



CENTRAL SOUTH ISLAND REGION

Upper Ōhau River Spring Season 2022 Report — review of the controlled-period ballot, angler survey and spawning survey

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Executive Summary

The Spring Season was created by Central South Island Fish & Game Council Staff (CSIFG) to restore a once highly valued fishery to the Ōhau River. Due to its increasing popularity, the Spring Season has been proactively managed with annual reviews. The 2022 Spring Season introduced a controlled fishery ballot to limit angler numbers and maintain the fisheries established high-country fishery aesthetics. The report recommends a ballot schedule for the 2023 Spring Season. A matter of urgency arose and management adaptations are recommended. The 2022 aerial live trout spawning survey was abandoned due to insufficient water clarity, but 2022 redds counts revealed a reduction in redd creation, indicating a potential significantly reduced sports fish spawning population in 2022 when compared to 2020 and 2021. As a precautionary approach to addressing low fish numbers and angler satisfaction observed in 2022, staff recommend reducing angler days in the 2023 Spring Season ballot schedule by 52%, including omitting the final 6 allocations from October. To enable a broader assessment of factors affecting the spawning populations staff recommend including brown trout spawning surveys into the annual monitoring programme.

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1. Introduction

The Upper Ōhau River’s Spring Season was first introduced in October 2018. Between 2018 and 2021 the fisheries popularity grew from relative obscurity to a fishery of national significance with an international profile owing to its coverage in social media. The attraction of the fishery centres around its one-of-a-kind opportunity for anglers to sight-fish with spin or fly for extremely large canal-origin rainbow trout in an attractive and challenging high-country river. The species and size make up of trout caught by anglers during the Spring Season, September to October, has been recorded during Spring Season creel surveys in 2019 and 2020. In summary, Spring Season catch is 100% trout. Brown trout are commonly 0.5-2kg with the capture of canal-sized trophy brown being extremely rare. Rainbow trout between 0.5-10kg are common with the occasional fish reaching 15.5kg.

The Spring Season was developed by Central South Island Fish & Game staff (CSIFG staff) to return a once highly valued fishery to the Ōhau River that was essentially lost when the river was disconnected from Lake Benmore by the construction of Lake Ruataniwha and the Ōhau Chain of power stations and canals in the 1980’s. An initial concerted effort by power companies and fisheries experts to restore suitable river flows designed to support a valued fishery failed to provide a summer season

fishery befitting the river. The Spring Season restores a highly valued fishery by opening earlier than traditionally available and in doing so provides access to the latter part of the rainbow trout spawning run. A summary of the Upper Ōhau River's fishery history is provided in Appendix 1.

CSIFG staff have observed and anticipated the Spring Season's growth in popularity and proactively adapted its management annually. This has necessitated a low-risk approach to managing the sustainability of the Upper Ōhau River and its interconnected fisheries Lake Ruataniwha, Ōhau B Canal and Wairepo Arm – hereafter named collectively as the “interconnected fishery”. CSIFG's Spring Season angler management has developed from an open fishery with no angler catch monitoring in October 2018 followed by intensive creel surveys undertaken in 2019 and 2020, then to its designation as a backcountry fishery in October 2021 with associated online survey and finally as a controlled fishery with its associated online angler survey in 2022. As such, the type and intensity of monitoring has differed between seasons, regulations have changed, and angling pressure has changed meaning that reliable comparisons between surveys are limited. The introduction of the controlled period adopted by CSIFG Council in May 2021 set out to establish a consistent long-term management and monitoring process to enable long-term review of trends in angler catch and spawning. Controlled period monitoring enables individual angler enjoyment of the fishery to be maintained by implementing strict controls on the number of anglers accessing the fishery.

Controlled fishery management is the most restrictive and adaptive fisheries management tool available to Fish & Game under the Conservation Act. Its core function is to set a limited number of angling days/controlled period licences. In the case of CSIFG, controlled period licences are randomly distributed to licence holders who enter a ballot draw. Where fisheries monitoring shows either the need to further restrict angling effort or to increase it, the adaptive nature of the ballot schedule means that changes in angling use can be controlled annually, and this does not require regulation change via the Anglers Notice process.

The management of the Spring Season adopted by Council in May 2021 and February 2022 is set up in a low-risk manner such that:

1. A controlled period is in place for the months of September and October – the Spring Season.
2. A ballot schedule establishes the maximum number of controlled period licences available during the controlled period and the dates they are valid. The schedule can be changed annually if deemed necessary.
3. A ballot draw is held to randomly distribute controlled period licences to eligible licence holders.
4. An online survey of angler activity, catch, harvest and satisfaction is completed annually and reported.
5. Spawning monitoring consisting of an aerial live trout survey and redds survey are completed annually and reported.
6. An enhanced spawning site is monitored and re-gravelled after significant floods.
7. CSI staff identify any matters of urgency arising from annual monitoring. Any regulation change or management adaptations recommended as a result must aim to ensure the sustainability of the fishery; maintain the established Spring Season angling values and satisfaction; and maintain the high-country aesthetics of the fishery.
8. A full review of the Spring Season management and regulations will be completed for the May 2025 triennial regulations review.

Readers of this report are reminded of the crossover of sports fishing seasons within the Spring Season. The upper Ōhau Spring Season is made up of the final month of the sports fishing season, September, and the first month of the following sports fishing season, October. For example, the September month of the 2023 Spring Season is in the 2022/23 sports fishing season and the October month of 2023 Spring Season is in the 2023/24 sports fishing season. It must be emphasised that the Spring Season month of September 2023 is published in the 2022/23 Anglers Notice and 2022/23 regulation guide.

The reach of this report is:

1. To recommend the ballot schedule for the 2023 Spring Season, October, and September 2023.
2. To consider if any matter of urgency arising from the 2022 monitoring necessitate management adaptation.
3. To consider if any matter of urgency arising from the 2022 monitoring necessitate a regulation change for those parts of the Spring Season in the 2023/24 sports fishing season, being October 2023 and September 2024 only.

This report presents:

- Results of the 2022 controlled-period ballot.
- Results of the 2022 controlled-period licence holders (CPL holder) survey.
- Results of 2022 spawning monitoring.
- An Identified matter of urgency arising from 2022 spawning and angler monitoring and considers management adaptation and regulations changes for the 2023/24 Angler Notice Review.
- Recommendations for the controlled-period ballot schedule for the 2023 Spring Season.

2. Controlled-period ballot 2022

Three separate ballot draws were held to randomly distribute a limited number of controlled-period licences. The ballot schedule and associated instructions, information and entry forms were posted on the CSI pages of the www.fishandgame.org.nz website. Multiple forms of communications were used to advertise the ballot including print media, NZC Facebook and Fish & Game's email newsletters.

Overall, 88% or 224 of a maximum possible 254 controlled-period licences were issued through the ballot (Table 1). The ballot draws were popular with Ballot 1 receiving 314 angler entries and Ballot 2 receiving 242 entries, allocations greatly exceeded the available controlled-period licences. For Ballot Draw 1 and 2, 96% of the maximum allowable controlled-period licences were issued, highlighting that almost 100% of available licences can be expected to be issued in subsequent ballots at the current allocation level or less. Ballot 3 applications received were less than the available controlled-period licences. The penultimate allocation "Mid Week 8" was under allocated, and the final allocation "long Weekend 9" had no angler applications indicating a diminishing demand for allocations late in the Spring Season. For Ballot 3, 78% of potential controlled-period licences were issued.

Table 1. Spring Season 2022 ballot draw outcomes. "CP" means controlled period.

Ballot	Allocation	Month	Ballot applicants	Maximum CP licences issuable	CP licences issued via ballot
1	Opening Weekend	September	314	30	29
	Mid week 1			12	12
	Long weekend 1			20	18
2	Mid Week 2		242	12	12
	Long Weekend 3			20	20
	Mid Week 3			12	11
	Long Weekend 4			20	20
	Mid Week 4			12	11
3	Weekend 5		October	97	20
	Mid Week 5	12			10
	Long Weekend 6	12			11
	Mid Week 6	12			10
	Long Weekend 7	12			11
	Mid Week 7	12			11
	Labour Weekend 8	12			12
	Mid-Week 8	12			6
	Long Weekend 9	12			0
				254	224

3. Controlled-period Angler Survey

A survey designed to capture information relating to individual controlled period licence holders (CPL holders) fishing activity, catch, satisfaction and general comments during their allocation was emailed to every angler.

3.1. Survey responses

CPL holders were prompted to contact Fish & Game prior to their allocation to confirm if they could not fish any one of their allocation dates, these anglers were removed from the survey distribution and were considered as survey respondents that did not fish. The survey was an online Google Form and was directly emailed to each angler on the last day of or day after their allocation. Anglers that did not respond to the survey email were sent a reminder email approximately one week later. A small number of non-responding anglers were then prompted to respond through correspondence with their fishing party members.

Overall, considering the survey email out and follow up email and other survey-related communications, responses to the survey were received from 199 out of a total 224 CPL holders, or an approximate 89% survey response rate. This is a very good response rate when compared to the 2021 Spring Season online back country survey which attracted a response rate of 31%.

3.2. Fishing Activity

Of survey responding CPL holders, 161 or 81% fished at least one day of their two- or three-day allocation. Thirty-eight or 19% of survey responding CPL holders did not fish any day of their allocation.

“Angler days” are a measurement of angler activity whereby one “angler day” represent a date that an angler was active on a fishery, regardless of the duration of such fishing outing within that date. The ballot resulted in the issuing of controlled period licences that provided for a maximum of 540 angler days for the 2023 Spring Season. It is estimated that 433 angler days were fished out of a possible 540 angler days that were issued through the ballot, meaning 80% of available angler days were utilised for the entire controlled period.

Compared to the ballot schedule, that provisioned a maximum possible 616 angler days for the Controlled Period, approximately 70% of scheduled anglers days were utilised.

3.3. Catch

Catch information is based on the actual reported catch of 161 CPL holders that reported to have fished. Catch by non-respondents was estimated based on catch of respondents.

Catch is reported as trout successfully landed in total, and harvest is the number of fish within that catch being kept.

Species and size for individual fish caught was not recorded in this survey to minimise the length of the survey. For the purposes of this report the size of trout is represented in two ways, firstly – 1kg/2lb or smaller, or secondly – trout that exceeded 1kg/2lb. The smaller category is considered indicative of a small trout likely to be juvenile or adult trout resident to the Upper Ōhau River or has run up the Upper Ōhau River from the interconnected fishery or migrated downstream from Lake Ōhau. The larger size category is considered indicative of trout that may have spent time in the Ōhau B Canal.

In total, CPL holders were estimated to have caught 465 trout of which 18 were kept during the September and October 2022 controlled period (see Table 2). Overall, the harvest rate was approximately 4% of catch; conversely, the catch-and-release rate was approximately 96%. Catch was a relatively even split between trout 1kg/2lb or smaller, an estimated 217 trout or 47%, and trout exceeding 1kg/2lb, an estimated 249 or 53%.

Table 2. Trout catch (fish landed) and harvest (fish kept) as reported by controlled period licence holders that responded to the survey (responding CPHL) and estimated for non-responding CPHL. *no anglers were allocated to this allocation reflecting that no catch was recorded.

Allocation	Month	Trout caught by responding CPLH - 1kg/2lb or smaller	Trout caught by responding CPLH - exceeding 1kg/2lb	Total trout caught by responding CPHL	Trout kept by responding CPLH	Total trout estimated caught by non-responding CPLH	Trout estimated kept by non-responding CPLH	Estimated Grand Total Catch 1kg/2lb or smaller – all CPHL	Estimated Grand Total catch exceeding 1kg/2lb – all CPHL	Estimated Grand Total trout caught - all CPHL	Estimated grand total trout kept - all CPHL
Opening Weekend	Sept	44	63	107	2	0	0	44	63	107	2
Mid week 1		1	20	21	0	0	0	1	20	21	0
Long weekend 1		15	35	50	3	10	1	18	42	60	4
Mid Week 2		10	11	21	0	7	0	13	15	28	0
Long Weekend 3		19	18	37	3	2	0	20	19	39	3
Mid Week 3		4	3	7	0	3	0	6	4	10	0
Long Weekend 4		35	27	62	1	21	0	47	36	83	1
Mid Week 4		13	8	21	0	0	0	13	8	21	0
Weekend 5	Oct	11	12	23	1	1	0	12	13	24	1
Mid Week 5		3	4	7	0	1	0	3	4	8	0
Long Weekend 6		0	4	4	1	2	1	0	6	6	2
Mid Week 6		8	7	15	0	2	0	9	8	17	0
Long Weekend 7		3	1	4	2	0	0	3	1	4	2
Mid Week 7		17	8	25	2	0	0	17	8	25	2
Labour Weekend 8		6	1	7	1	1	0	7	1	8	1
Mid Week 8		4	0	4	0	1	0	5	0	5	0
Long Weekend 9*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Total		193	222	415	16	50	2	217	248	465	18

3.4. Harvest Comparisons

Harvest comparisons are difficult to make between survey years due to the varying survey design, management status, and angler use of each Spring Season. Overall percentage of harvest varied between about 7% and 3% for 2019, 2020 and 2022 surveys (Table 3).

The 2022 total estimated harvest of 18 trout appears to be relatively low when compared to 2020 and 2021. This was to be expected with implementation of the controlled fishery mechanisms (specified maximum angling numbers and no fishing days) restricting angling activity.

Table 3. Spring Season open months and management status presented in relation to harvest measurables overall % catch harvested, and total trout harvest estimate for the period 2018 to 2022.

Spring Season	Month	Status	Overall % of catch harvested	Total trout harvest estimate
2018	October only	Open fishery	n/s	n/s
2019	September - October	Open fishery	7	n/a
2020	September - October	Open fishery	3	27
2021	October only	Backcountry	n/a	At least 24
2022	September - October	Controlled	4	18

3.5. Bag limit considerations

Consistent with previous Spring Season bag limits, anglers could keep a maximum of two trout per day in 2022. Fourteen of 161, or approximately 9% of active survey responding anglers, chose to keep 16 trout (Table 2) total. The highest daily rate of harvest reported for the 2022 controlled Period/Spring Season was 1 trout per day, which was achieved by a single angler over two days of fishing.

3.6. Method

Consistent with all previous Spring Season, methods available to angler were fly and spin. Angling activity was dominated by those who only fly fished, 123 anglers or 76%. Twenty-one anglers (13%) used both fly and spin and were at similar levels to those anglers who only spin fished, 17 anglers or 11%.

3.7. Previous Spring Season

Anglers were asked, “was this your first time fishing the Ōhau River?”

This question was only added to the survey after the first three allocations (Ballot Draw 1) in omission and 112 responses were received.

Anglers with no previous experience fishing the Ōhau River made up a slight majority at approximately 52% compared to those who had previously fished the river at 48%. The data suggests the fishery is still in its development phase with many new anglers accessing the river for the first time in 2022.

3.8. Satisfaction

Anglers were asked, “How do you rate your overall fishing experience during your allocation”? The answers available were either “satisfied” or “unsatisfied”.

Most anglers, 120 or 75% were “satisfied” while 41 anglers or 25% were unsatisfied.

Those 41 “unsatisfied” anglers were then given the opportunity to explain why. A full record of the explanations given by those anglers that chose “unsatisfied” is provided in Appendix 2.

In summary of the explanations of those anglers that were “unsatisfied”, two key themes arose:

1. Across the season fish numbers were lower than expected by new anglers and less than previously experienced by returning anglers.
2. Those anglers with allocations in mid-late October were too late in the season with the bulk of the spawning run having already returned to the canal.

Another prominent matter raised was:

3. That the gravel trap weir near the river’s mouth was observed/believed to be a barrier to passage and considered partly, if not fully, responsible for the observation/belief that fish numbers were less than expected.

Other matters raised by more than one angler include:

4. Poor water clarity for sight fishing.
5. Nuisance levels of didymo.
6. Bad weather.
7. High angler numbers.
8. Sighting of dead fish.

The level of “satisfied” anglers appears to be relatively low in 2022 at 75%. Although management status, season length and angler levels have changed notably over successive seasons, making direct comparison impossible, there is some insight that can be gained by broadly considering previous season’s angler satisfaction levels. In 2021 as an October only Backcountry Fishery, satisfaction was at 83% with the main concerns of anglers being the number of fish encountered and the number of anglers encountered. In 2020, arguably the most comparable Spring Season to 2022 as it was a September and October duration, satisfaction was at around 91%. The reason why the satisfaction levels were relatively low in 2022 is believed to be due to two main factors. Firstly, as expressed by many of the unsatisfied anglers – fish numbers were lower than expected, lower than needed for satisfaction, or lower than previously experienced. Secondly, the ballot process and privilege of winning a controlled-period allocation created high, possibly unachievable, expectations that angler would be able to sight-fish for high numbers of extremely large fish, despite which allocation they won and the limitations of variable water clarity and weather conditions.

3.9. Feedback

The closing question of the survey asked, “is there anything you would like to tell us about the Ōhau River Controlled Backcountry Fishery?” One-hundred anglers took the opportunity to provide feedback. Verbatim records of feedback are presented in Appendix 3 of this report.

In summary, these are the themes identified as the most common feedback items:

1. Anglers enjoyed their fishing experience.
2. Anglers expressed their thanks and support for the ballot and CSI’s work on the Upper Ōhau Fishery.
3. To a lesser extent than the above-mentioned viewpoints, a common point of view was that fish numbers were lower than expected or previously experienced.

Other notable feedback items are summarised as:

4. Concerns around fish passage/ fish numbers related to the weir near the river's mouth.
5. Late October allocations not providing enough opportunity due to main spawning runs leaving the river.
6. Water clarity not being good for sight fishing.
7. Expressing joy in catching trophy-sized trout.
8. Preference for catch-and-release only regulations.
9. Appreciation of controlled angler numbers experienced.
10. Bad experiences with didymo.

4. Spawning Surveys

Spawning monitoring at the Upper Ōhau involves two surveys that are paired to enable assessment of both live fish present and the observable output of spawning activity - redds.

4.1. Live fish survey

The aerial (helicopter) live fish survey was scheduled to take place at or near the 20th of September 2022 but was cancelled due to poor water clarity that resulted from the significant winter 2022 flood event in the Lake Ōhau Catchment. Water clarity was assessed as too poor to reliably detect fish in medium-deep water, where trout are most often observed during the aerial survey (Table 3).

The two previous live trout surveys on record, 2017 and 2021, show a large variation in live trout count. The 2021 count was subject to three Spring Seasons of angler activity and was higher than the 2017 count that was prior to the first-ever Spring Season. This may suggest that there is high natural variation in live trout numbers around the date of 20 September and this may be a natural characteristic of the Upper Ōhau spawning run.

Table 3. Aerial live trout surveys of the Upper Ōhau River undertaken in the month of September and their relevance to the status of the Spring Season.

Date	Live Trout count	Spring Season in place on survey year
19/09/2017	130	No
2018	n/s	October Only
2019	n/s	September & October
2020	n/s	September & October
16/09/2021	280	October Only
2022	Water clarity insufficient	September & October

4.2. Sites of significance redd survey

There are 24 spawning sites identified on the Upper Ōhau River where at least one redd has been observed on multiple years. Most spawning sites are used annually, some are used occasionally, and some have been temporary and changed after floods. Spawning sites of significance (SOS) are identified based on observations that they are used annually or most years and usually contain four or more fresh redds during September surveys.

To trial the use of SOS-only surveys as compared to labour intensive all-river surveys, in 2020 SOS counts were recorded during the all-river ground-observer redd survey. For September 2020, 92 fresh redds were counted at SOS and equated to approximately 69% of the total 134 fresh redds counted (Table 4). Eleven spawning sites were identified as SOS in 2020 and 2021 while in 2022 an extra site

was added (E2) after major river works increased spawning habitat near the river’s mouth. “Old redds” are counted during SOS surveys whereby the surveyor identified a redd that is not freshly made but is believed to have been dug during the same spawning season, April to August.

Table 4. Sites of significant spawning (SOS) redds counts of “fresh” and “old” redds undertaken between 2020 and 2022 at the Upper Ōhau River. * Indicates sites with spawning enhancement.

SOS Site ID	2020 (22/09/2020)		2021 (16/09/2021)		2022 (22/09/2022)	
	Fresh redds	Old redds	Fresh redds	Old redds	Fresh redds	Old redds
A3	5	n/s	7	2	2	1
A4	14	n/s	6	2	3	1
A5	19	10	14	5	11	10
A6	4	n/s	5	0	3	2
B3*	13	n/s	8	1	10	2
B4*	1	n/s	0	1	10	2
C2	18	6	23	7	5	8
C4	6	0	4	2	1	3
C6	0	n/s	11	3	5	5
D3	4	n/s	7	2	5	0
D4	8	4	12	2	4	1
E2					6	2
Total SOS sites	92	n/a	97	27	65	37
Total all river	134		n/s		n/s	

In 2022, 65 fresh redds and 37 old redds were counted on 22nd September and about 30 redds or 31% lower than 2020 and 2021. Water clarity was sufficient in shallow and medium depths for redds counts but some redds may have gone undetected in deeper water due to insufficient water clarity caused by the winter 2022 floods.

If fresh and old redds are combined an assessment of the utilisation of available spawning habitat across the season and including all sports fish can be made. For 2022, 102 combined redds compares to 124 for 2021, or an approximate 18% reduction in redd creation. This reduction in redd creation may indicate that some available spawning habitat was not utilised by sports fish in 2022, and this could indicate a significantly reduced sports fish spawning population in 2022 when compared to 2021.

2022 redd counts were the first on record during the eight years of Spring Season investigation, implementation, and management to have identified a decrease in redd counts. Some caution should be taken when interpreting annual variation in redds counts due to redd identification variation (survey error) between various individual surveyors and water clarity considerations. The SOS data, being three consecutive years only is insufficient to provide for trend assessment. A minimum of 5 years data is needed to provide short-term trend assessment.

5. Matters of Urgency Arising

The low-risk approach to managing the Upper Ōhau River fishery in light of its interconnected fisheries and the influence of the Spring Season, requires that staff annually assess angler use, catch and spawning monitoring to identify any matter of urgency arising and recommend management

adaptations or regulation change that ensures the sustainability of the fishery; maintains the established Spring Season angling values and satisfaction; and maintains the high-country aesthetics of the fishery.

A matter of urgency has been identified based on the 2022 spawning and angler monitoring. The matter is an apparent reduction in the trout spawning population in 2022 available to CPL holders. This issue has been identified as a common issue across three aspects of angler and spawning monitoring considering:

1. the relatively low 2022 SOS redd counts,
2. explanations and feedback of reduced fish numbers in 2022 encountered by anglers with previous Spring Season experience,
3. and the relatively high level of “unsatisfied” anglers and commonality of feedback associated with the belief/observation of low fish numbers/opportunity, including anglers who specifically attributed encountering low fish numbers to the timing of latter October allocations.

Each issue arising is assessed in the following sections.

5.1. Relatively low 2022 redd counts

When assessing a reduction in fresh redd counts at SOS by approximately 31% from 2020 and 2021 surveys, the following factors should be considered:

1. The 2022 count was a one-off result of concern. Spawning monitoring between 2016 and 2021 has provided no cause for concern of spawning population/effort sustainability. The Spring Season was first introduced in 2018.
2. The SOS data at hand, 2020-2022, does not provide for assessment of trends in redd counts, short-term (5 years), medium-term (5-10 years), or long-term trends (+10 years).
3. Redd count surveys have an inherent redd detection surveyor error therefore only significant annual changes in observed redd counts should be considered to indicate annual spawning population change.
4. Live fish surveys indicate that high variation in spawning populations is likely to be a natural characteristic of the Upper Ōhau Spawning run.
5. The Winter 2022 floods in the Lake Ōhau Catchment caused water clarity issues lasting into September and the survey could not be paired with a live fish survey as planned. Water clarity may have affected the detection of redds in deep water.
6. The weir near the river’s mouth likely presented a partial barrier to fish passage and may have contributed to a reduced spawning population and resulting reduction in redd creation.
7. Spawning production (trout fry) in the Upper Ōhau River is considered by CSIFG Staff to be a minor source of canal-based trophy trout recruitment when compared to downstream migration of adults and sub adults to the canal from headwater spawning in Lake Ōhau, Lake Tekapo/Takapō and Lake Pūkaki Catchments.

It is reasoned that due to the limitations of what can be concluded from the SOS and live fish data available that a precautionary approach be taken to assessing the 2022 spawning data and the observed reduction in redd count in 2022. The precautionary approach would be to consider the 2022 spawning data as if it is a true reduction in spawning when compared to 2020 and 2021. The precautionary approach should also be applied to any management adaptation or regulations change due to the factors highlighted above.

Continued annual spawning monitoring is required for at least three further consecutive years to provide assessment of short-term trends in the spawning effort/population. Currently there is uncertainty around the single monitoring point of concern with insufficient data at hand to assess trends in redd counts and that the weir may have also posed a fish passage issue.

5.2. Possible causes of relatively low 2022 redd count.

The cause of the observed upper Ōhau River reduction in redds in 2022 is unknown. Possible explanations/ contributions are explored:

- 5.2.1. Increase in harvest of trout or decrease in the trout population size at the interconnected fisheries of Ōhau B Canal, Lake Ruataniwha and Wairepo Arm leading to a reduced spawning population.

No recent or annual catch and harvest monitoring is in place that assesses harvest levels at Ōhau B Canal, Lake Ruataniwha or Wairepo Arm so evidence-based comment cannot be made. Considering the relatively high angler use experienced at Ōhau B Canal this part of the interconnected fishery is considered the most likely location where angler harvest could govern the variation of trout abundance within the interconnected fishery.

CSIFG staff are trialling a sonar-based survey to monitor annual changes in trout population sizes in the Hydro Canals that will be a more objective measure of canal trout abundance than angler harvest surveys.

- 5.2.2. The level of catch and harvest during 2019-2021 Spring Seasons leading to a reduced spawning population in 2022.

The level of Spring Season harvest of 24+ (2021) to 27 (2020) trout estimated from monitoring prior to 2022 has not previously raised concern at CSIFG Staff level. In 2022, harvest up to the spawning survey date is estimated at 9 trout total (Table 1). It is unlikely that the 2022 harvest of 9 trout up until the spawning survey date could have caused the 31% reduction of redds observed in 2022 but may have had a minor contribution.

Considering the one-off significant reduction in spawning redds observed in 2022, further consideration is warranted as to whether Spring Season harvest to date (2020-2021) could have caused an appreciable reduction in spawning redd counts in 2022. The harvest and spawning data at hand is insufficient to provide assessment of trends (5-year minimum), however some key observations can be noted.

1. 2021 redds counts were similar to 2020 and appeared to be unaffected by 2020 Spring Season harvest (27 trout).
2. 2021 live fish count was 280 fish, dramatically higher than count of 130 fish in 2018, prior to Spring Season fishing activity.

In summary, it is suggested that 2018-2022 Spring Season harvest to date alone cannot explain the significant reduction in redds observed in 2022. It is suggested that other factors are responsible or partly responsible for such observation, of which, Spring Season trout harvest may be a contributor.

Considering the limited data at hand, a precautionary approach to managing Spring Season harvest and its potential effects on the trout population of the interconnected fishery could be to reduce harvest by reducing Spring Season angling days whilst still maintaining a valued Spring Season fishery. A reduction of approximately 50% of angling days from 2022 levels is likely to result in a similar reduction in harvest level. It is predicted that a 50% reduction in angling days would result in 10 or

less trout in total being harvested for the Spring Season of 2023 – an insignificant level of annual harvest for the interconnected fishery. Reducing angler days is achieved through modification of the ballot schedule.

Increasing the scope of Spring Season spawning monitoring to include brown trout would be a valuable management adaptation. Brown trout spawning surveys provide an index of the interconnected fishery's brown trout spawning population but, unlike for rainbow trout, Spring Season catch has little interaction with the trophy-brown trout spawning population of the interconnected fishery. The Spring Season does not incorporate the brown trout spawning season, May to August, and few brown trout are caught during the Spring Season. To date, only two individual trophy size brown trout have been reported to be caught between 2019 and 2022 Spring Season. Brown trout spawning monitoring therefore provides a basis to assess if factors beyond Spring Season trophy-trout harvest, such as trophy-trout harvest at Ōhau B Canal, could be affecting the September SOS redd counts.

5.2.3. The weir near the upper Ōhau River mouth likely presented as a partial barrier for fish passage.

After flooding events over 2019 to 2022 caused a build-up of riverbed material near the river mouth, Meridian undertook river works including gravel removal and weir reconstruction in April 2022. The resultant works constructed a wide boulder-lined weir structure with a generally shallow-water profile and provided some suitable spawning areas in the most downstream river reach between the reconstructed weir and where the river dissipates into Lake Ruataniwha.

During the early 2022 controlled-period allocations a small number of anglers contacted CSIFG staff to suggest that the weir was a barrier to fish passage, observing 2 dead trout and witnessing some trout fail to traverse the weir upstream. CSIFG Staff subsequently visited the site on multiple occasions during September 2022. The same two dead trout were observed as notified by anglers, but no others. It was reasoned that these trout, of large canal-size (~8kg), likely perished by becoming stranded on a gravel bar while returning downstream after a failed attempt to pass the weir. Staff observed trout of a canal size (~8kg) both successfully passing the weir and failing to pass the weir without perishing. A small number (~10) trout and redds were observed in the river below the weir. At the time it was assessed that passage was sufficient for trout of traditional or large proportions, but that a small number of extremely large canal trout may have had difficulty. Staff reasoned that if the weir did present a significant barrier to passage then spawning surveys would have identified a large number of old and fresh spawning redds and an increased number of live trout immediately downstream of the weir. Neither were observed.

CSIFG staff notified Meridian that the construction of the weir may have acted as a fish passage barrier and that anglers were approaching CSIFG with their concerns being that it is affecting the spawning runs and therefore their Spring Season fishing opportunity. Meridian set to address the observation and provisioned a digger to deepen the lead channel to improve passage on 8 September 2022.

The site was visited as part of the SOS redd survey on 22/09/2022, 6 fresh redds, 2 old redds were observed in the wade-able area downstream of the weir (Site E2 on Table 4). Deeper channels were not visible due to insufficient water clarity and may have held redds. The number of redds observed below the weir was about what would have been expected given the available spawning area and the occasional historical use of the area for spawning. There were also 8 live canal-sized trout observed in the area which was consistent with the previous season. No new dead fish were observed during any

CSIFG staff inspection. At the time these observations led CSIFG staff to conclude that the weir most likely provided only a minor barrier to fish passage.

On 29 September an angler reported that further out in Lake Ruataniwha, redds and dead fish were observed – these observations were not verified by staff. It is possible the Ōhau A tail race/ head of Lake Ruataniwha may have held some fish and their redds as an alternative spawning site for fish displaced by their inability to pass the weir.

Meridian proactively commissioned Damwatch Engineering to redesign the weir to improve sports fish passage. In March 2023 the weir was modified to provide increased flow volume to the lead channel and place more than 20 boulders of >1m diameter through the lead channel to provide deep eddied areas that could provide staged upstream passage and resting areas. CSIFG staff were invited to review the weir modification design and participated in the reconstruction works.

In summary, it is unknown to what extent the weir affected the spawning population and therefore redd counts in 2022. Although staff observations around spawning activity and fish numbers at the site suggested the weir was not a significant barrier to passage, there remained some uncertainty due to water clarity limitations (deep water only), the timing of remediation works (8 Sept 2022), further observations by an angler made downstream of the site, and the potential for spawning habitat in the Ōhau A tailrace to be used as an alternate spawning site. Staff assess that the weir construction in April 2022 may have had a minor influence to reduce SOS redd counts in 2022 and the number of trout available for controlled period licence holders fishing the 2022 Spring Season. It is anticipated that the weir reconfiguration works undertaken by Meridian in March 2023 will reduce, if not eliminate, fish passage issues.

5.3. Reports of reduced fish numbers in 2022 encountered by anglers with previous Spring Season experience.

Some anglers known to have fished the Spring Season prior to 2022 provided explanations to their “unsatisfied” comments and/or general feedback that fish numbers were lower than previously experienced. There are many factors at play that could influence each anglers’ individual perceptions and observation of fish numbers including time of season previously fished, location/pools previously fished, water clarity, light conditions for fish spotting and fish spotting skills of companion anglers. In the case of the 2022 angler survey, there was commonality pertaining to explanations of reduced fish numbers and the barrier to fish passage caused by the weir.

Given the consistent explanations it is concluded that experienced anglers most likely observed significantly reduced fish numbers in 2022 when compared to the 2020 and 2021 Spring Seasons. Unfortunately, the issues with poor water clarity did not provide an opportunity to aerially survey live trout numbers which would have provided an objective measure of trout abundance.

5.4. The relatively high level of “unsatisfied” anglers and commonality of feedback associated with the belief/ observation of low fish numbers/ opportunity, including anglers who specifically attributed low fish numbers to the timing of latter October allocations.

Overall, 75% of CPL holders were “satisfied” with their overall Spring Season fishing experience while 25% were “unsatisfied”. Angler satisfaction with an overall fishing experience is a personal matter and difficult to interpret with confidence by fisheries managers as a qualitative measure of a fishery. Nevertheless, in a fishery such as the Spring Season that is managed for its one-of-a-kind high-country

trophy trout fishery values it is reasoned that satisfaction should be high and in previous Spring Seasons this has been the case.

In this 2022 assessment, it is reasoned that high satisfaction levels are where 80% or more anglers are satisfied with their overall fishing experience. Therefore, the finding that just 75% of anglers were “satisfied” with their overall fishing experience in 2022 is a cause for concern to be address as a matter of urgency.

Formally adopting a minimum target of 80% angler satisfaction for future Spring Seasons management would aid staff to identify when angler satisfaction levels are considered a matter of urgency.

Explanations for being unsatisfied in 2022 were wide ranging and personal, however some themes were common in explanations provided by “unsatisfied” anglers. Those themes provide an opportunity to consider if management adaptations or regulation change can increase satisfaction in successive seasons.

The two key themes relating to low satisfaction levels were “low fish numbers” and “latter allocations providing low opportunity and satisfaction”. These themes are explored:

a) Low fish numbers

Fish numbers may return to levels previously experienced without management intervention. However, there are two ways that intervention can “increase” fish numbers. Firstly, by fishery enhancement through being stocked and/or having spawning enhancement and secondly, by reduction in angler numbers to alter the proportion of available fish.

Stocking of the river with trout occurs naturally via downstream migration. Trout migrate downstream into the Upper Ōhau and interconnected fishery from Lake Ōhau via the Ōhau weir syphon. Additionally, during floods when Lake Ōhau levels are high and the Ōhau weir overflows, fish have relatively unhindered downstream access from Lake Ōhau. The frequency of floods that overtop the weir is currently about one per year. Downstream migration also occurs from Lake Ōhau and Pūkaki via the Pukaki-Ōhau A canal and the Ōhau A power Station. Due to natural stocking through migration, artificial stocking is not considered necessary to support a sustainable trout population or considered economically viable as an option to significantly increase the trout population of the Upper Ōhau River and interconnected fishery.

Spawning enhancement is an existing part of Spring Season management with one enhanced spawning site established and maintained currently. Additional spawning enhancement is planned with two other sites consented. Meridian Energy Ltd funds the consent process and enhancement work. Spawning enhancement improves the distribution of spawning effort, provides additional spawning gravels, and increases hatching success. The primary purpose of the existing enhancement is to offset/re-supply any trout harvested during the Spring Season only (e.g., 18 trout in 2022). The exiting spawning enhancement at 1 site or additional of 2 more sites at the Upper Ōhau River is not expected to significantly increase the overall population of the interconnected fishery therefore is not recommended as an enhancement tool beyond its primary purpose linked directly to Spring Season harvest replacement.

To reduce controlled period angler numbers is a relatively straight forward task involving the annual scheduling of allocations to ballot. The maximum number of anglers fishing an allocation and the duration (days) of allocations can be tailored to the desired level of angler reduction. A lower number of anglers on the river will provide more freedom of choice when selecting what water to fish for the day and a better chance of occupying the ‘hot spots’ that are well known by experienced anglers.

Although angler numbers were not seen as a significant issue in 2022, a precautionary approach taken to managing low satisfaction levels observed in 2022 could be addressed through a notable reduction in angler numbers. A notable reduction of angler numbers/angler days will also have the flow on effect of reducing catch and harvest, satisfying a precautionary approach to managing fishery sustainability.

b) Latter allocations providing low opportunity and satisfaction.

The second angler dissatisfaction theme to address is that of belief/observation of low fish numbers encountered by those in the latter allocations in October. This factor was anticipated by staff and proactively reflected in the 2022 ballot schedule by scheduling only a maximum of 12 anglers in weekends, down from 20, beyond the first weekend in October. Spawning and angler monitoring to date has shown that fish numbers reduce appreciably during October. This is a natural occurrence as canal-sized trophy trout migrate downstream back to the canal where the food needed to sustain their unusually large size is more readily available. The invertebrate food source of the upper Ōhau River cannot sustain large trout of canal origin for any length of time and is considered to be the main reason these large trout disappear from the river soon after spawning.

It is likely that the ballot has created expectations of opportunity that cannot be met in the latter October allocations with the trout numbers naturally present. An approach to increasing overall Spring Season satisfaction is to simply omit latter allocations from the ballot and therefore eliminate the allocations that are unlikely to provide satisfactory fish numbers for many anglers.

5.5. Matter of urgency conclusion

Consistent with the low-risk approach to managing the Spring Season's sustainability, it is concluded that the matters of urgency raised in this report should be addressed through management adaptations. Regulation change via the Anglers Notice process is not recommended.

Continuation of current regulations are deemed appropriate and low risk by CSIFG staff for the 2023/24 season – being that October 2023 and September 2024 are controlled periods and the regular open season will be the period from the first Saturday in November 2023 through to 30 April 2024.

Modifying the ballot schedule to reduce angler days substantially during the 2023 Spring Season and an increase in spawning monitoring is recommended by CSI staff as a suitably precautionary approach to the matter of urgency identified.

6. Recommendations

1. Undertake annual 'peak season' brown trout spawning surveys to provide further monitoring of the interconnected fishery's spawning population and provide insight into fishery sustainability influences beyond the Spring Season's trout harvest.
2. That the 2023 Spring Season ballot schedule is set as follows in schedule 1.
3. That the 2024 Spring Season ballot schedule be reviewed and adopted by May 2024.
4. Adopt a minimum 80% satisfaction target for maintaining acceptable angler satisfaction.

Schedule 1 – proposed 2023 Spring Season Ballot schedule for the Upper Ōhau River Controlled Period. The ballot is to be held as a single draw on 19 July 2023. Application will be accepted from 27 June to 17 July.

Fishing Dates	Allocation	Max anglers	Days	Max Allocation Angler Days
2 - 3 September	1 - Opening Weekend	20	2	40
5 - 6 September	2 - Mid Week	12	2	24
9 - 10 September	3 - Weekend	16	2	32
12 - 13 September	4 - Mid Week	12	2	24
16 - 17 September	5 - Weekend	16	2	32
19 - 20 September	6 - Mid Week	12	2	24
23 - 24 September	7 - Weekend	12	2	24
26 - 27 September	8 - Mid Week	12	2	24
30 Sept - 01 Oct	9 - Weekend	12	2	24
03 - 04 October	10 - Mid Week	12	2	24
7 - 8 October	11 - Weekend	12	2	24
	Maximum Total Angler Days			296
	Non-Fishing Dates			15

The proposed ballot schedule, when compared to the 2022 schedule, makes the following changes.

1. Only one ballot draw will be held in 2023 compared to three in 2022, reducing administration.
2. The balloted period reduces by approximately 3 weeks – omitting the last 6 allocations in October.
3. The maximum total anglers allocated for the Opening Weekend allocation is reduced from 30 to 20.
4. Weekend allocations in September and early October are reduced from 20 angler to either 16 or 12 anglers depending on the allocation date.
5. 3-day long-weekend allocations have been reduced to 2-day weekend allocation, as a result
6. Non-fishing days increase from 2 days per week (Monday & Thursday) to 3 days per week (Monday, Thursday & Friday).
7. Overall, these changes reduce maximum total Spring Season angler days from 616 to 296, a 52% reduction.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 – A summary of the management history of the Upper Ōhau River.

Pre 1935

- Alpine lake outlet joining Lake Ōhau to the upper Waitaki River, 25km.
- Mean flow 79 m³/s flood flows >2,500 m³/s.
- Conduit for sea run salmon and Waitaki River trout to spawning in Hopkins and Dobson and tributaries.
- Ōhau River world class trout fishery with very high tourist fishery use.

1935 to 1965

- Waitaki Dam stops sea run salmon passage.
- Ōhau River remains uncontrolled,
- trout fishery status retained, at least the equal of the Ahuriri River fishery.

1965 to 1979

- Benmore Dam inundates upper Waitaki River
- Ōhau River remains uncontrolled.

1979 to 1982

- Ōhau Canal commissioned, river sustained by seepage.
- Upper Ōhau River reduced to 11.5 km length, residual flow 0.4 m³/s.
- Lower 14km of Ōhau River inundated by Ōhau A tailrace.
- Flow inadequate for fishing.
- Retained significant spawning run upstream from L Benmore for fish that historically ran the river to spawn above Lake Ōhau.
- Lake Ruataniwha formed in 1982, river divided into Upper and Lower sections by Ruataniwha control gates.
- All access lost for Lake Benmore spawners, including sockeye, to Ōhau catchment spawning grounds.

1982 to 1993

- 1989 population estimate of 16 adult trout.
- Spawning declines to 0 to 60 redds annually
- 68% of Spawning in lower 1km, bulldozed in 1983.

1991

- Flow restoration negotiated with Electricorp.
- Flows based on angling habitat modelling recommendations.

1993 to 2016

- Restored flows of 12 m³/s summer and 8 m³/s winter
- 11.5km in length from L Ōhau to L Ruataniwha
- Spawning variable, up to 60 brown and 80 rainbow redds annually.
- Juvenile trout numbers sufficient to maintain a fishery of note.
- River looks great for angling yet little improvement.
- NIWA, Cawthron Institute and ECan studies into fishery but no answers
- Salmon farm enhancement.
- Didymo arrives and dominates benthic cover.

2016 to 2019

- Spawning counts of trout redds increased to 400 to 800 (cumulative), about three-quarters rainbows.
- Ōhau B Canal trout present, 20 to 30lb fish spawn, but evacuate quickly.
- Spawning habitat swamped and inefficient use.
- Solution – bring anglers to the fish (early season) and offset with improved spawning habitat.
- Enhanced spawning site establish with success creating new redds and more evenly distributing spawning effort across rivers length.
- First Spring Season open for October 2018.

Appendix 2 – Explanations provided by anglers who were “unsatisfied” with their overall Upper Ōhau River allocation experience in the 2022 Spring Season.

Allocation - fishing dates	Briefly tell us why you were unsatisfied with your overall fishing experience?
Opening Weekend - Saturday 3rd & Sunday 4th September	Didn't get the opportunities we were hoping for with the bigger fish. I think this was partly just unlucky with the numbers in the river on the weekend and partly because the good holes were already "taken" very early in the morning. Still a pleasant day out on the river overall. Thanks for organizing Rhys! We do appreciate the time and effort that goes into it. Cheers.
Mid week 1 - Tuesday 6th & Wednesday 7th September	Didn't suit my style of fishing river was at reasonable high cloudy flow seemed to be low fish numbers
Long weekend 1 - Friday 9th, Saturday 10th and Sunday 11th September	I suspect most of the fish are recovering as reflected by their poor condition. Appreciate its challenging for fng to time the season for this.
Long Weekend 3 - Friday 16th, Saturday 17th & Sunday 18th September	There were no fish in the local spawning holes where they have been in last few years. Lack of fish in the river.

Long Weekend 3 - Friday 16th, Saturday 17th & Sunday 18th September	Very few fish in the river this season - few too many anglers to spread out over good pools
Long Weekend 3 - Friday 16th, Saturday 17th & Sunday 18th September	<p>The sight of a large, shallow weir that looks to have been recently constructed across the entire width of the Ōhau River just above Lake Ruataniwha did not inspire confidence! It was generally agreed by all anglers on the river that fish numbers were very low. It was hard not to conclude that the weir might have been the reason. I appreciate that this work was probably done by the hydro electricity people and not under the control of F&G. Nevertheless, some advance notice of this from F&G, together with commentary on whether or to what extent the weir may influence large trout migration (and therefore numbers in the river and and fishing success) would have been appreciated.</p> <p>On the plus side, I was very satisfied with the way the ballot system managed angler numbers so there was plenty of water available for all and no sense of overcrowding. I do think the ballot system model could be extended more widely across the region and country to better manage angler numbers on other sensitive fisheries. I note there is an article along these lines in the F&G magazine sent out to licence holders.</p>
Long Weekend 3 - Friday 16th, Saturday 17th & Sunday 18th September	Too many anglers on the river for the number of pools that hold good numbers of fish. Low numbers of fish overall in the river. And fish I did spot and sight fish to acted like back country brown trout - incredibly spooky when in previous years doing the exact same methods in the same scenarios resulted in fish landed. Maybe in future could give 2 days between ballot blocks to rest the fish that are up there
Long Weekend 3 - Friday 16th, Saturday 17th & Sunday 18th September	Seemed less fish than approx 3 years ago when last here at exactly same weekend Also river murky
Mid Week 3 - Tuesday 20th & Wednesday 21st September	Need four wheel drive to get to the good spots
Long Weekend 4 - Friday 23rd, Saturday 24th & Sunday 25th September	Seen more dead fish (5 in total roughly 15 - 20 lb each) than we seen alive fish. Heard a few stories of a few people on the earlier ballots catching up to 8 per group averaging from 12 to 35 lb so I was looking forward to the weekend and with perfect weather conditions I was disappointed at the lack of fish seen
Long Weekend 3 - Friday 16th, Saturday 17th & Sunday 18th September	Very few fish in the river. Five 15-20lb dead fish found on the river edge. Clearly hadn't been released back in good condition.
Mid Week 4 - Tuesday 27th & Wednesday 28th September	No fish I think most fish have left the river
Mid Week 4 - Tuesday 27th & Wednesday 28th September	Diddymo infested, slippery and covered in silt.
Mid Week 4 - Tuesday 27th & Wednesday 28th September	Very few fish were spotted during the 5 hours fishing. We only found 6 trout in several sections of river compared to around 70-100 usually fish spotted on previous trips.
Weekend 5 - Saturday 1st & Sunday 2nd October	Fish numbers should be higher even after the September Ballot.
Weekend 5 - Saturday 1st & Sunday 2nd October	No fish were not located in the Ōhau River, some fish were seen near the river mouth with more fish in the Lake due to limited access to progress upstream by a river mouth weir.
Weekend 5 - Saturday 1st & Sunday 2nd October	The lack of fish in the river was hard to fathom. Compared to the previous three years it was very disappointing.
Weekend 5 - Saturday 1st & Sunday 2nd October	The fish numbers weren't there. Hooked 4 large trout from one pool, lost them all. Saw a few others porpoising but not the spawning run we were hoping for.

Weekend 5 - Saturday 1st & Sunday 2nd October	<p>The main reason for dissatisfaction was the lack of fish in the river. Having fished previous years here, there was certainly a big drop in numbers and we actually only sighted fish in two pools and that was with the help of a drone in some pools. It appears the weir at the bottom of the river is having a significant impact on the number of fish entering the river. In saying that we hooked and lost four substantial fish from one pool across the two days so had some success despite the low numbers.</p> <p>As for numbers of anglers, it was great. We met a few others and had a chat (similar experiences of low numbers) but felt we had a lot of choice of spots on the river etc.</p>
Mid Week 5 - Tuesday 4th & Wednesday 5th October	Hard fishing conditions, trout numbers down on previous years. Feels like the fisheries is over fished
Mid Week 5 - Tuesday 4th & Wednesday 5th October	Purely on the basis of the weather front. Front came in lunchtime of the 4th October and seem to put the fish down. We did not see many fish where in previous years 2019 and 2020 there were many fish to see and large ones to site fish. So nothing anyone could change because one can't choose weather. The snow was beautiful and when we woke up for our day 2 , 5/10/2022, our red car was white with snow and actively snowing. We went back to the river but was very cold and again did not spot any fish so elected to stop fishing and enjoy the snow and photography. We did drive much of the river looking for fish and did not spot any , nor many people fishing. Unsatisfactory would be the wrong choice of word for our experience as it was all due to the weather front which made it hard. nothing you could do to change it. My previous 2 trips were incredible with multiple trophy fish above 10 lb , 2 over 20 site fished and released.
Mid Week 5 - Tuesday 4th & Wednesday 5th October	Unfortunately the weather wasn't good (snow).
Long Weekend 6 - Friday 7th, Saturday 8th and Sunday 9th October	<p>Whilst grateful for the opportunity, I never saw a trout or salmon despite spending a lot of time stalking shadows between the rocks with the aid of polaroid glasses of course. Difficult terrain to navigate for this old codger, large slippery boulders etc. I searched three 300m reaches, lower, mid and high. I have 65 years experience in trout fishing, and usually find success - but not on this trip.</p> <p>The water was gin clear, of high volume (making navigation trickier), but lower than it has been of recent. All days were sunny. The track on the true right is much rougher than expected. I can confirm the washout at the top end has yet to be repaired.</p>
Long Weekend 6 - Friday 7th, Saturday 8th and Sunday 9th October	The dumping of gravel at the bottom of the Ōhau had a definite impact on the ability for the fish to enter the river. I saw a number of fish that were trying but couldn't not pass this point.
Mid Week 6 - Tuesday 11th & Wednesday 12th October	Few fish in the river.
Mid Week 6 - Tuesday 11th & Wednesday 12th October	Never saw a fish. However enjoyed video from Pure Fly who were lucky enough to get allocated a slot at the start of September when fish were still in the river. Trout hunting NZ also lucky. We look forward to next season and hope to be equally as lucky
Mid Week 6 - Tuesday 11th & Wednesday 12th October	only saw 3 fish total, didn't get a chance to fish to them. Remove October ballot and just do September
Mid Week 6 - Tuesday 11th & Wednesday 12th October	we didn't see any big spawning rainbows in our elected period.
Mid Week 7 - Tuesday 18th & Wednesday 19th October	Spawning fish were no longer in the river and only a couple of very small rainbows caught and landed. Fished afternoon of 18th and morning of 19th then headed to canals to fish on afternoon of 19th.

Mid Week 7 - Tuesday 18th & Wednesday 19th October	No fish as they had all dropped back to the lake
Labour Weekend - Saturday 22nd, Sunday 23rd & Monday 24th October	There were no large fish in any holding water that I had previously fished in early October when fishing prior to controlled areas was allowed. Any large fish were right at the bottom parts of the Ōhau before the lake. I would be interested if any one else saw any large fish over Labour weekend in the Ōhau.
Labour Weekend - Saturday 22nd, Sunday 23rd & Monday 24th October	Lack of fish.
Labour Weekend - Saturday 22nd, Sunday 23rd & Monday 24th October	not many fish sighted. Only saw one big >2lb fish for the whole two days. but couldn't get a chance to cast at it. small ones only caught blind fishing, on a ripple with a nymph
Labour Weekend - Saturday 22nd, Sunday 23rd & Monday 24th October	There were no spawning fish runs at this period.
Labour Weekend - Saturday 22nd, Sunday 23rd & Monday 24th October	Too late in the season. Should not have needed to wait that long for ballot. Not many fish in the river - large or small
Labour Weekend - Saturday 22nd, Sunday 23rd & Monday 24th October	Extremely low numbers if fish, what we did see were spooked on any bait/fly. A lot if didymo around.
Labour Weekend - Saturday 22nd, Sunday 23rd & Monday 24th October	Tried all fly fishing methods through out the 3 days but no actions (surface or deep). Spotted no fish along the river (down stream, mid stream and upper). Suspect rainbow rain season has finished.
Labour Weekend - Saturday 22nd, Sunday 23rd & Monday 24th October	Our group of 4 did not even spot a single fish throughout our 3 days of fishing. We covered the lower section on our first morning, moving upstream.(Total hours: 8) We fished the mid section on the second day, skipping the tern island, until past the Ford. (Total hours: 8.5) We covered the upper most section (only) briefly on the third day.
Mid Week 8 - Wednesday 26th & Thursday 27th October	No fault of fish and games I just didnt see or hook any big fish. I wondered if most of the big ones had dropped back into the lake by the end of October.
Mid Week 8 - Wednesday 26th & Thursday 27th October	Very few fish in river, river high and unbelievable amount of didymo in it.
Mid Week 8 - Wednesday 26th & Thursday 27th October	River had risen about 2 cumec day before according to ecan river levels. Didymo was just floating everywhere and made for difficult fishing. Never saw any trout other than a few small ones. Believe we were too late and larger trout had gone

Appendix 3 – Feedback provided by anglers in response to the question “Is there anything you would like to tell us about the Ōhau River Controlled Backcountry Fishery?”. *Anglers names have been removed where provided to protect their privacy.

Allocation - fishing dates	How do you rate your overall fishing experience during your allocation?	Is there anything you would like to tell us about the Ōhau River Controlled Backcountry Fishery?
Opening Weekend - Saturday 3rd & Sunday 4th September	Satisfied	Just thank you for the opportunity. As long as you guys are confident the system is healthy and can handle this, I think it's a great opportunity for people to experience something a little bit different. Cheers.
Opening Weekend - Saturday 3rd & Sunday 4th September	Satisfied	Fantastic & unique fishery, well worth the effort to preserve and enhance
Opening Weekend - Saturday 3rd & Sunday 4th September	Satisfied	Fishery was outstanding. I personally landed a 13 and 2 x 15lb fish. Fish were hard to spot with the water colour so most were caught blind fishing. Mix of wetline and nymph. Great concept with the ballot and really appreciate the time effort put in by the organisers. Well done and keep up the good work! Thanks
Opening Weekend - Saturday 3rd & Sunday 4th September	Satisfied	Fantastic couple of days - many thanks
Opening Weekend - Saturday 3rd & Sunday 4th September	Satisfied	The amount of fish in the river appears to be way down on previous years (less than 1/2) the mouth of the river maybe impacting this as it might be stopping a number of larger fish entering the river outside of flood condition. (Other factors maybe present) There is a small side channel above the ford/river crossing (true left) this should be marked as no fishing as the fish in the section are clearly on reds and paired up. They are unlikely to take a fly and easily foul hooked, targeting large fish in this area is extremely risky to the health of the fish. Some poor trout handling was observed so suggest ballot winners receive instruction on how to safely handle fish they do not intend to keep.
Opening Weekend - Saturday 3rd & Sunday 4th September	Unsatisfied	Nothing comes to mind
Opening Weekend - Saturday 3rd & Sunday 4th September	Satisfied	Please keep it going its an amazing opportunity .. i do think it should be Fly Only and Catch and release only THANKS
Opening Weekend - Saturday 3rd & Sunday 4th September	Satisfied	Well organised. Appreciate the catch limit of 2 I kept 1 (it was surprising how many good the fishing was) takes effort and patience. Caught one brown trout that was lost at the bank) 9.6kg was my largest fish .. rainbow jack. Thank you
Opening Weekend - Saturday 3rd & Sunday 4th September	Satisfied	An absolutely unique fishery. My team of 4 extremely experienced anglers rated this as one of the best fishing trips we have done. The setting and obviously the sheer size of the fish is almost unbelievable.
Opening Weekend - Saturday 3rd & Sunday 4th September	Satisfied	We encountered quite a lot of dead trout that had very obviously been recently caught and then released only to die. Not sure if this was due to poor handling and or treble hooks.

Opening Weekend - Saturday 3rd & Sunday 4th September	Satisfied	Enjoyed the 2 days fishing. Not as many fish in river as previous trips . Managed to land a 12.4 kg extremely happy. Thanks so much to Rhys for the effort to make this a success really appreciated
Opening Weekend - Saturday 3rd & Sunday 4th September	Satisfied	Really happy with how fish and game have managed this fishery regarding the ballot system. This river is an incredible asset that needs to be managed for kiwis to enjoy.
Opening Weekend - Saturday 3rd & Sunday 4th September	Satisfied	Absolute awesome weekend broke a few PBs and had a few good laughs definitely look fwd to doing it again soon
Opening Weekend - Saturday 3rd & Sunday 4th September	Satisfied	0800 fishing porn, was really cool to see big fish in a natural type habitat . Although I didn't catch anything over 10lbs saw many that were would love to come back for another fishing experience on the Ōhau river. Many thanks. Mike Clark
Mid week 1 - Tuesday 6th & Wednesday 7th September	Satisfied	strange to divide between under 2 pound and over 2 pound, under 10 pound and over10 pound would be more interesting. Ballot system is a good thing for this fishery.
Mid week 1 - Tuesday 6th & Wednesday 7th September	Satisfied	Great to have not too many others on the river at one time which made a far more enjoyable time. Fish and game ranger was very pleasant to talk to apart from not producing any identification on arrival and was surprised his truck did not have any nice pictures like Otago fish and game ones haha. A great job done by your team and the setup of the ballot etc Hope we get to do it again next year. Thanks
Mid week 1 - Tuesday 6th & Wednesday 7th September	Satisfied	Spawning fish and redds observed in the lower section of some pools. Evidence of anglers walking on redds through apathy and ignorance. Guess this is going to happen if you open a spawning river to angling.
Mid week 1 - Tuesday 6th & Wednesday 7th September	Satisfied	Just the right amount of people on. The river fished without bumping into other fishermen
Mid week 1 - Tuesday 6th & Wednesday 7th September	Satisfied	the restriction across the river appear to limit the run of fish which was disappointing
Mid week 1 - Tuesday 6th & Wednesday 7th September	Satisfied	Fantastic fishery, allocation/ballot of the fishery made for more enjoyable fishing on the river.
Long weekend 1 - Friday 9th, Saturday 10th and Sunday 11th September	Satisfied	It would be great if the track at the top of the river by Lake Ōhau got fixed so it is easier to access the true left of the river and this did not look involved (2 hours at the most with a digger)
Long weekend 1 - Friday 9th, Saturday 10th and Sunday 11th September	Satisfied	Absolutely stoked to get an opportunity to fish this system..... . Please make it a catch and release fishery
Long weekend 1 - Friday 9th, Saturday 10th and Sunday 11th September	Satisfied	The weekend was a true experience for my son and I. Something very special to spend time on the awa with my 14 year old son and landing double digit trout, a true experience and memories for life that we have taken away from the weekend. Very well managed and we just we are as lucky for next years ballot, as we highly rate this system. Credit to you and your team Rhys and it was great to convey our appreciate to Mark Webb who check our ballot on the Saturday.
Long weekend 1 - Friday 9th, Saturday 10th and Sunday 11th September	Unsatisfied	The level of didymo was disappointing and made fishing extremely challenging

<p>Long weekend 1 - Friday 9th, Saturday 10th and Sunday 11th September</p>	<p>Satisfied</p>	<p>Love the fishing and think it's great it is now controlled. Felt very relaxed on the river. not many anglers around, plenty of space and felt like the fish were in good condition. Our party didnt land to many i think 3 landed in total however the fishing was much better than last year October when the river was extremally busy and must be hard on the fish!! keep up the good work. Cheers</p>
<p>Long weekend 1 - Friday 9th, Saturday 10th and Sunday 11th September</p>	<p>Satisfied</p>	<p>Great weather and beautiful location fantastic company just a lack of visible fish. Thank you for the opportunity to fish the weekend.</p>
<p>Long weekend 1 - Friday 9th, Saturday 10th and Sunday 11th September</p>	<p>Satisfied</p>	<p>I really valued being able to take my son to fish this challenging and unique New Zealand fishery. It is quite something to fish, knowing that any cast could yield a leviathan trout. Iâ€™d also add that the allocation of 20 anglers is probably about right to share the water without feeling crowded. Everyone we met were really friendly and respectful. Thank you</p>
<p>Long weekend 1 - Friday 9th, Saturday 10th and Sunday 11th September</p>	<p>Satisfied</p>	<p>I would like to add a couple of comments. I met Mark one of your fishery officers and he gave me further knowledge of the river. I am from Hawkes Bay. I feel this is a very unique and very very special trophy trout fishery and should be treated as such. I would like to see fly fishing only. In terms of the ballot. I do feel for some locals that have possibly had this resource at there back door to suddenly be aggrieved in not having access to it through Sept and Oct. I wondered if 20% of the ballot could be reserved for them. Nothing like having those closest as your friends. I then think it should be offered to NZ resident license holders 1st and Internationals only if there is a shortfall. I don't believe that it would alter sales of internationals at all. I also could not understand why a digger (apparently 10 klm away on the Friday altering the flow at the weir) wouldn't spend 2 hours repairing the road at the Ōhau dam wall to make access complete and reinstated. Especially as apparently it has been that way for some time. That would have made for a really enjoyable experience I would also like to comment on the weir which is obviously mechanically controlled. I had 3 other regular anglers comment that they felt fish numbers were rather low and had genuine concern about the bigger trout able to get up. We observed 5 dead trout at the mouth. I did ask Mark and was even more confused as he said they could get up easily but then admitted that F&G had a digger there on the Friday to make one part of the channel deeper. We could see this but there was still about 2 meters of distance at the head less than 300 mls deep. Those big fat fish would struggle. They are not salmon . Has anyone put a camera at that point. And sorry but one last thing. The didymo is disgusting and according to one of your anglers (from Nelson) who seemed to have a huge amount of knowledge says it is very very likely that something could be done about it. The experience was bucket list for me and thankyou. Am hoping to be lucky again. I am not winging. I am striving for that to be absolutely memorable for others. I would genuinely love to hear a response from you Rhys</p>
<p>Long weekend 1 - Friday 9th, Saturday 10th and Sunday 11th September</p>	<p>Satisfied</p>	<p>We fished for 3 days and was a great experience overall, unfortunately water clarity was not great. Not knowing what percentage of successful applicants showed up in this period, we felt the river could have more people fishing at the same time. Very few encounters with others.</p>

Long weekend 1 - Friday 9th, Saturday 10th and Sunday 11th September	Satisfied	A great weekend
Mid Week 2 - Tuesday 13th & Wednesday 14th September	Satisfied	It would be good to make it fly fishing only and ballot it throughout the whole year
Mid Week 2 - Tuesday 13th & Wednesday 14th September	Satisfied	Allocation system worked well, unable to spot fish due to discolouration
Mid Week 2 - Tuesday 13th & Wednesday 14th September	Satisfied	Some more information for first timers on the river would be good, spent a lot of the day finding spots instead of fishing. Sight fishing was difficult due to colour in water but over all a awesome day. Beautiful river
Mid Week 2 - Tuesday 13th & Wednesday 14th September	Satisfied	The small spawning area that was made just above the ford should be closed to fishing. People (most likely more inexperienced anglers) were just continuously casting and will eventually foul hook fish.
Long Weekend 3 - Friday 16th, Saturday 17th & Sunday 18th September	Satisfied	I fished two years ago at the same time and there were ALOT more fish. The weather was much better this year although the river was more turbid. Runs that had lots of fish last time had none this time. The new weir at the bottom of the river can't be helping and I believe it could have been built more fish friendly, disappointing to see it erected and being worked on just before the ballot period. My feeling is that this has contributed to the reduction of fish.
Long Weekend 3 - Friday 16th, Saturday 17th & Sunday 18th September	Satisfied	Unfortunately it seemed the fished has dropped out
Long Weekend 3 - Friday 16th, Saturday 17th & Sunday 18th September	Satisfied	I saw a 35lb+ dead trout floating down the river. I am sad that this river is not able to be fished by more people. It was enjoyable and beautiful part of the country.
Long Weekend 3 - Friday 16th, Saturday 17th & Sunday 18th September	Satisfied	Did not see many fish on the river possibly 6 fish
Long Weekend 3 - Friday 16th, Saturday 17th & Sunday 18th September	Satisfied	Good system given the circumstances. Something had to be done after last years debacle with way too many anglers and a balloted system was the logical solution. I would still like to see a total ban of drones over the Ōhau River during the balloted time period. Some of these 'pilots' are in part responsible for creating last years situation for their own financial gain and what's worse they are using them as a fishing tool while completely imposing on other river users. My disdain for their lack of consideration cannot be overstated. Otherwise thanks to the good people at Fish and Game for managing this unique and amazing fishery. Cheers.
Long Weekend 3 - Friday 16th, Saturday 17th & Sunday 18th September	Satisfied	If fish have clearly dropped out it may be worth advising future groups
Long Weekend 3 - Friday 16th, Saturday 17th & Sunday 18th September	Unsatisfied	Support the ballot system for sensitive but also very popular fisheries like this one. As noted on previous page, I would support angler numbers on other sensitive rivers also being managed through a ballot system.

Long Weekend 3 - Friday 16th, Saturday 17th & Sunday 18th September	Unsatisfied	Think it's incredible, but the ballot system might need tweaking - less people and or more space between ballot allocations
Long Weekend 3 - Friday 16th, Saturday 17th & Sunday 18th September	Unsatisfied	Thank you for opportunity to fish and your care of this fishery !
Long Weekend 3 - Friday 16th, Saturday 17th & Sunday 18th September	Satisfied	We fished as a group of 4 , felt very privileged to be there and had an extremely good time .We very much appreciated the opportunity. Many thanks for all the organisation that arranging this event took .all the best. n
Long Weekend 3 - Friday 16th, Saturday 17th & Sunday 18th September	Satisfied	Good system, thanks team!
Mid Week 3 - Tuesday 20th & Wednesday 21st September	Unsatisfied	Can you fix the road and make it friendly for all types of cars please? Appreciate that
Mid Week 3 - Tuesday 20th & Wednesday 21st September	Satisfied	Two large dead trout mid stream and one dead on the shore. These were all 20+, wonder if some fisherfolk are over photographing video these fish causing them to die. Their condition is excellent otherwise. Maybe more advice on using stronger gear, quick landing and keep the fish in water, only out of water 5 seconds.
Mid Week 3 - Tuesday 20th & Wednesday 21st September	Satisfied	There weren't as many fish in the river as previous seasons. i only spotted one fish, the 3 i caught were from blind fishing. I fished the same spots as 2 years ago and there were none in these locations. Compared to my last trip two years ago when there were more trout in the river and i was able to fish to them. I only saw 2 other anglers on the day i fished, so it wasn't crowded as previous times. I like the idea of a ballot system. Next i'll try for an earlier date in September. Thanks for the effort you put into this Rhys, very much appreciated.
Long Weekend 4 - Friday 23rd, Saturday 24th & Sunday 25th September	Satisfied	Really enjoyed the opportunity to fish the river, thank you. Only fished the one day due to illness.
Long Weekend 4 - Friday 23rd, Saturday 24th & Sunday 25th September	Satisfied	There seemed to be fewer fish in the system from previous years experienced. Wondering if the major works that were conducted at the outflow into the lake has contributed to low fish numbers in the system this season?
Long Weekend 4 - Friday 23rd, Saturday 24th & Sunday 25th September	Satisfied	Our trip was cut short due to a family bereavement
Long Weekend 4 - Friday 23rd, Saturday 24th & Sunday 25th September	Satisfied	
Long Weekend 4 - Friday 23rd, Saturday 24th & Sunday 25th September	Satisfied	Thank you for the opportunity, will be applying again next year.

Long Weekend 4 - Friday 23rd, Saturday 24th & Sunday 25th September	Satisfied	It was an amazing experience. The fishing was harder than previous visits but I fished long days. I think bigger fish over 6kg are struggling to get up the weir near the confluence. Brown trout of upto 5kg caught but mostly Rainbows. It appeared quiet in terms of fisherpersons on the river but guess only 20ish in the ballot. I would like to thank Fish and Game, Rhys and all involved I think fishing in the river is an amazing wilderness experience.. all fish were successfully released and one kept for eating. We don't have the ability to store fish or the ability to process fish so catch and release done with the greatest care was made.
Long Weekend 4 - Friday 23rd, Saturday 24th & Sunday 25th September	Satisfied	Thanks Really enjoyed the experience
Long Weekend 4 - Friday 23rd, Saturday 24th & Sunday 25th September	Satisfied	Spectacular location
Mid Week 4 - Tuesday 27th & Wednesday 28th September	Unsatisfied	Great idea just very poor season for what ever reason very few fish caught after first weekend
Mid Week 4 - Tuesday 27th & Wednesday 28th September	Unsatisfied	I have fished the river for many years. Lovely river but largely barren of consistent nice fish. Got excited about the ballot, but, cannot understand why this river is not catch and release and balloted in September/October. I'll continue to fish an afternoon a season in February prior to the tiny salmon polluting the river in March.
Mid Week 4 - Tuesday 27th & Wednesday 28th September	Satisfied	Apparently those fortunate enough to get an early allocation sighted and caught more fish than those at the end of the Sept month .
Mid Week 4 - Tuesday 27th & Wednesday 28th September	Satisfied	Very few fish appeared to be present in the river
Mid Week 4 - Tuesday 27th & Wednesday 28th September	Satisfied	shame about Didymo !!
Mid Week 4 - Tuesday 27th & Wednesday 28th September	Satisfied	Ballot system is good, but would make this a catch and release fishery, saw 4 large rainbow greater than 20lb dead.I'm pleased mine 20lb+ hen swam away nicely
Weekend 5 - Saturday 1st & Sunday 2nd October	Satisfied	Low to no numbers. We were targeting the large rainbows like previous years but they were no where to be seen. We found a pod on the lake edge down by the state highway and had a crack but they were not interested. Saw action at the river mouth and but nothing landed.
Weekend 5 - Saturday 1st & Sunday 2nd October	Satisfied	Thank you for the work on this the ballot it is very good and enables enjoyable fishing while looking after the resource. I landed 3 good fish - 23lb, 20 an 17 - Hooked and lost another 3. River was not as clear as previous years making fish harder to locate. Fish that were found were happy to take flies and lures. I believe that it would be good to have one day allocations in the future, with rest days. This would provide more opportunity overall in the September period when there are more fish. One day is enough opportunity to have a very good chance on the river given the very easy access.
Weekend 5 - Saturday 1st & Sunday 2nd October	Unsatisfied	Catch and release in September for license holders was a much better experience than controlled balloting, as the experience this year was extremely disappointing for myself and my party member and also evident from talking to anglers that we meet on the Ōhau River.

Weekend 5 - Saturday 1st & Sunday 2nd October	Satisfied	Enjoyed the weekend out fishing in a beautiful part of NZ. However we were unable to find many fish in the river at all. Very tough going and long weekend with not a great result at the end.
Weekend 5 - Saturday 1st & Sunday 2nd October	Unsatisfied	The ballot process is great, but something has definitely contributed to the demise of this fishery. Over fishing cannot be blamed. Interested to know what affect the substantial earthworks at the Ruataniwha Lake end of the river has had.
Weekend 5 - Saturday 1st & Sunday 2nd October	Satisfied	Enjoyable but frustrating. Expectations were higher to sight more fish, but two landed were monsters. Brown and rainbow both 10lbs plus. Returned to river. Would like to try again on next NZ visit. Continuing on fishing central, Otago and Southland for eight more weeks. Thank you for the opportunity.
Weekend 5 - Saturday 1st & Sunday 2nd October	Satisfied	About the right number of people fishing. It is an exciting and frustrating river to fish.
Weekend 5 - Saturday 1st & Sunday 2nd October	Unsatisfied	I think you are on the right track with this. If fish access up the river is sorted it should provide great experiences again. One more thing - I did think that the ballot should maybe only go to the day before Labour weekend so it is opened up from that weekend onwards. Thanks
Weekend 5 - Saturday 1st & Sunday 2nd October	Satisfied	I have fished the Ōhau opening since you first opened it up for this experiment on the spring run. The fish numbers were certainly the least I have seen. When I fished it with my mates on previous opening weekends we had a great time, we were able to fish as a group with 6 people spotting and 1 person fishing, on rotation, and everyone caught over 5 fish each, the river wasn't overly populated with other anglers and there were plenty of fish anyway. There never seemed to be more than 30 people on the river. This year we applied and applied and didn't get a September spot, then the only spot we did get was in October. I was frustrated that we have fished this river every year and then when there is a ballot we didn't get a spot, I feel like people just applied for the ballot for the sake of it and we missed out. I understand that your trying to make it fair etc but its frustrating that people who don't know the river and the fish, see it on social media and are pushing out the people who do. I don't have a suggestion on how to fix this. I was only able to fish it for 1 morning as I had to attend a dinner in Chch, this maybe why I was less than satisfied as I have on previous years. Although last year I had 3 in the net before sunrise, but it was a month earlier. I look forward to next year. Hopefully there are a few more fish left in river when I get to it. Keep it tight.
Weekend 5 - Saturday 1st & Sunday 2nd October	Satisfied	Had a great time thanks, we only saw a couple of big fish and didn't manage to land any (broke 2 off). The ballet is a great idea and appreciate the effort put in to make this work so thank you very much
Mid Week 5 - Tuesday 4th & Wednesday 5th October	Satisfied	Fish numbers have declined massively from past years at the same time . I would estimate numbers are down 90%. We found some fish but it was slim pickings . Lost three , landed 2. Superb fish at 21 and 26 pounds . Protect this fishery with catch and release only please in this river . Many thanks
Mid Week 5 - Tuesday 4th & Wednesday 5th October	Unsatisfied	Ban YouTubers as they are destroying these rivers.
Mid Week 5 - Tuesday 4th & Wednesday 5th October	Satisfied	Great Fun.

Mid Week 5 - Tuesday 4th & Wednesday 5th October	Satisfied	Shame about the weather but that's Murphy for you
Mid Week 5 - Tuesday 4th & Wednesday 5th October	Satisfied	I don't think the numbers of fish are there like they used to be. Super tough fishing. Manger to get a 26 pounder. Cheers
Mid Week 5 - Tuesday 4th & Wednesday 5th October	Unsatisfied	I think the ballot system is a great idea to protect the incredible fishery, but would appreciate being able to apply for the ballot much earlier as am a doctor and difficult to organise Locum cover for time away, and short notice also means booking flights and accomodation challenging. There are a lot of professional in the same boat where difficult to organise time away from work with short notice.
Long Weekend 6 - Friday 7th, Saturday 8th and Sunday 9th October	Satisfied	The fishing was hard as I assume most of the fish had dropped out of the river this late in the spawn. I managed to find 4 fish in the river and landed one which was a bit over 20 pounds. It was overall a great experience and an even better challenge.
Long Weekend 6 - Friday 7th, Saturday 8th and Sunday 9th October	Unsatisfied	The evidence of intensive farm practises in the area spoiled it for me.
Long Weekend 6 - Friday 7th, Saturday 8th and Sunday 9th October	Satisfied	Bad weed in most places
Long Weekend 6 - Friday 7th, Saturday 8th and Sunday 9th October	Satisfied	Excellent idea with the ballot system. Ensures the river is not over fished. Great for the fish and the anglers. Ensures the survival of the fisherie.
Mid Week 6 - Tuesday 11th & Wednesday 12th October	Satisfied	A year ago to the day I fished the Oahu river from our ballot period on my first trip i encounter high numbers of fish. However on this trip seen very few fish made harder buy the river colour other than that fishing was good and all fish caught were in great condition
Mid Week 6 - Tuesday 11th & Wednesday 12th October	Satisfied	Sempt to be less bigger fish than last year everyone saying a lot spawned at lake head as works on river interrupted spawning
Mid Week 6 - Tuesday 11th & Wednesday 12th October	Satisfied	Flat white on the river & muffins would be nice.
Mid Week 6 - Tuesday 11th & Wednesday 12th October	Unsatisfied	A great idea but should be less fishermen per ballot
Mid Week 6 - Tuesday 11th & Wednesday 12th October	Satisfied	I fell in the river. A hot shower there would have been nice.
Long Weekend 7 - Friday 14th, Saturday 15th & Sunday 16th October	Satisfied	Didymo quit bad Is the groin at the bottom of the river preventing fish from migrating
Long Weekend 7 - Friday 14th, Saturday 15th & Sunday 16th October	Satisfied	Apart from not catching many fish it was a good weekend with good company

Mid Week 7 - Tuesday 18th & Wednesday 19th October	Satisfied	Excellent idea
Mid Week 7 - Tuesday 18th & Wednesday 19th October	Satisfied	great way for anglers to enjoy the lake/river with very little crowd
Mid Week 7 - Tuesday 18th & Wednesday 19th October	Satisfied	Great time. Not as many fish as I'd hoped though.
Mid Week 7 - Tuesday 18th & Wednesday 19th October	Unsatisfied	Waste of time in Oct
Labour Weekend - Saturday 22nd, Sunday 23rd & Monday 24th October	Unsatisfied	Maybe it should be catch and release over the controlled periods.
Labour Weekend - Saturday 22nd, Sunday 23rd & Monday 24th October	Unsatisfied	Too late in the month.
Labour Weekend - Saturday 22nd, Sunday 23rd & Monday 24th October	Satisfied	Epic fishing experience but frustrating due to the amount of dity mo. Spent too much of fishing time cleaning and untangling lines and hooks of this awful stuff.
Labour Weekend - Saturday 22nd, Sunday 23rd & Monday 24th October	Unsatisfied	Beautiful weather for the 3 days. Suggest to consider closing the river in OCT or cancel the Oct ballet fishing.
Labour Weekend - Saturday 22nd, Sunday 23rd & Monday 24th October	Unsatisfied	I'm sure you are keeping records from past years and if October proves consistently poor then perhaps the ballot/fishing can be limited to just September. Then again it could be due to the adversed weather conditions earlier in August that caused the spawning runs to end earlier which brings me to this: thank you for sounding out the warning that fishing may not be good in comparison to the previous year due to the excessive rainfall. That actually kept our expectation in check , I live only 10 mins from the Ōhau weir and I did witness the flooding.
Labour Weekend - Saturday 22nd, Sunday 23rd & Monday 24th October	Satisfied	Saw 3 fish dead,, put back when bleeding, saw one fish going backwards,(home) what fish there were ,rainbows down deep in pools, mate n dad caught 3, soft baits, DONT LET THE U TUBERS INFIRST, SAW THERE STUPID VIDEOS, I USED TO CATCH FISH THERE, ONLY A COUPLE OF OLD TIMERS WERE SEEN,, MY GOD IT WAS HEAVEN, NOW FURKED!!! EVERYBODY NO'S ABOUT IT,,,,GEE I WONDER WHY!! OH WELL NOTHING GOOD LASTS FOREVER
Mid Week 8 - Wednesday 26th & Thursday 27th October	Unsatisfied	Next time would try early, hopefully more fish about
Mid Week 8 - Wednesday 26th & Thursday 27th October	Unsatisfied	Only saw 2 large trout. They were both at the river mouth in the area that has been heavily modified recently by the look of it. Didymo just about covered all the river bottom there. I will try for an earlier ballot next year. Thank you