

Skeena Fish Advisory Committee (SFAC)

March 23, 2009

Terrace Best Western Inn – Skeena 2

Chair- **Denys Bell (DB)**

Minutes – **Mark Beere (MB)**

Attendees - See Appendix A

1000 hrs - Commence

- Welcome, introductions
- A brief discussion from **Dean Peard (DP)** regarding the importance of the attendance/contact list and the determining participant representation
- DB offered to act as Chair for a period on **one year** commencing March 30, 2008, with the aim of making this committee as effective as possible - he confirmed that this was still the case and asked for nominations for Chairperson
- **Jim Culp (JC)** nominated **Sharon Robertson (SR)** for the position of Chair
- **Gene Allen (GA)** further recommended Sharon Robertson, stating that given her past experience, she would be an excellent candidate
- DB expressed concern that, as Sharon was not present, we had no way to confirm
- **Randy Dozzi (RD)** offered to act as an alternate
- DB asked whether committee members were opposed to a vote for Chairperson
- **Fred Ferber (FF)** suggested that as we had RD offer to Chair that we should proceed with him as Chairperson and that SR could become Chairperson next if she chooses
- Everyone approved of FF's suggestion
- RD will be Chairperson for 2010 for a period of one year

1025 hrs – 2008 Regional Manager Recommendations – Review – Mark Beere read aloud a summary of the proposals and the Regional Manager's recommendation, rationale for decision

SFAC-2008-01 – Discontinue the use of treble hooks in Region 6 Lakes

- GA: it is much simpler for the angler to have a single set of regulations for the region

SFAC-2008-02 – No angling upstream of the CNR bridge on the Lakelse/no wading in gravel beds

- JC: MoE should consider having control areas where wading is not permitted and attempt to determine whether there is differential mortality for eggs in gravel – there was general agreement that signage be considered to educate anglers to be cautious about wading on fish redds – it was noted that the BC Freshwater Fishing Regulations Synopsis contains information for the angler regarding this

SFAC-2008-03 – No angling with bait in British Columbia

- JC expressed concern with the MoE's direction regarding the Regional Manager's recommendation not to implement this proposal as many feel steelhead are in decline and this pertains to the Skeena Watershed Congress concerns regarding minimizing the impact of sport fisheries on steelhead

SFAC-2008-04 – Allow two rods/lines when ice fishing

- Broad support from the group

SFAC-2008-05 – Allow angling in the upper 3 kms of the Zymoetz River

- Withdrawn by proponent – no comments

SFAC-2008-06 – Allow angling with bait in the Morice River downstream of Gosnell or Lamprey Creek June 16 to July 31

- JC expressed concern for the Morice River chinook populations and briefly discussed the history of that stock, the fishery
- **Mike Langegger (ML)**: Alaskan commercial harvest of chinook will hopefully decline and he is hopeful that this will lead to more chinook in the Morice River

SFAC-2008-07 – Resident angler priority

- Broad support from the group

SFAC-2008-08 – Junior angler licencing

- Withdrawn by proponent - no comments

SFAC-2008-09 – Non-resident aliens guided only

- No comments

SFAC-2008-10 – Tlell River cutthroat retention

- DB expressed displeasure with the provincial policy and federal precautionary approach documents

1125 hrs – Review of SFAC 2009-01- 04 proposals

- **Proposal 2009-01: Regulations clarification for lakes where steelhead are encountered** - proponent Ministry of Environment –DP presented the ministry’s proposal to add water specific tables for Region 6, pertaining to lakes where rainbow trout over 50 cms are to be considered steelhead, to provide clarification for enforcement purposes and angler education
- EM and others noted that others could be added to the list
- DB asked that the list be clarified with MU’s and watershed names
- ML recommended that signage be used for further clarification
- **Ted Luscombe (TL)** expressed a desire to move away from further detail in regulations in an effort to simplify
- JC supported the idea of a list to make it easier for anglers to comply with the regulations
- DB reiterated that the proposal wasn’t a regulation change but a clarification
- **Darrell Struthers (DC)** noted that these clarifications assist officers in court
- JC wanted to be clear that his comments were his alone and not those of the Northern Branch of the Steelhead Society of British Columbia, as he has not had the opportunity to consult with his constituents
- **No dissenters – Consensus - The committee recommended that the proposal be forwarded to the Regional Manager**

1155 hrs

- DB noted the lack of proposals submitted from outside of government and relayed that there are committee members that do not believe they are seeing success, that the SFAC ToR states that committee members raise issues for SFAC consideration and also that late proposals are an issue and the committee must decide if they will entertain them

- **Jeff Lough (JL)** enquired as to what “success” means in reference to proposal submissions and noted that, as there are almost always dissenters for a given proposal that committed members will be divided as to what constitutes “success”
- EM: feels that this process is really important and anglers he encounters on the river are assured to know that the committee is in place
- JC: issues outside of the SFAC ToR can be useful to address
- ML: this may be the appropriate forum for committee members to provide input into determining MoE priority for projects

1200 hrs - lunch

1240 hrs

- **Proposal 2009-02: Morice River fly fishing only September 1 to December 31** – proponent Bill Burkland – JC presented the proposal in Mr. Burkland’s absence as Bill is a SSBC member, to permit the discussion
- JC: the intention of fly fishing only regulations was to reduce hook-ups and therefore minimize fishery impacts
- ML: the proposed action will cause segregation and all should have access
- RD: fish can get as abused in a fly fishery or perhaps even more so than in a gear fishery and presented the examples of ‘flossing’ at Lakelse and Skeena mainstem
- DB asked MB if MoE had information to suggest a conservation concern for the Morice River steelhead population
- MB responded that this is similar to the Lakelse proposal 2008-02 in that MoE can not document a conservation concern
- JC questioned whether it is morally and ethically valid to fish over-wintering/pre-spawning steelhead with the most effective gear available
- GA noted that gear fishermen on the Kispiox caught 43 steelhead in 2 days and that this would not have been possible with fly fishing gear
- TL commented that both gear and fly fishermen can both be fairly successful – a hook is a hook
- RM: fly fishing isn’t accessible for all and could be either costly for more equipment or dangerous in the case of young children
- DB said the Tweedsmuir Rod and Gun Club do not support this proposal
- ML: if a conservation concern does not exist, leave it – if one does exist, shut the fishery down
- **Larry Proto (LP)** did not support the proposal if a conservation concern has not been documented
- FF: more people utilizing the resource is better – some will not comply with regulations – fewer gear fishermen now than in the past
- **Consensus - The committee does not recommend that the proposal be forwarded to the Regional Manager**

1300 hrs

- **Proposal 2009-03: Babine River watershed signage changes** – proponent Ministry of Environment - JL presented this proposal which pertains to the existing regulations signage in the Babine River watershed and aims receive approval to change boundary signs to locations where they are consistent with the intent of the regulation (i.e. protecting spawning steelhead) or are easier to maintain or easier for anglers to see or to harmonize boundary locations for the Nilkitkwa Lake outlet area
- JL: Babine guide Pierce Clegg is in support of this proposal as are residents surveyed to date
- SM: Fort Babine bridge signage is a concern if it was for biological purposes rather than for ease/practical purposes
- ML: in support
- GA: in support

- **No dissenters – Consensus - The committee recommended that the proposal be forwarded to the Regional Manager**

1320 hrs

- Late proposal: trout/char retention limits – Dan Daigle – **withdrawn**

1325 hrs

- ML expressed concerns re. the Navigable Water's Protection Act – Bill C-10, and updated the committee for information purposes
- JL: there may be environmental impact assessments but they will be streamlined
- GA: the act may be revisited
- DB: overall encouragement for all groups to petition government

1335 hrs

- JC articulated concerns for Kitsumkalum River steelhead that are subject to sport and commercial sport fishing effort as they over-winter – request for MoE to conduct studies to further current understanding of stock status
- RD: need MoE to conduct further assessments
- DB: there's a precedent for this kind of request in the SHAC and encouraged JC to write a proposal for the support of the committee
- GA: it's time some of the revenue from angling licence sales comes back to Region 6 to fund fisheries research
- TL: government already spends much more than they have
- EM: how much money is required?
- JC: data review, creel surveys, etc., a subcommittee to advise MoE re. prioritizing field projects
- TL: not in favour of the idea of subcommittees – MoE should take advise, discussion to follow

1405 hrs

- JC voiced concerns regarding the illegal harvest of steelhead in the Skeena bar fishery and a desire to better inform anglers
- **Dana Atagi (DA)** stated that he “could provide, perhaps small sums of funding to work with volunteers, SFAC to produce educational information, brochures, etc
- EM conveyed that the Bulkley Valley Rod and Gun Club has \$16 K available for projects
- Suggestions from the committee included: fish identification, fishing etiquette, catch and release techniques, fish handling, regulations information, perhaps a licence holder with fish ID information

1440 hrs

- DA: MoE update - \$495 million deficit, 9% less funds in MoE, a 2 year deficit is forecast, \$2 K is required for this meeting and there is uncertainty as to how we'll resource this meeting, synopses 400 K printed annually at a cost of \$200 K - \$400 K, “we'll probably have annual SFAC meetings but a 2 year submission turn-around for regulations synopsis”

1450 hrs

- GA offered the use of his lodge and to provide food – met by applause from the committee

1453 hrs - MoE updates – Small lake simplification – Joe De Gisi

- rationale for simplification
- is not in favour of implementing quota reductions for burbot (reduced to 2) and kokanee (reduced to 5) but is in favour of a 'suite alignment' – groups of lakes with consistent regulations

1515 hrs – Babine Lake Rainbow Trout Genetics – Jeff Lough

1530 hrs – Status of Trout/Char Regulations – Jeff Lough

1545 hrs – Steelhead Projects Update – Mark Beere

1615 hrs - meeting adjourned