

March 19, 2006
Terrace Best Western
Skeena Room

Chairperson - Dana Atagi

0910 hrs

The chairperson provided background information regarding the recommendations made by the Recreation Stewardship Panel. These recommendations were endorsed by the Assistant Deputy Minister resulting in the Skeena Fisheries Advisory Committee (see draft terms of reference).

MoE staff introductions.

- Dana Atagi- Section Head Fish & Wildlife
- Mark Beere- Senior Fisheries Biologist
- Dean Peard- Fisheries Biologist
- Paul Giroux-Fisheries Biologist
- Hugh Markides- Regional Manager

Participant introductions:

See attached distribution list.

0930 hrs

The draft terms of reference was introduced to the committee.

Draft terms of reference:

Background/Purpose

As directed by the Recreation Stewardship Panel and reconfirmed by Assistant Deputy Minister Nancy Wilkin, the Skeena Fisheries Advisory Committee (SFAC) has been created to provide a forum for various representatives within the Skeena Region with the goal to reach consensus on local issues related to recreational and commercial sport fishing. The SFAC promotes discussion and provides advice to the Director of Fisheries, Ministry of Environment, for consideration.

Responsibilities of SFAC

1. Any issues regarding fisheries can be addressed (placed on the agenda) by a member of the committee. However, the primary role of the committee is to review and provide advice on fishing regulation proposals. Consensus is preferred.
2. Committee members will be held to the highest standards of professional conduct and mutual respect; aggression, offensive comments or foul language will not be tolerated and those unable to adhere to these rules will be dismissed from the meeting.

Code of Conduct Principles

1. Be hard on problems and soft on people.
2. Seek to gain a better understanding of perspectives of others.
3. Treat others with courtesy and respect.
4. Take initiative to improve work partnerships and processes.
5. State views as interest and values rather than positions and explain why they are important.
6. Come to meetings prepared and ready to engage in productive discussion.
7. Share information relative to the issues being discussed.
8. State concerns openly and directly.
9. Lead by example.
10. Wait for others to finish speaking and listen to what they are saying.
11. Seek creative solutions which accommodate all interests.

Meetings/Procedures

1. The committee will meet formally, once a year, with supporting teleconference calls as necessary.
2. Committee meetings will be held in Terrace.
3. The committee will strive to work in a constructive and co-operative manner to achieve a consensus recommendation of the members. For the purposes of this committee, consensus is general agreement such that each member of the committee works from an interest-based position and that they can support the outcome without sacrificing their principles.
4. If consensus can not be reached, all positions will be forwarded to the Regional Manager. Any or all members of the committee can have their views recorded in the meeting notes once the discussion has concluded and more than one option is available.
5. In order for a meeting of the advisory group to proceed, fifty percent of the committee must be in attendance, either in person or by telephone.

6. A member of the committee will be chosen by committee members to be chairperson for a period of one year.
7. A member of the committee will be chosen to produce minutes to be available for other committee members within the first two weeks following each meeting.
8. Each committee member will contact the chairperson at least ten days prior to an upcoming meeting to indicate their attendance and to identify any items for inclusion on the agenda. Members that cannot attend a meeting may submit their position in writing to the chairperson on any given item on the agenda.
9. The chairperson will finalize the agenda in consultation with the Ministry representative who will provide relevant background information on the issues referred to the advisory committee for consideration.
10. The committee meetings will be open to the public. Time will be scheduled at the end of every meeting for public input, comment and presentations.
11. The committee has no authority to call public meetings, commit funds, enter into contracts or represent the Ministry of Environment, Environmental Stewardship Division.

Any concerns or advice from the committee will be in the form of written recommendations to the Regional Manager.

Media Conduct

The chairperson will act as the sole committee representative for any discussions or contact with the media.

Remuneration

For the **First** gathering (March 2006), monies will be available to help cover costs incurred by participants travelling to the meeting who do not reside in Terrace. Budget status will be assessed prior to subsequent meetings to determine if assistance can be offered in the future.

- ❖ ACTION ITEM- Terms of Reference to be forwarded to teleconference participants.

0940 hrs- The Chairperson called for discussion items. Several points were put forward by participants for consideration and discussion.

- Terms of Reference

Several participants made observations that the terms of reference needed to be clarified before the committee can move forward. The definition of consensus, the scope of the committee, committee membership makeup and clear separation from overlap with other committees were identified as areas that needed to be clarified. These observations

created some discussion on the mandate of the Regional Quality Waters Committee (RQWC) and any conflicting overlaps with the SFAC. The suggestion was put forward that the focus of the SFAC committee should be on regulations and regulations only.

- Science Based Decisions

The point was put forward that regulatory decisions must be based on science and not personal opinions or ideologies.

The following topics were added to the agenda:

1. Committee membership
2. Fresh water fishing regulations
3. Stream classification policy
 - British Columbia Wildlife Federation (BCWF) Nass/Skeena steelhead harvest proposal
4. Fish farms
5. Fisheries program success stories
6. BC Parks & Protected Areas

1000 hrs- break

1015 hrs-commence

Mark Beere gave a power point presentation that outlines some of the Fisheries Section activities in 2005.

1050 hrs

A question and answer period followed the presentation.

The main topics of the question and answer period involved the status of steelhead tissue samples collected for genetic analysis in 2004/05 and the fisheries funding model and to what degree the Fisheries Branch is involved in approving projects affecting fish or fish habitat. Particular reference was made to a private development proposal on or near Humphreys Creek (tributary to Kitimat River).

MoE staff informed participants that the Skeena (Tye Test Fishery) steelhead samples had not been analyzed yet. However, as funding becomes available the sample analysis will be completed (Kitimat samples have been done). Furthermore, participants were informed that the Ecosystems Branch is mandated to deal with habitat issues and development and the Fish & Wildlife Section is not significantly involved with the approval process. Concerns were expressed by some attendees about the lack of input, involvement or influence by the Fisheries Branch in the Land and Water Inc. tenure and development process. Discussion about fisheries funding and the proportional allocation

of those funds between MoE and the Freshwater Fisheries Society resulted in comments about increased licensing costs with very little return to the Fisheries Branch and the resource.

Meeting participants also discussed potential reasons for the reduction in angling license sales. Some participants were concerned that over regulation is precluding new angler participation and grass roots anglers are leaving the sport for the same reasons.

Meeting participants also discussed the Quality Waters Strategy (QWS) and its application. Concerns were raised about direction of the QWS and whether or not the policy prioritizes resident angler use over other classes of anglers. A member of the RQWC explained that resident anglers are given priority over other classes of anglers in the document. The SFAC process will respect the principle of resident priority

1210hrs- Lunch

Chairperson -Mark Beere

1254hrs- Commence

A brief discussion on the mandate (angling regulations) of the SFAC resulted in a few suggestions from meeting participants. The suggestion was put forward that the first sentence in the Terms of Reference should be changed to “any issues regarding angling regulations under MoE responsibility”. There was also further discussion about areas of the SFAC mandate that overlap with other committees. One point raised was that communities have an interest in the SFAC and can there be a mechanism for community involvement?

Significant time was spent by attendees discussing the make up of the SFAC and voting structure. The following list is the proposed committee structure and does not indicate voting configuration.

- Steelhead Society of British Columbia (SSBC) 1
- British Columbia Federation of Fly Fishers (BCFFF) 1
- Independent resident anglers 4
- British Columbia Federation of Drift Fishers (BCFDF) 1
- Skeena Angling Guide Association (SAGA) 1
- Angling Guide Independent of SAGA 1
- North Coast Steelhead Alliance (NCSA) 1
- Rod and Gun Clubs 5
- British Columbia Wildlife Federation (BCWF) 1
- Tackle Vendors 1

1350hrs- Break

1400hrs- commence

Discussion about the definition of consensus and how independent anglers are chosen and who they represent resulted in no clear direction. The suggestion was also put forward that recommendations for representatives be in the form of written submissions and that the four independent anglers on the committee should represent all areas of the Skeena Region.

- ❖ ACTION ITEM- Jim Culp will provide the committee with options for defining consensus.

There were no comments from participants regarding current fishing regulations at this time.

Discussion about the Steelhead Stream Classification Policy (SSCP) resulted in a spirited debate about the blanket policy of non-retention of wild steelhead across the province. Some participants felt that catch and release on all wild stocks is inappropriate and can not be supported at this time. Other participants felt that any harvest of wild steelhead is unsustainable, and the consultation process on this topic has already been completed. At this point, there was some confusion amongst meeting participants as to the status of the SSCP. Some participants were unaware that the policy had been signed by the Minister. Correspondence written by the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Branch was read to the committee. This correspondence confirmed that the policy had been signed by the Minister and was scheduled to be implemented in 2007/08. A wild steelhead harvest proposal was submitted by the BCWF. A proposal was put forward by the NCSA to make it mandatory to release all trout and char in the Zymoetz and Kalum watersheds. After a lengthy discussion there was no consensus reached, amongst the meeting participants, regarding the retention of wild steelhead. In summary, the Steelhead Stream Classification Policy was discussed and the participants were clearly divided on (i) the consultation process and (ii) the non-retention of wild steelhead provision.

- ❖ ACTION ITEM- MoE to forward BCWF proposal to Fish and Wildlife Director and meeting participants.
- ❖ ACTION ITEM- (Item for discussion on next years agenda) Rationale for catch and release as a management tool.

1500hrs-Break**1525hrs- Commence**

A brief discussion about fish farms and a cost benefit analysis was given by Andrew Williams. He also provided the group with updated information about the status of fish farm tenures in the Skeena Region.

1540hrs

Based on public comments, MoE asked for input regarding a boundary change at the outlet of Lakelse Lake. Concerns have been raised by anglers that the boundary sign should be at the Lake outlet and not approximately 1 km as is currently the case. Conservation is the motivation for relocating the sign as the catch limit is more liberal in the lake. Concern over how this would affect boaters was mentioned during the discussion. After a period of discussion, the motion was made to vote on MoE's proposal to move the fishing boundary sign on Lakelse River upstream to the Lake outlet.

Meeting participants voted unanimously in favour of moving boundary signs upstream to the lake outlet.

Participants felt that MoE should continue to act as Chairperson and also continue to be responsible for the recording of and distributing meeting minutes at future meetings. The suggestion was also put forward to have the meetings in June.

- ❖ ACTION ITEM- (On next years agenda) explain the differences between an Order in Council (OIC) and a Variation Order (VO).

1600hrs- meeting adjourned

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