

**Recommendations
of the Working Groups,
Skeena Quality Waters Strategy
Angling Management Plans**

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1.0 Background

For years, resident anglers, non-resident anglers, guides, members of the Ministry of Environment's Sport Fish Advisory Committee, members of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' Sport Fish Advisory Board, and local Fish and Game Clubs have told the Ministry of Environment that some waters in the Skeena River system have persistent steelhead angler-use issues — crowding, disproportionate numbers of non-resident anglers or guided anglers, lack of opportunities for resident anglers, illegal guiding, poor angler etiquette — all contributing to a degraded quality of angling experience.

In response to these concerns, the ministry implemented the Quality Waters Strategy on 13 waters of the Skeena River in 2006. The Quality Waters Strategy is a province-wide process that aims to maintain and improve the angling experiences offered in BC's waters, by managing angler-use. The strategy includes a community engagement process to help identify problems and find solutions through new or revised angling regulations.

The Quality Waters Strategy community engagement process will ultimately result in thirteen, river-specific Angling Management Plans that recommend revisions to current sport fishing regulations for steelhead. Angling Management Plans do not address steelhead population status and conservation issues; those are addressed through other ongoing initiatives.

The Quality Waters Strategy is a stakeholder-driven process with a provincial Quality Waters Committee and a Skeena Region committee (Regional Quality Waters Management Committee or Regional Committee). The Regional Committee plays an important role in overseeing delivery of the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy.

From January to March 2008, the Phase I consultation process was held in the Skeena River watershed to identify concerns and issues from the public and stakeholders regarding sport fishing for steelhead. The results of that consultation process were published on March 31, 2008 (Alan Dolan & Associates 2008a).

From April to June 2008, three stakeholder-based Working Groups met to help develop a draft Angling Management Plan for the 13 priority waters of the Skeena River watershed. The Working Groups and the rivers that they were responsible for were as follows:

Central Working Group

1. Kitseguecla
2. Kitwanga
3. Suskwa
4. Skeena IV upstream from Kitwanga Bridge
5. Kispiox

East Working Group

6. Babine
7. Bulkley
8. Morice

West Working Group

9. Zymoetz I
10. Zymoetz II
11. Kitsumkalum
12. Lakelse
13. Skeena IV downstream from Kitwanga Bridge

With the guidance of independent facilitators, the Working Groups used the Phase I Consultation Report, angling use data, and their local knowledge and experience on the rivers, to develop the draft plans. The results of their volunteer efforts were published on October 17, 2008 in a "Draft Angling Management Plan (Alan Dolan & Associates 2008b).

After the release of the draft Angling Management Plan, a second consultation process (Phase II) was undertaken. The Phase II consultation process asked public and stakeholders the following questions:

1. What do you like about the draft Angling Management Plan?
2. What don't you like about the draft plan?
3. How should the plan be changed to better address the issues the community has raised?

The Phase II Consultation Report was published on March 6, 2009 (Alan Dolan & Associates 2009).

The three volunteer Working Groups met again for three weekend meetings in May and June 2009 to prepare their recommendations using feedback from the Phase II Consultation Report, direction from the Ministry of Environment, and guidance from the principles of the Quality Waters Strategy.

This report is a summary of the recommendations of the Working Groups. It is being provided to the Director of Fish and Wildlife of the Ministry of Environment for consideration. The director is the statutory decision maker for this process.

The report is divided into several sections:

- 2.0 Recommended Management Alternatives – system-wide (regulatory)
- 3.0 Recommended Management Alternatives – river-specific (regulatory)
- 4.0 Recommended Management Alternatives – system-wide (non-regulatory)

Please note that all regulations referred to in these recommendations are regulations that would be applicable only during the Classified Waters period, and not outside that time.

2.0 Recommended Management Alternatives – system-wide (regulatory)

Some of the recommendations of the Working Groups are best applied to all 13 rivers that were included in the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy. At their final meeting, Working Groups agreed to these three system-wide Recommended Management Alternatives.

2.1 Limited-Day Licence only

On certain rivers, the 2008 draft Angling Management Plan proposed limited-day licences for non-guided, non-resident anglers, allocated through a lottery process based on a limited number of rod-days. Working Group members acknowledged the general lack of support for a lottery or rod-day booking system as expressed in the Phase II Consultation Report and the lack of capability by the current Ministry of Environment e-licensing system to support such a system.

Working Groups discussed a limited-day licence on its own as a potentially useful management approach. Such a licence would limit non-guided, non-resident anglers to one limited-day licence (up to eight, one-day licences cumulatively or one, eight-day licence with consecutive days) per person per water over the course of the Classified Waters period.

This sort of limited-day licence could be implemented across the thirteen priority rivers included in the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy, and even considered province-wide.

An additional benefit of a limited-day licence, as discussed by Working Group members, is that it requires non-resident anglers to count their days and plan their fishing in advance. Working Group members felt that this sort of approach might be a useful “interim step” to a rod-day booking system. It was agreed that a rod-day booking system should be implemented in the future when data suggested that it was needed and the Ministry of Environment e-licensing system could deliver such a management approach (See below for more information on the rod-day booking system).

Participants acknowledged that e-licensing is not currently capable of limiting each non-guided, non-resident angler to only eight days on a particular river. However, they noted that many other government regulations are managed using voluntary compliance (an honour system) that is monitored by a formal enforcement strategy.

In the short term, the wording in the angling regulations could be changed to identify the number of days that could be fished by non-guided, non-resident anglers on each river. Over time, as the e-licensing system is improved, it could be used to notify anglers when they have reached eight days and not allow them to purchase any more days on that river.

Also in the short-term, compliance could be enforced by conducting random checks of the angling licence database at the end of the season to see if anyone fished more than

eight days on a river. Working Group participants noted that ministry Conservation Officers have told them that most anglers follow the rules.

A limited-day licence addresses crowding by requiring that non-resident anglers “move on” after their eight days have been used on each river. This Management Element would also address issues of long-term, non-resident campers and make it more difficult for illegal guides to operate, because they would have to move around more frequently.

Working Group members noted that a limited-day licence on its own was not included specifically in the draft Angling Management Plan so the Phase II Consultation Report has limited information on public and stakeholder acceptability of this approach. However, there was some interest in this element expressed at stakeholder meetings and in other input to the fall 2008 consultation process.

At their final meeting, all three Working Groups discussed making the limited day licence a system-wide Management Element. There was some discussion as to whether the number of days might be fewer than eight on some smaller rivers.

The time period of eight days has already been used on the Dean River by the Ministry of Environment and eight days is the maximum number of days that can be purchased at one time under the present angling licensing system. Eight days is also the average length of stay based on the results of some recent regional creel surveys. In the future, collection of more data may reveal additional information on average length of stay by non-residents and determine whether an eight-day limit is in fact addressing the problems on area rivers.

After considerable discussion, the three Working Groups reached a consensus decision to recommend that the Ministry of Environment implement one eight-day licence (purchased for a maximum of eight cumulative days) for each non-guided, non-resident angler on each of the 13 waters during the Classified Waters season. They also recommended that the ministry track use over time, and change the number of days accordingly in response to need.

2.2 Skeena Steelhead Stamp

Based on a recommendation from Central Working Group, the three Working Groups discussed the concept of a Steelhead Stamp that is unique to Skeena Region — the Skeena Steelhead Stamp. The stamp would be in addition to the present BC Steelhead Conservation Surcharge Stamp. The Skeena Steelhead Stamp would be implemented across all 13 Classified Waters in the Skeena watershed. The purpose of the stamp is twofold:

- To direct revenue to local management of the steelhead resource
- To better reflect the true value of the Skeena steelhead angling

The genesis of the idea for a Skeena Steelhead Stamp comes from the notion that Skeena steelhead are very undervalued and that most anglers who visit the watershed

to fish for steelhead pay very little compared to other high-quality angling experiences elsewhere in the world.

Working Group members noted that there are provincial precedents where conservation surcharges or stamps have been used, such as for the Kootenay Lake rainbow trout (Gerrard trout), the Shuswap Lake rainbow trout and Shuswap Lake lake char and white sturgeon.

The Skeena Steelhead Stamp was originally proposed for implementation during the peak of the season in the Kispiox, which is from mid-September to mid-October, but as the idea was expanded to include more rivers in the Skeena system, the dates had to change.

In order to lessen the impact on those anglers fishing for a short time, the stamp should be available on a one-day, eight-day and annual basis, similar to recent changes to the White Sturgeon Conservation Stamp. Working Group members noted that the White Sturgeon Stamp is an example of a provincial process where funds are directed entirely to the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation rather than being directed into general revenue.

The Phase II Consultation Report had feedback that suggested the quality of steelhead and the steelhead sport fishery in the Skeena watershed is undervalued under the present licensing system. Many anglers noted that they would not mind paying more if in fact the money was staying in the region to be used for steelhead management.

Working Group participants discussed the cost of the Skeena Steelhead Stamp and eventually came up with a range from \$100 – 200 for a seasonal stamp for non-residents, both guided and non-guided, and \$10 for residents. The participants suggested that the Ministry of Environment would need to conduct further market analysis in order to arrive at an acceptable fee for the Skeena Steelhead Stamp.

The Central Working Group looked in more detail at the cost of fishing for steelhead in the Skeena Watershed and compared it to other jurisdictions around the world. Their analysis demonstrated that even with an additional stamp, the total costs of angling for steelhead in the Classified Waters of the Skeena watershed based on average lengths of stay for non-residents were still considerably less than other world-class angling destinations around the world.

The members of the Working Groups noted that other Classified Waters in Skeena Region, which are not part of the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy, might be considered for the Skeena Steelhead Stamp.

The three Working Groups achieved a consensus to recommend that a Skeena Steelhead Stamp be implemented August 15 – October 31 for the 13 Classified Waters

covered by the Skeena Quality Waters process. They agreed that the Ministry of Environment would decide on an appropriate fee for the stamp. They proposed that one-day, eight-day and annual stamps be made available. The Working Groups believed that an essential feature of the Skeena Steelhead Stamp was that all funds must be directed towards management of the steelhead resource in the Skeena watershed.

2.3 Long term: Rod-day booking system

Working Group members acknowledged the general lack of support for a lottery as expressed in the Phase II Consultation Report and the lack of capability by the current Ministry of Environment e-licensing system to support a lottery.

However, the Phase II Consultation Report also recommended distributing rod-days over the Classified Waters period and many participants were unsure of how best to do this.

Working Group members, particularly in the East Working Group, discussed a rod-day booking system (reservation system) as a tool that could be implemented to better distribute angling effort, eliminate illegal guiding, and track use and angler effort. The system would be developed and applied to non-guided, non-residents, but in the future it could be applied to other angler groups as well, taking care to follow the Quality Waters Strategy hierarchy of exclusion to ensure that residents would be the last angler group to be regulated (See box, page 17).

The rod-day booking system would rely on a determination of the steelhead angler carrying capacity based on fishable water for each river. A portion of the total carrying capacity would be allocated to non-guided, non-resident anglers based on a combination of historical use, the principles of the Quality Waters Strategy, and Ministry of Environment direction on what appropriate allocation to this group should be.

Working Groups (particularly the West Working Group) and the Ministry of Environment have brought forward considerable information on how to calculate carrying capacities. However, Working Groups decided not to bring forward specific numbers at this time. One of the reasons for this is that more up-to-date data needs to be collected over the next few years in order to develop better estimates.

Developing an angler carrying capacity and determining how that carrying capacity would be allocated to non-guided, non-resident anglers would enable the calculation of daily and seasonal rod-day caps for angler use. The rod-day booking system would have the ability to adjust caps and quotas over time.

Working Group members believe this would be a responsive, fair management system. They acknowledge that data from River Guardian surveys and creel censuses is needed to determine the need for this kind of system, including angler satisfaction surveys to assess crowding and user expectations.

Working Group members realized that public acceptance for these types of measures would take time. The limited-day licence on its own would help anglers to think about where they will go, for how long, and when. Participants acknowledged that an attitudinal change is needed for this measure to be successful. Groups suggested that 50-75 per cent of the total rod-days be available on a first-come, first-serve basis and that “day of” opportunities be available for at least 25% of the capacity (for “rubber tire” traffic).

Working Group members acknowledged that the marketing of such a reservation system is very important to ensure that all non-residents fully understand how such a system would work and the rationale for such a system, and to ensure that they continue to feel welcome.

Participants acknowledged that some resident anglers have a desire for unfettered access to the fishery. Working Group members felt that resident anglers should be the last angler-group to be included in a rod-day booking system, unless their use alone was degrading the quality of steelhead angling.

Working Group members acknowledged that due to financial limitations, implementing a rod-day booking system is not possible with the current e-licensing system. They noted that short-term costs to develop and implement a provincial rod-day booking system would be high, but once developed, the annual costs of running such a system and the regulatory complexity would be low.

Participants noted that such a rod-day booking system could potentially preclude the need for tiered licences and licence fee increases that might discourage some anglers from coming to the region.

One of the potential advantages of a rod-day booking system is that licence fees could be specific to individual rivers or waters. In the same way that some seats in a stadium cost more than others, certain rivers or waters might merit higher fees than others.

Participants stressed that the provincial government has already made a huge investment in the Skeena Angling Management Planning process. They feel that such a reservation system would best respond to the issues being faced in this region, and would enhance the province’s investment made in planning to date.

Marketing and messaging related to this rod-day booking system should acknowledge the value of the resource and the angling opportunity in the Skeena River watershed.

Participants concluded by recommending that the Ministry of Environment not reject the idea of a rod-day booking system simply because it cannot be implemented in the near term. They recommended working towards building and implementing such a system over time.

The East Working Group recommended a once-in-a-lifetime \$1 fee to every angler to raise money for the development of a rod-day booking system.

At their final meeting, members of the three Working Groups agreed by consensus that a rod-day booking system should be developed over time and applied to non-residents first and not applied to residents until levels of effort warrant it.

3.0 Recommended Management Alternatives – river-specific (regulatory)

3.1 Kitsequecla and Kitwanga (Central Working Group)

The Kitsequecla and Kitwanga are small Class II Classified Waters that have no guiding. They are classified year round and Steelhead Stamps are mandatory between September 1 and October 31. These rivers are closed to fishing from January 1 to June 15 to provide protection to overwintering and spawning steelhead.

The recommended Management Alternative for the Kitsequecla and Kitwanga is:

1. Resident angler-only times

- **Majority Option: Resident angler-only on weekends**

- **Minority Option: Resident-only on Saturdays**

(For a discussion of Majority and Minority Options, see box, page 12.)

Working Group members felt that creating resident angler-only times was important to help maintain resident priority, a principle of the Quality Waters Strategy. They felt that given the lack of support in the Phase II Consultation process for limited-day licences allocated through a lottery system, there was a need to find management alternatives that provided some regulation of non-residents while offering increased angling opportunities for residents.

Many participants in the Phase II Consultation process put forward a variety of resident angler-only times for these rivers. The Response Form in the Phase II Consultation Report specifically asked about resident angler-only Saturdays on these two rivers, and the results showed support by resident anglers and local business and no support by guides and non-residents. In the draft Angling Management Plan, the only management element that recommended resident angler-only weekends was for Zymoetz II, and in the Phase II Consultation report, resident anglers and local business supported this element.

Working Group members examined a range of options for providing increased angling opportunities for resident anglers. These included making the rivers resident-only year round (one of the suggestions in the Phase II Consultation Report), resident angler-only weekends, and resident angler-only Saturdays or Sundays.

The Ministry of Environment indicated that resident-only times are easier and less costly to administer than resident-only zones.

Working Group members were unable to arrive at a consensus regarding the duration of resident-only times and recommended Majority and Minority Options (See box, page 12). The Majority Option recommends a resident-only weekend and the Minority Option recommends a resident-only Saturday for these waters.

The Working Group felt that neither of these options would seriously impact the local

tourism industry, but they might result in a slightly lower income from angling licence sales to the Ministry of Environment.

Working Group members supporting the Minority Option (Saturday) felt that non-guided, non-resident anglers would not want to sit out two days in a row of fishing on these rivers, and hence supported just one weekend day of resident-only angling.

Those supporting two days (full weekend) felt that the demand for angling by non-residents on these two small rivers was low and not being able to fish on the weekends was not a significant imposition. They also felt that given guided angling was not allowed on these rivers, restricting non-guided, non-resident anglers was appropriate. In fact some members, along with many participants in the consultation process, felt that it would be more in keeping with the Quality Waters Strategy if the rivers were resident angler-only all year.

Consensus process and Majority and Minority Options

At the first meeting of the Working Groups in May 2009, participants agreed to the following understanding of consensus for the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy process:

The Working Groups reach consensus if:

- Everyone agrees with the decision
- Most agree and a few are uncomfortable with the decision but are willing to go along with it either because they do not feel that strongly about it, they want to go with the will of the group, or for other reasons. These people are sometimes referred to as "abstaining" or "standing aside." Sometimes they wish to have their names and reasons recorded, but the decision has been made by consensus.

In the event that consensus is not achieved, and there is a person or persons who do not agree with the decision, they present their other decision with their reasons. The two decisions are recorded as Majority and Minority Options. There is no scoring or voting on these options. It is important to validate all points-of-view or interests brought forward and even if only one person is involved in the Minority Option, he/she is often representing an interest that has the support of others in the community.

In some cases, there was not a clear Majority or Minority Option and the alternatives are just referred to as "Options."

2. Limited-day licence only

This is a system-wide Management Element proposed for implementation on all 13 rivers in the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy (See section 2.1).

3. Skeena Steelhead Stamp

This is a system-wide Management Element proposed for implementation on all 13 rivers in the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy (See section 2.2).

4. Long term: Rod-day booking system

This is a system-wide Management Element proposed for implementation on all 13 rivers in the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy (See section 2.3).

3.2 Suskwa (Central Working Group)

The Suskwa is a small Class II Classified Water that has no guiding. It is classified year round and a Steelhead Stamp is mandatory between September 1 and October 31. This river is closed to fishing from January 1 to June 15 to provide protection to overwintering and spawning steelhead.

The recommended Management Alternative for the Suskwa is:

1. Resident angler-only times

- **Majority Option: Resident angler-only weekends**

- **Minority Option: Resident-only Saturdays**

(For a discussion of Majority and Minority Options, see box, page 12.)

Working Group members felt that creating resident angler-only times was important to help maintain resident priority, a principle of the Quality Waters Strategy. They felt that given the lack of support in the Phase II Consultation process for limited-day licences allocated through a lottery system, there was a need to find management alternatives that provided some regulation of non-residents while offering increased angling opportunities for residents.

Many participants in the Phase II consultation process put forward some sort of resident angler-only time on this river. The Response Form in the Phase II Consultation Report specifically asked about resident angler-only Saturdays on this river, which was supported by resident anglers and local business and not supported by guides and non-residents.

Working Group members examined a range of options for providing increased opportunities for resident anglers from making the river resident-only year round (a suggestion in the Phase II Consultation Report), to one or two days for residents on the weekend.

The Ministry of Environment indicated that resident-only times are easier and less costly to administer than resident-only zones.

Working Group members were unable to arrive at a consensus and hence recommended Majority and Minority Options (See box, page 12). The Majority Option recommends a resident-only weekend and the Minority Option recommends a resident-only Saturday for these waters.

The Working Group felt that neither of these options would seriously impact the local tourism industry, but they might result in a slightly lower income from angling licence sales to the Ministry of Environment. Working Group members supporting the

Minority Option felt that non-guided, non-resident anglers would not want to sit out two days in a row of fishing on this river, and hence supported just one weekend day of resident-only angling. Those supporting two days (full weekend) felt that the demand for angling by non-residents on this small river was such that not being able to fish on the weekends was not a significant imposition.

2. **Change to Class I Classified Waters**

Working Group members proposed that the Suskwa be reclassified as a Class I Classified Water because they felt the Suskwa met the criteria for a Class I river (See box, page 14). They felt that the resulting increase in fees with reclassification would act as a slight deterrent and reduce angling effort. They also believed that higher classification would mean that other agencies would better recognize the significance of the Suskwa in their planning processes.

Reclassification from Class II to Class I was proposed by a number of participants during the Phase II Consultation process, but not specifically for the Suskwa. The reasons given for reclassifying some rivers were that the higher fees would better value the resource and possibly result in fewer anglers participating in the sport fishery. A number of people suggested reclassifying all the rivers being considered in this process, but many of them do not fit the criteria laid out in the Quality Waters Strategy.

The ministry indicated that the costs to implement this Management Element are not significant.

Criteria for Class I Classified Waters (MOE 2005)

- a) Quality wilderness waters with wild anadromous fish
- b) A water that due to its remote natural setting raises the quality of the already high angling experience
- c) Remote – no road access or very limited road access.

3. **Limited-day licence only**

This is a system-wide Management Element proposed for implementation on all 13 rivers in the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy (See section 2.1).

4. **Skeena Steelhead Stamp**

This is a system-wide Management Element proposed for implementation on all 13 rivers in the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy (See section 2.2).

5. **Long term: Rod-day booking system**

This is a system-wide Management Element proposed for implementation on all 13 rivers in the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy (See section 2.3).

3.3 Skeena IV above Kitwanga Bridge (Central Working Group)

Skeena IV is a Class II water that is classified from July 1 to October 31. A Steelhead Stamp is not necessary unless fishing for steelhead. The main stem of the Skeena is closed to fishing above Cedarvale from January 1 to May 31 to provide protection to overwintering and spawning steelhead. Schedule A of BC Regulation 125/90 establishes that this section of the Skeena can have a maximum of 10 licensed angling guides and 1,000 rod-days. There are currently 414 rod-days allocated on Skeena IV.

The recommended Management Alternative for Skeena IV above Kitwanga Bridge is:

1. Mandatory Steelhead Stamp from September 1 to October 31

Working Group members felt that a mandatory Steelhead Stamp from September 1 to October 31 was appropriate because it better reflected when steelhead were being targeted in the river, would yield more data for the Ministry of Environment, would not negatively impact salmon anglers because most of their fishing would be earlier in the season, and would stop anglers from “pretending” to be fishing for salmon when they are actually targeting steelhead.

Establishing a mandatory Steelhead Stamp on this river was well supported by all User-Groups in the Phase II Consultation process.

The Ministry of Environment noted that the implementation of this Management Element does not involve significant costs.

2. Resident angler-only times and zones

- **Majority Option: Resident angling-only on weekends, guiding allowed; one zone from confluence of the Shegunia (Salmon) with the Skeena main stem to the Kitwanga Bridge**

- **Minority Option: Resident angling-only on Saturdays, guiding allowed; two zones 1) from confluence of the Shegunia (Salmon) with the Skeena main stem to Four-Mile Bridge and 2) from confluence of the Bulkley with the Skeena main stem to Kitwanga Bridge**

(For a discussion of Majority and Minority Options, see box, page 12.)

Working Group members felt that creating resident angler-only times was important to help maintain resident priority, a principle of the Quality Waters Strategy. They felt that given the lack of support in the Phase II Consultation process for limited-day licences allocated through a lottery system, there was a need to find management alternatives that provided some regulation of non-residents while offering increased angling opportunities for residents.

Working Group members believed that allowing both resident anglers and guides to fish at certain times while excluding non-guided, non-resident anglers was consistent with the hierarchy of exclusion as defined in the Quality Waters Strategy (See box, page 17).

Working Group members also suggested that allowing guides to fish during resident-only times would prevent all guides from having their changeover days on the resident-only day, which in turn would lead to issues with the airlines being unable to accommodate all the clients flying in and out on the same day.

The Working Groups proposed that there be no guiding on changeover days. This would be implemented as a condition of angling guide licences as a way to reduce congestion on changeover days. Guides typically, but not always, work on an eight-day schedule. So for example, if they bring in a client on a Thursday, the client might fish that day in the late afternoon and evening and then fish until the following Thursday morning, leaving in the afternoon. Under this proposal, the client would not be guided on the Thursday afternoon and evening when they arrive or the Thursday morning when they leave, which results in a reduction in guiding effort of one day a week. Working Group members noted guides would still have the flexibility to determine the day of the week that would be the changeover day.

Some participants in the Phase II Consultation process put forward resident angler-only time options on this river. Working Group members recognized that it was difficult to determine the level of community support for resident angler-only times as it was not in the draft Angling Management Plan and hence participants in the consultation process were not “prompted” to give their opinions.

Working Group members examined a range of options for providing increased opportunities for resident anglers on this river.

The Ministry of Environment indicated that resident-only times are easier and less costly to administer than resident-only zones.

Working Group members were unable to arrive at a consensus and hence recommended Majority and Minority Options (See box, page 12). The Majority Option was one zone for resident angling-only on weekends, guiding allowed but no guiding on changeover days and the Minority Option was two zones for resident angling-only on Saturdays, guiding allowed but no guiding on changeover days.

The Working Group felt that both of these options might result in a slightly lower income from angling licence sales to the Ministry of Environment because of the exclusion of non-resident anglers at certain times and possible lower revenue from their angling licences. Working Group members supporting the Minority Option felt that non-guided, non-resident anglers would not want to sit out two days in a row of fishing on this river, and hence supported just one weekend day of resident-only angling.

Those supporting the Majority Option of two days (full weekend) felt that the

demand for angling by non-residents on this river was not that high and the lack of fishing opportunities on weekends was not a significant imposition. They also acknowledged that non-guided, non-residents could angle outside the zone or zones on the weekend and throughout the river during the week.

Quality Waters Strategy – Hierarchy of exclusion

The Quality Waters Strategy (MOE 2005) states: “Where angling opportunities become oversubscribed, decisions regarding angling opportunities will reflect the priority and interests of British Columbian resident anglers.” The strategy also states that “The recommended hierarchy of diversion/exclusion is as follows:

1. Non Guided Non Canadian
2. Non Guided Non BC
3. Guided Non Canadian
4. Guided Non BC
5. BC Anglers, guided and non-guided”

What this means is that if the quality of angling on a particular river is poor due to crowding or other issues, the first groups regulated are the non-residents (1 and 2), the second groups regulated are the guided anglers (3 and 4), and the last group regulated is the resident anglers. This is often referred to as the Quality Waters Strategy hierarchy of exclusion.

3. Reclassify Skeena IV above confluence of the Shegunia (Salmon) to Class I

Working Group members proposed a reclassification for this portion of the Skeena main stem because they felt that this part meets the criteria for a Class I river (See box, page 14). They felt that the resulting increase in fees with reclassification would act as a slight deterrent and reduce angling effort. In addition, they believed that higher classification would mean that other agencies would better recognize these waters in their land-use planning processes.

Working Group members felt a Class I designation would better protect this part of the Skeena in the future and that the reclassification acknowledges the quality of the angling experience. While the fee increase might be a bit of a disincentive in a part of the Skeena that is underutilized and it would result in increased guiding costs, Working Group members suggested that the increased costs would likely be passed on to the clients.

Reclassification from Class II to Class I was proposed for a number of different rivers by participants in the Phase II Consultation process, although not specifically for the section of Skeena IV above the Shegunia. It was felt that the higher fees would better value the resource and possibly result in fewer anglers participating in the sport fishery.

The Ministry of Environment indicated that reclassification is a less challenging and costly regulation to implement, compared to other measures.

4. Limited-day licence only

This is a system-wide Management Element proposed for implementation on all 13 rivers in the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy (See section 2.1).

5. Skeena Steelhead Stamp

This is a system-wide Management Element proposed for implementation on all 13 rivers in the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy (See section 2.2).

6. Long term: Distribute guided effort over the Classified Waters period

Working Group members felt it was important to address the potential crowding associated with peaks in guide activity at certain times during the Classified Waters season. An analysis of past guiding practices revealed that guiding pressure was currently spread out through most of the Classified Waters season, but it was felt that in the future it might change, which could become a problem. The Working Group decided to add a long-term recommendation that addressed the distribution of guided effort. As a condition of a guiding licence, all guides on Skeena IV would have to divide their guiding activity over the Classified Waters season according to the following percentages: July – 0%; August – 10%; September 1-15 – 25%; September 16-30 – 25%; October 1-15 – 25%; October 16-31 – 15%. The percentages were derived from current guiding activity as reported to the ministry.

Working Group members decided to make this element a long-term recommendation because it seemed unfair to invoke such an element on guides and not implement some sort of spatial or temporal regulations on non-guided, non-resident anglers (See box, page 17).

There was general support for measures to distribute guided effort in the Phase II Consultation Report from all User-Groups except guides. There was no feedback regarding this measure during the consultation process specific to Skeena IV above Kitwanga Bridge.

The ministry would implement a requirement for distribution of guided effort over the Classified Waters period by changing the conditions of angling guide licences, which is already an annual administrative process.

7. Long term: Rod-day booking system

This is a system-wide Management Element proposed for implementation on all 13 rivers in the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy (See section 2.3).

3.4 Kispiox (Central Working Group)

The Kispiox is a Class II water, classified from September 1 to October 31. A Steelhead Stamp is mandatory from September 1 to October 31. The river is closed to fishing from

January 1 to June 15 to provide protection to overwintering and spawning steelhead. The Kispiox can have a maximum of four licensed angling guides and 393 rod-days. There are currently three licensed guides operating on the river.

The recommended Management Alternative for the Kispiox is:

1. Mandatory Steelhead Stamp from September 1 to December 31

The Working Group chose a mandatory Steelhead Stamp because it would generate more data and more revenue to the Ministry of Environment. It would stop anglers from “pretending” to fish for species other than steelhead when they are actually targeting steelhead, which would make enforcement easier.

Although this element was not put forward specifically for the Kispiox in the draft Angling Management Plan, it was generally accepted by all User-Groups in the Phase II Consultation report.

The Ministry of Environment indicated that a mandatory Steelhead Stamp is less challenging and costly regulation to implement, compared to other measures.

2. Resident angler-only times

• **Majority Option: Resident angling-only weekends, guiding allowed**

• **Minority Option: Resident angling-only Saturdays, guiding allowed**

(For a discussion of Majority and Minority Options, see box, page 12.)

Working Group members felt that creating resident angler-only times was important to help maintain resident priority, a principle of the Quality Waters Strategy. They felt that given the lack of support in the Phase II Consultation process for limited-day licences allocated through a lottery system, there was a need to find management alternatives that provided some regulation of non-residents while offering increased angling opportunities for residents.

Members felt that allowing guiding during the resident-only time was consistent with the Quality Waters Strategy (See box, page 17).

Working Group members also suggested that allowing guides to fish during resident-only times would prevent all guides from having their changeover days on the resident-only day, which in turn would lead to issues with the airlines being unable to accommodate all the clients flying in and out on the same day.

The Working Groups proposed that there be no guiding on changeover days. This would be implemented as a condition of angling guide licences as a way to reduce congestion on changeover days. Guides typically, but not always, work on an eight-day schedule. So for example, if they bring in a client on a Thursday, the client might fish that day in the late afternoon and evening and then fish until the following Thursday morning, leaving in the afternoon. Under this proposal, the client would not be guided on the Thursday afternoon and evening when they arrive or the Thursday morning when they leave, which results in a reduction in guiding effort of one day a

week. Working Group members noted guides would still have the flexibility to determine the day of the week that would be the changeover day.

Participants in the Phase II consultation process put forward a variety of resident angler-only time options for this river. The Response Form in the Phase II Consultation Report specifically asked about resident angler-only on Saturdays for the Kispiox, and only resident anglers supported this Management Element.

The Response Form did not ask about resident angler-only on weekends for the Kispiox. This made it challenging for the Working Group members to determine the level of community support for this particular Management Element on the Kispiox.

The Ministry of Environment indicated that resident-only times are less challenging and less costly regulations to implement than resident-only zones.

Working Group members were unable to arrive at a consensus on a resident-only time and hence recommended a Majority and Minority Options (See box, page 12). The Majority Option was resident angling-only weekends, guiding allowed but no guiding on changeover days and the Minority Option was resident angling-only Saturdays, guiding allowed but no guiding on changeover days.

The Working Group felt that both of these options would have some impact on local businesses and might result in a slightly lower income from angling licence sales to the Ministry of Environment. Working Group members supporting the Minority Option (Saturdays) felt that non-guided, non-resident anglers would not want to sit out two days in a row of fishing on this river, and hence supported just one weekend day of resident-only angling.

Working Group members supporting the Majority Option (full weekend) felt being unable to fish the Kispiox on weekends was not a significant imposition for non-residents, because there are many other places to fish and lots of other activities to do. Non-guided, non-residents are able to angle on the Kispiox during the week. The Working Group members supporting the Majority Option also felt that given the lack of support in the Phase II Consultation process for limited-day licences allocated through a lottery system, there was a need to find Management Elements that provide some regulation of non-guided, non-residents and offer increased angling opportunities for residents.

3. Limited-day licence only

This is a system-wide Management Element proposed for implementation on all 13 rivers in the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy (See section 2.1).

4. Skeena Steelhead Stamp

This is a system-wide Management Element proposed for implementation on all 13 rivers in the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy (See section 2.2).

5. Long term: Distribute guided effort over the Classified Waters period

Working Group members felt it was important to address the potential crowding from peaks in guide activity at certain times during the Classified Waters season. An analysis of past guiding practices by the ministry revealed that guiding activity had peaks during the Classified Waters season. Guides on the Working Group felt that they generally spread their activity over the season. The Working Group decided to add this Management Element as a long-term recommendation. As a condition of a guiding licence, all guides on the Kispiox would be required to spread their guiding activity over the Classified Waters season.

Working Group members decided to make this alternative a long-term recommendation because it seemed unfair to further restrict angling guides and not implement some sort of spatial or temporal regulations on non-guided, non-resident anglers.

There was support for these types of measures on the Kispiox in the Phase II Consultation Report from all User-Groups except guides.

The ministry would implement this element by changing the conditions of angling guide licences, which is already an annual administrative process.

6. Long term: Classified Waters season from August 15 to November 15

• **Majority Option: Include as Management Alternative**

• **Minority Option: Do not include as Management Alternative (status quo)**

(For a discussion of Majority and Minority Options, see box, page 12.)

Working Group members believed that extending the Classified Waters season from August 15 to November 15 would better reflect when steelhead were actually being targeted in the river. It was also seen as a way to better regulate guiding pressure in the future in what are now the “shoulder seasons” outside the Classified Waters period. It was felt that future changes in angler effort on surrounding rivers might “push” anglers to the Kispiox and exacerbate crowding issues. Working Group members also noted that global warming might change the nature of angling and the need for more regulation later in the season.

Extending the Classified Waters season was generally considered acceptable to most participants in the Phase II Consultation process. However, the draft Angling Management Plan did not entertain this option for the Kispiox so there was no specific response to it in the Phase II Consultation Report.

Working Group members were unable to arrive at a consensus and hence recommended Majority and Minority Options (See box, page 12). The Majority Option was to change the Classified Waters season in the long term. The Minority Option was not to change the Classified Water season.

Working Group members who did not support an extension of the Classified Waters

season were concerned that once the shoulder seasons were classified, the ministry would need to allocate additional rod-days to existing licensed guides to compensate for lost guiding opportunities. It was felt that this could have a large negative financial impact on guides who have traditionally guided on those shoulders because they would have to bid on the rod-days and have to pay more for Classified Waters licences.

7. Long term: Rod-day booking system

This is a system-wide Management Element proposed for implementation on all 13 rivers in the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy (See section 2.3).

3.5 Babine (East Working Group)

The Babine is a Class I Classified Water from September 1 to October 31. A Steelhead Stamp is mandatory during the Classified Waters season. The total number of guided rod-days allocated is 1,718 and the maximum allowed under Schedule A of BC Regulation 125/90 is 1,798. Three licensed guides operate on the Babine during the Classified Waters season and over the past few years some of them have utilized less than their full allocation of rod-days.

The recommended Management Alternative for the Babine is:

1. Resident angling-only on Saturdays in a zone from smolt-counting fence to confluence of Nilkitkwa, no guiding

This zone extends from the smolt-counting fence located at the outlet of Nilkitkwa Lake downstream to the confluence of the Nilkitkwa River with the Babine. The establishment of this zone supports the importance of resident angling opportunities. The draft Angling Management Plan had originally recommended no guiding in the same area of the upper Babine at any time during the Classified Waters period. Working Group members acknowledged that this approach was very intrusive to upper river guides who fish these waters regularly and sometimes rely on waters above the Nilkitkwa if that river “blows out” after heavy rainfall.

The Ministry of Environment indicated that reducing the complexity of the regulations by changing the number of zones from two to one would be easier for anglers to understand and involve lower start-up and administrative costs.

General feedback received in the Phase II Consultation Report suggests that the resident angler-only on Saturday for a single zone approach would be more acceptable than what had originally been proposed in the draft Angling Management Plan, because it was less intrusive.

2. Reduction in rod-day quota

The recommendation to reduce the rod-day quota for the Babine combines three initiatives: to reduce unallocated guided rod-days by 80, to identify and reduce unused rod-days, and to invite licensed guides who are ceasing or reducing their operation to negotiate the return of rod-days to the province.

The Working Group recommended that the Ministry of Environment begin by recalling rod-days from guides who have chronically underused their rod-day quota. This Management Element was proposed by the Working Group at the upper end of the Babine to avoid crowding in the future should rod-days be sold to another guiding operation, and to eventually reduce the total rod-day allocation on the river.

Results from the Phase II Consultation Report suggested that the number of guided rod-days on the Babine needed to be reduced.

The Ministry of Environment indicated that reducing allocated rod-days is challenging and potentially very costly, both in terms of time and financial resources.

3. Limited-day licence only

This is a system-wide Management Element proposed for implementation on all 13 rivers in the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy (See section 2.1).

4. Skeena Steelhead Stamp

This is a system-wide Management Element proposed for implementation on all 13 rivers in the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy (See section 2.2).

5. Require guides to demonstrate distribution of effort during the Classified Waters season

The draft Angling Management Plan noted the need for guides to spread out their rod-days over the entire Classified Waters period on the Babine. This would help to alleviate crowding at certain times of the year in certain parts of the river. Working Group members felt that this is presently happening, but there is concern it may not always be that way in the future. As a condition of licence, this measure could manage periods of peak effort on the Babine by ensuring that the current pattern of use and effort continues.

Most guides on the Babine River already have the same number of clients per week throughout the Classified Waters period. The guides on the Working Group noted that operational limitations of lodges on the Babine (number of beds, etc.) require that guided rod-days be spread out over the entire Classified Waters period.

Participants acknowledged that the Phase II Consultation Report feedback, although not specific to the Babine, generally indicated that guided rod-days should be distributed over the Classified Waters period.

The Ministry of Environment indicated that this Management Element would not be difficult to implement through a condition of angling guide licence. The ministry noted that the capacity of guided-angler accommodations along the Babine make peaks in guiding activity unlikely.

6. Long term: Rod-day booking system

This is a system-wide Management Element proposed for implementation on all 13 rivers in the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy (See section 2.3).

3.6 Bulkley (East Working Group)

The Bulkley is a Class II Classified Water from September 1 to October 31. A Steelhead Stamp is mandatory for the Classified Waters period. There are seven guides operating on the river and they are allocated a total of 1,504 rod-days.

The recommended Management Alternative for the Bulkley is:

1. Resident angling-only zone on the Telkwa, no guiding

Working Group members proposed the creation of a resident-only zone on the entire Telkwa River upstream from the CN rail bridge for the Classified Waters period. This zone would restrict non-guided, non-residents as well as guided anglers during the Classified Waters period. Participants acknowledged that this recommendation would have little impact on angling guides, as the Telkwa rarely sees guide activity.

Working Group members felt that creating a resident angler-only zone was important to help maintain resident priority, a principle of the Quality Waters Strategy. They felt that given the lack of support in the Phase II Consultation process for limited-day licences allocated through a lottery system, there was a need to find management alternatives that provided some regulation of non-residents while offering increased angling opportunities for residents.

The Phase II Consultation Report indicated support for a resident-only zone on the Telkwa River by resident anglers and guides, mixed support from local business and a lack of support from non-residents.

The Ministry of Environment indicated that resident-only times are easier and less costly to administer than resident-only zones, but that this zone was fairly straightforward to describe.

2. Resident angling-only on Saturdays, guiding allowed

Working Group members felt that creating resident angler-only times was important to help maintain resident priority, a principle of the Quality Waters Strategy. They felt that given the lack of support in the Phase II Consultation process for limited-day licences allocated through a lottery system, there was a need to find management alternatives that provided some regulation of non-residents while offering increased angling opportunities for residents.

Members felt that allowing guiding during the resident-only time was consistent with the Quality Waters Strategy (See box, page 17).

Working Group members also suggested that allowing guides to fish during resident-only times would prevent all guides from having their changeover days on the

resident-only day, which in turn would lead to issues with the airlines being unable to accommodate all the clients flying in and out on the same day.

In the 2008 draft Angling Management Plan, resident angler-only zones on weekends were proposed for the mouths of three small waters that enter the Bulkley: Chicken Creek, Toboggan Creek, and the Telkwa River. Concerns were raised in the Phase II Consultation Report that these areas were also important access areas for non-residents and that these areas might become resident “hot spots.” Hence the Working Group decided that a resident-only time (Saturdays) would have less impact on non-residents and still provide resident priority.

Some participants in the Phase II Consultation process put forward resident angler-only time options for the Bulkley. The Response Form in the Phase II Consultation Report did not ask about resident angler-only on Saturdays for the entire Bulkley, just the three zones at the mouths of the Chicken and Toboggan Creeks and Telkwa River. Resident anglers, local business and guides supported those resident-only times; non-residents did not.

The Ministry of Environment indicated that resident-only times are less complex and less costly to administer than several, small resident-only zones.

Working Group members felt that a resident-only weekend day (Saturday) on the Bulkley River that permitted guiding of non-residents would have a reduced impact on non-residents and guides, as compared to the measures originally proposed in the draft Angling Management Plan.

3. Reduction in guided rod-days

There is a desire to reduce the overall guided rod-days to bring guided use in line with the carrying capacity for guided anglers on the Bulkley. Participants suggested that the Ministry of Environment begin by recalling rod-days from guides that chronically under-use their days. This would reduce the potential for crowding in the future if in fact all the rod-days allocated were used.

During a recent transfer of guided rod-days, 53 rod-days that had historically been allocated for use on both the lower Morice and upper Bulkley were separated. This split resulted in allocation of 53 rod-days to the Bulkley and an additional 53 rod-days to the Morice. The Working Group expressed concern that this effectively doubles the original allocation of rod-days. Working Group members recommended that 53 rod-days be dropped from the Bulkley and that 53 rod-days be kept on the Morice in an area that includes the upper Bulkley River downstream to the CNR Bridge as a condition of the angling guide licence.

The draft Angling Management Plan identified that historically, a large number of unused guided rod-days existed on the Bulkley. Working Group members acknowledged that a new guide has recently made more use of his total allocation and there are currently fewer unused rod-days.

Participants acknowledged feedback from the Phase II Consultation Report indicating support for removal of unused guided rod-days and other measures to reduce the overall allocation of guided rod-days.

The Ministry of Environment acknowledged that costs associated with reducing the 53 rod-days could be high as these are allocated days and the ministry would have to negotiate the return of rod-days to the province.

4. Require guides to demonstrate distribution of effort over Classified Waters season

In the draft Angling Management Plan, it was noted that there is a need for guides to spread out their rod-days over the entire Classified Waters period on the Bulkley. This practice helps to alleviate crowding at certain times of the year in certain parts of the river.

Guides need to continue to demonstrate how they are distributing their guiding effort evenly over time during the Classified Waters period.

Participants noted that the Phase II Consultation Report contained feedback that guides are contributing to crowding at some times and there is concern that the situation may become worse in the future. A number of people taking part in the consultation process requested that guided rod-days be distributed more evenly over the Classified Waters period.

The Ministry of Environment indicated this recommendation could be implemented as a condition of a guide's annual licence.

5. Limited-day licence only

This is a system-wide Management Element proposed for implementation on all 13 rivers in the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy (See section 2.1).

6. Skeena Steelhead Stamp

This is a system-wide Management Element proposed for implementation on all 13 rivers in the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy (See section 2.2).

7. Long term: Rod-day booking system

This is a system-wide Management Element proposed for implementation on all 13 rivers in the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy (See section 2.3).

3.7 Morice (East Working Group)

The Morice is a Class II Classified Water from September 1 to October 31. A Steelhead Stamp is mandatory for the Classified Waters period. To protect overwintering and spawning steelhead, the section of the Morice from Morice Lake to Gosnell Creek is closed from January 1 to September 30 and from Lamprey Creek to Gosnell Creek from January 1 to August 31. There are two licensed guides operating on the Morice with a

total allocation of 433 rod-days.

The recommended Management Alternative for the Morice is:

1. Resident angling-only on Saturdays, guiding allowed

Working Group members felt that creating resident angler-only times on the Morice was important to help maintain resident priority, a principle of the Quality Waters Strategy. They felt that given the lack of support in the Phase II Consultation process for limited-day licences allocated through a lottery system, there was a need to find management alternatives that provided some regulation of non-residents while offering increased angling opportunities for residents.

Members felt that allowing guiding during the resident-only time was consistent with the Quality Waters Strategy (See box, page 17).

Working Group members also suggested that allowing guides to fish during resident-only times would prevent all guides from having their changeover days on the resident-only day, which in turn would lead to issues with the airlines being unable to accommodate all the clients flying in and out on the same day.

Resident angler-only zones were not proposed for the Morice in the original draft Angling Management Plan.

In the Phase II Consultation Report, stakeholder feedback requested consideration of resident-only Saturdays for the following zones: Canoe Point, Bymac to junction of Little Bulkley, and Aspen Campground to Owen flats. Working Group participants acknowledged feedback from the Phase II Consultation Report indicating general support for resident angler-only days on the weekend.

The Ministry of Environment indicated that resident-only times are less complex and less costly to administer than resident-only zones.

Working Group members felt that a resident-only weekend day (Saturday) on the Morice that also permitted guiding of non-residents would have a reduced impact on non-residents and guides as compared to the original proposals in the draft Angling Management Plan.

2. Reduction in guided rod-days

There is a desire to reduce the overall guided rod-days to bring guided use in line with the carrying capacity for guided anglers on the Morice. Working Group members suggested that the Ministry of Environment begin by recalling rod-days from guides that chronically under-use their rod-days. This would reduce the potential for crowding in the future if in fact all the rod-days allocated were used.

During a recent transfer of guided rod-days, 53 rod-days that had historically been allocated for use on both the lower Morice and upper Bulkley were separated. This

split resulted in allocation of 53 rod-days to the Bulkley and an additional 53 rod-days to the Morice. The Working Group expressed concern that this effectively doubles the original allocation of rod-days. Working Group members recommended that 53 rod-days be dropped from the Bulkley and that 53 rod-days be kept on the Morice in an area that includes the upper Bulkley River downstream to the CNR Bridge as a condition of the angling guide licence.

The draft Angling Management Plan identified that historically, a large number of unused guided rod-days existed on the Morice. Working Group members acknowledged that a new guide has recently made more use of his total allocation and there are currently fewer unused rod-days

Participants acknowledged feedback from the Phase II Consultation Report indicating support for removal of unused guided rod-days and other measures to reduce the potential for unused guided rod-days to be used in the future.

3. Require guides to demonstrate distribution of effort over Classified Waters season

In the draft Angling Management Plan, it was noted that there is a need for guides to spread out their rod-days over the entire Classified Waters period on the Morice. This practice helps to alleviate crowding at certain times of the year in certain parts of the river.

The Phase II Consultation Report indicated that guides are contributing to crowding at some times. There is concern that the situation may become worse in the future. Consultation Report feedback, although not specific to the Morice, requested that guided rod-days be distributed over the Classified Waters period.

The Working Group felt that guides need to continue to demonstrate how they are distributing their guiding effort evenly over time during the Classified Waters period.

The Ministry of Environment indicated this recommendation could be implemented as a condition of a guide's annual licence.

4. Limited-day licence only

This is a system-wide Management Element proposed for implementation on all 13 rivers in the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy (See section 2.1).

5. Skeena Steelhead Stamp

This is a system-wide Management Element proposed for implementation on all 13 rivers in the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy (See section 2.2).

6. Long term: Rod-day booking system

This is a system-wide Management Element proposed for implementation on all 13 rivers in the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy (See section 2.3).

3.8 Lakelse (West Working Group)

The Lakelse is a Class II Classified Water year round. A Steelhead Stamp is mandatory between December 1 and May 31. There is no guided rod-day allocation on this river.

The recommended Management Alternative for the Lakelse is:

1. Change to Class I year round

Working Group members felt that reclassification of the Lakelse to Class I year round designates the river as “special” and hence it will be better recognized in future land-use planning processes, potentially providing increased protection for fish habitat. The increased fee for a Class I licence could reduce overall angling pressure.

The river meets the attributes of a Class I river as outlined in the Quality Waters Strategy 2005 document (See box, page 14).

In the Phase II Consultation report, a change to Class I year round was supported by guides, resident anglers and local business but not by non-residents. Working Group members felt this element would not negatively impact any of the different angler groups.

The Ministry of Environment indicated this recommendation is not challenging or costly to implement, because the re-classification is for the entire river.

2. Mandatory Steelhead Stamp from September 1 to May 31

The Working Group put forward a new time period for a mandatory Steelhead Stamp on the Lakelse to better reflect when steelhead are actually in the river. Working Group members felt that the corresponding increase in fees might help reduce angling pressure. Members felt that this recommendation would potentially provide more information for the Steelhead Harvest Analysis survey. They felt that this recommendation might have some impact on coho anglers, who were not targetting steelhead but would be required to purchase a Steelhead Stamp.

All User-Groups supported this Management Element in the Phase II Consultation Report.

The Ministry of Environment indicated that extending the time period of the steelhead stamp requirement is a less challenging and costly regulation to implement compared to other measures.

3. Resident angler-only zone

The Working Group recommended a resident angler-only zone on the Lakelse from the power line crossing upstream to the outlet of Lakelse Lake. This zone is about 3.9 kilometres in length on a river of approximately 21 kilometres.

The Working Group believed that a resident angler-only zone would address

resident priority, a principle of the Quality Waters Strategy. This small river is very important to resident anglers of the nearby Terrace community and Working Group members felt that this particular zone of the river has suffered from considerable crowding and poor angler etiquette issues in the past.

The resident-only zone would reduce overall opportunities for non-guided, non-resident anglers, but retain opportunities for those anglers in the lower river. Working Group members did not believe the impact of this element would hurt the local economy. As much of the salmon fishery is in the lower river, the impact on the salmon sport fishery would be minimized.

The 2008 draft Angling Management Plan proposed a resident angler-only time rather than a zone. The Phase II Consultation report only documents support for a resident angler-only time from the resident angler User-Group.

This Management Element is more complex and costly for the ministry to implement because it involves changes to regulations, maps and signage.

4. Limited-day licence only

This is a system-wide Management Element proposed for implementation on all 13 rivers in the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy (See section 2.1).

5. Skeena Steelhead Stamp

This is a system-wide Management Element proposed for implementation on all 13 rivers in the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy (See section 2.2).

6. Long term: Rod-day booking system

This is a system-wide Management Element proposed for implementation on all 13 rivers in the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy (See section 2.3).

3.9 Zymoetz I (West Working Group)

The Zymoetz upstream from Limonite Creek is a Class I Classified Water from September 1 to October 31. A Steelhead Stamp is mandatory during the Classified Waters period. The river is closed to angling from January 1 to June 15 to provide protection to overwintering and spawning steelhead. Schedule A of BC Regulation 125/90 establishes a maximum of three licensed guides and 250 guided rod-days. Only 58 rod-days are currently allocated to three guides. For the past two years, the ministry has issued 30 permit days, 10 to each of the three licensed angling guides.

The recommended Management Alternative for Zymoetz I is:

1. Classified Waters season from July 24 to December 31

The Working Group recommended an extended Classified Waters season from July 24 to December 31 because it better reflects when steelhead are potentially in the river. It is also consistent with what was recommended for Zymoetz II. There are few salmon anglers in Zymoetz I, so Working Group members felt this recommendation

would not negatively impact them. This recommendation may increase revenues because more Classified Waters licences would be sold, which Working Group members believe better values the steelhead resource.

An extended Classified Waters season for Zymoetz I was in the draft Angling Management Plan with a slightly shorter season and received strong support from all User-Groups in the Phase II Consultation Report. As guides have historically reported little activity in June or July and only limited activity in August, it is felt that this element would not seriously impact guiding. However, Working Group members felt there will be a need to allocate new rod-days to compensate for the “shoulder” seasons, where guiding traditionally occurred outside the former Classified Waters season. This would increase both one-time and annual costs for those guides involved.

The ministry indicated that this element would not be difficult or costly to implement.

2. Mandatory Steelhead Stamp from July 24 to December 31

The Working Group recommendation to extend the mandatory Steelhead Stamp from July 24 to December 31 on Zymoetz I better reflects when steelhead are in the river and targeted by anglers. It is also consistent with what was recommended for Zymoetz II. It may increase revenues and it better values the steelhead resource. The stamp would yield more data for the Ministry of Environment to better manage the steelhead sport fishery, because more anglers would be included in the Steelhead Harvest Analysis survey at the end of the licence year. There could be an impact on some early season chinook salmon anglers.

In the draft Angling Management Plan, an extended Steelhead Stamp period was proposed from August 1 to December 31 and was supported by all User-Groups. Working group members felt that there would also be support for this slightly longer time period.

The Ministry of Environment indicated that this measure was easily implemented and not costly compared to other measures.

3. Guide restrictions: Maximum three anglers per guided group and one group per guide per day

The Working Group introduced guide restrictions to limit the number of anglers per guide and the number of groups per guide per day to better distribute guided effort over the Classified Waters season to avoid possible crowding situations related to high guiding activity on a particular day. The draft Angling Management Plan originally referred to anglers per boat, but by using the word “group,” it covers both boats and walk-in groups of anglers. Working Group members indicated that there are no problems with “peaks” in guide activity at the moment, but they felt that concentrated guiding activity could lead to reduced angling quality in the future.

In the Phase II Consultation Report, guiding activity was cited as contributing to

crowding. Guide restrictions such as this were well supported by all User-Groups in the report. Guides on the Working Group indicated that they would be fine with this Management Element. They indicated that to offer a high quality angling experience and to ensure the safety of their clients, they do not guide more than three anglers at a time.

The Ministry of Environment indicated that it could implement this recommendation by changing the conditions on angling guide licences.

4. Decrease guided rod-days in BC Regulation 125/90 from 250 to 100 rod-days; increase rod-days allocated by 42 to a total of 100 rod-days

Working Group members felt that the number of guided rod-days for Zymoetz I in BC Regulation 125/90 is too high for the size of this river, particularly when compared to Zymoetz II. They proposed decreasing the total number of rod-days in regulation to 100 from the present 250.

The present allocation to the three licensed guides is 58 rod-days. The Working Group proposed that this allocation be increased by 42 rod-days to 100 rod-days. The additional 42 rod-days is approximately equivalent to the additional 30 permit days (10 for each guide) that have been granted annually by the ministry for the last two years, and hence anglers would see little change in guiding activity on the river.

The allocation of these rod-days would follow the procedure described in Section 11 of BC Regulation 125/90 (See box, page 33).

Most User-Groups that took part in the Phase II Consultation process did not support additional rod-days for guides in any situations. Working Group members felt that while the total number of rod-days in regulation was too high and should be reduced, a small increase in allocated rod-days was warranted.

The Ministry of Environment noted that the process for implementing this Management Element would have some time and budget consequences.

Allocation of guided rod-days

Until recently, guided rod-days were allocated as a tenure in perpetuity. Guides could transfer (buy and sell) rod-days, subject to certain guidelines and approval from the Ministry of Environment.

In 2008, BC Regulation 125/90 was changed so that the province leases rod-days for a period of 20 years or less. Guiding operations can still transfer rod-days, but they would only be valid for the time left in the lease.

The leasing of Classified Water rod-days would follow the procedure described in Section 11 of BC Regulation 125/90 that requires the submission of a written proposal (prospectus) or a bid proposal or both from interested guides. Proposals would be assessed on such factors as historical record of guiding in the area, bid price, and value to the community.

When guides lease new rod-days, there are two costs involved: the initial leasing cost and annual fees for the rod-days.

5. **Limit access by non-guided, non-residents to two weekdays per week (Monday/Tuesday or Tuesday/Wednesday)**

- **Majority Option: Immediate implementation**
- **Minority Option: “Triggered” implementation after a threshold level of non-guided, non-resident angler effort is reached**

(For a discussion of Majority and Minority Options, see box, page 12.)

In the draft Angling Management Plan, a Management Element was proposed that all non-resident anglers be guided on Zymoetz I. It was supported by most guides and resident anglers but not well received by local business and non-residents in the Phase II Consultation Report. The Working Group grappled with how to address some of the problems on this river using other management approaches rather than guided-only for non-residents.

Working Group members felt that limiting access by non-guided, non-residents provides a better balance between User-Group interests and yet still protects angling quality. It was felt that this element was more in keeping with the hierarchy of exclusion in the Quality Waters Strategy and resident priority (See box, page 17). Participants felt that limiting access by non-guided, non-residents to two weekdays, with or without a trigger, would also help to address concerns about long-term camping.

The Ministry of Environment indicated that there would be increased costs for the implementation of this recommendation.

The Working Group was unable to reach a consensus so the Majority Option was to

implement this Management Element immediately and the Minority Option was to implement it after a threshold level of non-guided, non-resident angler effort is reached. The Working Group looked at a number of options for what this trigger might be, ranging from 25 to 75 non-guided, non-resident rod-days, but left it up to the ministry to determine an appropriate number.

Additionally, the Working Group did not reach a consensus on which two days a week non-guided, non-residents would be allowed open access to Zymoetz I. It was agreed that consecutive days are appropriate and Monday/Tuesday or Tuesday/Wednesday were put forward as options for the ministry to consider. The intention of Working Group members was that the weekdays available to non-guided, non-resident anglers on Zymoetz I should be different from those available to non-guided, non-resident anglers on Zymoetz II, so that non-guided, non-resident anglers would always have an opportunity to fish on at least one of the sections of the Zymoetz on weekdays.

6. Limited-day licence only

This is a system-wide Management Element proposed for implementation on all 13 rivers in the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy (See section 2.1).

7. Skeena Steelhead Stamp

This is a system-wide Management Element proposed for implementation on all 13 rivers in the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy (See section 2.2).

8. Long term: Rod-day booking system

This is a system-wide Management Element proposed for implementation on all 13 rivers in the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy (See section 2.3).

3.10 Zymoetz II (West Working Group)

The lower section of the Zymoetz, downstream from the confluence of Limonite Creek, is a Class II Classified Waters between September 1 and October 31. A Steelhead Stamp is mandatory during the Classified Waters period. The river is closed to angling above the five-kilometre mark at the Lower Canyon from January 1 to June 15 to provide protection to overwintering and spawning summer run steelhead. The licensed guiding activity is currently restricted to five angling guides who are allocated 117 rod-days. Schedule A of BC Regulation 125/90 establishes a maximum of five guides and 200 rod-days.

The recommended Management Alternative for Zymoetz II is:

1. Classified Waters season from July 24 to May 31

The Working Group recommended an extended Classified Waters season for Zymoetz II because it: better reflects when steelhead are in the river; does not seriously impact chinook salmon anglers; caps unregulated growth in guiding activity when waters are not Classified, could increase revenues through the purchase of more Classified Waters licences, increased angling guide fees and guided rod-day

fees; and better values the steelhead resource. The Working Group chose July 24 because the chinook season closes on July 23 and there is limited guiding before this date, and it chose May 31 in order to include the winter/spring steelhead sport fishery. This recommendation is consistent with what was proposed for Zymoetz I.

This Management Element was in the draft Angling Management Plan with a slightly shorter season and received strong support from all User-Groups in the Phase II Consultation Report.

The Working Group felt that an extended Classified Waters season was important but it may have some minor negative impacts on chinook salmon anglers, and some more substantial financial impacts on guides. Increased licence fees for non-guided, non-resident anglers during the month of August may reduce overall angling pressure.

In August, when the first steelhead are caught, there is considerable guided effort that has been building over the past few years. This recommendation would have an impact on guiding during the months of August and to a lesser extent November. In recognition of this, there will be a need to allocate new rod-days to guides for parts of the season where they traditionally guided outside the former Classified Waters season. This would increase both one-time and annual costs for those guides involved. An extended Classified Waters season essentially puts a cap on the amount of angling guide effort.

The Ministry of Environment indicated that this recommendation would involve some costs to implement.

2. Mandatory Steelhead Stamp from July 24 to May 31

Extension of the Steelhead Stamp period from July 24 to May 31 on Zymoetz II better reflects when steelhead are in the river and targeted by anglers. The Steelhead Stamp would yield improved data for the Ministry of Environment to better manage the steelhead sport fishery, because more anglers would be included in the Steelhead Harvest Analysis survey at the end of the licence year. This measure could potentially increase revenues and better values the steelhead resource. The impact on salmon anglers in this part of the river would be minimized, because the chinook salmon season closes on July 23.

In the draft Angling Management Plan, an extended Steelhead Stamp period was proposed for August 1 to May 31 and was supported by all User-Groups. Working group members felt that there would also be support for this slightly longer time period.

The Ministry of Environment indicated that this measure was not as challenging or as costly to implement compared to other measures.

3. Increase guided rod-days to compensate for extended Classified Waters season

At the present time, guides with rod-days during the Classified Waters season do not need to “use” any of their rod-days to guide on the “shoulder” seasons, when the rod-day use is not restricted. With the extension of the Classified Waters season on Zymoetz II (See Management Element 1 above) guiding during the shoulder seasons would require rod-days. Accordingly, the Working Group members believed that in the interest of fairness, the ministry should allocate more rod-days to compensate for the lost guiding opportunity.

The allocation of new rod-days would follow the procedure described in Section 11 of BC Regulation 125/90 (See box, page 33).

An increase in guided rod-days to compensate for extending the Classified Waters season would provide better regulation of guiding activity over a longer season, because the amount of guiding in the shoulder seasons is presently not regulated.

The draft Angling Management Plan recommended 150 additional rod-days bringing the total allocated to 267 rod-days. The number of rod-days was discussed in considerable detail but the Working Group did not reach a consensus. Guiding activity reported to the Ministry of Environment that took place outside the present Classified Waters period during the shoulder seasons averaged about 239 rod-days for the period from 2006-2008. As consensus was not achieved, the Working Group left it to the ministry to determine an appropriate number of additional guided rod-days.

Most User-Groups that took part in the Phase II Consultation process did not support additional rod-days for guides in any situations. Working Group members felt that many participants in the consultation did not understand the nature of fairness that is involved in providing additional rod-days if they are essentially “removed” as a result of an extension of the Classified Waters season. This Management Element makes up for loss of guiding opportunities in what was formally the non-Classified Waters season.

The Ministry of Environment noted that the process for implementing this Management Element is fairly time consuming and costly, but acknowledged that if the Classified Waters season were extended, it would negatively impact guides who presently operate during the “shoulder” period when the waters are not Classified.

4. Guide restrictions: Maximum three anglers per guided group, one group per guide per day

Guide restrictions were introduced as a way to better distribute guided effort over the Classified Waters season to avoid possible crowding situations caused by increased guiding effort on a particular day. Working Group members indicated that there are few problems with “peaks” in guide activity during September and October but there is a significant concern for guide activity in August and this contributes to reduced

angling quality.

In the Phase II Consultation Report, guiding activity was cited as contributing to crowding. Guide restrictions such as this were well supported by all User-Groups in the report.

The Ministry of Environment indicated that this recommendation could be implemented as a condition of an angling guide licence.

5. Guide restrictions: Distribute guiding effort over the Classified Waters season

• **Option 1: Guides use 30% or less of their rod-days per month over August, September and October**

• **Option 2: Guide activity remains at current level and any new rod-days allocated to be used during what was the former shoulder seasons (i.e., not in September or October)**

Working Group members felt that guide restrictions that distribute effort would help alleviate any crowding as a result of guiding activity. Both of these options could be implemented as a condition of an angling guide licence.

In the Phase II Consultation Report, guiding was cited as contributing to crowding problems in certain parts of Zymoetz II at certain times. Guide restrictions to distribute guided effort were supported in the Consultation Report by all User-Groups except the guides.

The Ministry of Environment indicated that this recommendation would be fairly straightforward and not too costly to implement.

The Working Group was unable to arrive at a consensus and there was no obvious Majority Option, so it put forward two options (See box, page 12) for consideration by the ministry.

6. Non-guided, non-residents open access on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday (three weekdays a week)

The Working Group proposed that non-guided, non-resident anglers would have unrestricted access to all of Zymoetz II for three days of the week — Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday during the Classified Waters period. This recommendation recognized the contribution of non-guided, non-residents to the local sport fishery and economy.

Working Group members felt it was important that the open access days for Zymoetz II be different from those available to non-guided, non-resident anglers on Zymoetz I, so those anglers would have an opportunity to fish on either one or the other river on weekdays.

The Working Group recommended this element in combination with Management

Elements 7 (Resident only weekends) and 8 (Guiding zone on Saturdays) as an alternative to guided-only for non-residents, which was part of the draft Angling Management Plan and was not well supported in the Phase II Consultation Report. A summary of this “package” of recommendations is presented below after Management Element 8.

7. Resident angler-only on weekends

The Working Group proposed a resident-only steelhead sport fishery on Saturday and Sunday for all of Zymoetz II.

Working Group participants felt that this restriction recognizes resident priority and significantly reduces crowding, but it would have an impact on non-guided, non-resident anglers.

In the Phase II Consultation Report, resident anglers and local business supported resident angler-only on weekends for Zymoetz II, which was a Management Element in the draft Angling Management Plan. Non-resident anglers and guides did not support this Management Element.

The Ministry of Environment indicated that implementing resident-only times is somewhat complex and would include significant costs.

8. Guiding zone on Saturdays

The Working Group proposed a guiding zone on Saturdays from the confluence of Mattson Creek, which is located approximately 23 kilometres along the Copper River Main Forest Service Road, downstream to the confluence with the Skeena. This is about one-third of the length of Zymoetz II. The rationale for this recommendation was to recognize and accommodate the interests of the guides and their need to have some access for their clients during the weekend period.

The group felt that a guided zone would be easier to manage. Resident anglers can fish anywhere on the Class II section of the water, however if they fish downstream of the Mattson Creek confluence, they may encounter angling guides and their clients.

The Ministry of Environment indicated that this Management Element would be neither costly nor complex to implement.

Summary of “package” of recommendations (Management Elements 6, 7, and 8) for Zymoetz II. Times when each Angler-Group can fish:

Day of Week	Resident Anglers	Guided Anglers	Non-Guided, Non-Resident Anglers
Mon	Yes	Yes	No
Tues	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wed	Yes	Yes	Yes
Thurs	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fri	Yes	Yes	No
Sat	Yes (whole river)	Yes (in zone only)	No
Sun	Yes	No	No

9. Limited-day licence only

This is a system-wide Management Element proposed for implementation on all 13 rivers in the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy (See section 2.1).

5. Skeena Steelhead Stamp

This is a system-wide Management Element proposed for implementation on all 13 rivers in the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy (See section 2.2).

6. Long term: Rod-day booking system

This is a system-wide Management Element proposed for implementation on all 13 rivers in the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy (See section 2.3).

3.11 Skeena IV below Kitwanga Bridge (West Working Group)

Skeena IV below the Highway 37 bridge crossing of the Skeena River near Kitwanga is part of the main stem of the Skeena River and is Class II Classified Waters from July 1 to October 31. During this period, a Steelhead Stamp is only required when angling for steelhead. The Skeena main stem is closed to angling above Cedarvale from January 1 to May 31 to provide protection to overwintering and spawning steelhead. Schedule A of BC Regulation 125/90 allows for 10 licensed angling guides and a total of 1,000 rod-days. The current allocation is 414 rod-days distributed amongst nine guides.

The recommended Management Alternative for Skeena IV below the Kitwanga Bridge is:

1. Classified Waters season from July 1 to December 31

An extended Classified Waters period from July 1 to December 31 on Skeena IV below Kitwanga Bridge was chosen because it better reflects when steelhead are in the river, it increases revenues, and better values the steelhead resource.

In general there was support in the Phase II Consultation Report for changes to Classified Waters seasons, although this particular proposal was not part of the draft

Angling Management Plan. It was felt that extending the Classified Waters period to December 31 would not seriously impact guiding, because there is only limited guiding during the months of November and December on Skeena IV.

The draft Angling Management Plan proposed a reclassification of this section of the main stem Skeena to Class I. All User-Groups except resident anglers in the Phase II Consultation Report did not support this idea, as it was suggested that the river does not meet the wilderness criteria for a Class I designation (See box, page 14).

The ministry indicated that this Management Element would not be difficult or costly to implement. However, the Central Working Group recommended keeping the status quo Classified Waters season from July 1 to October 31 for Skeena IV above Kitwanga Bridge, so there will be a need to address this inconsistency.

2. Mandatory Steelhead Stamp from July 1 to December 31

The Working Group recommended a mandatory Steelhead Stamp from July 1 to December 31 on Skeena IV below Kitwanga Bridge for a number of reasons, including: because it better reflects when steelhead are in the river, it allows for the capture of more data by the ministry through the Steelhead Harvest Analysis survey, it increases revenues, it better values the steelhead resource, and it spans the same timeframe as the new Classified Waters season for consistency.

The draft Angling Management Plan proposed that use of the Steelhead Stamp continue as status quo — to be purchased only by those anglers targeting steelhead. In the Phase II Consultation Report, all User-Groups supported this element except guides. Based on feedback for other rivers in the Consultation Report, anglers targeting only salmon would not like such a measure because it would require them to spend money on a Steelhead Stamp that they did not need or want.

The ministry stated that this Management Element is neither difficult nor costly to implement. However, the Central Working Group recommended a Mandatory Steelhead Stamp from September 1 to October 31 for Skeena IV above Kitwanga Bridge, so there will be a need to address this inconsistency.

3. Increase guided rod-days by 586 to a total of 1,000 for Skeena IV in a zone from Flint Creek confluence downstream to Chindemash Creek confluence

Working Group members felt that Skeena IV is underutilized and could accommodate some additional guided rod-days. In order to avoid the crowding “hot spots” that were identified for the steelhead sport fishery particularly in the upper parts of Skeena IV, Working Group members recommended restricting the 586 new rod-days to a presently underutilized zone bounded by Flint Creek and Chindemash Creek. These new rod-days would be distributed amongst 12 new guide licences with no single guide being allocated more than 50 rod-days. Guides would be limited to guiding only one group per day in this zone.

The Working Group felt that moving guided activity to this part of the river might reduce crowding from guides in the Terrace area (i.e. Skeena II and the unclassified sections of the Skeena main stem). In addition, although outside of its mandate, the Working Group suggested reducing the rod-day allocations in Skeena II by 586 days to offset the increases proposed for this zone of Skeena IV. Additionally, current guides could utilize the existing 414 rod-days anywhere on Skeena IV.

Guides on the Working Group felt the allocation of these additional days was consistent with the Quality Waters Strategy and the hierarchy of exclusion (See box, page 17) in that guides are already restricted and non-guided, non-residents have few restrictions.

The draft Angling Management Plan proposed four new guiding opportunities of 20 rod-days each over the whole of Skeena IV. The draft plan also proposed that the four existing Skeena IV guides from the Terrace area would be issued an additional 30 rod-days each for a total of 120 rod-days. Neither of these Management Elements was supported by any of the User-Groups in the Phase II Consultation Report. Many participants in the consultation process did however indicate a need for guiding opportunities open to all guides, old and new.

The allocation of new rod-days would follow the procedure described in Section 11 of BC Regulation 125/90 (See box, page 33).

The Ministry of Environment indicated that increasing rod-day allocations is time consuming, complex and costly. It would result in additional revenue to the province.

4. **Resident angler-only in two zones: 1) Shandilla Creek to Boulder/Sedan Creek and 2) Chindemash Creek to the downstream boundary of Skeena IV; no guiding; non-resident anglers access three weekdays per week**
Working Group members proposed two zones on the Skeena IV below Kitwanga bridge: 1) Kitwanga River mouth zone, from Shandilla Creek confluence downstream to Boulder/Sedan Creek confluence; and 2) Kitselas Canyon zone, from Chindemash Creek confluence downstream to the existing downstream boundary of Skeena IV (1.5 km upstream of Zymoetz River confluence).

The zones would be resident angler-only with no guiding. Working Group members proposed that non-residents could fish in either of these zones for three weekdays each week. Members indicated that the ministry should make the decision on which three days. They felt that these resident-only zones address resident priority. In addition, the resident-only zone from Shandilla Creek confluence downstream to Boulder/Sedan Creek confluence may address the issue of long-term camping by non-residents at the mouth of the Kitwanga.

The draft Angling Management Plan did not have any resident-angler zones on this river so it is difficult to determine the level of community support for this

Management Element from the Phase II Consultation Report. In general, all User-Groups that participated in the consultation process supported resident-only times more than zones, but that feedback was usually in response to a management element such as a resident-only weekend day.

The Ministry of Environment indicated that resident-only zones are more expensive and more complex than resident-only times (e.g., Saturdays, Sundays, or weekends).

5. Limited-day licence only

This is a system-wide Management Element proposed for implementation on all 13 rivers in the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy (See section 2.1).

6. Skeena Steelhead Stamp

This is a system-wide Management Element proposed for implementation on all 13 rivers in the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy (See section 2.2).

7. Long term: Rod-day booking system

This is a system-wide Management Element proposed for implementation on all 13 rivers in the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy (See section 2.3).

3.12 Kitsumkalum (West Working Group)

The Kitsumkalum is a Class II Classified Water year round. A Steelhead Stamp is mandatory from December 1 to May 31. A total of 11 angling guides have an allocation of 959 rod-days between March 16 and October 15. Schedule A of BC Regulation 125/90 establishes a maximum of 13 guides and 959 rod-days. The Kitsumkalum is unique in that there is a no-guiding period between October 16 and March 15.

The recommended Management Alternative for the Kitsumkalum is:

1. Mandatory Steelhead Stamp from August 7 to May 31

A mandatory Steelhead Stamp from August 7 to May 31 on the Kitsumkalum better reflects the time when steelhead are present in the river. The extended season allows for the capture of more data by the ministry through the Steelhead Harvest Analysis survey. The requirement for a Steelhead Stamp begins on August 7, as this is the day after the closure of the chinook salmon fishery. This date accommodates chinook salmon anglers who are not targeting steelhead but would otherwise have to purchase a Steelhead Stamp.

This Management Element was not proposed in the draft Angling Management Plan but extended mandatory Steelhead Stamps were generally acceptable to all User-Groups that took part in the consultation process.

The Ministry of Environment indicated that implementing this Management Element is not difficult or costly.

2. **Resident angler-only Sundays year round**

The Working Group recommended resident angler-only Sundays year round to recognize resident priority on the Kitsumkalum. The group acknowledged the importance of this river to local anglers. This recommendation complements the original intent of establishing a no-guiding period during the winter months. There would be no guiding and no non-guided, non-residents allowed on the waters on Sundays. The Working Group chose Sunday because it felt many resident anglers had to work on Saturdays and so Sunday was the preferred day. Most businesses in Terrace are open on Sundays, so non-resident anglers would have other things to do, or they could fish elsewhere.

The original Angling Management Plan called for resident angler-only on Sundays on the Kitsumkalum throughout the year. In the Phase II Consultation Report, resident anglers and local business supported this element, but guides and non-residents did not.

The Ministry of Environment indicated that this element was relatively straightforward and did not cost much to implement.

3. **Resident angler-only on Saturdays from Glacier Creek to Kitsumkalum Lake, year round**

The Working Group felt that a resident angler-only zone on Saturdays from Glacier Creek to Kitsumkalum Lake would ensure further resident priority on the Kitsumkalum. There would be no guiding and no non-guided, non-residents allowed in this zone on Saturdays. The zone extends from the confluence of Glacier Creek upstream to the outlet of Kitsumkalum Lake, a section of approximately 11 kilometres.

Combined with Management Element 2 above, there would be resident angler-only weekends on this section of the Kitsumkalum on a year round basis.

This specific Management Element was not recommended in the Phase II Consultation Report. The original draft Angling Management Plan called for no guiding in this zone, but non-resident anglers could still fish. Resident anglers and local business supported this original recommendation, non-residents had mixed support, and guides did not support it.

The ministry indicated that the timing part of this element was relatively easy and did not cost much to implement but marking and maintaining a spatial zone as well would make this Management Element very complex and costly to implement.

**Summary of recommendations (Management Elements 2 and 3) for Kitsumkalum.
Times when each angler group can fish:**

Day of Week	Resident Anglers	Guided Anglers (March 16 – October 15)	Non-Guided, Non-Resident Anglers
Mon	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tues	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wed	Yes	Yes	Yes
Thurs	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fri	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sat	Yes (whole river)	Yes (outside zone)	Yes (outside zone)
Sun	Yes	No	No

4. Guide restrictions: Maximum three anglers per guided group, one group per guide per day in the upper river and one group per guide per day in the lower river

The Working Group introduced these guide restrictions as a way to better distribute guided effort over the season when guiding is allowed and on a daily basis to reduce possible crowding situations. Working Group members indicated that there are currently “peaks” in guide activity (at certain times and locations). This recommendation could alleviate some of the guide-related crowding issues.

The boundary between the upper and lower Kitsumkalum is defined as the lower canyon, which is not navigable by boat. The canyon is located approximately 13.3 km upstream from the Skeena confluence and is approximately 4.2 km in length.

In the Phase II Consultation Report, guiding activity was cited as contributing to crowding. Guide restrictions such as this were well supported by all User-Groups in the report.

The Ministry of Environment indicated that this Management Element could be easily implemented as a condition of angling guide licences.

5. Modify the dates and duration of the no-guiding period

The Working Group was divided by sector on this Management Element. The angling guide interests desired a shortened no-guiding period (Option B) or a delay in the start of the no-guiding period (Option C) as this would acknowledge and compensate for the additional constraints imposed by Management Elements 2, 3 and 4. Resident angler interests proposed the status quo be maintained (Option A).

The Working Group was unable to arrive at a consensus so three options were put forward for resident-only times during the winter season:

Option A: October 16 – March 15 (status quo)

Option B: November 15 – March 15

Option C: November 1 – April 1

The Working Group determined that the decision on this element would be made by the Ministry of Environment.

The draft Angling Management Plan did not put forward a Management Element that changed the no-guiding period, so there is no feedback available from the Phase II Consultation Report.

The Ministry of Environment indicated that this element was not costly to implement.

6. Reduce total number of guides in regulation from 13 to 11

A reduction in the total number of guides in regulation to 11 effectively reduces the maximum number of guides that could fish the Kitsumkalum to the number that are presently licensed to operate. Working Group members felt that the maximum number of guide operations should not be allowed to increase as this could further increase guide-related crowding issues. Currently the entire rod-day quota (959 days) is fully allocated to these 11 guides.

This specific Management Element was recommended in the draft Angling Management Plan. In the Phase II Consultation Report, it was supported by resident anglers, local business, and non-residents, but not supported by guides.

The Ministry of Environment indicated that this is a relatively easy recommendation to implement as it only involves changing the number of guides in Schedule A of BC Regulation 125/90.

7. Limited-day licence only

This is a system-wide Management Element proposed for implementation on all 13 rivers in the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy (See section 2.1).

8. Skeena Steelhead Stamp

This is a system-wide Management Element proposed for implementation on all 13 rivers in the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy (See section 2.2).

9. Long term: Rod-day booking system

This is a system-wide Management Element proposed for implementation on all 13 rivers in the Skeena Quality Waters Strategy (See section 2.3).

4.0 Recommended Management Alternatives – system-wide (non-regulatory)

Working Groups addressed non-regulatory, system wide recommendations to varying degrees. Very little time was spent harmonizing those recommendations in the final meeting of all the groups. These recommendations are referred to as non-regulatory when in fact some of them may involve regulations that are outside the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Environment. Some Working Group members and many participants in the consultation processes identified that some “non-regulatory” issues were even more important to address than some of the regulatory issues to help create and maintain a quality angling experience.

4.1 Angler Education (East, West and Central Working Groups)

More angler education needs to be provided in the following areas:

1. Fish identification
2. Angler etiquette including use of small, individual pontoon boats
3. Proper catch and release and handling of steelhead
4. Boating safety (particular need on Babine) including boat operation and minimizing impact on environment
5. Licence requirements and regulations in effect in different parts of the watershed
6. Potential impacts of boats and anglers on steelhead

Some of the suggested methods to educate the public included:

1. Complete an “angler’s test” when buying a Steelhead Stamp online
2. Prepare a brochure, similar to what was produced by the North Coast Steelhead Alliance, that could be distributed through
 - a. Tourism information centres
 - b. River Guardians
 - c. Accommodation, restaurants and other tourism businesses catering to steelhead anglers
 - d. Angling licence vendors
 - e. Downloadable from website
3. Provide signage at access points
4. Develop better education sections in Ministry of Environment’s Freshwater Fishing Regulations Synopsis
5. Videos
6. Local workshops

4.2 Develop ongoing River Guardian program (East and Central Working Groups)

The tasks of the River Guardians would be as follows:

1. Assist with enforcement and increase presence of ministry on river
2. Deliver public education (See above)

3. Data collection (Could be collected through standardized Creel Census or through the River Guardian program) including information such as:
 - a. Quality of experience and angler satisfaction surveys
 - b. Distribution of anglers from different groups
 - c. Angler density
 - d. Steelhead catch

Central Working Group prioritized its rivers for future data collection as follows:

1. Kispiox (first priority is an immediate creel on the Kispiox)
2. Skeena IV
3. Suskwa, Kitseguecla and Kitwanga

East Working Group prioritized its rivers for future data collection as follows:

1. Bulkley
2. Babine
3. Morice

4.3 Manage and maintain access (East Working Group)

There is a need to ensure that existing access points (i.e., boat launches and walk-in sites) remain functional, because access is critical to distributing angler effort along the rivers. The Ministry of Environment and the Integrated Land Management Bureau should work together to ensure that both existing and potential access points are mapped, maintained and managed.

After some discussion, the East Working Group concluded that it has a general reluctance to increase access along the Babine River given its Class 1 Park status.

There is a desire to retain and maintain current boat launches and walking trails on the Bulkley in order to distribute angling effort. It was recommended that the Ministry of Environment communicate with the Bulkley Valley Stewardship Council regarding its project to gather information on trails and access to share with government, planners and developers. Participants noted that a loss of access has led to an increase in jet boat traffic because anglers need them to access certain key sections of the river.

A request was made by East Working Group for an access management plan for the Bulkley and Morice to help spread effort over the whole watershed, provide and maintain access, and protect access for the future.

4.4 Improve Enforcement (East Working Group)

There is a need for increased enforcement of management regulations. This point was raised many times throughout the consultation process.

4.5 Address long-term camping on the Babine (East Working Group)

There is a need to work with BC Parks to address issues around long-term camping along the Babine River. In the same way that it regulates river rafters, the park could implement rules around length-of-stay, timing of visits, and location and distribution of

campsites. These rules would help address the concentration of long-term campers in the future.

4.6 Address long-term camping in other parts of the watershed (Central and West Working Group)

Several initiatives were suggested:

- In cooperation with Ministry of Forests, erect signs at forestry campsites that notify people they can only camp for 14 days
- Have River Guardians speak to long-term campers and tell them about the rules on crown land

Although long-term camping is not a problem on all rivers, participants suggested there is an opportunity to begin a conversation with anglers about limiting the length of stay on these waters.

4.7 Address Illegal guiding (East and Central Working Groups)

There is a need for greater awareness of illegal guiding and the potential consequences of engaging in illegal guiding. Several initiatives were proposed:

- Signage at access points and local airports
- Clear identification of licensed angling guides on their boats or on their person
- More information in Freshwater Fishing Regulations Synopsis
- Improved definition of guiding to go beyond just the transfer of money from an angler to an illegal guide to include driving anglers out to a body of water and showing them where to fish
- More enforcement

4.8 Permitted launch times for watercraft on Babine (East Working Group)

There was a request to regulate the use of all recreational rafts and boats on the Babine River. This would be over and above the current management that is occurring for commercial boaters on this system (through the Parks Act). The objective of this recommendation would be to make the Babine a safer place, reduce boater/angler conflicts, and help ensure the overall quality of the recreational experience on the Babine is improved. Participants felt that additional regulatory control of non-commercial rafting groups or other non-commercial watercraft would help to maintain the quality of the experience and better distribute watercraft use.

Participants acknowledged that this would be regulated under the Parks Act, as opposed to the Wildlife Act.

Parks already regulates visitors to some degree by requiring reservations and fixed “launch” or departure times elsewhere in BC such as in the Bowron Lakes.

Participants discussed the option of requiring that all non-commercial watercraft be required to have a permit for their launch time – a kind of reservation system. Such a measure might help address problems with long-term “tent camps.”

4.9 Funding (East Working Group)

Working Group members recommended that the Ministry of Environment institute a one-time only \$1 fee for each angler number to finance and build a rod-day booking system. This would be a fee like an airport improvement fee.

4.10 Prepare an Economic Impact study (Central Working Group)

There is a need for an economic study that looks only at the steelhead sport fishery in the Skeena River watershed, to determine where money comes from and where it goes. Additional spin-offs from such a study would include background information that would be helpful when the fishery is faced with other environmental and conservation concerns and there is a need to provide data on the value of this world-class sport fishery.

4.11 Expand and enhance the e-licensing system (Central Working Group)

Working Group members felt the best way to regulate the steelhead sport fishery in the future will be to have a comprehensive e-licensing system that:

- Captures more data for better management of steelhead
- Provides for the ability to cap the number of limited-day licences
- Makes it possible to cap the number of anglers who can fish on a particular river by day, season or year

4.12 Improve boating situation (Central Working Group)

- Address pontoon boat issue using signage and as part of the angler education initiatives
- Look into the possibility of using the Wildlife Act to manage powerboats
- Ask River Guardians to check boat licences

4.13 Addressing concerns related to family members from other parts of Canada (Central Working Group)

The ministry should develop a process where BC residents who have family members visiting from other parts of Canada who want to fish during a resident-only period, can write the Regional Manager and request a “Permit to Accompany” in much the same way as hunters can.

5.0 References

(all available at www.env.gov.bc.ca/skeena/qws)

Dolan, A. 2008a. Consultation Report Phase I (January – March 2008). Skeena Quality Waters Strategy. Alan Dolan & Associates March 2008.

Dolan, A. 2008b. Draft Angling Management Plan, Skeena Quality Waters Strategy. Alan Dolan & Associates. October 2008.

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