

*Skeena Angler Advisory Team Meeting # 1- Draft Minutes*  
*March 29, 2022*

**Draft Agenda**

1830-1900	Introductions, housekeeping, scope, conduct  Agenda additions or changes  Review action items from 2021  Steelhead management in 2022 and future meetings to discuss  Skeena 4 rod day renewal focus meeting
1900-2000	Terms of Reference Finalization
2000-2005	5-minute break
2005-2020	Regulation Toolbox presentation/discussion
2020-2030	Closing thoughts and actions items for Meeting #2  Confirmation of next meeting, April 5, 22- 1830 - 2030
2030	Adjourn

**Attendance**

Province - Skeena

Kenji Miyazaki – Senior Fisheries Management Biologist  
Joe De Gisi – Stock Assessment Biologist  
Paddy Hirshfield – Acting Director of Resource Management  
Troy Larden – Fish and Wildlife Section Head  
Kris Maier – Fisheries Biologist  
Emily Mason – Fisheries Biologist

Province - Branch

Greg Andrusak – Rivers Management Biologist  
Trevor Rhodes – Associate Director, Fisheries

Alex Bussmann – Tackle Vendors  
Allison Oliver – Skeen Fisheries Commission  
Andy Towse – Kitimat Rod and Gun Club (Alternate)  
Brian Niska – Northern BC Tourism  
Ricardo Correia – DFO, Conservation and Protection  
Dave Evans – Upper Skeena Angling Guide Association  
David Lewis – Prince Rupert Rod and Gun Club  
Frank Guillon – Bulkley Valley Rod and Gun Club  
Jason Harris – BC Federation of Drift Fishers  
Jesse Stoeppler – Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition/ Hagwilget First Nation  
Jesse Grice – BC Federation of Fly Fishers  
Jim Culp – BC Federation of Fly Fishers (Alternate)  
Larry Proteau – Terrace Rod and Gun Club  
Mike Langegger – BC Wildlife Federation  
Sam Cooper – Non-affiliated angler  
Dustin Kovacovich – Lower Skeena Angling Guide Association  
Stan Hislop – Fulton River Rod and Gun Club  
Bryce O'Connor – Non-affiliated angler  
Nathan Meakes – Steelhead Society of BC

Melissa Moore - Observer  
Michael Young – Observer

### ***Review action items from 2021***

- Revise Terms of Reference (All)
  - o Ongoing
- Set date for special meeting regarding classified waters.
  - o Was tentatively planned for June/July, due to extremely low return of steelhead, focus of extra meeting shifted.
- Share rationale notes for statutory decisions (Branch)
  - o Haven't been published yet – coming soon.
- Clear up language in TOR regarding media
  - o Has been addressed in current version of TOR.

### ***Steelhead management in 2022 and future meetings to discuss***

Paddy Hirshfield (PH)

- Last year was quite reactionary. Province is working with DFO on scenario planning for the upcoming year (e.g., if there is a high return of sockeye, but low return of steelhead, how will the salmon fisheries be managed?). Working toward a policy of no surprises.
- Collaborating with First Nations to understand steelhead monitoring/use etc.
- Reviewing steelhead information and assessment program to determine how it can better inform management and a regulatory regime moving forward.
- Unlikely we will have a robust management regime for Skeena steelhead by this season.

- If there is low abundance again we will be quite concerned, hard to say more as we don't know what the return will look like.

Trevor Rhodes (TR)

- In the next year or two we will be taking an interim approach. Trying to ensure no surprises in our collective approach regarding what decisions need to be made, and how we'll make them. Part of the interim approach will be sharing timing of decisions, criteria, and thresholds for regulatory actions.
- Poised to put steelhead on the table at the Pacific Salmon Treaty discussions.
- Both Branch and the Skeena Region have applied for internal funding to supplement current steelhead assessment.

Troy Larden (TL)

- last year we made a bit of a concession in the timing of the closure because of our communication lag. Region will be looking to make recommendations to Branch for earlier closures if we have another steelhead run in the extreme conservation concern zone. Over next few months the Province will develop more certainty on thresholds, decision timing, etc.

Jason Harris (JH)

- Who are you working with the Pacific Salmon Commission (PCS), and is there representation for steelhead at PSC meetings?

Response (TR): Province's representative is Martin Paish, we've had discussions with regarding steelhead. Rebecca Reid has also put steelhead on the table. [TR] could facilitate invitation for Martin to SAAT.

Dave Evans (DE)

- You talked about quite a few initiatives that you're working on. Have you set any timelines?

Response (PH): Meeting next week with DFO and another one shortly after that. Invested in moving that along early in the season. In regard to working with Nations – can't comment on a timeline. Longer term, multi-year.

Brian Niska (BN)

- I don't view Tyee as a good indicator of steelhead abundance. But it is a long-term data set.

Q1: Have you looked at programs outside our region that enumerate steelhead successfully (i.e. Dean River)?

Response (PH): Tyee is a big part of our monitoring but not only one. Open to trying new options. We do look outside our jurisdiction, often the outcome is a mix of ideal and what is possible.

Q2: Has the issue of pinniped learning to predate fish caught in the Tyee net come up?

Revision: have you looked at whether it has artificially lowered number of steelhead at Tyee?

Response (PH): We have heard about concerns with pinnipeds, control measures beyond the things in our toolbox, but we need to be using everyone's toolbox. Relatively new thing.

David Lewis (DL)

- Rebecca Reid and the West Coast in general – not interested in talking about pinnipeds. East coast has removed some. Many groups working toward addressing the issue of over abundance. Nuisance permits at Tyee have been brought up, DFO not interested in addressing it. "close your eyes approach" right now by DFO.

- Comment on creel surveys and data – there have been some erroneous data floating around. Think recreational catch numbers are too high.

### ***Terms of Reference Finalization***

KBM: any comments or concerns re draft TOR?

PH: suggest we take a few mins to go over bigger changes, what we're doing and why?

DE: It has been a long time since the last meeting, forgotten what we've talked about. Long gap between meetings is a challenge.

KBM: overview of changes to the TOR"

- Mandate and scope – mostly the same
- Roles and responsibilities of members – mostly the same
- Membership – biggest change was appointment of new members/organizations to the team, observers were new
- Added tourism representation

PH: These changes were in response to not knowing what organization people are representing, or people not showing up for many meetings. Important for the Province to be able to keep track of who we are engaging with.

KBM:

- Even after Covid-19, we will keep a hybrid meetings, virtual and some in person so SAAT members all over region can participate.
- Non regulation years: presentations on monitoring projects etc.
- Regulation years: going from move from the 12 proposal model to 1-2 proposals that are collaboratively developed.

Kris Maier (KWM): We think the revised TOR provides a much better roadmap now for stakeholders to understand what their roles and responsibilities are.

KBM: need to complete signature page on final draft following next meeting. Also need alternates for all members (just a few remaining).

PH: any questions or concerns? We will revisit the TOR at next week's meeting.

### ***Regulation Toolbox presentation*** (KWM) – Slides to be distributed.

Mike Langegger (ML): These tools (bait bans, barbless hooks) are not the solution to the problem. Why isn't funding from our resources (forestry, mining, etc.) going directly towards fish and wildlife management?

- PH: Agreed. Part of funding from the Land Based Investment Strategy (LBIS) does come from forestry stumpage fees. But it is divided up between many investment categories, and fisheries often receives a smaller portion.

- TR: echo Paddy – no question there's a need for more capacity and funds to make science-based decisions. Talking to political decision makers is the way to go.
- PH: there are a lot of things we don't talk about – not because they are not important, but because we don't have control/ jurisdiction over them. We work with Provincial Ecosystems to manage habitat, but this is a gap. We have applied to LBIS for \$84,000 for aquatic habitat support.

Nathan Meakes (NM): regulations only go so far. Need to focus on the habitat side of things. Not sure regulations are the answer to abundance, can see that from the Thompson.

### ***Presentation Continues***

Stan Hislop (SH)

- Regulations state the gap from tip to shank on burbot hook must be more than 3cm. Most suppliers in area don't sell hooks like that, need to order them, very expensive. As a result, many anglers are non-compliant.  
Response (JDG): That regulation is meant to reduce mortality of other species. Most of Province doesn't allow set lines so lack of market likely contributes to price.
- Would it be worth putting speed restrictions or horsepower restrictions for boats in some waterways (e.g. Rainbow Alley)?  
Response (TR): vessel restrictions are under Federal jurisdiction. Need a "sponsor" to take responsibility for management/ enforcement of regulations.  
(PH) it's a shared concern. We're hoping this committee will start to find things we agree on and work towards them even if they are not under our jurisdiction  
(KWM): Stan's points maybe be good ones to work on – how to address these issues.

Nathan Meakes (NM)

- Management decisions (specifically regarding steelhead) such as opening and closures are being made with limited data (Tyee), what is being done to inform decisions around steelhead?  
Response (PH): working on trying to understand the confidence of Tyee.  
(KBM): reduction of abundance reflected in all monitoring projects (Sustut weir, Witset mark-recapture) not just Tyee.

Brian Niska (BN)

- Could a provincial staff member produce a 1 pager on tyee and steelhead?
- If a steelhead is caught, how much does it change the run size?  
Response: 245 fish per fish in the net.

David Lewis (DL)

- We've been asking DFO to recalibrate the Tyee expansion since there were changes to net size/set time. Has the Province taken a look at that data for steelhead in relation to changes?  
Response (KBM): that's part of steelhead program review. More to come on that.

Dave Evans (DE)

- a lot of other jurisdictions in prov use guide data to assist management, just curious why in this region we are not using that data?

Response (PH): support for QA/QC is needed. Need to tighten it up. Could use this data more than it is currently being used.

DE: Was surprised no one reached out to guides last year.

PH: That was not for lack of interest, mainly lack of time/ resources

TR: During the decision-making process last year, I talked to 20-25 guides. It was hard to discern patterns from anecdotal observations in many different watersheds, but we did consider that data in the decision.

Allison Oliver (AO)

- (referring to slide about regulation development) If this is the framework for us to use for regulation development, say we work through these steps ourselves, what's the process for bringing it forward to the province/group?

Response (KWM): can always approach provincial staff, can bring it to SAAT, proposals during regulation cycles.

PH: that is part of the discussion for our next meeting.

JDG: (referring to earlier conversation) we are trying to see how angling data can be used more. Angling data (ie CPUE) tends to be hyper stable. It doesn't appear to track abundance as well as other assessment methods. If you have other ideas about how we might use angler data, we're happy to hear it.

PH: next meeting scheduled for April 5<sup>th</sup> 6:30pm-8:30pm. Want to try to create a bit of a funnel for proposals. To start to spur some thinking we will share proposals that have been submitted in the past and see if there are any we would like to revive and work on.

Meeting adjourned @ 8:30pm.