

Results of the Vancouver Island
Sport Fishing Regulations Proposals –
To be implemented April 1, 2007

Developed by
BC Ministry of the Environment
Fisheries Section
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Background

Sport fishing regulations governing steelhead fishing have changed many times over the past 30 years. Generally the regulations have become more restrictive as circumstances of the day have demanded. The quality and quantity of steelhead habitat in many of our most accessible and popular streams has diminished due to issues such as logging, urban development and competing water uses. Co-incidentally there have been major shifts in ocean productivity, especially over the past decade. The combination of a reduced ability of many streams to produce seaward migrating steelhead smolts and an ocean environment where their survival is at record lows does not create happy circumstances for those who cherish steelhead angling. Compounding the difficulties faced by steelhead and steelhead managers is the steadily increasing efficiency of anglers, not the least of which is related to more guides and more boats on all the larger producers. Increased angler efficiency maintains catch and catch rates and obscures the fact there are fewer fish.

The steelhead sport fishing scenario is not all gloom and doom however. Our knowledge of steelhead behaviour and the rivers they occupy is now sufficiently advanced to allow for some adjustments to sustain angling opportunity where closures are presently in effect. The principles and environmental factors on which some of the regulations changes proposed below are based are as follows:

1. Steelhead migrate through the lower reaches of most Vancouver Island streams relatively quickly. Rapid movement through these areas means any negative impacts from exposure to angling can be managed to minimize conservation concerns.
2. Important pre-spawning holding reaches and spawning areas occur in all steelhead streams. These are reasonably well known in many streams and almost always occur in the middle or upper reaches of the streams and/or in their tributaries. Lake outlet areas are particularly valuable in this respect.
3. Catch and release angling with single barbless hooks and artificial lures only is a proven conservation tool and highly unlikely to cause measurable biological harm to steelhead or steelhead stocks that are not exposed to sustained angling pressure and multiple capture events.
4. Winter stream flow conditions (highly variable discharge and low water temperature) limit potential angling impacts because steelhead encounter rates are relatively lower under these circumstances.

Collectively these principles and factors can be applied to select times and places to provide angling opportunities presently unavailable. Proposed stream-specific regulation adjustments are outlined below. Please note that unless stated otherwise single barbless hook, bait ban/artificial lure and wild steelhead release regulations would apply.

Public Input

The public was asked to respond to the regulation proposal package and provide comments in writing to the Region 1 office or by responding digitally via email to the address identified within the regulation review package at:

http://wlapwww.gov.bc.ca/vir/fsh/R1_Regulations_Proposals_2007.pdf.

A large number of responses both in letter and in electronic formats were received prior to the August 11, 2006 deadline and are summarized within this document. Responses were received representing individual anglers, organized groups as well as municipal governments and resident petitions. Ideally responses were dichotomous, either in support or not in support of a proposed regulation. Unless clearly stated, little additional interpretation of individual responses was made. Most communication provided commentary on only one or two regulation proposals. The actual number of responses to each proposal is identified in Chart 1.

Prior to the input of responses a weighting plan where individual anglers received one vote, small organized groups (<75 members) received 5 votes and large organized groups (>75 members or petitions with greater than 75 signatures) received 10 votes, was developed to better represent existing angling interests. Results are presented as both un-weighted approval, where each response counts as one vote and weighted approval, where each response is weighted depending on its origin (Chart 1).

Results

Most of proposed angling regulations have been supported by a significant majority of respondents through the public consultation process (Table 1). In these cases angling regulation changes have been endorsed by the Ministry of the Environment and appear in the 2007/2008 Freshwater Fishing Regulations Synopsis. Where input has suggested that significant portion of the public was not supportive of a particular regulation, that regulation change has not been endorsed by the Ministry and past regulations continue to remaining in effect.

Regulations proposed for the Cowichan River elicited a large number and diversity of recommendations. Adjustments to the status quo will occur only after the results of a detailed study of angler distribution, catch and effort are available and further public input considered. Although this study is currently underway, possible refinement of management strategies on the Cowichan would not be translated into angling regulation changes before the 2008/2009 angling season.

On the Stamp River the “No fishing from a boat between Girl Guide Falls and Stamp Falls Pool” proposal was overwhelmingly endorsed by respondents. However implementation of this regulation is constrained by lengthy administrative processes that make it impossible to include in the 2007/08 Regulations Synopsis. The Ministry is pursuing options for in-season implementation in the event the current administrative barriers are overcome in time to be of application for the 2007/08 season.

Within responses directed at the Gold River watershed a number of similarly themed comments prevailed. These comments were used to guide amended regulation recommendations aimed at preserving angling opportunities while affording some protection to spawning steelhead in the mainstem Gold and the Muchalat River (Table 2). These regulations will appear in the 2007/2008 synopsis.

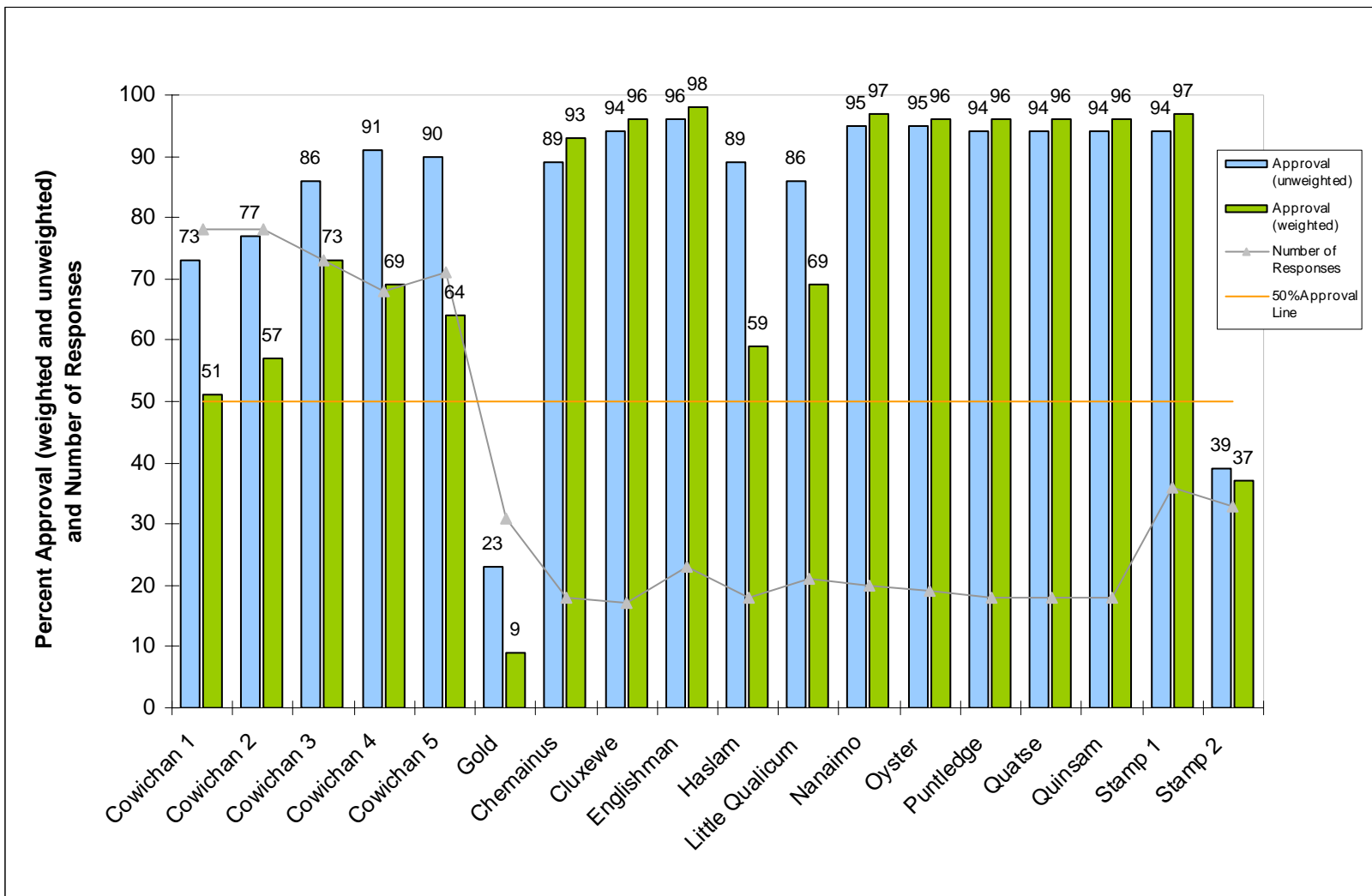


Chart 1. Results of the Vancouver Island angling regulation public review process, ending August 11, 2006.

Table 1. Review of proposed angling regulation changes and approval ratings based on public input between April 1 and August 11, 2006.

Stream	Approval (weighted percent)	Approval (unweighted percent)	Regulation Status (A=Accept proposed, R=Reject proposed)	Angling regulation as presented during the public consultation period, April 1 – August 11, 2006.
Cowichan River	51	73	R	1. An angling closure from the weir at Lake Cowichan downstream to the mile 70.2 trestle December 1 through April 15 inclusive. NB: Cowichan River proposal #1 will not be accepted with regulations defaulting to current freshwater fishing synopsis.
	57	77	A	2. Fly fishing only from the mile 70.2 trestle downstream to the fishing boundary signs at Skutz Falls all year. NB: Further study is currently underway to identify angler distribution, catch and effort on the Cowichan River. Implementation of this regulation is contingent on the findings of this ongoing study.
	73	86	R	3. Fly fishing only from the Greendale trestle near Lake Cowichan downstream to the mile 70.2 trestle from April 16 through November 30 inclusive. NB: Cowichan Proposal #3 will not be accepted with regulations defaulting to current freshwater fishing synopsis.
	69	91	A	4. Catch and release for all wild trout and char for all reaches of the river that are open to angling. NB: Further study is currently underway to identify angler distribution, catch and effort on the Cowichan River. Implementation of this regulation is contingent on the findings of this ongoing study.
	64	90	A	5. Bait ban in all reaches of the river all year. NB: Further study is currently underway to identify angler distribution, catch and effort on the Cowichan River. Implementation of this regulation is contingent on the findings of this ongoing study.
Gold River	9	23	R	It is proposed to close the Gold River upstream from the Heber River confluence from December 1 through May 31 annually. NB: See Table 2 for modified regulation.

Stream	Approval (weighted percent)	Approval (unweighted percent)	Regulation Status (A=Accept proposed, R=Reject proposed, AR=Amended Regulation)	Regulation Proposal
Chemainus River	93	89	A	It is proposed to open the lower Chemainus River from the Highway 1A Bridge (Chemainus Road) upstream to the Bannon Creek confluence from Dec 1 – June 30.
Cluxewe River	94	96	A	It is proposed to extend the open to fishing area from the present boundary signs at the Port McNeill landfill site upstream for about 5 km to the Island Timberlands Mainline Bridge crossing. The open season would be Dec 1 – May 31.
Englishman River	96	98	A	It is proposed to open the lower Englishman River downstream from the “Top Bridge” at the end of Allsbrook Road from December 1 – May 31 inclusive.
Haslam Creek	89	59	A	It is proposed to close Haslam Creek to angling.
Little Qualicum River	86	69	A	It is proposed to rescind the April 1 – November 30 angling closure from the falls in Little Qualicum Falls Provincial Park downstream to Kincade Creek.
Nanaimo River	95	97	A	The current experimental fishery that opened the Nanaimo River from the Cedar Road Bridge upstream to the Island Highway Bridge crossing is proposed to be extended from December 1 – May 31.
Oyster River	95	96	A	The current experimental fishery that opened the Oyster River downstream from the Little Oyster River confluence from February 1 – June 30, 2006 is proposed to be extended to the period December 1 – June 30.
Puntledge River	94	96	A	It is proposed that the Puntledge River be open to angling from the base of Stotan Falls downstream to the Lower Puntledge River Hatchery fence and from the boundary signs located approximately 100 m downstream of that fence to tidewater, except for the area 100 m upstream and downstream from the Morrison Creek confluence (closed all year).

Stream	Approval (weighted percent)	Approval (unweighted percent)	Regulation Status (A=Accept proposed, R=Rejected)	Regulation Proposal
Quatse River	94	96	A	It is proposed to extend the open area by approximately one kilometre from the present angling closure boundary at the Dick Booth Creek confluence to a new boundary at the Quatse River fishway.
Quinsam River	94	96	A	It is proposed to open the Quinsam River downstream from the fishing boundary signs located 300 m below the Quinsam River Hatchery fence from December 1 – April 30.
Stamp River	94	97	A	1. It is proposed to eliminate angling from boats from the fishing boundary signs at Stamp Falls Park downstream to “Girl Guide Falls”. NB: Implementation of this regulation will occur in future years.
	39	37	R	2. It is proposed to remove the bait fishing prohibition presently in place between Stamp Falls and “Girl Guide Falls”. NB: This regulation is not accepted with existing regulations remaining in effect.

Table 2. Additional regulation recommendations resulting from the public consultation process.

Stream	Additional angling regulations to be implemented as of April 1, 2007
Gold River	Based on significant support for a closure in downstream habitats identified as “key” spawning habitats, the Gold River will be closed from the top of the lower canyon as identified by sport-fishing closure signs located approximately 300 m above the Lions Campground to the confluence of the Muchalat, from April 1 – June 1 annually.
Muchalat River	To address repeated capture and mortality of early migrating Muchalat River steelhead an annual angling closure from Dec 1 through June 1 will be imposed.