

A person in a waders and cap is fishing in a river. The background is a soft-focus view of a river with autumn-colored trees on the banks.

Planning *for* World-class Steelhead Fishing

*If you care about steelhead
angling in the Skeena watershed,
you'll want to get involved
in the planning process.*

A Co-operative Approach to Recreational Fisheries Management

Rivers in the Skeena watershed have long been treasured, by residents and visitors alike, for excellent steelhead fishing. But sport anglers increasingly report that their angling experience is being compromised by crowding.

To solve this problem and improve steelhead angling on the Skeena River system, we need to work together – and plan how best to use this resource. That's why the B.C. Ministry of Environment is about to initiate an important community dialogue.

Read this brochure to learn:

- What the Quality Waters Strategy is
- What Angling Management Plans are
- How you can participate

Background:

Why Manage Steelhead Fishing at all?

Wild steelhead, a silvery, ocean-going species of trout that returns to fresh water to spawn, has always been important to the Skeena watershed. Over the past half-century, its popularity has soared among sport anglers, who revere its chart-topping size, abundance and ability to put up a great fight. As popular books and media reports continue to affirm its reputation, the species has become internationally renowned among anglers.

Today, the Skeena watershed's unrivalled steelhead angling draws residents as well as visitors, supports numerous guiding businesses, and benefits many local communities with tourism-related economic activity.

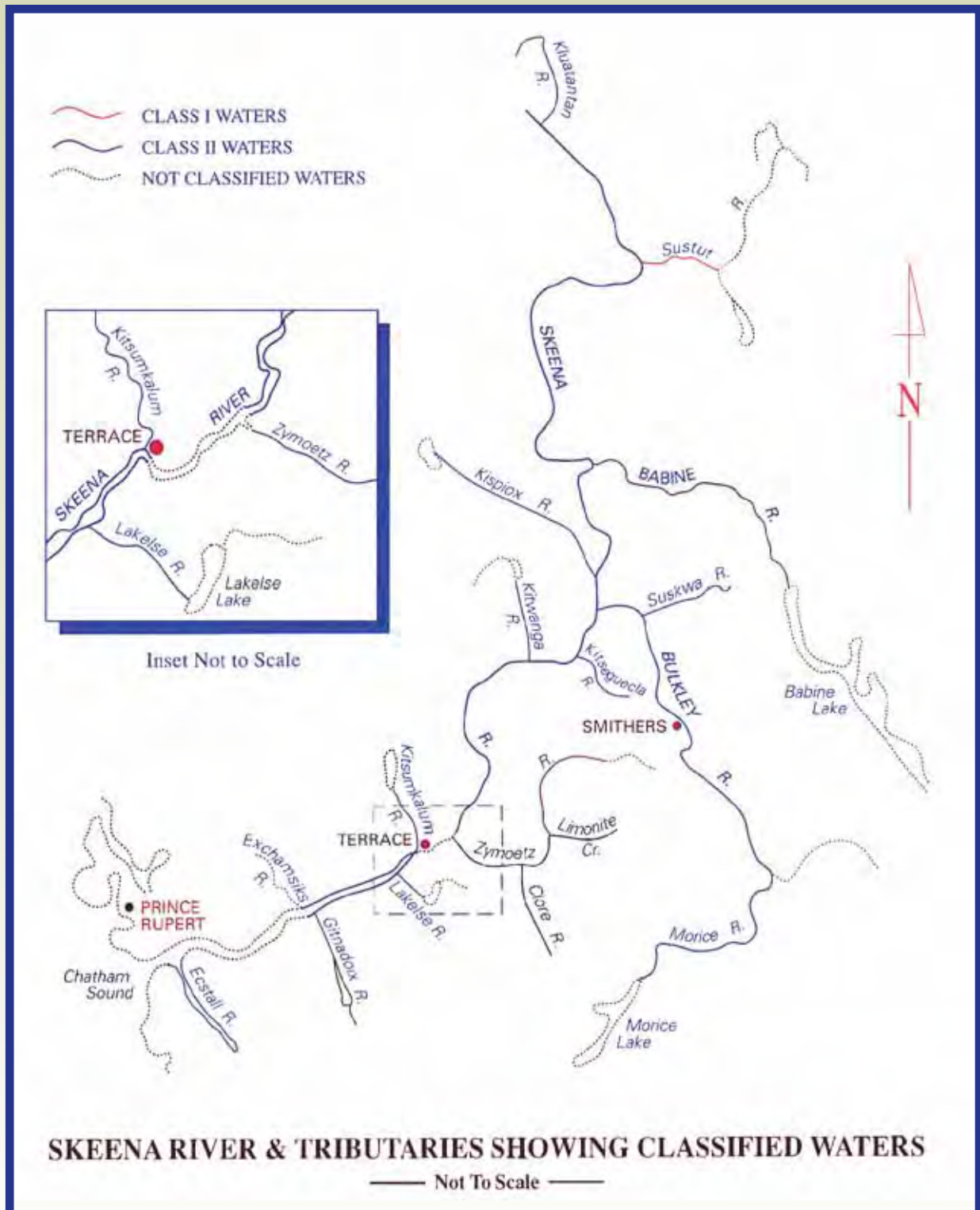
But fame comes with a price.



The Classified Waters Management System

As more anglers seek out legendary Skeena steelhead, many feel their experience of angling is being compromised by angler crowding.

To address this problem, which has been observed at other popular sport-fishing destinations, government introduced a province-wide Classified Waters sport-fishery management system in 1990. The system sought to improve the situation by classifying waters according to the quality of angling experiences they offer, and capping the number of “rod-days” available to angling guides.

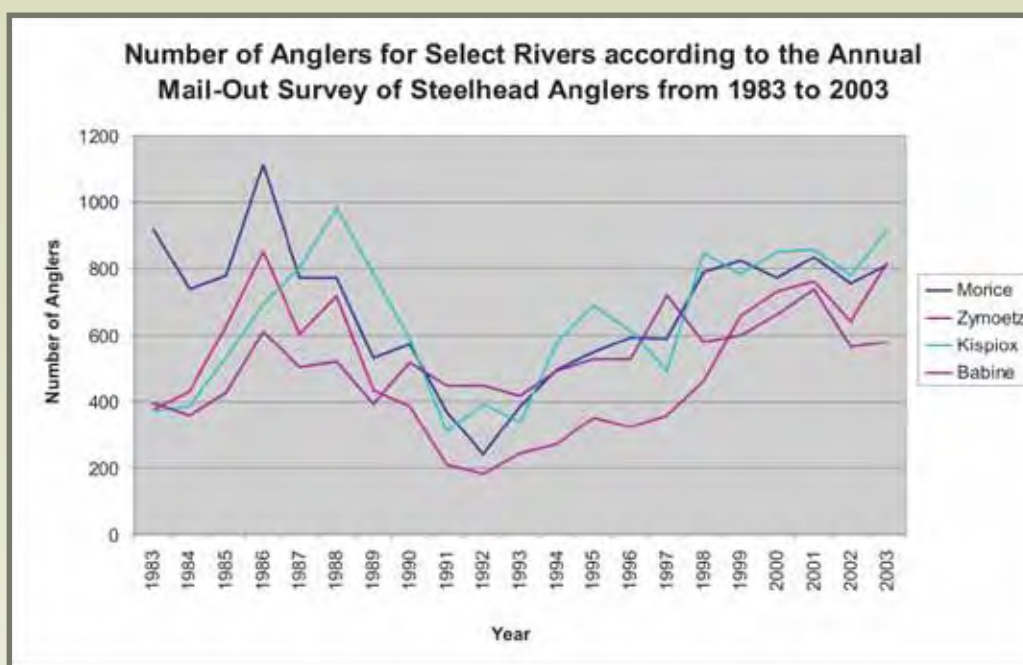


B.C.'s Quality Waters Strategy

Although angling guide days remain capped at 1990 levels, the effectiveness of the Classified Waters system is declining in the Skeena watershed as the total number of anglers on several rivers continues to rise (see graph, below). Both resident and non-resident anglers say top-notch steelhead fishing experiences are increasingly jeopardized by angler crowding – and that something has to be done.

In 2005, the B.C. government responded. After extensive consultation with anglers, angling guides, and members of the public, it introduced an approach to sport-fishery management that will advance B.C.'s existing Classified Waters system: the **Quality Waters Strategy**.

Like the Classified Waters system, the Quality Waters Strategy aims to maintain and improve the angling experiences offered by B.C.'s waters, by managing angler use. But the Quality Waters Strategy goes further – by mobilizing expertise from the local, regional and provincial levels to create location-specific **Angling Management Plans**.



What's an Angling Management Plan?

Angling Management Plans are designed through transparent, community-level processes that consider the unique characteristics of each river. They improve angling experiences by addressing crowding. Management strategies available for use include:

- defining a set number of angler-days for a specific river
- defining a set number of guided rod-days for a specific river
- placing limits on locations of angling
- placing restrictions on licences
- classifying waters according to their importance for steelhead angling, and setting appropriate conservation surcharges

Before implementation, Angling Management Plans undergo several reviews by the general public, key stakeholders, regional and provincial Quality Waters Strategy Committees, and the B.C. Ministry of Environment. Their long-term effectiveness is monitored by the provincial Quality Waters Strategy Committee.

Angling Management Plans for the Skeena Watershed

If you'd like to help maintain or improve steelhead angling conditions in the Skeena watershed, read on to learn how the planning process works.

Anglers, guides and Ministry of Environment staff have identified several steelhead-bearing streams in the Skeena watershed, where angler crowding is currently an issue, or likely to become one in the future (see map, on previous page). These waters include:

Babine	Morice
Bulkley	Skeena IV, upstream of Kitwanga
Kispiox	Skeena IV, downstream of Kitwanga
Kitseguecla	Suskwa
Kitsumkalum	Zymoetz section I
Kitwanga	Zymoetz section II
Lakelse	

As in other regions of B.C., Angling Management Plans will be developed by local Working Groups. These Working Groups will be composed of local resident anglers and angling guides. The groups will also consider the interests of others with a stake in

recreational steelhead angling. To be eligible, group members must show:

- knowledge of the waters under discussion
- endorsement by their angling peers
- ability to focus on local-level planning
- agreement with the principles, goals, rules of engagement and timeline for the process

Recruitment for local Working Groups will begin in March 2008.

Over the coming months, Working Group members will follow a well-defined process (see next page for a more detailed process description and timeline). Assisted by an independent facilitator, they'll work with the Ministry of Environment, examining angler-use data from the waters in question and considering input from the stakeholders and public engagement process.

The resulting plans are expected to be implemented in the 2010/2011 licence year.





Striking a Balance

Local Working Groups will draft Angling Management Plans using the following framework:

Vision

Steelhead fishing in the Skeena watershed will provide opportunities for a world-class angling experience in balance with the needs of resident anglers, angling guides and local businesses.

Guiding Principles

Skeena watershed Angling Management Plans must:

- create a desirable angling experience that is regarded as world-class
- maintain a range of angling opportunities
- recognize the economic value of this public resource
- recognize the role of steelhead angling in local business interests
- recognize the priority and interests of BC resident anglers wherever angling opportunities become oversubscribed

Scope

Angling Management Plans will focus on angler use. They will complement, but not duplicate or revisit, work of other government agencies on:

- commercial fishing
- aboriginal fishing rights
- uses of land adjacent to the waters
- conservation goals for steelhead and other species
- mode of transport used to access fishing opportunities
- management of fishing methods (fly versus gear, etc.)

Challenges

Working Group members will face many challenges. Anglers vary widely in their definitions of a high-quality fishing experience, and those definitions are coloured by individual experience and preconceptions about steelhead fishing in the Skeena watershed. Every decision will require careful consideration of implications for angling opportunity, cost and enforcement. Available data* about angler use will require critical evaluation.

*To view that data, visit <http://wlapwww.gov.bc.ca/ske/qws/> and download *Skeena Watershed Angling Data Summary*.

Get Involved!

By supporting this process, you'll be helping to preserve the internationally renowned experience of steelhead fishing in the Skeena watershed. Here's how to participate:

- Get informed: Read *Skeena Watershed Angling Data Summary*.
- Attend public meetings to offer your suggestions and feedback, or visit the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy website.
- Get nominated, or nominate another qualified person, to join an Angling Management Plan Working Group.
- Spread the word about angling use management planning in the Skeena watershed. Circulate this brochure, and direct people to the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy website.

For information, public meeting dates and Working Group nomination forms, visit the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy website:

<http://wlapwww.gov.bc.ca/ske/qws/>

or contact :

Ministry of Environment
PO Box 5000, 3726 Alfred Avenue
Smithers, B.C. Canada V0J 2N0
Telephone: (250) 847-7260

Skeena Watershed Angling Management Planning Process and Timeline	
Fall 2007	Research and information preparation
January - March 2008	Public education on Quality Waters Strategy / Skeena Angling Management Plans Phase I Community Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder meetings • Public meetings to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Answer questions about process ▪ Solicit public input on waters of concern Summarize stakeholder and public input
April - August 2008	Convene Skeena Angling Management Plan Working Groups; create draft Angling Management Plans
September - November 2008	Phase II Community Engagement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene meetings with selected stakeholders to review draft Angling Management Plans • Public meetings to solicit input on drafts Summarize public and stakeholder input
Early 2009	Final Working Group meetings to refine draft Angling Management Plans
Spring 2009	Prepare and submit final Angling Management Plans to Regional Quality and Provincial Quality Waters Management Committees for review and comment
Spring to September 2009	Submit Angling Management Plans to Ministry of Environment for review; pending Ministry of Environment approval of Angling Management Plans, publish final versions
September 2009	Submit regulation change proposals for implementation in 2010 angling season (2010/2011 licence year)

