



CENTRAL SOUTH ISLAND REGION

Upper Ōhau River Spring Season 2023 — review of the controlled-period ballot, angler survey and spawning surveys

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Executive Summary

The Spring Season was created by Central South Island Fish & Game to restore a once highly valued fishery to the Upper Ōhau River. The 2023 Spring Season’s administration included holding a ballot to administer controlled period licences; angler catch, harvest and satisfaction monitoring; and spawning surveys. It is estimated that 119 controlled period licence holders fished and caught 595 trout including the harvest of 15 trout. Ninety-two percent of anglers were satisfied with their experience. Spawning surveys indicate moderate population levels. No matters of urgency were identified upon review of 2023 angler and spawning monitoring. It is recommended a ballot schedule for the 2024 Spring Season is set to replicate the 2023 Spring Season ballot schedule to provide direct comparison of angler monitoring across Spring Seasons.

1. Introduction

The Upper Ōhau River's Spring Season was developed by Central South Island Fish & Game staff (CSIFG staff) to return a once highly valued fishery to the Ōhau River. This fishery 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.

The Spring Season was first introduced in October 2018. Between 2018 and 2021 the Spring Season's popularity grew from relative obscurity to a fishery of national significance with an international profile owing to its coverage in online 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.

CSIFG staff have anticipated and observed the Spring Season's growth in popularity and proactively adapted its management annually. As such, the type and intensity of monitoring has differed between seasons, regulations have changed, and angling pressure has changed meaning that robust comparisons between Spring Seasons are limited. This has necessitated a low-risk approach to managing the sustainability of the Upper Ōhau River and the interconnected fisheries of 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 associated online angler survey in 2022 and 2023.

Management of the Spring Season adopted by the CSIFG Council in May 2021, February 2022, and May 2023 developed a low-risk strategy 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 (angler days) available during the controlled period and the dates they are valid. The schedule can be changed annually and is additional to the Anglers Notice review process.
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. Consented spawning enhancement sites are monitored and maintained.
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 at a minimum of 80% angler 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.

The 2023 Spring Season's administration included holding a ballot (lottery) to distribute controlled period licences; angler catch, harvest and satisfaction monitoring; and spawning surveys. The number of anglers and available fishing days in 2023 was reduced significantly from 2022 based on CSIFG staff identifying matters of urgency to address in the monitoring of the 2022 Spring Season. Critically, a

management condition was introduced in 2023 that triggered an immediate matter of urgency review if a threshold of 80% angler satisfaction was not achieved. The review would consider potential management actions to restore angler satisfaction above the 80% threshold.

This report presents:

- Results of the 2023 controlled-period ballot.
- Results of the 2023 controlled-period licence holders (angler) survey.
- Results of 2023 spawning monitoring.
- Where practical, comparison of monitoring data between Spring Seasons.

The reach of this report is:

1. To consider if any matters of urgency arose from the 2023 angler catch, anglers satisfaction and spawning surveys necessitating management adaptation.
2. To recommend the ballot schedule for the 2024 Spring Season, October and September 2024.

2. Controlled-Period Ballot 2023

The ballot schedule and associated instructions, information and application forms were posted on the CSI pages of the www.fishandgame.org.nz website. Multiple forms of communication were used to advertise the ballot including news items posted on Fish & Game NZ's website and Facebook page.

The ballot received 339 valid entries (339 anglers). The ballot was drawn on July 19, 2023. One-hundred and thirty-eight (138) controlled-period licences (CPL) were issued subject to the 2023 ballot schedule and the ballot process.

3. Controlled-period Angler Survey

An online survey (Google Form) designed to capture information relating to individual CPL holders fishing activity, catch, satisfaction and general comments during their allocation was emailed to all CPL holders.

3.1 Survey response

Overall, the survey email out and follow up email, along with other survey-related communications generated 129 responses out of a total 138 CPL holders, giving an approximate 93% survey response rate.

3.2 Fishing activity

Eighty-six percent of survey respondents fished at least one day. It is estimated 119 CPL holders actively fished in total during the 2023 Spring Season.

“Angler days” are a measurement of angler activity whereby one “angler day” represents one date on which an angler was active on a fishery, regardless of the duration of the fishing activity within that date. It is estimated that 119 active anglers fished 195 angler days or out of a possible 276 angler days in the 2023 controlled period.

3.3 Catch

Anglers were asked to report the number of trout caught in three size categories. Firstly – “small trout” 0.86kg/1.9lb or smaller, or secondly “medium trout” – trout between 1kg/2lb and 4.4kg /9.9lbs, and

lastly “trophy trout” — 4.5kg/10 lbs or bigger. The smaller category is considered indicative of a small trout likely to be juvenile or young 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. Medium trout are considered indicative of a mix of trout of all possible origins, and the large size category is considered indicative of trout that have spent time in the Ōhau B Canal around the salmon farms.

In total, it is estimated that 119 CPL holders caught 595 trout of which 15 were kept (harvested) during 195 angler days that spanned 11 fishing allocations between 2 September and 8 October 2023 (Table 1). Overall, the harvest rate was approximately 3% of catch or conversely, the catch-and-release rate was approximately 97%.

Table 1. Estimated total trout caught and kept during 195 angler days considering “small, “medium” and “trophy” size categories during the 2023 controlled period. *Rounded to whole numbers for presentation – rounding errors are displayed.

Allocation	Total active anglers	Total trout caught – “small” 1.9lb (0.86kg) or smaller	Total trout caught – “medium” between 2 - 9.9lb (1.1-4.4kg)	Total trout caught – “trophy” 10lb (4.5kg) or bigger.	Average trout caught per angler	Grand Total trout catch	Grand Total trout kept
1 - Opening Weekend	19	24	26	30	4	80	6
2 - Mid Week	10	23	23	31	8	77	3
3 - Weekend	13	16	5	11	3	32	1
4 - Mid Week	12	37	10	23	6	70	0
5 - Weekend	14	28	14	26	5	68	2
6 - Mid Week	7	19	6	3	4	28	0
7 - Weekend	8	9	12	13	4	34	0
8 - Mid Week	10	11	11	26	5	49	0
9 - Weekend	6	20	6	2	5	28	0
10 - Mid Week	10	18	10	10	4	38	1
11 - Weekend	11	59	17	14	8	90	2
Total	119	267	140	188	5	595	15

3.4 Trophy trout

To assess the trophy-trout component of the fishery, anglers were asked to report the number of trout caught weighing 10lb/4.5kg or bigger and the weight of the largest trout they landed. The average size of the largest trout landed by anglers was similar for the Opening Weekend allocation and for all allocations at nearly 15lb / 6.9kg (Table 2).

Table 2. Average weight and weight range of anglers largest fish landed and the proportion of catch in the “trophy” size category for the Opening Weekend allocation and all allocation during the 2023 Spring Season.

Allocation	No. anglers reporting largest fish	Size range (lb / kg)	Average largest fish size (lb / kg)	Percentage (%) of total “trophy” catch 10lb / 4.5kg or greater
Opening Weekend	16	3.5-32 / 1.6-14.5	14.9 / 6.8	38
All allocations	103	0.5-32 / 0.2-14.5	14.6 / 6.6	32

3.5 Harvest comparisons

Overall, percentage of catch harvested and total number of trout caught varied between Spring Season and their management parameters. The 2023 Spring Season harvest was relatively low being an estimated 15 trout kept in total and a harvest rate of approximately 3% of the total catch (Table 3).

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 2023.

Spring Season	Open months	Angler survey type	Management Status	Angler days	Overall % of catch harvested	Total trout harvest estimate
2018	October only	None	Open fishery	n/a	n/s	n/s
2019	September - October	Non-quantitative	Open fishery	n/a	7	n/a
2020	September - October	Quantitative	Open fishery	n/a	3	27
2021	October only	Limited-quantitative	Backcountry	n/a	n/a	At least 24
2022	September - October	Quantitative	Controlled	433	4	18
2023	September - October	Quantitative	Controlled	195	3	15

3.6 Method

Consistent with all previous Spring Seasons, methods available to anglers were fly and spin. 2023 angling activity was dominated by those who only fly fished (73%), while 12% of anglers used both fly and spin and anglers who only spin fished made up 15%.

3.7 Fishery participation

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

Anglers with previous experience fishing the Ōhau River made up a slight majority at approximately 51% compared to those who had not previously fished the river at 49%. The data suggests the fishery is still in its development phase with as many anglers accessing the river for the first time in 2023 as those who had fished it previously.

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, 92%, were “satisfied” while 8% of anglers were unsatisfied.

The observed satisfaction level of 92% exceeds the 80% satisfaction threshold established whereby a matter of urgency must be identified and considered.

“Unsatisfied” anglers were given the opportunity to explain their reasoning for being unsatisfied. A full record of the explanations, excluding names for privacy, are provided in Appendix 1.

In summary, the explanations of those anglers that were “unsatisfied”, were commonly related to the fish numbers or catch rate not meeting expectations or the levels previously experienced. Other explanations included issues such as didymo, fish passage and angler numbers.

3.9 Feedback

The closing question of the angler survey asked, “is there anything you would like to tell us about the Ōhau River Controlled Fishery?” Seventy-five anglers took the opportunity to provide feedback. Apart from angler names which were removed for privacy, verbatim records of feedback are presented in Appendix 2 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. Commentary about angler numbers.

Other notable feedback items are summarised as:

4. Lower number of fish encountered than expected or previously experienced.
5. A suggestion to adopt catch and release only regulations.
6. Miscellaneous spawning observations and suggestions.
7. Good fish numbers observed.
8. Hope / enthusiasm to fish the controlled period again.

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

An aerial (helicopter) live fish survey was completed on 11/09/2023. Water clarity could be described as “good” as all but the deepest areas, perhaps deeper than 2.5 metres, could be observed. The survey was undertaken on a non-fishing day within the schedule of allocated fishing days. The 2023 count of 211 live trout appears to be at moderate levels with respect to the limited comparative data available from 2017, 2021 and 2023 surveys (Table 4).

Table 4. 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 and trout harvest.

Date	Live trout counted	Spring Season in place on survey year	fished days up to survey date	Trout kept prior to survey date
19/09/2017	130	No	n/a	n/a
2018	n/s	October Only		
2019	n/s	September & October		
2020	n/s	September & October		
16/09/2021	282	October Only	0	n/a
2022	Water clarity insufficient	September & October	n/a	
11/09/2023	211	September & October	6	9

4.2 Sites of significance redd survey

There are 27 spawning sites identified on the Upper Ōhau River where at least one redd has been observed between 2016 and 2024. Many spawning sites are used annually, some are used occasionally, and some have been formed or reduced during floods or spawning enhancement. Spawning sites of significance (SOS) have been identified based on observations that they have been used annually or on most years and usually contain four or more fresh redds during September surveys.

To trial the use of SOS-only surveys as a general index of redds as opposed to the former labour intensive all-river total redd surveys, since 2021 only SOS counts have been undertaken. The number of SOS analysed annually is anticipated to change over time and with changes in the availability of spawning gravels at sites. Spawning sites to be considered as additional SOS can be identified during aerial live trout counts whereby the full river length is observed.

Eleven spawning sites were identified as SOS in 2020 and 2021 while in 2022 an extra site was considered after major river works increased spawning habitat near the river's mouth. However, this site has since been removed from analysis as no fresh trout spawning redds were identified there in September 2023. During the aerial survey in 2023 one new spawning site and three existing spawning sites were observed to have notable spawning additional to established SOS sites and were added to the redds survey for investigation (Table 5). The 2023 count of 97 redds indicates a moderate spawning production level compared to previous surveys at SOS sites. The observation of 25 additional fresh redds at 4 sites in addition to the established 11 sites provides an indication that spawning effort may have been redistributed in the river. Overall spawning effort in 2023 may have been similar to that of 2020 and 2021 that were years with high counts and wider distribution of spawning effort.

Table 5. Sites of significant spawning (SOS) redds counts of “fresh” redds undertaken in September between 2020 and 2024 at the Upper Ōhau River.

	2020 (22/09/2020)	2021 (16/09/2021)	2022 (22/09/2022)	2023 (29/09/2022)
SOS Site ID	Fresh redds	Fresh redds	Fresh redds	Fresh redds
No. SOS sites	11	11	11	11
Total fresh redds at SOS sites	92	97	59	79
Total fresh redds at 4 potential new SOS sites 2023				25

4.3 Fish Passage

Potential spawning fish passage issues were raised by anglers during the 2022 Spring Season and resulted in Meridian working with CSIFG staff to undertake instream works to improve fish passage at the weir near the mouth of the river in March 2023. No fish passage issues were observed by CSIFG staff during the 2023 spawning season / Spring Season, i.e., no observations of dead or stranded fish at the weir, no unnatural accumulations of trout below the weir, no unnatural accumulation of redds below weir, spawning numbers within a range appearing to be natural. Some concern remains with anglers but field observations by staff did not support such concerns.

5 Matters of Urgency Arising

No matters of urgency identified arising from the 2023 angling and spawning surveys.

6 Discussion

The administration and monitoring of the 2023 Spring Season has provided a highly valued trophy trout fishery on the Upper Ōhau River subject to a low-risk management approach. To date, due to the proactive and reactive development of Spring Season regulations and monitoring, no two consecutive Spring Seasons have been subject to comparable angler use. The 2023 ballot schedule and monitoring provided the fishery as intended and therefore should be repeated for the upcoming 2024 season. Repeating the 2023 ballot schedule will allow for direct comparison of Spring Season angler catch, harvest and satisfaction as far as possible.

7 Recommendation

- 1. That the 2024 Spring Season ballot schedule is a repeat of the 2023 schedule as set out in schedule 1.**

Schedule 1 – proposed 2024 Spring Season Ballot schedule for the Upper Ōhau River Controlled Period.

Fishing Dates	Allocation	Max anglers	Days	Max Allocation Angler Days
7 - 8 September	1 - Opening Weekend	20	2	40
11 - 12 September	2 - Mid Week	12	2	24
14 - 15 September	3 - Weekend	16	2	32
18 - 19 September	4 - Mid Week	12	2	24
21 - 22 September	5 - Weekend	16	2	32
25 - 26 September	6 - Mid Week	12	2	24
28 - 29 September	7 - Weekend	12	2	24
02 - 03 October	8 - Mid Week	12	2	24
05 - 06 October	9 - Weekend	12	2	24
09 - 10 October	10 - Mid Week	12	2	24
12 - 13 October	11 - Weekend	12	2	24
	Maximum Total Angler Days			296
	Non-Fishing Dates			15

The proposed ballot schedule, when compared to the 2023 schedule is:

1. Repeats the number of allocations, total maximum angler days and non-fishing days.
2. Starts and finishes five days later to conform with the adopted ‘first weekend in September’ opening dates.

8 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Explanations provided by anglers reported to be “unsatisfied” with their overall Upper Ōhau River allocation experience in the 2023 Spring Season.

Allocation / dates	Briefly tell us why you were unsatisfied with your overall fishing experience?
Allocation 3 - Weekend - Saturday 9th & Sunday 10th September	Couldn't catch any
Allocation 5 - Weekend - Saturday 16th & Sunday 17th September	The trout fishery is declining at a very fast rate! We didn't see any fish over 20lb and the fish numbers were very poor compared to the last 4-5 years.
Allocation 5 - Weekend - Saturday 16th & Sunday 17th September	<p>My unsatisfied response is given in comparison to previous years fishing opening dates.</p> <p>In General I would say I am still satisfied.</p> <p>The fishery has declined significantly, I attribute this to the flooding last year and river mouth modification, which I believe stopped a lot of fish entering the river. I am comparing this years fishing to opening dates of pervious years so this may be a contributing factor having already been open 16days before I fished.</p> <p>Of note: I fished the Tekapo, Pukaki and Ohau canals the 2 days before my ballot period, and noticed a dramatic decrease in this fishery also. Which I can only assume and attributed to over fishing finally taken its toll. I think a maximum size limit should be introduced and a reduction in bag limits. Perhaps a tag system so people can target and keep 1 or 2 fish over the maximum length per year. I am sure there many things that could be introduced to help look after them. I have fished these canals for 25yrs since before they were even good fisheries, I use to have them to my self intercepting small fish cruising the edges now sadly even they seem to be absent. Happy to chat and be corrected if needed. Cheers</p>
Allocation 5 - Weekend - Saturday 16th & Sunday 17th September	There were minimal numbers of fish in the river. Talking with other ballot holders showed that most think the fish are being overly targeted prior to entering the river for spawning.

Allocation 5 - Weekend - Saturday 16th & Sunday 17th September	There were very few trout compared to last year (the water was much clear this year and easier to see fish) I would say the number of fish seen was 75 % down on last year. There seemed to be more than the allowable number of fisherman on the river . But the most disappointing thing for me was the still poor fish access over the weir or dam . Once over the weir the fish collected in a natural obstruction about 200 meters up stream with many caught by foul hooking . I think if the first half km of the river was closed off it would give the fish a chance to get into the river proper without being picked off while trapped by obstacles in the run upstream . catch and release only would also help
Allocation 5 - Weekend - Saturday 16th & Sunday 17th September	Fish numbers were much lower than last season, even though river conditions were better, lower flow and clearer. The number of really large fish (over 4.5kg) seemed to be considerable lower than the previous season. Not much improvement seems to have been made to the 'weir/ford' for fish passage out of the lake and up into the river, surely this wouldn't take much to improve and could be combined with a fish trap to actually get some useful data on the actual run of fish (total number of fish and size distribution). I also felt that 16 anglers was probably about 4 too many for the number of fish in the river this year and the limited 'prime' fishing spots.
Allocation 6 - Tuesday 19th & Wednesday 20th September	Fishing abysmal compared with pre ballot days when I would catch at least 5 large fish per day. It used to be almost true wilderness fishing only a few years ago. The ballot system has advertised the quality of this fishery , resulting in huge fishing pressure. Fish and Game should not seek out and advertise the best fishing locations: this should be left to individual anglers as it is an integral part of the fishing/hunting process. As a result I have not bothered going fishing today, my second allocated day.
Allocation 11 - Saturday 7th & Sunday 8th October	tough couple of days
Allocation 11 - Saturday 7th & Sunday 8th October	Didymo was bad

Appendix 2 – Feedback provided by anglers in response to the question “Is there anything you would like to tell us about the Ōhau River Controlled Fishery?”. *Anglers names have been removed where provided to protect their privacy.

Which allocation (fishing dates) did you win in the ballot?	How do you rate your overall fishing experience during your allocation?	Before submitting this survey, is there anything you would like to tell us about the Ōhau River Controlled Fishery?

Allocation 1 - Opening Weekend - Saturday 2nd & Sunday 3rd September	Satisfied	We did absolutely great in the pool around the ford. Really struggled to find any schools of fish anywhere else except for two top pools. Saw a few single fish around but very hard to catch.
Allocation 1 - Opening Weekend - Saturday 2nd & Sunday 3rd September	Satisfied	2 fantastic days - thanks for your tips Rhys
Allocation 1 - Opening Weekend - Saturday 2nd & Sunday 3rd September	Satisfied	The experience of a life time for me. Thanks Fish & Game.
Allocation 1 - Opening Weekend - Saturday 2nd & Sunday 3rd September	Satisfied	should be all released
Allocation 1 - Opening Weekend - Saturday 2nd & Sunday 3rd September	Satisfied	A fantastic and unique fishery, love it!
Allocation 1 - Opening Weekend - Saturday 2nd & Sunday 3rd September	Satisfied	Was great
Allocation 1 - Opening Weekend - Saturday 2nd & Sunday 3rd September	Satisfied	It was a delight to win this opportunity, and enjoy it on 2 perfect days. I am most grateful. Thank you for all your efforts, which make this possible.
Allocation 1 - Opening Weekend - Saturday 2nd & Sunday 3rd September	Satisfied	We were a group of 3 which helped with spotting fish first. Great weekend and brilliant weather.
Allocation 1 - Opening Weekend - Saturday 2nd & Sunday 3rd September	Satisfied	Looking at the condition of the bottom of the river with all the silt and slime there seems to be very few gravel beds for the trout to spawn in.

Allocation 1 - Opening Weekend - Saturday 2nd & Sunday 3rd September	Satisfied	Brilliant fishery.....well done to Rhys and the team for the management of this incredible resource. Thank you!!
Allocation 1 - Opening Weekend - Saturday 2nd & Sunday 3rd September	Satisfied	I think that the ballot system is a great innovation, and thanks to all for implementing it !
Allocation 1 - Opening Weekend - Saturday 2nd & Sunday 3rd September	Satisfied	Thanks for the great experience
Allocation 1 - Opening Weekend - Saturday 2nd & Sunday 3rd September	Satisfied	was an awesome experience, not as many fish as the week before when i scoped it out but still plenty of trophy fish sitting in a few pools
Allocation 2 - Mid Week - Tuesday 5th & Wednesday 6th September	Satisfied	Certainly don't want to see angler numbers increased. Some concern at pressure on groups of spawning fish. Most spots would be fished by more than one group of anglers each day. It would be interesting to see results of longer term monitoring on spawning success.
Allocation 2 - Mid Week - Tuesday 5th & Wednesday 6th September	Satisfied	This was our first time fishing the Ohau during the ballot period and we very much enjoyed the experience. As first timers we did not know what to expect. We would make the comment that we would not want to see any increase in angler numbers due to the pressure that would place on the fish. As the fish are grouped up in a limited number of locations they definitely come under quite heavy fishing pressure especially where access is easy. We did not experience anyone using a drone but feel that would have been detrimental to the overall experience.
Allocation 2 - Mid Week - Tuesday 5th & Wednesday 6th September	Satisfied	was disturbed to find the intestines and eggs of two fish on the bank below the first ford on the north side
Allocation 2 - Mid Week - Tuesday 5th & Wednesday 6th September	Satisfied	Disappointing to see so many spawning fish killed. I think the fish are spawning and the fishery should be closed till November. More compliance checking needed

<p>Allocation 2 - Mid Week - Tuesday 5th & Wednesday 6th September</p>	<p>Satisfied</p>	<p>I definitely think the number of fish in the river was down on prior years, from what i have heard from other reliable sources in town. There were no big pods of fish. This coincides with the number of fish in the canals decreasing, because of too many big fish being taken. The ballot system is great and should continue, otherwise this fishery would just get too much pressure. A key example of this was above the State Highway bridge on the Tekapo canal for opening day & weekend. There would have been 100 people fishing this section on the Saturday morning. You don't want this happening to the Ohau River. The top section of the Tekapo Canal could actually do with a ballot system like the Ohau River to ease pressure on spawning fish.</p>
<p>Allocation 3 - Weekend - Saturday 9th & Sunday 10th September</p>	<p>Satisfied</p>	<p>Had the best time! Seeing big fish in good numbers is very pleasing.</p>
<p>Allocation 3 - Weekend - Saturday 9th & Sunday 10th September</p>	<p>Satisfied</p>	<p>Awesome weekend. A lot of LARGE fish were spotted over the weekend. As a side note, caught a 12 pound salmon in lake Ohau to top the weekend off :)</p>
<p>Allocation 3 - Weekend - Saturday 9th & Sunday 10th September</p>	<p>Satisfied</p>	<p>It's what dreams are made of , If I could attach a photo I would, I love fishing and love this river</p>
<p>Allocation 3 - Weekend - Saturday 9th & Sunday 10th September</p>	<p>Satisfied</p>	<p>I loved my first experience there.</p>
<p>Allocation 3 - Weekend - Saturday 9th & Sunday 10th September</p>	<p>Satisfied</p>	<p>There were definitely more fish in the river this year, compared to last year, but not as many as 2020 . Lovely to be on river and have the privilege of casting to huge fish. Just did not get the doubles to the hook this time .Brian fishing with got a 14 lb yesterday. Superb!!!! Thanks</p>
<p>Allocation 3 - Weekend - Saturday 9th & Sunday 10th September</p>	<p>Satisfied</p>	<p>I think the ballot is a great way to keep the fishing sustainable in the river. Would have been good to see a ranger checking to ensure the ballot is enforced. Thanks</p>

Allocation 3 - Weekend - Saturday 9th & Sunday 10th September	Satisfied	Weather was terrible on the Sunday so only fished the Saturday.
Allocation 3 - Weekend - Saturday 9th & Sunday 10th September	Satisfied	The experience of fishing a great river with only a limited number of others on the river was great. I found the few areas of spawning gravel were fairly churned up with fish having spawned over the top of several others. Need more spawning areas I believe.
Allocation 3 - Weekend - Saturday 9th & Sunday 10th September	Satisfied	It appears recent high flows have depleted a lot of the re-shingling F&G have carried out in past years, spawning fish that I observed, all were fighting for the same small areas of good spawning ground. I believe re-shingling and in more areas is most important to give the fish a better chance of successful spawning. All in all we had a great time, did not observe many others fishing, maybe 8-10 people on the Saturday and 5-6 on Sunday.
Allocation 3 - Weekend - Saturday 9th & Sunday 10th September	Unsatisfied	I'd like to try next year again.
Allocation 3 - Weekend - Saturday 9th & Sunday 10th September	Satisfied	Spawning fish appeared to be competing over the limited amount of good spawning shingles available, re-shingling in suitable areas would certainly benefit the fishery.
Allocation 4 - Mid Week - Tuesday 12th & Wednesday 13th September	Satisfied	Thank you Rhys for setting up this fishery system works well with present numbers of fishes
Allocation 4 - Mid Week - Tuesday 12th & Wednesday 13th September	Satisfied	For the size of the river would expect to see more fish to much didymo still well worth the trip
Allocation 4 - Mid Week - Tuesday 12th & Wednesday 13th September	Satisfied	Most people tend to gravitate to area's they believe will yield the best result. Is it worth considering splitting the fishery over two days , half the fishery on each of two days .
Allocation 4 - Mid Week - Tuesday 12th & Wednesday 13th September	Satisfied	There seemed to be few fish with the odd small shoal of large spawning fish. There was a guide with a drone and having located the fish encouraged his customers, This group occupied where the fish were. I did not see any fish killed but this fishery should be catch n release.

<p>Allocation 4 - Mid Week - Tuesday 12th & Wednesday 13th September</p>	<p>Satisfied</p>	<p>The one I like to see changed is the Redd bed above the ford area, to be closed to all fishing, we watched a couple of guys targeting the fish lying there. It felt wrong to be targeting fish in this tiny stream. Place some signs and a camera. Other than that, a good trip, great weather and great visibility well worth taking the 2 days to drive and scout the river before hand. TroutHunterNZ YouTube clips about the river, gave us the best info and scouting, we found the biggest fish in the same area's as his clips.(maybe Edit or remove before adding to the report for next year) Not something I need to do again, but well worth the experience and glad for opportunity to get some really big Fish.</p>
<p>Allocation 4 - Mid Week - Tuesday 12th & Wednesday 13th September</p>	<p>Satisfied</p>	<p>Great work to all involved controlling the ballot and the fishery hope I get drawn again one day cheers</p>
<p>Allocation 5 - Weekend - Saturday 16th & Sunday 17th September</p>	<p>Satisfied</p>	<p>Well managed and highly rated. Well done team</p>
<p>Allocation 5 - Weekend - Saturday 16th & Sunday 17th September</p>	<p>Unsatisfied</p>	<p>Awesome place hope to fish again.</p>
<p>Allocation 5 - Weekend - Saturday 16th & Sunday 17th September</p>	<p>Unsatisfied</p>	<p>This is a great concept and worth fostering even if it means a 500m exclusion zone at the mouth of the river to allow the fish the chance to get into the river.</p>
<p>Allocation 5 - Weekend - Saturday 16th & Sunday 17th September</p>	<p>Satisfied</p>	<p>Numbers down again this year- this is a great fishery, hope you can figure out why it's been in decline the last couple of years. I last fished it 2020- didn't see any fish in the pool we hooked most of the fish last time whereas there would have been at least 8-10 in the pool in 2020. There were redds at the head of the pool so looked like there had been fish there- maybe they had finished spawning and were back down in the canal. Very very windy which didn't help. Unfortunately I had bust my knee 10 days before the trip which also limited where I could fish.</p>

Allocation 5 - Weekend - Saturday 16th & Sunday 17th September	Unsatisfied	I appreciate the effort and work done on the ballot system but in-spite of this the fishery appears to be in decline
Allocation 5 - Weekend - Saturday 16th & Sunday 17th September	Satisfied	While this was my first time fishing the Ohau River during the ballot period, I was fishing with XYZ and XYZ who have been fishing this system during the ballot period for the last few years. They both commented that the fish numbers and fish size have declined significantly from when they first began fishing the system. They pointed out that there were large floods in the Ohau River the winter prior, which may have effected recruitment. We also note that the fishing popularity of the entire canal system (lakes included) has grown significantly recently, and believe this angling pressure has had a negative effect on the large fish found in the system. In particular, reports of large fish being caught and killed in Lake Ruataniwha have most likely had an impact on the decrease in size and numbers of fish found in the Ohau River during the balloted period. It would be worth implementing a size limit for large fish to help reduce the number of large fish taken and hopefully begin to recover the size and numbers of large fish in this fantastic fishery. Thank you for all that you do with the limited resources available. I hope we can continue to protect and manage this precious resource for years to come.
Allocation 5 - Weekend - Saturday 16th & Sunday 17th September	Satisfied	It can be breezy
Allocation 5 - Weekend - Saturday 16th & Sunday 17th September	Satisfied	If the bulk of the spawning has happened by September 1st. and you are worried enough to protect the late spawning fish by having a ballot, Why not make it catch and release? It should be supported by clear catch and release protocols for anglers taking pictures before releasing.
Allocation 6 - Tuesday 19th & Wednesday 20th September	Satisfied	Love the idea of this and wonder if the top of Tekapo canal should be managed in the same manner. Or the entire system.....

Allocation 6 - Tuesday 19th & Wednesday 20th September	Satisfied	Only witnessed one dead fish this year. Anecdotal improvement over previous years but I guess its midway in the controlled period.
Allocation 6 - Tuesday 19th & Wednesday 20th September	Satisfied	Enjoy the experience and the ballot system is a good thing
Allocation 7 - Saturday 23rd & Sunday 24th September	Satisfied	Very lucky to have the experience cheers
Allocation 7 - Saturday 23rd & Sunday 24th September	Satisfied	Cool place and privileged to fish the place.
Allocation 7 - Saturday 23rd & Sunday 24th September	Satisfied	Reducing allocated angler numbers has significantly improved the fishery and active fish numbers this season. There's only a small number fish easily fishable pools, as a result, any more angler groups than allocated this year (as displayed in previous years) was a serious detriment to overall satisfaction for me. As always with Mackenzie large trout, I suggest this river should be changed to catch and release only, it will not reduce angler satisfaction on this special fishery, quite the contrary. It will provide better sport and fish numbers for all anglers in the near and far future. There's canals nearby to harvest fish if an angler is so inclined. The harvest of one/two female fish would completely ruin a good pool of fish, and that's the gender most anglers are more likely to keep. On another note I was happy to witness the capture/catch a number of juvenile trout, displaying the success of last years spawning run.
Allocation 7 - Saturday 23rd & Sunday 24th September	Satisfied	Angler numbers were much better this year. Given there are only a handful of pools that are fish able and hold a reasonable number of fish (usually) then any more anglers like in previous years would really impact negatively. There seemed to be higher numbers of fish in the river this year. And it was great to catch quite a few smaller fish from the last couple of spawning years. Would definitely recommend making the fishery catch & release only, it shouldn't be a river for people to harvest fish from as the canals are 5 minutes away and can handle the harvesting of a few big hens whereas the Ohau river and the anglers fishing it would suffer.

Allocation 7 - Saturday 23rd & Sunday 24th September	Satisfied	I think it should be Catch and release only and Fly Only THANKS
Allocation 7 - Saturday 23rd & Sunday 24th September	Satisfied	Make it catch and release. 12 anglers max for any period is a better experience.
Allocation 8 - Tuesday 26th & Wednesday 27th September	Satisfied	Ballot system works well, nice to have minimal rod pressure from other parties during our allotted time..
Allocation 8 - Tuesday 26th & Wednesday 27th September	Satisfied	Keep numbers of fisherman down so that everyone who's there gets a good go at it.
Allocation 8 - Tuesday 26th & Wednesday 27th September	Satisfied	Really enjoyed it, seen a lot of fish, hard to catch. Thank you
Allocation 8 - Tuesday 26th & Wednesday 27th September	Satisfied	A great couple of days. Thank you
Allocation 9 - Saturday 30th September & Sunday 1st October	Satisfied	Interesting fishery with both smaller resident trout and larger spawning ones. Good to get to know the layout of the river a bit. Didn't see another fisherman on Saturday of the ballot period, but did see 5 anglers on Sunday.
Allocation 9 - Saturday 30th September & Sunday 1st October	Satisfied	Not fished the river before it was a bit hard to gauge what to expect there seemed to be a lack of fish in the river at the time thinking most were in the deep pools which we couldn't see into and spent a lot of time fishing them ,on the last day late in the after noon we seemed to have cracked the code and found a couple of reeds holding some large fish which I hooked 4 before landing one , I hate it when you have a gear failure as the leader to the fly line came off a knot that 1 rarely check the other 3 the fly pulled on 2 and the 3rd broke me off , 2 of these fish were in the height 20s If I'm lucky enough to get it again I will take a different approach to scouting out the river. a great weekend thank you.

Allocation 10 - Tuesday 3rd & Wednesday 4th October	Satisfied	I don't know how often these fish are caught but the two I hooked were pretty disappointing so far as fight goes, indicative of being caught multiple times. Maybe my expectation was unrealistic given they are spawning. Anyway was fun to swing flies for them with a two hander.
Allocation 10 - Tuesday 3rd & Wednesday 4th October	Satisfied	Only thing is for a controlled ballot I would of expected to at least come across a fish and game officer on of the day bit disappointed there going along with that I don't know how many people get the ballot period at the same time but there where a lot of other people fishing there at the same Time total of 3 cars with at least 4 others people fishing not in our party of 2
Allocation 10 - Tuesday 3rd & Wednesday 4th October	Satisfied	Didn't see any fish and game officers. Seemed to be close to a dozen vehicles that were fishing River flow was better this year compared to last year
Allocation 10 - Tuesday 3rd & Wednesday 4th October	Satisfied	Great initiative to be running the ballot, was so great to have so much river with so few anglers
Allocation 10 - Tuesday 3rd & Wednesday 4th October	Satisfied	Interested in learning about spawning numbers in the Ohau and how this relates to catch rates and harvest rates in lake R and associated canals. What trends are you learning. Thanks, really enjoyed my first time. Keen to have another go now we have learnt some.
Allocation 10 - Tuesday 3rd & Wednesday 4th October	Satisfied	Really enjoyed the opportunity and I hope it continues.
Allocation 11 - Saturday 7th & Sunday 8th October	Satisfied	First time I've seen an eel in river est 50lb .plus! Fishing was very good with numbers a bit less than previous years probably due to the later slot in ballot .Managed to get 3 over 25lb. Stoked with weekend got really good conditions Thanks Rhys for the work it takes to put this together
Allocation 11 - Saturday 7th & Sunday 8th October	Satisfied	great river great fish had an awesome time.

<p>Allocation 11 - Saturday 7th & Sunday 8th October</p>	<p>Satisfied</p>	<p>We saw a few dead fish and one fish Cam caught had a torn mouth and a hook in its back. The fish had no fight and we couldn't recover it after an hour of trying. We dispatched the fish. When we opened her she was full of blood and the liver looked ruptured. I have a background in fish pathology and pretty sure the internal injury was mechanical from poor handling. I think a lot of anglers are lifting these Xxl fish out of the water and crushing organs with both grip and the fish's unsupported weight. All our large fish were photographed half in the water. I think it would be good to develop guidance information on best practices for handling and playing Xxl fish for anglers. Thank you</p>
<p>Allocation 11 - Saturday 7th & Sunday 8th October</p>	<p>Satisfied</p>	<p>River was a little higher this year making wading harder in some spots. It was a great experience and we appreciate the amount of time and effort put in to conserve and manage the fishery as well as make it accesssble to sports fishing. Thanks</p>
<p>Allocation 11 - Saturday 7th & Sunday 8th October</p>	<p>Satisfied</p>	<p>We fished a number of areas. Fish were scarce. We found a few spawning but no pods of fish on the move. Of the 6 small fish I landed blind 5 were small rainbows of less than 0.5kg and 1 was a brown trout about 1.5lb. My observation was that the run of spawning rainbows had finished. We found good numbers of redds, but many looked to be 2 weeks or so old. The 14.5lber I landed was a spawning jack which took 20 minutes to revive. Our group landed 3 other fish from 15.5 - 19.5lb. Two also took a considerable time approx 20 minutes to revive and one (15.5lb hen) could not be revived and was killed. We also found a dead fish of 20lb+ lying in the edgewater of one pool. It was an excellent quality jack which had been dead for a week or more judging from the coat of algae on it. We surmised it hadn't survived being released. After landing my one large trout, I made a conscious decision to not fish to any more trout that were obviously spawning. The danger of damage to actively spawning fish for me was took risky. Watching You Tube clips showing poor handling of large trout under the soft belly area, F&G would fo well to come up with and advertise / advise anglers on how to safely handle and revive large trout destined for release. Overall, it was a good angling experience ... thanks to F&G for providing and managing the ballot. Regards</p>

Allocation 11 - Saturday 7th & Sunday 8th October	Satisfied	Fish were generally higher in the river. Good to see spawning fish on clean gravel beds above the ford. Another amazing couple days fishing. Always appreciate the work fish and game put into managing this fishery and preserving it as a unique resource.
Allocation 11 - Saturday 7th & Sunday 8th October	Unsatisfied	shame we need to allocate
Allocation 11 - Saturday 7th & Sunday 8th October	Satisfied	After a very lack lustre fight (less than 30 seconds) I was very disappointed that I had to kill my biggest fish. After trying to revive it for more than an hour, I decided to kill it. Upon gutting it, it was full of blood, and it appeared it may have sustained crush injuries to the internal organs, probably from poor handling from being caught before.
Allocation 11 - Saturday 7th & Sunday 8th October	Satisfied	It was a wonderful experience catching and landing such a beautiful trout.
Allocation 11 - Saturday 7th & Sunday 8th October	Unsatisfied	Needs more trimming to be done along river edges