

Skeena Angler Advisory Team Meeting Minutes
March 21 and 23, 2021
Online

SAAT Meeting # 1. March 21, 2021.

Meeting start at 902 AM

Attendees

Province of BC

- Kenji Miyazaki (KBM) - Senior Fisheries Management Biologist - Kenji left at 910 AM.
- Kris Maier (KWM) - Fisheries Management Biologist
- Joe De Gisi (JD) - Fisheries Biologist
- Troy Larden (TL) - Fish and Wildlife Section Head - Chair
- Paddy Hirshfield (PH) - Regional Manager Resource Management Division

SAAT Members

- Sam Cooper (SC) – Tackle/retail rep
- Dave Evans (DE) –Upper Skeena Angling Guide Association
- Jim Culp (JC) – BC Federation of Fly Fishers
- Al Hummel (AH) – Kitimat Rod and Gun Club
- Bryce O'Connor (BO) – Unaffiliated Angler
- Gill McKean (GM) – Skeena Angling Guide Association
- Larry Proteau (LP) – BC Federation of Drift Fishers
- Troy Peters (TP) – Steelhead Society of BC
- Frank Guillon (FG) - Bulkley Valley Rod and Gun Club.
- Jason Harris (JH) - Terrace Rod and Gun Club.
- Mike Langegger (ML) – BC Wildlife Federation

Guest/Observers

- Alex Bussmann (AB) – guest/observer
- Melissa Moore (MM) – guest/observer
- Jesse Stoeppler (JS) – Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition
- Brian Niska (BN) – representing Northern BC tourism

General Discussion

- TL - - we'll defer the regulations decision part of the agenda to Tuesday when Trevor Rhodes can attend.
- **BN would like to discuss letter he sent, he would also like to discuss minutes from last meeting**
- **SC – would like to add agenda items. 1) discussing new membership seats 2) scope relating to regulation change proposals**
- DE – Terms of Reference (ToR) question. Are the ToR set already or are we discussing?

ToR discussion

Mandate and scope

- JC – and other activities (add this in)
- **DE – wants more on the process. From proposal to decision. So, there's better clarity on process, what happens if stuff doesn't get approved etc.**

2.0 Roles and responsibilities

- JC – have gov staff listed. Make a profile for staff – what they do kind of thing. Greater clarity.
- JC – After agencies, include First Nations . Bullet six change.
- SC – asked about habitat. Or impacts from other management agencies. Troy said we can talk about this and add it to the scope of this committee.
- ML – wanted habitat identified in the ToR. By providing advice and recommendations and bringing habitat concerns forward to the section head and director.
- JH – what is the overlap between SAAT and PAAT? The province is represented by our branch staff. Overlap between regional team and provincial team is around consistency. Also asked about how provincial representation occurs and if Skeena could have a seat at that table. He said bycatch was identified as a top priority with habitat being number 4.
- JC – sits on the PAAT but finds there isn't enough time. Said he's trying to make more connections between regional/provincial, but still a work in progress.
- GM – reinforced what Mike and Sam said. Habitat is number 1 concern. Asked who is responsible for habitat? Troy said FLNRORD is. Ecosystems. Gill asked for ecosystems support at the SAAT table.

3.0 SAAT membership

- SC. Suggestion we add two more members to the stakeholder list. Currently no representation from tourism bodies, there should be a rep for Smithers area one for Kermode tourism.
- JC – amend representative term to two years, not 4
- JC –we need to review those organizations who're not attending. Like NC steelhead alliance.
- TL – asked if any rod and gun clubs were missing. No one said anything.
- ML – said that we've already guides and tackle shop rep – isn't this enough?
- DE – said tourism very important. Also said FNs need to be a member of the committee.
- TL – said that Alison Oliver represents SFC
- **JC – recommended ministry ask member rod and gun clubs if they still want to participate.**
- JS – wants the committee to focus on habitat. Also wants a broad membership and then have specific positions for voting.
- ML – said he doesn't want the committee to lose focus by adding tourism. Its about regs and fisheries management.
- BN – said 4 years is appropriate given we only meet once per year. Also thinks tourism seat is a good thing. Main thing is an info pathway. Felt that NBC Tourism is a good way to go. Didn't say if 1 or 2 seats was the preference.
- TP – FN issues are not being represented by SWCC. Said we need to add seat to have FNs represented.
- TL – Asked the committee how we could include FN representation.
- GM – asked if 5 Nations could have a rep participate with the committee. Felt a seat needs to be added.

- DE – said FNs needs to be represented. 1 meeting per year is not enough.
- GM – asked if anyone from ministry has been to Lakelse mudslide site.
- TL – we have to keep the focus on SAAT ToR.
- TL – summary – representative term length is about trying to achieve stability, consistency.
- TL – Mark Beere retired and we’ve recruited Kenji. And we’re hiring for the fourth position. But we’ve been at 75% for the past two years.
- TL – asked about regional/provincial representation on the committee with the various organizations.
- DE – suggested we ask all FNs in the region how they want to participate with SAAT
- JS – felt that FNs are stakeholders?
- BN – asked about the connection between the BCWF and the rod and gun clubs. Mike said they’re affiliated. Brian asked if there’s redundancy in having both.
- BO – said the habitat needs to be considered but the scope of the committee is about angling regulations. Asked for a full review of seats and recommendations. Supports some sort of grouping between the rod and gun clubs and the non-affiliated seats.
- TL – does everyone support addition of tourism seat?
- JC – the rod and gun clubs need to better coordinate with BCWF.
- AH – does not support removing any of the rod and gun clubs.
- ML – asked if we are a voting committee. Troy said we are an advisory committee, and we try to achieve decisions by consensus. Also said the committee makes decisions wrt proposals
- SC – supports having rod and gun club participation. Geography matters and this should be considered when making appointments to the committee.
- TL - Term of SAAT, as little as 2 years, achieve a level of consistency in the process by increasing the term of membership. Asking for the voting from members to opposition to the 2 year term Al, Brian N, Dave, Mike, Bryce. TL - No opposition to the 4 year term, **maintain the 4 year term as written in ToR**
- TL - Review the members that are identified in the TOR, will be looking for increased participation from DFO, also looking for participation and continued support from COS explaining the current situation with staffing in the Skeena Region. Goal for the committee is fisheries management and need committee members to assist us with management in the region
- JC – Feels that the not having DFO at the SAAT table is a serious issue and need to possibly have BC sit on SFAB committees to deal with steelhead issues. Mirror orders will come up again from DFO this year and JC had a hard time with organization last year.
- ML – Elaborated on the BCWF and the distinction between the provincial and regional scope. The region works with rod and gun clubs and reports to the greater provincial body.
- GM – SFB comments on the mirror orders and how the province will deal w/ the mirror orders for this season and the potential impact to the overall economy, not just guides.
- TL – Support for the inclusion of membership in the BCWF, SSBC, and BCFDF.
- TL is approving that SFC is the body to cover FN at this time.
- JS - Does not feel that the SFC should be the sole FN member at the table. Just SFC does not work for him at this point.
- PH – SAAT is an aggregated body to represent stakeholders, FN are not a stakeholder in the process. All regulation proposals are sent out for consultation to determine impacts to FN rights and title. If there are habitat concerns please share comments and pictures and we will forward over to ecosystems staff.

- JS – There are reps for rod and gun clubs that encompass the region. JS would like to see more reps from the FN groups in the region.
- DE – Sounds like region is in contact w/ the regional FN's. Recommends that we contact FN groups to see if they would like reps at the table.
- ML – SAAT is not a decision body, but advises reg changes and such. FN are not a stakeholder, but a gov't in themselves.
- TL – Outlines consultation w/ FN in the region when it come to decision making. Believes there should be a role for SFC to participate to share the FN point of view.
- JC – FN participation is difficult, but we need to hold a workshop to chat about selective harvesting of fish. Develop a workshop to understand issues.
- GM – Lives in an indigenous community. Angling is misunderstood between recreational anglers and FN. There are common goals between recreational anglers and FN, but a lack of communication. Very complex situation and not sure how the committee will deal w/ it going forward.
- DE – Just because the situation is difficult BC should deal w/ the issue and not pass it on to the committee.
- TL – If the committee feels that BC should get FN reps for the committee, the region will not be in favor of that role.
- JS – Very important to discuss this issue, we all have some skin in this game and important to have this conversation. Why are we looking for a signal arm that speaks for all FN and why do we have multiple rod and gun clubs. The input from rod and gun clubs is more important than FN concerns at the table. If the SAAT wants to be taken seriously the we need to deal with this issue.
- JH – It's the role of BC to figure this issue out. Not the role of other stakeholders at the table.
- TL – BC will fill those chairs and it's SAAT's role to identify any shortcomings.

5 minute break. – 11:15

- GM – There's a gap in the information. Perhaps we need to have Taylor Bachrach or Ellis Ross at the table.
- FG – There has been no one saying that they don't want to have FN at the table. FG is on the LBN negotiation table and feels that going directly to the group is better than not communicating at all.
- BN – Better understanding how the BCWF feeds into the regional rod and gun clubs?
- PH – Trying to understand the complex nature of government to government issues is extremely difficult. BC has been working on reconciliation for a while and it seems to get more difficult over time.

Adjourned at 12 noon. Review of ToR will continue at next SAAT meeting. March 23, 2021 virtually.

SAAT Meeting # 2, March 23, 2021.

Attendees

Province of BC

- Kenji Miyazaki (KBM) - Senior Fisheries Management Biologist
- Kris Maier (KWM) - Fisheries Management Biologist
- Joe De Gisi (JD) - Fisheries Biologist
- Troy Larden (TL) - Fish and Wildlife Section Head - Chair
- Paddy Hirshfield (PH) - Regional Manager Resource Management Division
- Catherine Denny (CD) - Resource Information Specialist
- Trevor Rhodes (TR) – Associate Director Fisheries
- Greg Andrusak (GA) – Provincial Rivers Biologist

SAAT Members

- Sam Cooper (SC) – Tackle/retail rep
- Dave Evans (DE) –Upper Skeena Angling Guide Association.
- Al Hummel (AH) – Kitimat Rod and Gun Club
- Bryce O'Connor (BO) – Unaffiliated Angler
- Brenda (?) – Skeena Angling Guide Association
- Larry Proteau (LP) – BC Federation of Drift Fishers
- Troy Peters (TP) – Steelhead Society of BC
- Frank Guillon (FG) - Bulkley Valley Rod and Gun Club.
- Jason Harris (JH) - Terrace Rod and Gun Club.
- Mike Langegger (ML) – BC Wildlife Federation
- Allison Oliver (AO) - Skeena Fisheries Commission
- Michael Geuze (MG) – Conservation Offices Service

Guest/Observers

- Melissa Moore (MM) – guest/observer
- Jesse Stoeppler (JS) – Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition
- Brian Niska (BN) – representing Northern BC tourism
- Phillip Dennis (PD) – Local Angler

Regrets

- Jim Culp (JC) – BC Federation of Fly Fishers – absent but supplied email with notes pertaining to the proposed agenda and discussion items.

Chair – Troy Larden

Meeting start @ 905 AM

General Discussion

Intro information

Time in the agenda will be flexible throughout the meeting.

Any additions to the agenda

- DE – Reason for review and that the process has not been effective, poor results in reg cycle. Hope to have some time to make changes to make the process effective for all participants.
- ML – More discussion on habitat and moving the committee in a direction of looking at addressing these issues.
- Brenda – Discussion of the SAGA guide letter sent to region on Sunday.

Regulation Decisions 2021 – Trevor Rhodes and Greg Andrusak leading the discussion

- TR-Few things to chat about, particularly how the decisions are made at branch around regulations from regions across the province.
 - New angling synopsis will be out soon, criteria around the decision and touching on the regional regulations submitted in the last process.
 - Jennifer Davis was not available to meeting and was the person who made the ultimate decision on the regulations. A formal rationale JD from Jen Davis will be forth coming.
 - Regulations synopsis has no ads and is a lot smaller, tried to improve the usability of the document.
 - Removal of ads is to adhere to provincial policy.
 - Starting to roll out, and some vendors are starting to receive the hardcopies.
 - Please use the online version as it is the most up to date copy.

General Process of Reg Development

- Statutory Decision Maker under the BC Wildlife Act makes the decisions on freshwater fishing regulations (presently Jen Davis and Trevor Rhodes)
- Skeena proposals were divided between Jen Davis and Trevor Rhodes, with Jen Davis making the final call.
- TR wanted to bring a different process to the table and increase communication with regional staff of their proposals.
- Applications are reviewed in Branch (Victoria) and decision is made to post on the AHTE web site.
- Branch decided to make the decision and then update region to possibly reply to Branch concerns.
- This is an evolving process going forward, will benefit from increased communication between branch and region.

SDM decision criteria:

- Engagement and consultation w/ FN, COS, BC Parks, SAAT, etc.
- Conservation rationale for freshwater fish, this also includes mirror orders. Requests conservation rationales from DFO
- Social and economic concerns, weighted on a case by case issue.
- Minimizing the loss of angling opportunity, impact on anglers. Use precautionary approach.

- Provincial lens of consistency across the regions, recommendations are consistent with regional management plans.
- GA – regional process feeds into the branch process.
- DE-Better understanding of the decisions, can we have access to the written rationales?
- TR- Yes, they will available possibly be available online
- AH-Information from Rod and Gun clubs was sent to JD and she did not reply to any of the letters.
- TR-At the point when letters were received the decision had not been made, so there was no time to respond because there was no decision.
- AO-Can Branch share the written copy of the SDM decision criteria for stakeholders ?.
- **TR-Branch will put together something for region and others.**
- TR-Work through the regs in order in the table that was provided in the
- GA – No Angling - Kitasoo, Khutze, Green – no conservation concern on those systems was defined in the proposal.
 - Provincial bear viewing management plan in the works and did not want to get ahead of the cart with this regulation.
- Bulkley River no angling from boats
 - not with in the provincial jurisdiction at this point, needs Fisheries Act amendment to allow for the mechanism.
 - Working with DFO at the moment to open up the BCSF reg for changes, long overdue, but a huge process for DFO right across the country.
- DE-How can stakeholders support opening the BCSF regs
- TR-Starting quarterly discussions with DFO staring next month. Have asked for first list of amendment from BC
 - will be engaging with regional staff and stakeholders.
 - DFO in BC is supportive of opening the file.
 - to be honest still a couple years away
- AO-What will be the scale of engagement w/ DFO?
- TR- Provincial level DFO, w/ some consultation w/ regional DFO staff. There will be a parallel process in region.

Skeena Region Bait Ban in Streams

- TR – Went to the AHTE site, couple key points for non-support, not a technical disagreement with the rationale, regional assessment of the impacts to fish species across the region.
 - AHTE feedback was weighted to the negative sides, changes in regional support, loss of opportunity-loss of opportunity for youth to access fisheries.
 - Too much inconsistency in stakeholder response.
- ML-Need to reflect on historic regulations, not seeing steelhead populations in recovery, we as a group need to wrap our head around the real issues that are impacting the fish. How will these fish subsist into the future.
- TR-On steelhead end, there are a myriad of issues that have impacted populations.
- TR-Conceptual framework for steelhead management document is still in draft, but TR is working on finalizing.
 - what should we be doing w/ steelhead in the future.
- NM-what metrics are in place that show measurable improvement in what we're doing in steelhead management.

- TR-Clear pathways allow BC to get funding for project and make action asap.
- NM-What does the timeline look like for the strategy? Are steelhead and habitat a priority?
- TR-Yes, next month TR will role out a rough draft for regions to review. Document was shared with the PAAT, FN and stakeholder engagement by the end of the summer. General timeline.
- JH-What are the immediate things we can do for steelhead now, reduction in fisheries, less bycatch. Does not want to see a Gold River situation.

No Angling for Spawning Steelhead – Region wide

- TR-Support by the SDM
- MG – Is the definition of a spawning steelhead id'ed in the regulations?
- TR- Temporal closures

Kitimat River Regs

Trib Closures

Bait ban

Mainstem Closure

Quota increase in hatchery steelhead

- TR-some support, some non-support. Inconsistency around the conservation rationale for CCT. Disagreement around the retention opportunity for CCT. AHTE site feedback was biased to the negative side and lead to the non-support decision.
- GA-agrees w/ TR outline of the decision.
- TR-Quota passed to the 5 to make consistent w/ other regions.
- BN-What parts passed and which parts did not?
- TR – Will send a summary to be included in the minutes.
- TL-Clarity for the team, regulation not improved was the mainstem and trib winter closure.
- BN-The winter closure was not endorsed?
- TL- Correct.
- AH- Did not support the closures, based on poor science done 8-9 years ago, need better science.
- BO- TR a better definition around conservation concern vs conservation rationale? How does that definition weight into the overall decision?
- TR-Conservation concern is an observed trend /need to manage the population abundance, vs access or social issues. That leads to data, this leads to where regional staff has the data to make the conservation rationale with consultation w/ Branch. If there's uncertainty that's where the precautionary approach comes into play and the need for additional data maybe needed to make a more informed decision. Not an absolute formula.
- BO-hard to hear as a stakeholder, if there's a lack of data we go the to the precautionary approach, is there then funds made available to regional staff to complete the data set?
- TR-No direct branch funding, regions need to compete for external funds to update data sets.
- PD-Happy to hear that there is no closure on the river. Doesn't like the regulations and not seeing lots of change. Frustrated, does not believe in the science.

Tahltan DFO Mirror Order

- TR supported by branch.
- LP-Feels that the license prices are too expensive, and that region does not get their fair share of the money produced in region.
- TR-Money allocated through FFSBC is not allocated proportionally amongst regions based on fee collected in each region.

5 Minute Break

Continuation of ToR Discussion

3.0 SAAT membership Continuation

- TL-Move through the ToR information and leave membership till the end.
- SC-Requesting to table the membership discussion for later in the call.

3.2 Membership Application and Review

- TL-open for initial comments
- ML-Will the chairperson be a regional staff member?
- TL-Yes
- SC-Non-affiliated anglers need to ensure that the angler are distributed across the region.
- TL-that will be taken into consideration.

3.3 New Membership

- TL-Comments?

4.0 Meeting and meeting process

- TL-we are in a different realm with COVID, SFAB meetings are now virtual. There are benefits for both in-person and virtual meetings in the future. Something to keep in mind going forward.
- FG-Is there a way to have a hybrid process in the future.
- SC-Hybrid support.
- LP- Support virtual meetings
- JS-Supports hybrid.
- ML-Support hybrid as well, opportunity to get remote groups.
- AH-Need to think about the date and time, weekday meetings don't necessarily work for some people.
- TL- BC has been counselled that we can not use gov't buildings during the weekends. Wildlife Section in Smithers is moving towards weekday evening meetings.
- DE-In favor of the hybrid, but back to a face to face meeting when possible.
- DE-Virtual for remote members and face to face w/ local.
- LP-Teams is better than Skype.
- TL- Regarding work schedule conflicts, try to delivery weekday face to face, with remote access through technology. **Will add this language into draft ToR for comment.**

4.1 No regulation cycle meetings

- TL- objective setting and management discussion to identify where we should be putting our efforts going forward.
- JH- Likes the idea of the off-cycle year proposal.

4.2 Regulation Cycle Meetings

- DE-Regarding reg cycle, adding some wording around transparency on how regulations are put forward to branch. Also wording on the how voting on proposals weigh the decision to move regs forward.
- TL-Very important for region to communicate to the SAAT team what ideas are good to go versus not possible, due to the limited tools in the regulatory tool box.
- BN-Would like to see pre-consultation on regs to ensure we are not seeing failures over time.
- ML-Still seeing the same proposals being submitted year after year, should we be looking at a time frame to shelf proposals before they can be submitted again.
- TL-Doesn't see why the committee cannot review and make proposal better if there's an appetite for this type of management approach.
- PH-Agrees with TL
- BO-Likes the ToR document, based on previous comments, need to include information on the reg tool box, need to have an appendix with a decision matrix and tools available to stakeholders prior to the start of proposal development. Provincial staff needs to put more time into the document.
- TL-This is overarching document.
- DE-needs the information available, so people are not wasting their time.

4.3 Meeting Process

- JC- would like to see a hybrid between Roberts and Bourinot's Rules of order.
- TL-We will look into this and report back to the team.
- AH- not in favor of a hybrid model of rules

ToR Revisions and Amendments

- TL- living document that needs to be addressed at the start of each meeting. This will be completed by the team.
- SC-Do we need to write in what we said in the meeting?
- TL-No, just agenda item you would like to see and possible revisions to the ToR

Code of Conduct

- ML-Is there a prevision for media contact?
- TL-No media contact identified, bullet #5
- ML-There should clear language that if media comes to the SAAT, a response will need to be cleared through the chair-person before any information can be shared.

- TL- Propose language in next ToR to reflect point above.
- JC-Names should be left out of the minutes.
- ML-Intent of the process is not to be secretive. Need to remain a public body.
- SC- Second ML comments. As members of the committee we represent our members.
- JS- Concur with previous comments, ensure accountability of the member.
- BN-Agrees with the group.
- TL- Will continue with the current process.

Membership Discussion

- TL- agrees that the group is large but needs to be that way in order to cover all the issues over a large region.
- ML-New members need to have a focus on fisheries. Need to better understand the tourism role on the team, does it fit the committee mandate. Will this drift into an economic discussion, vs working towards direct fisheries management? Not a poke to the tourism sector.
- TL-Statutory Decision Maker has put social and economic criteria in the rationale for decision, so the inclusion of the Tourism seat is important.
- PH-Agrees with both points above. Has experience with not including tourism in some past processes, which necessitated later inclusion; probably need a tourism rep with the caveat that the person must have fisheries experience.
- SC-Agrees with TL and PH comments above. Would like to see more unaffiliated anglers at the table. Local knowledge is key to driving the process.
- JS-Agrees with ML on the point but sees the merit in the inclusion of Tourism in the decision-making process; however, he would like to see increased FN inclusion.
- BN-Agrees with TL, PH, and SC comments. Tourism covers off a large sector of people, and conservation feeds directly into Tourism. Tourism is in contact w/ a large group of individuals each day and could be a larger voice for the committee.
- DE-SAAT is too large at this moment. Believes that Tourism and FN needs to be at the table. Need to have regional rep for the rod and gun clubs, instead of clubs from each town.
- ML-DE would you suggest limiting the guide seats at the table? There are tons of avenues for the Tourism to get involved outside of this committee. Does TL receive requests from the Tourism sector.
- TL- Not really, our ministry makes decisions that impact people and businesses across the landscape. This is an advisory group and this group allows for more in-depth conversation amongst stakeholders.
- FG-Need to sit down with FN at this table to get work done.
- GA-Branch insight, fisheries has not done a great job at identifying the values in region.
- ML-We need to understand the values going forward.
- TL-Would like close out the ToR discussion, region will make changes to ToR and send to SAAT for comments at a late date.

QWS Discussion

- PH-Third time giving this talk, wanted to meet in the fall of 2020. Have received classified waters (CW) proposals in the past and have shelved them. We would like to host a discussion in the next couple months to share data and chat about issues. CW regulations are extremely difficult to implement historically.

- TL-KBM to lead commitment in June.
- TL- Habitat emphasis heard from ML, FG and others on the committee. Habitat decisions are out of scope for this committee. This committee can be a sounding board, but the team needs to understand that the main focus of the group is fishing regulation develop and fisheries management.
- PH-Echoes TL comments.
- ML-Asking members to think about how to address fish habitat issues in region and discuss later.
- TL TL will not be responding to the letter submitted by SAGA at this point. TL intends that there will be a written response later.

Actions

1. Revised version of ToR
2. KBM to set date for CW discussion.
3. Branch will put together something for region and others (TR)
4. There should clear language that if media comes to the SAAT, a response will need to be cleared through the chair-person before any information can be shared. (Fish Section)

Adjourned at 12 noon. Review of ToR will continue at next SAAT meeting.