

Fish and Wildlife Section Head Decision: SFAC Regulation Proposal 2015-01

Proposal Title: Bait Ban – Zymacord River Year-Round

Proponent: Dustin Kovacvich – Skeena Angling Guides Association

Proposed Regulation Change: Bait ban year-round
Summary of issue(s) proposal is to address: <p>The main objective of this regulation is to protect the char population from excess mortality by anglers either targeting them or as by catch during Steelhead and Coho fisheries. The Zymacord river is prime breeding and rearing habitat for both Bull Trout and Dolly Varden Char.</p> <p>Since the former logging road has been rebuilt and access has increased there has been a noticeable drop in the catch rates of Char on the Zymacord River. Even with full catch and release regulations the mortality for Char according to Alaskan research is around 30% to 40% when bait is used and almost nil when bait is not used.</p> <p>Since we have total catch and release regulations for Char in streams region wide it would be advisable that a bait ban be put on the Zymacord river to reduce the mortality rates for caught and released Char.</p> <p>The expected outcome would be that Char survival rates would increase and lead to a healthier more robust Char population in the Zymacord River.</p>
Regulatory/ Policy Impediments: <i>(list & provide details)</i> None.
Existing Regulation & Justification Summary: <i>(may include biological comments)</i> Just blanket Skeena Regulations apply
Management Considerations: <i>(summarize relevant: stock status, life history information, exploitation levels/limits, information or observations from other geographic locations or jurisdictions & relevant examples / references from the literature, social issues)</i> <p>The Fish and Wildlife Branch lacks information about the specific conservation status for Zymacord fish populations.</p>
Available Options: <i>(where appropriate, incorporate biological information above that supports an alternative approach to achieve the same outcome more effectively)</i> N/A
Summary of SFAC Issues and Concerns: Four SFAC members were in favour, 4 opposed. Comments in favour related that trout and char captured with bait fisheries have a higher mortality that those caught with other gear-types. Some

voiced the opinion that education was key and that banning bait year-round would impact salmon anglers. The committee recommended that the proposal not be forwarded for approval.

Fish and Wildlife Section Head Decision:

Not recommended to forward for further consultation on the provincial Ministry angling engagement website, nor to the Director of Fish, Wildlife and Habitat Management for consideration.

Signed by:

Fish and Wildlife Section Head

Date

Fish and Wildlife Section Head Decision: SFAC Regulation Proposal 2015-02 & 2015-03

Proposal Title: Fly-fishing Only, Clore River and Zymoetz River I, July 24 to December 31

Proponent: Dustin Kovacvich – Skeena Angling Guides Association

Proposed Regulation Change:

Fly fishing only on Clore River and Zymoetz River I during the period of July 24 to December 31 (submitted as two distinct proposals but combined by agreement of the committee).

Summary of issue(s) proposal is to address:

The proposal asserts that a small minority of gear anglers hook and ‘put down’ much larger numbers of steelhead per angler, thus greatly decreasing the potential success and quality of angling for the majority fly anglers on these two waters. In addition, the proposal asserts that steelhead holding in deep pools in late season are more vulnerable to gear angling than fly angling, implying that reduced catch resulting from a fly-only regulation would reduce stress on overwintering steelhead.

Regulatory/ Policy Impediments: *(list & provide details)*

None.

Existing Regulation & Justification Summary: *(may include biological comments)*

Both waters

- Bait ban all year
- Steelhead Conservation Surcharge stamp required, July 24 to Dec 31
- Canadian-residents only on Friday, Saturday and Sunday during classified period

Zymoetz River I

- Classified Waters Licence (Class I) required, July 24 to Dec 31

Clore River

- Classified Waters Licence (Class II) required, July 24 to May 31

Management Considerations: *(summarize relevant: stock status, life history information, exploitation levels/limits, information or observations from other geographic locations or jurisdictions & relevant examples / references from the literature, social issues)*

The Fish and Wildlife Branch lacks information about the specific conservation status for Clore and Zymoetz steelhead.

Although the proposal relates to steelhead, fly fishing only would presumably also affect angling success rates for salmon and resident trout and char in these waters.

Available Options: *(where appropriate, incorporate biological information above that supports an alternative approach to achieve the same outcome more effectively)*

N/A

Summary of SFAC Issues and Concerns:

One SFAC members were in favour, 5 opposed, 2 abstained for the SFAC 2015-02 while SFAC 2015-03 had 2 in favour, 5 opposed and 1 abstaining. Comments in favour tended to support the idea that fly angling is “easier on the fish”, that the majority of anglers on these two waters are participating a unique fly fishery whose quality is degraded by gear angling, and that gear fishing is more appropriate on bigger waters such as the Skeena mainstem. Comments in opposition asserted that the proposal would primarily restrict and negatively impact resident anglers. Significantly, most agreed that fly-fishing is has evolved to be considerably more effective and such a regulation would not be the solution to reducing encounter rates. The committee recommended that the proposal not be forwarded for approval

Fish and Wildlife Section Head Decision:

Not recommended to forward for further consultation on the provincial Ministry angling engagement website, nor to the Director of Fish, Wildlife and Habitat Management for consideration.

Signed by:

Fish and Wildlife Section Head

Date

Fish and Wildlife Section Head Decision: SFAC Regulation Proposal 2015-04

Proposal Title: Kispiox River Fly Fishing only September 1 – October 31

Proponent: Gene Allen – Upper Skeena Angling Guides Association

<p>Proposed Regulation Change:</p> <p>Fly fishing only on the Kispiox River during the classified waters period - September 1st to October 31st</p>
<p>Summary of issue(s) proposal is to address:</p> <p>The proponent, who lives and works on the Kispiox River, has observed relatively high mortality rates for steelhead captured using plastic scented worms, in contrast to fly fishing, and wishes to see a reduction in steelhead mortality in this world famous catch and release fishery.</p>
<p>Regulatory/ Policy Impediments: <i>(list & provide details)</i></p> <p>None.</p>
<p>Existing Regulation & Justification Summary: <i>(may include biological comments)</i></p> <p>Bait ban.</p>
<p>Management Considerations: <i>(summarize relevant: stock status, life history information, exploitation levels/limits, information or observations from other geographic locations or jurisdictions & relevant examples / references from the literature, social issues)</i></p> <p>Bait is currently defined in the Freshwater Fishing Regulations Synopsis: “‘Bait’ is any foodstuff or natural substance used to attract fish, other than wood, cotton, wool, hair, fur or feathers. It does not include fin fish, other than roe. It includes roe, worms and other edible substances, as well as scents and flavourings containing natural substances and nutrients.” (From page 9 of the Freshwater Fishing Regulations Synopsis). By this definition, scented rubber worms are currently not a legal terminal tackle. BC fisheries managers promote a diverse array of allowable angling methods to encourage participation.</p>
<p>Available Options: <i>(where appropriate, incorporate biological information above that supports an alternative approach to achieve the same outcome more effectively)</i></p> <p>N/A</p>
<p>Summary of SFAC Issues and Concerns:</p>

There were 3 in favour and 4 opposed with one abstaining from the Skeena Fish Advisory Committee. Comments from those in favour included citing concern for stressing fish and their need for sanctuary areas and the desire to reduce the efficiency of anglers – to provide good opportunities for many rather than exceptional opportunities for a few. Comments from those opposed include not favouring terminal tackle changes if a conservation concern could not be proven and that education and hook size were key issues in addition to the illegality of scented artificial lures. Significantly, most agreed that fly-fishing is has evolved to be considerably more effective and such a regulation would not be the solution to reducing encounter rates The committee recommended that the proposal not be forwarded to the Regional Manager for approval.

Fish and Wildlife Section Head Decision:

Not recommended to forward to the Director of Fish, Wildlife and Habitat Management for implementation.

Signed by:

Fish and Wildlife Section Head

Date

Fish and Wildlife Section Head Decision: SFAC Regulation Proposal SFAC 2015-06

Proposal Title: Increase the Classified Waters licence fee for non-residents on the Kispiox River (SFAC 2015-6).

Proponent: Gene Allen – Upper Skeena Angling Guides Association

Proposed Regulation Change:

Increase the Classified Waters licence fee for all non-residents from \$20/day to \$50/day.

While not stated in the proposal, the proponent clarified during the 2015 SFAC meeting that this regulation change was intended for the Skeena Region and/or the Kispiox River.

Summary of issue(s) proposal is to address: *(as stated in the proposal)*

From the proposal: The extra revenue could be applied to help enhance funds for wild Steelhead projects. This is still a reasonable price to pay compared to other river systems that are not as special as the Skeena River system.

The proponent indicated during the 2015 SFAC meeting that this proposal may also discourage excessive non-resident use.

Regulatory/ Policy Impediments: *(list & provide details)*

There is no policy which describes “how to” set fees for angling licences. The ministry has received feedback from anglers that current fees for Steelhead fishing are relatively low. For example, during the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy process, a Skeena Steelhead Stamp was proposed. This stamp was intended to complement the existing Steelhead Stamp to better value the Skeena watershed Steelhead resource. Stakeholders felt this was necessary as the cost to participate in the Skeena Steelhead fishery is considerably cheaper than comparable fishing opportunities for this species.

Existing Regulation & Justification Summary: *(may include biological comments)*

The Classified Waters licence fee on the Kispiox River for non-residents and non-resident aliens is \$20/day (\$21/day including GST). This is the sum of a \$14/day fee and \$6/day conservation surcharge. These fee amounts are identified in Schedule C of the *Angling and Scientific Collection Regulation* under the *Wildlife Act* and apply to all Class 2 waters in the province. The following price changes have occurred to Class 2 waters over time:

1. 1990/1992: Classified Waters introduced. \$10/day for non-residents.
2. 1997/1998: \$40/day for non-residents (note - distinction between Class 1 and 2 waters was apparently eliminated during this licence year).
3. 1998/1999: \$10/day for non-residents.
4. 2003/2004: \$20/day for non-residents.

The rationale for historical Classified Water licence fee changes is not well documented.

Management Considerations: *(summarize relevant: stock status, life history information, exploitation levels/limits, information or observations from other geographic locations or jurisdictions & relevant examples / references from the literature, social issues)*

Classified Water fees are currently set for Class 1 and 2 waters at the provincial level. Water specific fees are not currently used for Classified Waters, however, this approach has been applied for some conservation surcharges (e.g. Kootenay Lake Rainbow Trout, Shuswap Lake char).

Recognizing fees for Class 2 waters have remained static for the last 12 years, there is a basis to consider increases relative to indicators such as the Consumer Price Index (published by Statistics Canada) or the market value of similar offerings. For example, BC is commonly acknowledged as “cheap” relative to other Steelhead and Atlantic Salmon fisheries. Anadromous fisheries that offer wild stocks, beautiful rivers and relatively natural setting are a scarce commodity, as demonstrated by the international attention received by the Skeena Steelhead fishery.

It is also important to note that when price changes have occurred over time (i.e. doubling of CW fees in 2003 for non-residents), this did not impact overall participation rates in the Skeena Region, suggesting there was a higher willingness to pay amongst such anglers at the time.

Presently, the administration of revenue for a \$20 Class 2 non-resident daily licences is allocated to the Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC (\$14) and the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation general fund (\$6). Increasing the price of the Class 2 licence may require new considerations for this allocation model.

As noted during the 2015 SFAC meeting, changes to the price for Class 2 waters would also require corresponding increases to the fees for Class 1 waters. Further, policy direction for setting fees on Classified Waters does not currently exist. This policy gap creates a void whereby ministry staff will be unable to consistently evaluate future applications for water specific fee changes. Recognizing this, a review of Classified Water licence fees at the regional and/or provincial level may be required to assess if price changes are required (similar to the Recreational Stewardship Panel that provided angling fee recommendations to government in 2003 when CW fees were doubled for non-residents).

To implement water-specific Classified Waters fees, changes to the *Angling and Scientific Collection Regulation* and Cabinet and Treasury Board review/approval would be required.

Available Options: *(where appropriate, incorporate biological information above that supports an alternative approach to achieve the same outcome more effectively)*

N/A

Summary of SFAC Issues and Concerns:

- Generally felt that Steelhead fishing in the Skeena Region is a bargain.
- There was concern this proposal would expand the existing gap in fees paid by residents and non-residents. It was felt that regulations should not pit Canadians against each other; non-residents would like to pay once per season similar to the current fee structure for residents.

Vote: 6 in favor and 2 against

Fish and Wildlife Section Head Decision:

Recommend forwarding to the Director of Fish and Wildlife for further discussion, recognizing classified water fees are currently set at the provincial level.

Signed by:

Fish and Wildlife Section Head

Date: