

**Sixth Annual  
Skeena Fisheries Advisory Committee (SFAC) Meeting**

**Skeena Valley Golf and Country Club**

**Terrace, BC**

**March 18, 2012**

**In attendance**

**Committee Members**

Rob Brown -Steelhead Society of BC\*

Andrew Williams -BC Federation of Fly Fishers\*

Gene Allen - Upper Skeena Angling Guides Association\*

Peter Haigh - Lower Skeena Nass non-affiliated angler\*

Denys Bell - Tweedsmuir Rod and Gun\*

Larry Proteau - BC Federation of Drift Fishers\*

Brian Patrick - Regional Tackle Vendor Community\*

**Public**

Jim Culp (SSBC alternate), Randi Dozzi (formerly of North Coast Steelhead Alliance)

**Ministry of Forests Lands and Natural Resource Operations (MFLNRO)**

Jane Lloyd-Smith, Dana Atagi, Mark Beere (Chair), Joe De Gisi, Jeff Lough (minutes)

**Ministry of Environment (MOE)**

Dean Peard

**Ministry of Environment (MOE), Conservation Officer Services (COS)**

Kevin Nixon, Darryl Struthers

**Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO)**

Mark Regan - Resource Manager (Recreational Fisheries)

**Regrets:**

Eckard Mendel - Angler

Dustin Kovacvich - Skeena Angling Guides Association (SAGA)\*

Bob Johnston - Non-affiliated resident angler – Kitimat\*

Sam Moroski - Non-affiliated resident angler – Fraser\*

## **Declined to Attend:**

Ken Franzen - BCWF

Larry Walker - Kitimat R&G

Jim Grilz - Prince Rupert R&G

Ted Luscombe - Terrace R&G

\* voting member of SFAC

10:00 AM- Meeting Commences

## **Introductions and Housekeeping**

- The Chair Mark Beere (MB) thanked Randi Dozzi (RD) for excellent service as the SFAC Chair for the last three years.
- MB requested that committee members submitting travel expense receipts do so by the end of the meeting.
- RD was uncertain of the status of his affiliation with the North Coast Steelhead Alliance and resolution will be forthcoming.

*Comment from M. Beere: Randy Dozzi confirmed his affiliation with the North Coast Steelhead Alliance; correspondence was interrupted for a period due to a change of e-mail address.*

- Denys Bell (DB) identified that he was the only Rod and Gun (R&G) Club representative at this year's meeting and that the BC Wildlife Federation (BCWF) representative was not in attendance. He also asked whether or not there was indeed a quorum present
- MB confirmed that there was indeed a quorum present
- Rob Brown (RB) points out that the three R&G clubs and the BCWF representative were invited but chose not to attend. This was confirmed by MB.
- Peter Haigh (PH) inquired as to why the five committee members declined to attend. MB shared quotes from correspondence received.

*Comment received from M. Langegger, April 15, 2012: "Please review the response that was sent Dec 18 2012: 'The SFAC has been problematic from inception and has digressed to the point where those representing us at the table felt the process produced no results and has catered to a minority of special interests.'"*

- Jane Lloyd-Smith (JL-S) stated that BCWF and R&G club representatives were welcome and encouraged their participation.
- RB questioned how non-affiliated resident anglers consult with their "constituents" and ensure their views at the SFAC are in fact representative of the independent angler in their area of interest. Peter Hague identified that he directly communicated with other non affiliated anglers in his area to construct an opinion.

## Terms of Reference (ToR)

- MB conveyed that the only changes to the ToR were the membership list; specifically that the committee member from the Haida Gwaii no longer attends the SFAC as regulation advisory for the HG is now completed via the Vancouver Island Region (Region 1) fisheries advisory committee.

*Comment from M. Beere: Ver. 1.3 (March 2011) of the Terms of Reference (ToR) was changed to reflect membership changes due to the fact that the Haida Gwaii are no longer part of the region; changes made to the ToR addressed the rod and gun club membership change but omitted to include the non-affiliate resident angler change as passed at the March 20, 2011, SFAC meeting (please see page 1 of the meeting minutes). This correction has been made (Ver. 1.4, March 2011)*

- DB identified that the Tweedsmuir R&G has not been affiliated with the BCWF for 25 years. He clarified that he represents the Tweedsmuir R&G only and is not able to speak for or represent the Bulkley Valley, Terrace, Prince Rupert nor Kitimat R&G clubs.
- Gene Allen (GA) identified that that we need to take the safe approach with regard to managing our regions' fish.
- Jim Culp (JC) outlined that we will never be able to get a complete poll of the public opinion on regulation proposals or fisheries issues and that this group is advisory. He continued to state that we must be civil and that there are many reasons for a regulation change (i.e. not just a conservation concern).
- MB identified regulation development history prior to SFAC; how regulations are amended and the differences between the federal Sport Fish Advisory Board (SFAB) and the SFAC.
- Mark Regan (MR) gave a short history of SFAB and its process. MB related that after 2005, the province initiated its own process rather than attending all SFAB meetings within the region. MR noted that a component of the SFAB is now called the Sport Fish Advisory Committee (SFAC). More discussion was had regarding what the SFAB represents (co-management concepts etc.).
- JL-S pointed out that voting on proposals is not the desire of the Ministry it's more the message we are hearing that is important.
- Denys Bell reiterated that in no way does he represent any other regional R&G groups that declined to attend this years meeting. He also wanted to know how the other three R&G Clubs and BCWF representative will have their voices heard?
- Dana Atagi (DA) identified that one key point of access is the Ministry's new Angling, Hunting and Trapping Engagement web site will post all regulations that have been submitted to the Director of Fish, Wildlife and Habitat Management Branch. MB noted that the Ministry has always and will continue to engage with a wide variety of stakeholders on an ongoing basis, which is another point of access or comment.
- DB identified that this approach was unfortunate as he would not be able to review all the other stakeholder submissions so the process was not transparent.
- RB commented that if the R&G and BCWF choose not to attend the SFAC meeting then it is difficult to ask for more opportunities.

- Joe De Gisi (JD) pointed out from the provincial *Freshwater Fisheries Program Plan* identifies that the majority of anglers are not represented by formal organizations so their opinions are not necessarily solicited through existing consultative processes.
- PH reiterated that he develops his perspectives as a non-affiliated resident angler from discussions with other anglers in his area. He questioned whether there are too many steelhead centric anglers sitting at the table and perhaps we should rethink the ToR and involve more non affiliated anglers in the absence of the three R&G clubs and the BCWF representative.
- GA concerned that more non-affiliated may bog the process down.
- JL-S identified that the three R&G clubs are welcome to come to the next SFAC meeting and stated that they will continue to be asked each year. MB clarifies that the past members were invited and welcomed and will invite them each year.
- DB requested that the non attending R&G Clubs be sent minutes and the Ministry committed to doing that.
- DB stated that the SFAC is no SHAC and the process and operates quite differently from one another. DA pointed out that SHAC meetings may operate differently than SFAC but their function to government is the same.
- MB identified that both that RD and JC are not presently committee members (RD no longer representing NCSA? and JC and alternate for the SSBC).
- DB felt that a disparaging remark from one SFAC member to another in 2010 was not adequately dealt with by the SFAC. MB described how these have not been permitted at SFAC meetings and he has discouraged these situations in the past, that there have been a number of e-mail exchanges that would be deemed inappropriate from a variety of members since the inception of the committee. MB stated that the Province is responsible to formally referee this inappropriate behavior in the future.
- JL-S stated that it's up to all committee members to discourage this kind of behavior.

## **FW Section Head Responses to the 2011 SFAC Regulation Proposals**

- **SFAC 2011-01** MB outlined the proposal and that it was recommended to not be forwarded to the Director. MB referred to Fisheries Program Plan mandate that a wide variety of angling opportunities be provided.
- **SFAC 2011-02** This proposal was withdrawn.
- **SFAC 2011-03** MB advised that the primary publications referred to in this proposal are available to all interested parties. DA identified that this should go to Provincial Advisory Committee (Victoria) for consideration as this would be applied provincially as opposed to a regional regulation. The committee discussed further if it should be a regulation or an education piece. MB identified that other neighboring jurisdictions do not allow removal of fish from the water and that it is illegal in Washington State.
- **SFAC 2011-04** MB discussed the management considerations for the Lakelse Watershed and the options and what will be forwarded and what will not. DB stated that in his opinion, non retention of trout/char in the streams of the region is a stretch. He wanted to know if the BCWF had heard of this proposal before they declined to attend this year's SFAC meeting. Jeff Lough (JL) confirmed that they

were not aware of the proposal. DA outlined that stakeholder comments over and above the SFAC will be accepted via the Ministries new Angling, Hunting and Trapping Engagement web site <http://a100.gov.bc.ca/pub/ahte/>. Proposals will be posted on this site in November of the year prior to the implementation of a new regulation in the Freshwater Fishing Regulation Synopsis.

RB raised a question with respect to vulnerability trout/char in Lakelse Lake as possibly being high. JL outlined how risk to populations in lakes and rivers are considered differently by the Branch, with a higher probability of encounters in the river than in the lake. Lake effort is often more dispersed, as are the fish. JL recognized that there are times and locations (prespawning and foraging) when trout/char may congregate in lakes that make them more vulnerable.

- **SFAC 2011-08** Presented with no questions from the committee.
- **SFAC 2011-09** Presented with no questions from the committee.
- **SFAC 2011-10** Presented. AW questioned the stock assessment and evaluation portion of the trout/char proposal. MB responded that program capacity and technological limitations will drive our stock assessment but we have successfully pursued funding to study cutthroat trout in one watershed, and, where technically possible and resources allow, we will continue with assessments/evaluations.
- **SFAC 2011-11** Presented with no questions from the committee.
- **SFAC 2011-12** Presented. DB- Suggests that, in his opinion, the Ministry may have “shot ourselves in the foot” with respect to the trout/char proposed precautionary management approach. DB asked if Ministry staff had considered when the election is being held?
- **SFAC 2011-13** Presented. MB clarified that the alternate trout/char precautionary approach to management of trout/char in streams also applies to this proposal and will be forwarded to the Director and posted on the Angling, Hunting and Trapping Engagement web site for comment.
- **SFAC 2011-14** Presented and MB clarified that the alternate trout/char precautionary approach to management of trout/char in streams also applies to this proposal. No questions from the committee.

## 2012 SFAC Regulation Proposals

- **SFAC 2012-1** MB reviewed the proposal and gave a biological summary of the science that states there is an impact of walking/wading on redds during key periods of egg incubation.
- RB suggested another option that may have the desired effect. Consider a periodical closure of fishing during the coho spawning period. Additional comments identified that the closure should be included to protect steelhead eggs from wading impacts as well. This concept resulted in three options: 1) a fall closure (exact period TBA with more research); (2) Fall and Spring closure (exact periods TBA with more research); (3) year round closure to angling to protect eggs of all species of fish from any potential impact.
- AW pointed out the vulnerability period is after spawning and before hardening off.
- RB suggested a no fishing regulation for steelhead in the area may meet the objective. BP thinks that it should be closed but does not agree with RB’s approach.
- MR pointed out that an area closure to be successful would require both federal and provincial agreement as an area closure would have salmon fishing implications as well. MR also identified that we couldn’t implement a “no wading allowed” regulation under the Fisheries Act.

- LP identified that they are opposed to the area closure concept unless it was year round.
- AW wonders if this would be applicable to the whole region and DA points out several sites that a similar concerns and discusses the triploid process is induced by shocking (using pressure – in this instance anglers stepping on eggs, and temperature).
- Conservation Officer Darryl Struthers (DS) suggested that whatever is proposed it should be implemented using existing boundaries in the upper river (i.e. lake signage to CNR bridge).
- AW pointed out that the proposal was aimed at protecting the eggs of all fish species rather than just steelhead or salmon.
- RB identified that the SSBC has an educational sign at the site and that society makes efforts to educate anglers at the site. An additional concept involving a Ministry educational sign was proposed for consideration.
- JC outlined an experimental approach using incubation boxes and monitoring survivals after exposure to wading etc.
- JC and RB identified that the Spring trout/char fishery in this area is significant and a complete closure would be a significant impact to that fishery. They suggest perhaps the April opening with a May closure may be appropriate.
  - Support:
  - Against:
  - Alternative approach (closure periods TBA):
  - Ministry signage concept:
  - Jim Culp’s experiment concept:
  - Abstain: 2 (outside their area)
- No consensus could be found so a vote was not held.

12:00 PM - BREAK FOR LUNCH

12:55 PM – RECONVENE

- Prior to recommencing with the 2012 regulation proposals, GA wanted to identify that on the Kispiox River, the sanctuary/refuge areas for steelhead are the deep pools and these areas are still being hit hard by gear anglers. Gene presented his observations on one day that a single angler caught 43 fish using float gear and his clients caught five fish between three clients. The two groups “hop scotched” each other all day so GA’s group wasn’t just being scooped on each hole. Gene points out that we need to “think about the fish” more and that he feels that we should regulate gear anglers during the classified waters period.
- **SFAC 2012-2** Options proposed were read by MB. RB comments that it makes sense to have the temporal closure for just the creek and the mouth. GA identified his concerns about the leaving the mouth open as steelhead will be congregated there as well. JC gave history of the Cedarvale angling boundary that was delineated by Bob Hooton with support from JC. JC originally thought the steelhead

in Insect Creek were winter run fish but is now aware that they are summer run. Therefore JC feels that it is fair game to relook at the angling boundary now that we know more about the life history of that population of fish.

- As an alternative DA suggested moving fishing boundary downstream to Skeena West Bridge and have the mainstem no fishing regulation apply there from January 1 to May 31<sup>st</sup>. However we could maintain the tributary closures upstream of the Skeena West Bridge until June 15<sup>th</sup>. DA points out this approach would require two regulation changes. MR pointed out that if the boundary is moved as outlined in Option 2 then that may influence early run timing salmon fishing and would require Federal agreement with the proposal.
- LP stated that we should all take up golf.
  - Support Option 3: 6 total
  - Against Option 3: 1
  - Abstain: 0
- DB was not in support of all options or alternatives for this proposal however he did not abstain due to the proposal being outside of his area of representation.
- **SFAC 2012-3** Proposal reviewed for the committee by MB. RB suggested that they don't need the sodium sulfite for bait to work well well. RD identified that use of sulfites can make a difference on juvenile salmonid survival. BP- "Impact is more using the sulfite impact than folks walking on eggs in redds".
- DB pointed out that this proposal should be referred to the Provincial Angling Advisory Team (PAAT) for review.
- DA stated that the consumers should review the product contents list from Pro Cure etc. where available.
- GA pointed out that where there is a catch and release fishery why are we allowing the use of bait?
- MB outlined Oregon's approach to sulfites in bait use and suggests taking an angler education approach. This could be in the form of an education piece posted in the BC Synopsis (similar to Oregon).
  - Support: 0 (as written)
  - Against: 1
  - Support for alternative education approach posted in the regulations: 6
- DB stated he was against both the proposal as written and the education alternative.

*Comment received from D. Bell, April 10, 2012: "My opposition to the proposal and the education alternative is based on the assumption that levels of toxicity of any and most elements or compounds can be lethal if administered in sufficient quantities over a sufficiently long period of time. Selecting this element or compound over others (i.e. lead (as in weights) or plastics as in artificial fly plastics) makes no sense unless other known toxic elements or compounds are also listed that could be harmful at the same quantity over the same period of time."*

## SFAC 2012-4 & SFAC 2012-5

The table suggested that the committee combine SFAC 2012-4 and SFAC2012 as they are similar and both apply to the same watershed. The Chair and the Committee members agree with this approach.

- Proposal read by MB.
- GA and JC stated that the Ministry needs to rethink what we're doing and consider a more conservation-minded, precautionary approach.
- LP clearly identified that the BCFDF does not support this proposal. SAGA presented 5 similar themed regulation types to the BCFDF in the past and this approach will restrict "resident" anglers.
- BP felt that this proposal was a way to make more money for the guides as they feel these gear fishermen will reduce catch by the guides. "This proposal not required".
- GA pointed out that the resident gear fishermen are bringing nothing to the table and are the most destructive and consumptive (gear anglers etc). They catch and therefore kill more of the fish when the use gear.
- DB submitted that need to have opportunities for kids to start angling with gear. DB identified that he is a born-again fly fisherman and a fly fishing regulation doesn't allow the local resident to start getting into angling.
- RB suggested that there are other opportunities to fish with gear. For example anglers can take young gear anglers to the Skeena mainstem. They should not fish with gear on smaller streams where fish are more vulnerable and stocks are potentially smaller.
- LP felt that this proposal is all about getting rid of the resident anglers. He felt that one chinook per month was the start and that "they are coming after us".
- GA identified that he is not in support of 536 guided RD allocated on Skeena 4 as determined by the SQW review. Gene states that we should think about the fish and the more they get hooked the higher the mortality is. Fly fishing is easier on the fish and therefore there is less mortality. Look to Alaska as "they are way ahead of us"
- JC described how special the dry fly fishery is for summer run steelhead and we don't really appreciate how special it is in a global sense.
  - Support: 3
  - Against: 4

Note that this was for both proposals

- **SFAC 2012-6** DA clarification on gazette name is Zymagotitz
- BP identified that the bridge upstream of Erlandson Cr. has washed out and "the population" is still good shape (he didn't say what species).
- DA the spring fishery there is not much effort or catch except in the fall and the effort then is mostly for coho.
- PH access is the issue on the Zymagotitz and there's not much access to the upper river now.
- GA never used to release a CT on the Kispiox. He used to catch 10-15 cutthroat/day and catches 1 cutthroat/day now if he is lucky.



- JL asked PH about the distribution upstream of the old bridge PH points out that the angling is all downstream of the old bridge site and the distribution upstream is unknown. RB pointed out that the fishing upstream of the old bridge used to be good when the bridge was in.
  - Support: 2
  - Against: 4
  - Abstain: 1

3:30 PM - BREAK

#### **Fisheries Program Staff Presentations**

- Skeena steelhead management (MB)
- Kitwanga R. Didson Sonar - steelhead counting project Dean Peard (DP)
- Provincial and regional lake char management update (JD)
- Regional Fisheries Activities (JL)

4:45 PM - ADJOURN