quality angling at specific times in certain places.

The limited-day licence and lottery system is applied to the non-guided, non-resident sector of the sport fishery. There are several reasons for this:

- Consultations with stakeholders and the public indicated that the number of non-guided, non-residents fishing in some waters has increased considerably in the past few years and in many cases, that sector is a major component of the crowding problem.
- Many people cited specific examples of crowding caused by non-guided, non-resident anglers.
- The total number of guided anglers for each river is basically capped at specific levels. Ministry data as well as consultations with public and stakeholders suggest that in most instances guided anglers do not contribute to the crowding problem. There may be some situations where there are large numbers of guided anglers during peak times in the season, and changes to guiding regulations could be made to ensure that guided angler use was distributed more evenly over the entire Classified Waters period. However, the number of guides and assistant guides usually places a limit on the number of guided anglers on a river at any one time.
- In many cases, public and stakeholder groups said that resident anglers were not participating in the sport fishery due to crowding. Therefore, regulating the numbers of BC residents, other than trying to find ways to create more opportunities, would not be appropriate.
- One of the over-arching principles of the Quality Waters Strategy states that resident anglers and guided anglers have a higher priority than non-resident anglers on Classified Waters.

The solution to the crowding problem is not so much to reduce the overall angling pressure by non-guided, non-resident anglers on the rivers over the Classified Waters period, but to spread angler effort evenly over the entire Classified Waters period.

In order to spread angler use over a period of time, two things need to be in place. The first is to create a limited-day licence. Working Groups for the most part chose an eight-day licence for two reasons:

- Average length of fishing trip for most non-residents on most waters is similar to this number of days
- Eight-day licence has already been used on the Dean River in BC and is established in regulation

The second thing that needs to be in place is a lottery system. A lottery system is the only way to fairly allocate eight-day licences evenly over a Classified Waters period. There is a lottery system in place on the Dean River although it is an expensive process and involves a lot of ministry staff time. Lottery systems in the future could be integrated with the e-licensing system, but start-up costs may be high and so it is difficult to determine when the ministry might be able to implement this system.

Using past ministry data and local knowledge, the Working Groups developed an “ideal” number of anglers (sometimes referred to as carrying capacity) that can fish a particular water in one day. Those daily targets were expanded to produce targets for the entire Classified Waters period and then the number of eight-day licences that could be issued for that river was determined.

Some of the recommended management alternatives call for an immediate implementation of the eight-day licence and lottery based on the target number of non-resident anglers. Other call for a “trigger,” which means that if a target is reached twice in a three-year period, then that would trigger an eight-day licence and lottery system to come into effect.

The lottery system will require modifications to the province’s e-licensing system. Depending on the target number of non-resident anglers, a set of eight-day licences would be put into the e-licensing system such that they were spread over the entire Classified Water period for a particular river. For example, an angler could receive a licence for Sept 1-9, 2010 on the Kispiox River. All licence issuers would have access to this database until all the licences for each water were sold. A small number of licences could be “held back” for sale closer to the actual angling time. If demand for angling in a particular river were low, there could be the option of a second eight-day licence available to the same angler.

At an established date in the angling year, the lotteries for each river would be opened. An angler could apply to be included in the lottery on more than one river. There could be a provision that if you were unsuccessful in a lottery on a particular river in one year, you would have priority in the lottery on that water in the following year.

This system is very similar in concept to the Limited Entry Hunting (LEH) lottery that has been running for a number of years for hunting big game in BC.

The end result is that some people may potentially not be able to fish for as many consecutive days on one water as they used to. Some people will not be able to fish precisely at the same time of year as they used to. Some people may have to fish on different waters than they have in the past. And some people may not have an opportunity to fish on all the waters that they choose. But by spreading effort over the Classified Waters period, this approach has the least impact on the smallest number of non-resident anglers. And more importantly, it is the only way that the peaks of non-resident angler activity that contributes to crowding can be addressed.

1.5 Recommended Management Alternatives

It is important to note that all the statements in this Angling Management Plan are based on discussions and conclusions by Working Group participants. Although there was considerable expertise around the tables, there are likely lots of differences of opinion on the factual information and many points-of-view on the recommendations made.

That's why this is a DRAFT Angling Management Plan and that's why there is an extensive Phase II consultation process in the fall of 2008 to gather input on this draft plan from other stakeholders and members of the public.

The following are the Recommended Management Alternatives for each of the waters.

(Note: non-resident anglers mean anglers from other provinces in Canada plus anglers from countries other than Canada.)

1.5.1 Central Working Group: Kitseguecla and Kitwanga Rivers

The Kitseguecla and the Kitwanga Rivers were considered together because they are a similar size, resident anglers dominate both rivers, and access is fairly limited. There are no guided rod-days allocated on these rivers. The possibility of making these rivers resident-only throughout the season was considered but rejected because there are only a small number of fishing opportunities and it sends the wrong message to non-residents. Adding guided activity was rejected because the original intent was to offer some Classified Waters in the Skeena watershed that were not open to guided anglers. While crowding is only an occasional issue on these rivers, it was decided that residents should be given some priority. Changes to regulations on nearby waters such as the Kispiox may bring more pressure on these two rivers in the future.

The recommended management alternative is:

- Start with resident angler-only fishing on Saturdays and leave everything else as status quo
- If total angling pressure by non-guided, non-resident anglers 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 Kitseguecla, that would trigger a move to an eight-day licence lottery for these anglers with caps of two anglers per day on the Kitwanga and one angler per day on the Kitseguecla, spread evenly over the Classified Waters period from September 1 – October 31

1.5.2 Central Working Group: Suskwa River

The Suskwa River was considered separately from the Kitseguecla and Kitwanga because it has a larger proportion of non-resident anglers. A number of management alternatives including year-round resident-only angling and adding guiding opportunities were considered but rejected for the same reasons as the Kitseguecla and the Kitwanga. The Suskwa was also deemed a river where resident opportunities should be

increased. Changes to regulations on nearby waters may bring more pressure on this river in the future.

The recommended management alternative is:

- Start with resident angler-only fishing on Saturdays and leave everything else as status quo
- If total angling pressure by non-guided, non-resident anglers exceeds 399 angler-days for two years out of three, that would trigger a move to an eight-day licence lottery for these anglers with caps of two anglers per day on the Suskwa, spread evenly over the Classified Waters period from September 1 – October 31

1.5.3 Central Working Group: Skeena IV (upstream from the Kitwanga Bridge)

This part of the Skeena River (see Figure 1) has some localized areas of crowding but large sections of river that are quite underutilized by anglers. There are a large number of unused guided rod-days on this stretch of the Skeena. A number of management approaches were considered including a lottery for non-residents over the entire area or just in zones where it was felt crowding was a problem. A mandatory Steelhead Stamp was considered for the peak of the steelhead fishery, which would provide better management information for the Steelhead Harvest Analysis.

The recommended management alternative is:

- Implement a limited-day licence lottery for non-guided, non-resident anglers with a total of 180 eight-day licences spread evenly over the Classified Waters period (July 1 – October 31) in the following two zones:
 - From mouth of Salmon River to Four-Mile Bridge
 - From triangular markers below the mouth of the Bulkley River to the Kitwanga River Bridge (Note: the Central Working Group originally set this boundary at the mouth of the Kitwanga River, but the mouth falls under the West Working Group, so further discussions are needed)
- Rest of Skeena IV outside two zones is status quo
- Mandatory Steelhead Stamp from September 1 - October 31

1.5.4 Central Working Group: Kispiox River

There are a large number of non-residents coming to the Kispiox River and contributing to crowding especially during late-September and early-October in the section from Resthaven to the confluence of the Kispiox with the Skeena River. A number of management elements were considered for the Kispiox including eight-day licences for non-residents with and without a lottery, angling zones by time and space, extending the Classified Waters period, resident-only fishing times, and guided-only for non-resident anglers. The most important factor in weighing the different options was trying to manage non-resident anglers without seriously impacting local businesses that depend on those anglers. Hence, guided-only for non-residents was rejected because it was too extreme. Extending the Classified Waters season did nothing to address the problem. An eight-day licence without some sort of lottery would not yield the desired results. In the end, an eight-day licence with a lottery system was put forward for the

entire river except a nine-kilometre zone of the river that is a popular place to fish for many of the non-residents staying with local accommodation providers.

The recommended management alternative is:

- Non-guided, non-resident, eight-day licence lottery based on target of 795 angler-days for non-residents in the Classified Waters period, which equates to 99 eight-day licences spread evenly over the season (on entire river except status quo zone)
- 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
- Resident-only angling on Saturdays on entire river including status quo zone; hence no guided anglers on Saturdays

1.5.5 Central Working Group: Non-regulatory recommendations

- Reinstatement of the River Guardian program
 - Help monitor the implementation of the Angling Management Plan
 - Collect survey data or conduct creel censuses
 - Provide information and education on fish identification, proper handling techniques and proper angler etiquette
 - Assist Conservation Officers in identifying enforcement problems
- Improved Enforcement of regulations
- E-licensing
 - Only way that steelhead angling can be effectively managed is to be able to spread anglers out over the whole fishable period and “cap” their overall numbers
 - Best way to do that is to ensure that the province’s e-licensing system is capable of handling targets, caps, time-limited licences, and spreading licences over the Classified Waters season, for each of the different waters
- Need for a clear definition of “resident priority”
- Public Education
 - Angler etiquette
 - Proper catch and release techniques
 - Fish identification
- Process
 - Better criteria for selection of Working Groups so past members of the Regional Committee and resident anglers who have guided in the past are ineligible.
 - Broader representation from other stakeholders in the community, particularly those in the non-guiding local economy

1.5.6 East Working Group: Babine River

There are crowding problems in the upper five kilometres of the Babine River, caused by both non-guided, and guided anglers who move there when the Nilkitkwa is “out.” There is also a sense that a reduction in the overall number of guided rod-days is required. A limited-day licence combined with a lottery for non-residents was rejected

because there are not a lot of non-guided, non-residents fishing the Babine. Extending the Classified Waters period to December 31 was not felt to be effective. Ways to reduce guide activity were discussed but it was felt that the ministry needs to review the whole guide rod-day allocation situation on the Babine. A variety of other management elements were considered.

The recommended management alternative is:

The creation of three zones on the Babine River during the Classified Waters period:

- 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
- Resident anglers only will be permitted to angle between Nichyeskwa Creek and Nilkitkwa River. No guiding will be permitted in that zone
- Open to all licence classes and permitted guides downstream of the Nilkitkwa River confluence with the Babine

The ministry should review and rationalize guided rod-days on the Babine (used and unused) and seek to reduce the total allocation. Participants recognized that the unused days are primarily from guides not sitting on the Working Group.

1.5.7 East Working Group: Bulkley River

There are crowding problems on the Bulkley, especially non-resident campers at river access points. The only way to reduce the “peaks” of non-guided, non-resident angling activity that lead to crowding was to use a limited-day licence (the Working Group did not reach agreement on how many days the limited entry licence would cover) with a lottery system that “spreads” angler use evenly over the Classified Waters period. That lottery would be established in the future if the number of non-resident anglers exceeds a target. There are also concentrations of guided anglers during the peak season. A range of management elements was considered to address these issues. The most important factor in weighing the different options was trying to manage non-resident anglers without seriously impacting local businesses that depend on those anglers. There are almost 500 unused guided rod-days on the Bulkley but reducing those days was rejected as a management approach at this time. It was recognized that this and other guide restrictions (number of clients per guide, number of assistant guides per guide, etc.) may be required in the future to maintain a quality experience for all anglers. There is a need to provide more resident angler opportunities on the Bulkley River and try to find ways to address crowding issues.

The recommended management alternative is:

- Zoning for resident-only weekends during the Classified Waters period for three, small, easily accessible locations where the Bulkley meets Chicken Creek, Toboggan Creek, and the Telkwa River.
- Telkwa River a resident-only zone for the Classified Waters period
- Allocate limited-day licences in a lottery if a non-guided non-resident angler-day target is exceeded twice in three years. There are two threshold target options that will be presented to the public:

- Option 1 (high use) – The lottery would allocate 1,716 angler-days in limited-day licences to non-guided, non-resident anglers.
- Option 2 (average use) – The lottery would allocate 814 angler-days in limited-day licences to non-guided, non-resident anglers.
- One participant was unable to agree to an eight-day licence and prefers a 10-day licence. The number of days for limited-day licences will be determined either provincially or regionally. The licences will be allocated so they are spread evenly over the entire Classified Waters period.

1.5.8 East Working Group: Morice River

It was felt that crowding occurs on the Morice River, particularly in the area around campgrounds at peak season. Many campers stay and fish for long periods of time. A number of management elements were considered for the Morice that were similar to those for the Bulkley. It was felt that the non-resident crowding situation may be a problem in the future but for the moment the status quo is acceptable. Some zones were set aside for resident anglers to increase opportunities for that group.

- Working Group members did not recommend the immediate implementation of any management elements. However, they did propose a target if a limited-entry lottery were needed in the future.
- Allocate limited-day licences in a lottery if a non-guided non-resident angler-day target is exceeded twice in three years. There are two threshold target options that will be presented to the public:
 - Option 1 (high use) – The lottery would allocate 617 angler-days in limited-day licences to non-guided, non-resident anglers.
 - Option 2 (average use) – The lottery would allocate 449 angler-days in limited-day licences to non-guided, non-resident anglers.
- The ministry should review and rationalize guided rod-days on the Morice (used and unused). Participants recognized that the unused days are primarily from guides not sitting on the Working Group.

1.5.9 East Working Group: Non-regulatory recommendations

- Education on etiquette - An angler education program needs to be set up that includes information on driving boats, angler etiquette and fish handling.
- Manage and maintain access - There is a need to ensure that existing access points remain functional, because access is critical to distributing angler effort along the rivers. The Ministry of Environment along with the Integrated Land management Bureau should work together to ensure that both existing and potential access points are mapped, maintained, managed and/or developed.
- Enforcement - There is a need for improved enforcement of management regulations for all rivers.
- Data collection - More funding is needed so that data collection could be improved. The most pressing need is for more regular creel censuses.

- Long-term camping on the Babine - There is a need to work with BC Parks to address issues around long-term camping along the Babine River. In the same way that it regulates river rafters, the park could implement rules around length-of-stay, timing of visits, and location and distribution of campsites.
- Illegal guiding - There is a need for signage on the boats of licensed guides so everyone knows who they are and to distinguish them from illegal guides. Increased education is required to let anglers know the potential implications of being involved in illegal guiding. Additional enforcement is also needed.
- Floatcraft - There is a need to regulate both recreational rafts and boats, and angling boats including powerboats, so that the river is a safer place, conflicts are minimized, and the quality of the experience improved.
- Guiding - Unused rod-days could be distributed to local businesses or First Nations. Communications between upper Babine guides needs to be improved so that use of the river is better coordinated.

1.5.10 West Working Group: Zymoetz I River

The upper part of the Zymoetz River has experienced crowding due to increases in the number of non-guided, non-resident anglers. There are some concerns around the number of guided anglers on this stretch of water. Zymoetz I has a low capacity to support a lot of angling effort. Both lottery/limited-day licences and guided-only options were considered for Zymoetz I. It was felt that given the limited access of this area, the sensitivity of the habitat and the difficulties with enforcement, the best option was to go to guided-only for non-resident anglers. Guiding restrictions were considered primarily to “flatten out” use over the Classified Waters period and prevent peaks in activity that result in crowding.

The recommended management alternative is:

- Extend Classified Waters period to begin on August 1 and continue until the close of the steelhead season on December 31. This accurately reflects the time that summer steelhead are in the river and when the river is open to fishing
- A Steelhead Stamp would be mandatory during this period (August 1 – December 31). Both of these elements would facilitate the distribution of guided and non-guided effort throughout the open water season and would increase the Ministry of Environment’s data collection abilities through the Steelhead Harvest Questionnaire.
- Limit the three existing guides to the use of one boat per guide per day. This would put a maximum of three guided parties on this section of water on any day.
- Limit the three existing guides to a maximum of three anglers per boat. In conjunction with the previous element there would only be nine guided anglers on the class I section of the Zymoetz River on any given day.
- All non-residents must be guided. This element was viewed by the Working Group as key to ensuring that the capacity of this small river is not exceeded.

Additionally, it addressed a perceived illegal guiding issue. It was acknowledged that increased demand by non-resident anglers could be accommodated in the guiding industry.

- The three existing guides currently hold 58 rod-days. Their allocation will be increased by 10 rod-days each for a total of 30 additional rod-days to accommodate increased demand brought about by the requirement that all non-residents be guided. The Working Group considered the impacts to local economic interests and that there was capacity in this reach to increase the guide allocation to compensate for increased non-resident demand.
- The Working Group recognized that, in the future, BC Residents may need to be restricted if the carrying capacity of the upper Zymoetz is exceeded. The Working Group recommends that the Ministry of Environment establish an effort level target for this trigger, which is consistent with the concept that the levels must be exceeded two times in three years before any restrictions are put in place.

1.5.11 West Working Group: Zymoetz II River

Crowding and over-use by all types of anglers has been a problem on Zymoetz II, the lower section of this river. Anglers who camp for long periods of time add to crowding problems. The only way to reduce “peaks” of non-guided, non-resident activity that lead to crowding is to use a limited-day licence with a lottery system that more evenly distributes angler use over the Classified Waters period. Working Group members considered a limited-day licence and lottery for non-guided, non-resident anglers, restrictions to limit number of guides, especially at peak times, and making provisions for resident priority times on the river. The resulting recommended management alternative is a combination of most of the management elements considered.

The recommended management alternative is:

- Extend the Classified Waters period from August 1 to May 31 and retain Class II status. This reflects the time that steelhead are in the river and covers both the summer and winter runs. A Steelhead Stamp will be mandatory during this period. This would allow angling effort to be controlled during the entire fishery and not just during the months of September and October.
- The Working Group recommended that the Clore River be managed under the umbrella of Zymoetz II Classified Water.
- The Working Group recommended that there would be no guiding on weekends (Saturday and Sunday) during the classified period. It was also recommended that there would be no non-resident angling on weekends, which provides for a resident-only fishery on Saturday and Sunday during the classified period. This would provide an opportunity for non-guided, resident anglers to access the fishery during the days of the week that are highly desirable by local anglers. This was a major concession by the guide community as they recognized the importance of this fishery to the resident angling community.
- Restrict the maximum number of anglers that a guide or assistant guide may assist during a day to three anglers. This limits the maximum guided party size.
- The Working Group recognized that the current guide allocation on Zymoetz II (five guides and 117 rod-days) would need to be increased to accommodate the

extension of the Classified Waters period. The recommendation is that each of the five guides be increased by 30 rod-days (total of 150 additional rod-days).

- The Working Group recommended that guided effort be more evenly distributed throughout the fishing season to address the crowding issue. The recommendation was to have 40% of the guided effort occur during the two shoulder seasons (i.e., 20% in August and 20% in November-May) and to have the remaining 60% of the guided effort occur during September and October.
- Non-resident anglers would access the weekday fishery by lottery and this would be implemented immediately. The non-resident lottery cap is 267 rod-days (equal to the new guide allocation). Non-resident angler allocation would be 534 angler-days via the guides and lottery access.
- The distribution of non-resident angling effort would be distributed throughout the season like the guide effort, so it is: 40% during the two shoulder seasons (i.e., 20% effort in August and 20% from November to May) and 60% of remaining effort during the peak (September and October).
- The Working Group considered that the “best” total effort estimate of 1,398 angler-days (based on the 1999 creel survey) would give non-residents access to 564 days or 40% of the days fished.

1.5.12 West Working Group: Kitsumkalum River

Increased angler use and guided effort has produced crowding on the Kitsumkalum in September and October and also in April and May. There is lots of resident angler interest in this river but opportunities for residents have been declining due to crowding. Illegal guiding was identified as a concern on this river. Working Group members considered a range of options and selected management elements that ensured guide effort was spread across the Classified Waters period while providing increased opportunities for resident anglers.

The recommended management alternative is:

- To address the issue of guides contributing to crowding on the Kitsumkalum River, the Working Group proposed to limit each licensed guide to the use of one boat on the upper river and one boat on the lower river on any single day.
- Along with the first element, it was proposed that angling guides be restricted to a maximum of four guided anglers per boat.
- To acknowledge the importance of this fishery to resident anglers, no guiding on Sundays on the entire river is proposed.
- No guiding on the section of river from the Glacier Creek confluence upstream to the outlet of Kitsumkalum Lake on Saturday. The remainder of the river (downstream of the Glacier Creek confluence) would be open to guiding. The first four elements will adversely impact the guide sector and benefit the resident angling sector.
- A change to the BC Regulation 125/90 is proposed that would reduce the maximum number of guides allowed on the Kitsumkalum River from 13 to 11 guides. There are currently 11 licensed angling guides operating on the Kitsumkalum. This will constrain the access of more guides to the Kitsumkalum fishery.

- All non-residents must be guided during the period when guiding is allowed – March 15-October 15. This will mean that there is a resident-only fishery between October 16 and March 14 as both guides and non-residents are restricted from access to the fishery at that time.
- It was noted that this option severely restricts non-guided, non-resident opportunities and that it has very high management and regulatory costs associated with implementation.

1.5.13 West Working Group: Lakelse River

The Lakelse River has no licensed guides with rod-days on it. There is a large fall salmon sport fishery that exacerbates any crowding because of steelhead anglers. There has been an increase in non-resident use on this river in recent years. A range of management elements was considered on this river.

The recommended management alternative is:

- Class I all year (change from Class II all year). This acknowledges the wilderness attributes of the river, especially in some of the more remote sections.
- Steelhead Stamp mandatory between September 1 and May 31 (extension from present December 1 – May 31, to reflect actual time steelhead are in the river).
- The Working Group recommended establishing a resident-only fishery for steelhead from March 1 to May 31 for Lakelse River. This would cover both the spring steelhead and cutthroat trout fisheries. This element recognizes that importance of these fisheries to resident anglers.
- Non-resident anglers can access the fishery from June 1 – February 28. This recognizes the summer and fall salmon fisheries that overlap with the steelhead fishery. This is a compromise to accommodate the interests of local businesses although it is expected that non-guided, non-resident effort would be lower under this management option.
- Non-resident angling effort will be constrained if total non-guided, non-resident effort exceeds 100 angler-days, two years out of three. When this target or trigger is achieved a limited-day licence lottery would be implemented based on a target of 100 angler-days. The non-guided, non-resident effort will be monitored for the time being.
- There could be some negative impacts to the local economy.

1.5.14 West Working Group: Skeena IV (downstream from Kitwanga Bridge)

This part of the Skeena River (see Figure 1) has some localized areas of crowding, notably at the mouth of the Kitwanga River and in Kitselas Canyon. Changing classification of this part of Skeena IV would make it a more desirable destination and would make it more marketable for guides. Licence-class restrictions such as resident-only licences were not felt to be necessary on this part of the Skeena. Although restrictions on non-guided, non-resident anglers are not required right now, provisions needs to be made for the future.

The recommended management alternative is:

- Class I all year (Change from Class II between July 31 and October 31). This would better reflect the wilderness nature of this section of Skeena IV.
- The Working Group elected to maintain the current Steelhead Stamp requirement, which is only required when fishing for steelhead. This reduces the licensing impact on salmon anglers.
- The existing (pre-Angling Management Plan) Skeena IV guides will not be constrained in the use of their Skeena IV angler-day allocation. They can guide in either reach (upper or lower) of the new Skeena IV Classified Waters.
- To address the concerns of the guide sector, four new guide opportunities of 20 rod-days each would be made available (total 80 new rod-days). This addresses the issue that new guides (usually non-Classified Waters guides) have few opportunities to access premier fisheries.
- Additionally, the existing Skeena IV guides from the Terrace area (four guides were identified that presently hold a cumulative total of 85 rod-days) would be issued 30 additional rod-days. This would increase their cumulative allocations by a total 120 rod-days.
- If total non-guided, non-resident angler effort exceeds 1,000 angler-days, two years out of three, a limited-day licence lottery would be implemented with a target of 1,000 angler-days. While the available data are sparse, the Working Group did not feel that present non-guided, non-resident angler effort was near this target.

This draft Angling Management Plan and the recommended management alternatives will be presented to the public and stakeholders in the fall of 2008. In early 2009, the Working Groups will re-convene to modify the plans in relation to feedback received during the fall consultation process. The final draft management plan containing the recommended management options will be forwarded to the Director of Fish and Wildlife at the Ministry of Environment in February 2009. The director will carefully review the recommendations to ensure they balance all the different community interests. The ministry will respond to the plan and any regulation changes that are approved will likely be reflected in the 2010/2011 Angling Synopsis.