

**Eleventh Annual
Skeena Fisheries Advisory Committee Meeting
Skeena Valley Golf and Country Club
March 19, 2017**

In attendance

Committee Members

Larry Proteau - BC Federation of Drift Fishers (BCFDF)
Jim Culp – BC Federation of Fly Fishers (BC FFF)
Malte Juergensen – Non-affiliated independent angler – Lower Skeena/Nass
Philip Maher - Terrace Rod and Gun Club (TRGC)
Troy Peters - Steelhead Society of BC (SSBC) Northern Branch
Rob Vodola – Non-affiliated independent angler – Kitimat
Brian Patrick - Regional Tackle Vendor Community
Gene Allen - Upper Skeena Angling Guides Association (USAGA)
Randy Dozzi – North Coast Steelhead Alliance (NCSA)

Provincial Government Employees – Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (MFLNRO)/Ministry of Environment (MOE)/BC Parks and Conservation Officer Service Division

Joe De Gisi – Stock Assessment Biologist (Chair)
Troy Larden – Fish and Wildlife Section Head
Dean Peard – Resource Information Biologist
Kris Maier – Fisheries Management Biologist
Kenji Miyazaki - Fisheries Management Biologist
Gareth Scrivner – BC Conservation Officer Service
Scott Senkiw – BC Conservation Officer Service
Mark Beere – Senior Fisheries Biologist (Minutes)

Stakeholders/Observers

Melissa Moure

Regrets/not present

Rob Brown – North Coast Steelhead Alliance (NCSA alternate)*
Dustin Kovacovich – Skeena Angling Guides Association (SAGA alternate)*
Walter Faetz - Skeena Angling Guides Association*
Frank Guillon – Bulkley Valley Rod and Gun Club, Smithers*
Mike Langedger – BC Wildlife Federation*
Jim Grilz – Prince Rupert Rod and Gun Club*
Dallas Matson – Tweedsmuir Rod and Gun Club*

John Webb – Recreational Fisheries Manager – Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO)

* SFAC committee member

0930 hrs to 1000 hrs – Coffee, sign-in, name tags, seating

1000 hours - Introductions/committee and Housekeeping

NB: 9 committee members present of the total membership of 16, thus, item 5 (50% of the committee must be in attendance) from *Meetings/Procedures* section of the Skeena Fisheries Advisory Committee Terms of Reference (TOR) Version 1.5 (May 2016) is met

Joe De Gisi (JD) - 1005 hrs - Meeting commenced, welcome and introductions made, no new agenda items requested

JD asked if stakeholder present, **Melissa Moure (MM)** would like to act as a non-affiliated angler representative

MM – ‘No’ to acting as independent non-affiliated angler representative

JD – acknowledged the presence of more than 50% of members; discussed a chinook proposal received from the USAGA and distributed to the committee membership that is outside the scope of the TOR and explained that Fisheries staff have never filtered proposals, Skeena chinook status is of concern to all in the room, chinook are an iconic species in the watershed and that he had spoken to DFO Recreational Fisheries Manager, John Webb and John was amenable to/interested in such a discussion – the inclination of the Chair was that if there was time at the end of the meeting, discussion could take place after this session was officially adjourned

Jim Culp (JC) – chinook are applicable and a distinct overlap exists because we could have a total angling closure which would, in-turn, impact fisheries within the TOR of this committee

Gene Allen (GA) – chinook proposal is perhaps out of scope but is a very important issue

1016 hrs

JD – provided an overview of the SFAC 2017 package, covered old business, the last TOR update and the late responses to 2016 proposals due to Fisheries Section capacity

JC – noted that this is not a voting process and that the TOR very clearly state that we don't vote and recommends we stick to that and don't vote; he expressed his frustration to read in proposal reviews that voting still occurs he had invested a lot of time in writing them

JD – voting doesn't affect the decision – consensus not a vote – for the decision maker, the vote provides a rough idea of the balance of opinion of the committee

Philip Maher (PM) – last year we came to a consensus that we can vote

JD – reviewed old meeting minutes and the same views of PM and JC still exist and we still don't have “consensus on consensus”

Mark Beere (MB) – reviewed the history of the committee with respect to voting and consensus and reiterated that while the committee is encouraged to strive for consensus recommendations, it remains an advisory committee to provide advice, which may not be adopted even where consensus is achieved

JC – TOR need to be amended to show committee members can vote but the vote doesn't affect the outcome

JD - completed action items from 2016

1030 hrs - 2016 Fish and Wildlife Section Head Recommendations

JD - first noted Quality Waters proposals will comprise a component of the QW review to come; read responses and provided detail, clarification where applicable

SFAC 2016-1 – Lachmach No Fishing Regulation Repeal - mirror order repealed – Lachmach was an index stream and no longer functions as such

SFAC 2016-2 – Spoon Fishing/Hook Size Concerns – the proposal states that hook size is the main driver for an increase in mortality – the review found that there was no evidence that spoons cause more injury than other non-fly non-bait methods, reference to page 9 of the 2017 SFAC package – no ability/'tool' to make spoons unlawful and only able to have either no hook size restriction or no hooks greater than 15 mm from point to shank - decision to review of hook size and the effects on fish mortality

JC – appreciate the effort made but we need to follow through and implement

Troy Larden (TL) – not a small deal but a big deal to alter hook size and to determine the impacts to other fisheries – would require considerable consultation with stakeholders – timing also of issue: 20 months before the next regulation cycle – we'll do a proper investigation to determine what is involved in changing hook size and where/when it might make sense

GA – let's think about fish rather than impact to stakeholders – we need to take care of the fish because if we take care of the fish, the stakeholders will in turn be taken care of

JD – if DFO isn't willing to mirror a provincial change, that is significant

JC – put forward a motion at the SFAB - larger hooks have a bigger impact than smaller hooks – cited chinook work conducted previously

1051 hrs

SFAC 2016-3 – Skeena II Classified Waters Timing - QWS proposal for another process

SFAC 2016-4 – Skeena Watershed Bait Ban Proposal – watershed-wide bait bans require consideration of all federally regulated fisheries as well – overwintering steelhead (Interior Summer Run ecotype) are currently protected with bait bans or seasonal angling closures – bait ban not recommended

SFAC 2016-5 – Zymoetz River Seasonal Closure – recommendation to re-submit – life history needs to be considered in addition to climate change and the proponent must stress just what is desired and the rationale for same

SFAC 2016-6 – Zymoetz Catch Limit – Order In Council required – Atlantic salmon fisheries now entertain catch and release quotas – offers the potential to keep fisheries open rather than close them down – regulation a long way from being in the tool box but it won't be if we don't begin to examine – recommended to begin the process of establishing how catch and release limits could become a tool in future

SFAC 2016-7 – helicopter use limitation for the Zymoetz

TL – looked at existing regulations/jurisdiction – currently exists, difficult to enforce – discussed the regulation that one cannot transport hunters and game

Rob Vodola (RV) – guides are not currently restricted?

TL – only 2 stops for an angler – not a guide

GA – upper Skeena much new effort – aggressive anglers/guides – and not just the Zymoetz should be considered here

JC – history on the Zymoetz – so guides aren't limited to 2 stops?

TL – I'm gonna say I don't know

JD – don't have time for more discussion – it's clearly written in the response that the Ministry will fully review the options for this issue

1110 hrs

SFAC-8 – Skeena IV Resident Zone - QWS proposal for another process

SFAC-9 – Booking System for Skeena Classified Waters - QWS proposal for another process

SFAC 2016-10 – Zymoetz River Power Boat Ban – not recommended at present – JD reiterated that changes would be addressed via Transport Canada’s power boat regulation change process

SFAC 2016-11 – Kitsumkalum River Power Boat Ban and Catch and Release Limit – not recommended - continue to monitor; C&R Limit - recommended, as in SFAC 2016-6, above

SFAC 2016-12 – Zymoetz I Booking System - QWS proposal for another process

SFAC 2016-13 – Fly-Fishing Only Section of Zymoetz II – not recommended – BC wishes to continue to encourage a diversity of angling opportunities

SFAC 2016-14 – Bulkley-Morice Booking System - QWS proposal for another process

Break 1116 hrs to 1121 hrs

1122 hrs – 2017 Regulation Proposals

SFAC 2017 – 2 – Increase licence fees

JD read the proposal

Randy Dozzi (RD) – The Lakelse BC residents only regulation hasn’t decreased the effort/impact on the fish – restricting non-residents hasn’t solved the problem – higher fees won’t solve the problem

Malte Juergensen (MJ) – should be an option for a one-time licence for all classified streams, albeit higher fees – Canadians are Canadians – it’s a big country

GA – I agree with Randy – now more resident pressure on the Kispiox – 4 pickups on every hole – pressure is coming from Alberta

Troy Peters (TP) – agree that licence fee is cheap - \$100 too much but fees could be increased to a more appropriate fee

Larry Proteau (LP) – reduce guides and you’ll reduce effort

PM – increased cost is very inhibiting – if we are feeling the fish are being too hammered look at guide rod days – elitist to increase to \$100

Gareth Scrivner (GS) – can still fish but not on CW’s - will push people around and we’re seeing that already

GA – with the sale of 50 more rod days in Skeena IV – created a guiding business in all the non-classified rivers in the vicinity - 384 guided days on the Kispiox (84 days/guide) guides aren’t the problem

LP – not what I’m seeing in the Terrace area

TL – change would be on a provincial scale

JD – lost Jeff Lough and Paddy Hirshfield, who knew the QW's business – fee changes means a Treasury Board submission – significant administrative burden

PM – could a non-resident have a limited number of days – could, for example, an angler from Ireland get a 3 day licence on the Copper and then be required to fish elsewhere?

JD – doesn't know if that option exists

TL – would need to develop an Angling Use Plan that would quantify angler use to meet objectives – don't know if anglers are restricted to a block of time or not

JC – too many people fishing the rivers now – don't enjoy fishing the Zymoetz anymore – it's changed dramatically – same with the upper Lakelse – not many guided days on the Zymoetz really now

JD – will present the Classified Waters tag sales data later – clarified the Dean River situation – 8 day blocks of time and only 1 per year for non-resident aliens, which implies this approach could be used on other waters

GS – the fine isn't much more than the licence fee!

MJ – can we make friendly amendments?

RD – I could see some increase – provide a golf game cost as an example

GA – been the same price since 1990

MJ - \$15/year just a tracking – friendly amendment: – BC residents \$15/yr Can \$100/year non-Can \$50/day

GA – at \$100/day, Kispiox Band, flat fee of \$5000/yr – great for the first year of two but in 2016, upper Patch to lower patch, a river length of just over a mile, 57 anglers – we classified these rivers because they're special, \$300 for 3 days is nothing – Washington State anglers are illegally guiding on the Kispiox

PM – that's why I suggested limiting the number of days to limit illegal guiding – easier to police

GS – they're illegally guiding on North Coast waters often – e.g. Kitimat

MM – perhaps it's time to review the amount of money charged and how much the fines are worth

GS – a lot of people now are claiming to be BC residents to save \$20 or \$40/day

PM – shelve it now – don't vote now, discuss as anglers

GA – will accept a lower price but want to get something done! Need to see action and not just revisiting in subsequent years – don't have the resources – haven't seen a CO on the Kispiox for 5 years – let's take care of the resource and the BC residents first

Show of hands: 5 in favour, 4 opposed as written

SFAC 2017-3 – C&R limit – JD states we're already pursuing this

SFAC 2017-4 – Conservation Officer Dedicated Solely to Address Fish Issues during the Summer and Fall Seasons

JC – Guardians began to address this issue

JD – COS doesn't take direction from FLNRO – there is a FFSBC initiative to increase COS resources for fisheries enforcement

GS – that may have happened in the southern part of BC but not so far in Terrace area

Kris Maier (KM) – currently being negotiated for some FFSBC funds to come to Skeena to increase capacity in region

GS – requests have been made for times and places to focus from – checked most everyone in this room before!

TP – once hunting season starts, few CO's on angling issues

Show of hands: 8 for, 1 against

1200 – 1245 hrs Lunch

1250 hrs

TL – Quality Waters Update – Paddy still working on 2016 report and the summary report, still committed to doing that, lost Paddy and Jeff, we are moving forward on that file, we will resource this work – reg change proposals, etc.

JD – I don't think the region is committing to revisiting the QWs process

GA – thank God – this was the biggest expenditure money in the history of Fish and Wildlife and the biggest waste of tax payers' dollars

1300 hrs

FLNRO/MOE Presentations

JD – review of electronic licence system results for Province and QWs from 2009/2010 forward; Guardian program data – I don't have it here today

1318 hrs – Lakelse River Guardian Program Introduction - Kenji Miyazaki - presentation regarding Lakelse River Guardian Program (> changes to QWS)

1330 hrs – Regional Steelhead Update – Mark Beere - presentation regarding stock status, regional issues with a Provincial context

1410 hrs – sockeye prediction/fishery discussion

1415 hrs - Skeena Region Trout and Char Risk Assessment - Kris Maier

1437 hrs

LP – how long until you'll be able to change the regulations?

JD – we're closer to knowing whether we'll have more or less opportunities to retain T/C

GA – sea-run cutthroat (CT)/Dolly Varden (DV) in Kispiox when there are PK's in good abundance – really low abundance in the last 15 years!

1505 hrs

JD – trout/char research is in the works – changes to regulations could occur in the future, Kitimat CT work is in Kris's hands – perhaps regulation changes, perhaps recommendations for more assessment; LT regulations changes in the works by PhD students – likely regulations changes in the future as these animals don't recolonize

JD – The Future of the SFAC Process – JD requested participant feedback

JC – I like it, enjoyed the meeting

MJ – fine, although a shorter meeting would be more desirable

PM – Informative but should meet as stakeholder groups prior to the main meeting

GA – don't necessary want it to be shorter, no DFO, where's the threshold value for opening the chinook fishery – we have one for sockeye, two meetings a year would be more desirable, need a local level committee, enough things go to Victoria and nothing happens – moving responsibilities to Victoria is problematic (e.g. Licence and the chinook stamp/fresh water angling licence reprinting)

RV - agree with GA – 2 meetings/year would be desirable

RD – spread them out throughout the year

TP – I like it – 2X/yr would be good, updates sooner too

LP – SFAB process is far superior, meet 2X/yr, this process is valuable but the federal SFAB process has been here for 52 years, starts at the local level, moves up a level, eventually 3rd process at main board and proposals are expected to be implement

JC – this process isn't much different that the SFAB

TP – I'm pretty happy with this process, 2X/yr wouldn't be bad

MM – learning and observing, more tame than thought it would be

1558 hrs

TL – you're looking at the whole team to manage all fish issues over a large area, with lots of responsibilities, I'm here to enlighten you that the workload is substantial. Union agreement says double time is to be compensated for all BC employees working on a weekend day

MB – I have worked for the Fish and Wildlife Branch since 1986 and I have never been compensated at time-and-a-half let alone double time - this is a new initiative – Fisheries Section staff are already trying to find innovative ways to get the job done in spite of this recent directive – e.g. claiming work occurs on a weekday rather than a weekend day

JC – proposed that a lot of the process can happen independent of the gov't employees

MJ – weekday meeting would work

Show of hands: 7 of 9 could attend a week day meeting

JC – would like to see better feedback from us to stakeholders after the meeting

1610 hrs meeting adjourned

