



## CENTRAL SOUTH ISLAND REGION

# Upper Ōhau River Spring Season 2024 — review of the controlled-period ballot, angler survey, 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 2024 Spring Season's administration included holding a ballot to distribute controlled period licences; angler catch, harvest and satisfaction monitoring; and spawning surveys. The work and outcomes of managing the Spring Season on the Upper Ōhau River aligns closely with two objectives of the Fish & Game New Zealand organisational strategy 2023-27: *'Attract and retain licence holders'* and *'healthy habitats and ecosystems'*.

It was estimated in 2024 that 114 controlled period licence holders fished and caught 569 trout including the harvest of 21 trout. Ninety percent of anglers were satisfied with their experience. Spawning surveys indicate moderate population levels. There are small differences in all the monitoring metrics measured between 2023 and 2024 subject to a comparable ballot schedule. No matters of urgency were identified upon review of 2024 angler and spawning monitoring.

The scheduled long-term sustainability review assessed that the key to ensuring future long-term sustainability reviews are as robust as possible is to be as consistent in applying management far as practicable. This includes management aspects within Fish & Game influence including ballot schedule, regulations, monitoring, and spawning enhancement.

A non-urgent regulations review considered common angler feedback suggestions for zero daily bag limit and fly-only regulations. The existing regulations were endorsed.

It is recommended:

- A ballot schedule for the 2025 Spring Season is set to replicate the 2023 and 2024 Spring Season ballot schedule to provide consistency in angler use.
- That the established "2023 and 2024" ballot schedule is repeated indefinitely to maintain consistent angler use in the long term, unless a matter of urgency is identified that compels an adjustment to the ballot schedule.
- That review of long-term sustainability is decoupled from the triennial review process, honouring the spring season's low-risk management approach of assessing sustainability on an annual basis.

## 1. Introduction

The Upper Ōhau River's Spring Season was created by Central South Island Fish & Game staff (CSIFG staff) to return a once highly valued fishery to the Ōhau River by permitting fishing during its untraditional open season of September and October. 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 opened for the first time 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 varied 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 fishery and the interconnected fisheries of Lake Ruataniwha, Ōhau B Canal, Wairepo Arm and Kellands Pond – 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 from 2022 onwards.

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 review of the long-term sustainability of the Spring Season and review of non-urgent regulation will be completed prior to the May 2025 triennial regulations review.

The 2024 Spring Season’s administration includes 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 2024 repeated that of 2023 to provide for comparison as far as possible. The key difference between 2024 and 2023 was the different fishing dates that commence on the variable ‘first Saturday of the month’ opening day of the season.

This report presents:

- Results of the 2024 controlled-period ballot.
- Results of the 2024 controlled-period licence holders (angler) survey.
- Results of 2024 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 2024 angler catch, anglers’ satisfaction and spawning surveys necessitating management adaptation.
2. To recommend the ballot schedule for the 2025 Spring Season.

3. To review of the long-term sustainability of the fishery.
4. Consideration of regulation change options not considered a matter of urgency in line with the 2025/26 triennial regulations review.

## 2. Strategic Purpose

The work and outcomes of managing the Spring Season on the Upper Ōhau River aligns closely with two objectives of the Fish & Game New Zealand organisational strategy 2023-27.

*Objective: 'Attract and retain licence holders'*

Monitoring of angling activity, angler satisfaction and providing opportunity for feedback had led to understanding of angler needs and the establishment of the control fishery ballot which delivers an attractive and valued experience whilst maintaining simple and effective communications.

*Objective 'healthy habitats and ecosystems'*

Monitoring and enhancement of spawning habitat, monitoring of spawning populations, catch and harvest secures the maintenance of sustainable wild harvest opportunities for future generations.

## 3. Controlled-Period Ballot 2024

The ballot schedule and associated instructions, information and application forms were published on the CSI pages of the [www.fishandgame.org.nz](http://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 and local region print media.

The ballot received 504 entries including 499 valid entries / 221 valid parties and 5 invalid entries / 2 parties. The ballot was drawn on July 16, 2024. Controlled period licences were issued to 62 parties comprising of 141 anglers. The ballot has increased in popularity, with approximately 40% more valid entries in 2024 (499) than 2023 (339).

Winning anglers/parties were issued controlled period licences (CPL) which included a code of conduct designed to encourage ballot winners to amicably share the river and act responsibly (see appendix 1). Prior to their fishing allocation anglers were emailed with information to support a successful fishing trip such as access options, monitoring information, and other important matters.

## 4. 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 controlled period allocation was emailed to all CPL holders.

### 4.1 Survey response

Overall, the survey email and related communications generated 126 responses out of a total 141 CPL holders, giving an approximate 89% survey response rate.

### 4.2 Fishing activity

It is estimated 114 CPL holders (81%) actively fished during the 2024 Spring Season compared to 119 holders in 2023 (table 1).

"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 CPL holders fished 205 angler days in the 2024 controlled period, slightly higher when compared to 195 angler days fished in 2023 (Table 2).

### 4.3 Catch

Anglers were asked to report the number of trout caught in three size categories. The “small” category, 0.86kg/1.9lb or smaller, 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 between 1kg/2lb and 4.4kg /9.9lbs, are considered indicative of a mix of trout of all possible origins, and the “large” size category, 4.5kg/10 lbs or bigger, is considered indicative of “trophy-size” trout that have spent time in the Ōhau B Canal around the salmon farms.

In total, it was estimated that 114 CPL holders caught 569 trout of which 21 were kept (harvested) during 204 angler days that spanned 11 fishing allocations between 7 September and 13 October 2024 (Table 1).

The average trout caught per angler had a decreasing trend across the allocations which is consistent with observations that the spawning population reduces from September to October. The final two allocations resulted in the two lowest consecutive average catches being just 1 and 2 trout per angler on average which is a stark contrast to the first two allocations which had an average of 8 and 11 fish caught per angler on average.

**Table 1. Estimated trout caught and kept during 204 angler days considering “small, “medium” and “Large” (trophy) size categories during the 2024 controlled period. \*Rounded to whole numbers for presentation – rounding errors are displayed.**

Allocation	Active anglers	Trout caught – “small” 1.9lb (0.86kg) or smaller	Trout caught – “medium” between 2 - 9.9lb (1.1-4.4kg)	Total trout caught – “Large” (trophy) 10lb (4.5kg) or bigger.	Average no. trout caught per angler	Total catch	Total kept
<b>1 - Opening Weekend</b>	18	60	29	46	8	135	7
<b>2 - Mid Week</b>	10	58	20	28	11	106	0
<b>3 - Weekend</b>	13	45	10	19	6	74	2
<b>4 - Mid Week</b>	11	21	17	51	8	89	3
<b>5 - Weekend</b>	13	11	14	33	5	58	0
<b>6 - Mid Week</b>	10	2	6	12	2	20	0
<b>7 - Weekend</b>	7	13	3	8	4	25	0
<b>8 - Mid Week</b>	7	1	1	8	2	11	0
<b>9 - Weekend</b>	7	16	2	8	4	26	5
<b>10 - Mid Week</b>	11	10	4	1	1	15	2
<b>11 - Weekend</b>	8	7	1	4	2	12	2
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>219</b>		<b>569</b>	<b>21</b>

Total catches were similar for 2024 and 2023 Spring Seasons with the key variation being a slightly higher total catch in 2023 than 2024 (595 vs. 569), and higher numbers of large trophy-sized trout caught in 2024 (219 vs. 188) compared to 2023 (Table 2). The higher total catch of 2023 was achieved

with less angler days (195 vs 204) meaning that the rate of trout caught per angler day was higher in 2023 (3.1) compared to 2024 (2.8).

**Table 2. Catch comparisons between 2023 and 2024 Spring Seasons.**

Year	Angler Days	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 – “large” 10lb (4.5kg) or bigger.	Average no. trout caught per angler day	Total catch
2023	195	267	140	188	3.1	595
2024	204	243	108	219	2.8	569

#### 4.4 Trophy trout comparisons

To monitor the state of the trophy trout fishery component of the interconnected fishery over time, anglers are asked to report the weight of the largest fish they caught and the number of fish in the “large” trophy size category. There were more trophy size trout caught in 2024 (219) compared to 2023 (188) on both Opening Weekend and for all allocations (Table 3).

**Table 3. Average weight and weight range of anglers’ largest fish landed and the proportion of catch in the Large “trophy” size category for the Opening Weekend allocations and all allocations during the 2023 and 2024 Spring Seasons.**

Year	Allocation	Size range of largest trout caught by anglers (lb)	Average size of largest trout caught by anglers size (lb)	Proportion of total catch 'large' trophy trout	Total no. of trophy trout caught
2023	Opening Weekend	3.5-32	14.95	38%	30
	All allocations	0.5-32	14.64	32%	188
2024	Opening Weekend	3.0-27	17.55	34%	46
	All allocations	0.8-30	16.9	38%	219

#### 4.5 Harvest comparisons

Percentage of total catch harvested and total number of trout harvested has varied between Spring Seasons subject to variable management parameters and angler days. The 2024 Spring Season harvest was moderate-high levels relative to Spring Seasons 2019 - 2023. An estimated 21 trout were kept in total at a harvest rate of approximately 6% of overall catch in 2024 (Table 4).

**Table 4. 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 2024.**

Spring Season	Month	Survey	Management Status	Angler Days	Overall % of catch harvested	Total trout harvest estimate
2018	October only	None	Open fishery	n/a	n/a	n/a
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
2024	September - October	Quantitative	Controlled	204	6	21

#### 4.6 Methods

Consistent with all previous Spring Seasons, methods available to anglers were fly and spin. 2024 angling activity was made up by anglers who only fly fished (59%), anglers who used both fly and spin (27%) and anglers who only spin fished (14%).

#### 4.7 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, 90%, were “satisfied” while 10% of anglers were unsatisfied. Similar levels of satisfaction (92%) were reported in 2023.

The observed satisfaction level of 90% exceeds the 80% satisfaction threshold established whereby Council has resolved that a matter of urgency must be identified and assessed.

“Unsatisfied” anglers were given the opportunity to explain their reasoning for being unsatisfied. A full record of the explanations, excluding their names for privacy, are provided in Appendix 2.

In summary, the explanations of those anglers that were “unsatisfied,” were commonly related to the fish numbers not meeting expectations. A notable number, 4 of 10 unsatisfied responses were from a single party of anglers who fished allocation 10, the second to last allocation.

#### 4.8 Feedback

The closing question of the angler survey asked, “is there anything you would like to tell us about the Ōhau River Controlled Fishery?” Sixty 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. Over thirty themes of feedback were provided.

In summary, these are the themes identified as 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.

Other notable feedback themes are summarised as:



3. Lower number of fish encountered than expected – particularly in the latter allocations.
4. Commentary around number of other angling parties encountered – mainly positive.
5. Fish being hard to catch / pressured.
6. Good fish numbers encountered.

## 5. Spawning Surveys

Spawning monitoring involves two surveys that are paired to enable assessment of both live fish present and the observable output of spawning activity, redds (egg nests).

### 5.1 Live trout survey – September

An aerial (helicopter) live trout survey was completed on 16/09/2024 targeting rainbow trout (Table 5). Water clarity could be described as “Excellent” with 3.8m visibility recorded using the black disc methodology. All but the deepest areas, perhaps deeper than 3 metres, could be reliably observed. The survey was undertaken on a non-fishing day. The 2024 count of 249 live trout appears to be at moderate levels with respect to data comparable from 2017, 2021 and 2023 surveys. Higher water clarity observed in 2024 (3.8m) compared to 2023 (3.4m) may have led to a higher count observed.

**Table 5. 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, water clarity, and trout harvest.**

Date	Live trout counted	Water clarity (m)	Spring Season in place on survey year	fished days up to survey date	Trout kept prior to survey date
19/09/2017	130		No	0	n/a
2018	n/a		October Only		
2019	n/a		September & October		
2020	n/a		September & October		
16/09/2021	282		October Only	0	n/a
2022	Water clarity insufficient		September & October		
11/09/2023	211	3.4	September & October	6	9
16/09/2024	249	3.8	September & October	6	9

### 5.2 Live trout survey – June

An aerial (helicopter) live fish survey was completed on 26/06/2024 for the first time during June. The June timing targeted the brown trout spawning run. Water clarity could be described as “good” with 2.9m visibility recorded using the black disc methodology. The bottom of deep pools could not be observed. The live trout count was 444 fish. Observations from the surveyor were that of the readily identifiable fish, it was an approximately 50:50 ratio of brown and rainbow trout indicating that the survey captured the brown and rainbow trout spawning run.

### 5.3 Sites of significance redd survey - September

There are 30 spawning sites (gravel where trout deposited eggs) identified on the Upper Ōhau River where at least one redd has been observed between 2016 and 2024. Most spawning sites are used annually. Since 2016, spawning sites have been formed or depleted during floods, spawning enhancement and river engineering. Five new spawning sites were identified during aerial surveys in

2024, while two new spawning sites were identified in 2023. The discovery of new sites in recent years suggest that the distribution of spawning effort across the river’s length is variable from year to year due to availability of spawning habitat.

Traditional redd surveys, in which an observer walks and wades several kilometres of river length, are difficult to undertake on the Upper Ōhau River due to its slippery boulder bed and dense riparian vegetation and limited crossings. A full river redd survey at the Upper Ōhau is labour intensive, requiring four staff over one day. To reduce the physical difficulty and staffing requirements of the full river redd survey, the spawning sites-of-significance (SOS) survey was developed in 2021. The SOS survey aimed to capture a subsample of the spawning sites as an index of full river spawning effort. 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.

The number of SOS analysed annually is anticipated to change over time and with changes in the availability and quality of spawning gravels at sites. For example, enhanced sites where gravel is mechanically introduced is likely to attract a higher proportion of the run to spawn at the site than previously, due to both the increased availability and quality of the gravel.

Originally eleven spawning sites were identified as SOS in 2020. 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 SOS redds survey for ongoing assessment (Table 6). The 2024 count of 72 redds indicates at the 11 original SOS sites indicates a moderate spawning production level compared to the limited 2020-2024 survey data at hand. Including the 2023 SOS site the spawning redds observed are similar between 2023 (104) and 2024 (105).

**Table 6. Sites of significant spawning (SOS) redds counts of “fresh” redds undertaken in September between 2020 and 2024 at the Upper Ōhau River.**

	<b>2020</b> (22/09/2020)	<b>2021</b> (16/09/2021)	<b>2022</b> (22/09/2022)	<b>2023</b> (29/09/2023)	<b>2024</b> (20/09/2022)
	<b>Fresh redds</b>	<b>Fresh redds</b>	<b>Fresh redds</b>	<b>Fresh redds</b>	<b>Fresh redds</b>
<b>Total fresh redds at SOS sites (n=11)</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>Total fresh redds at 2023 new SOS sites (n=4)</b>				<b>25</b>	<b>30</b>

## 6. Matters of Urgency Arising

No matters of urgency were identified from the 2024 angling and spawning monitoring and comparisons with previous monitoring where applicable.

## 7. Discussion

### 7.1 2024 Monitoring

The administration and monitoring of the Spring Season has provided a highly valued trophy trout fishery on the Upper Ōhau River subject to a low-risk management approach. Due to the proactive and reactive development of Spring Season regulations, monitoring between seasons has been

inconsistent through the 2018-2022 period. After the apparent success of the 2023 Spring Season administration to deliver on the founding aspiration of the Spring Season, the 2024 Spring Season was repeated as far as practical, and therefore, provided the first comparable consecutive Spring Season catch, harvest, and satisfaction data. Overall, there are small differences in all the monitoring metrics measured between 2023 and 2024, including for spawning data – nothing that compels further consideration or could be reviewed in the context of a “matter of urgency”.

The 2024 and 2023 monitoring results support the establishment of standardised “2023 and 2024” ballot schedule to be implemented annually and indefinitely to maintain consistency of angler use and therefore enable further and eventual long-term comparisons of catch and satisfaction.

The Spring Season’s low-risk management approach including annual monitoring, annual reporting of matters of urgency arising from monitoring and an 80% angler satisfaction threshold continues to provide a fit-for-purpose safeguard for the sustainability of the Spring Season and the interconnected fishery and maintains the high-country aesthetics of this one-of-a-kind trophy trout fishery.

## 7.2 Long-term sustainability review

This section of the report is compelled by Councils resolution in May 2021, that:

- (a) Unless a matter of urgency arises, review the long-term sustainability of the Spring Season on a triennial basis in conjunction the with the existing triennial review process of CSI regulations.***

It is not possible to undertake a genuine “long term” review of the Spring Season at this point (2024) as the Spring Season has not been in operation for a long-term period (10 years plus). Further, the natural and human influenced dynamics of the fishery and its monitoring to date have been highly variable and provide a limited opportunity to directly compare fishery monitoring metrics across years since its founding investigations were undertaken in 2016.

Short-term sustainability of the fishery in relation to Spring Season has been considered annually since 2019 with reporting of Spring Season related spawning, catch and angler satisfaction. To date sustainability matters have been addressed with a low-risk management approach. In practice the low-risk management approach has led to a proactive and precautionary fishery management structure including a controlled period ballot that has delivered a Spring Season that provides a satisfying experience for anglers, is sustainable and honours the historical goal of restoring a highly valued fishery to the Ōhau River. When long term data is available, long-term sustainability will be considered annually through the established low-risk management framework. Coupling a review of long-term sustainability to the triennial review process is unnecessary in future.

Nevertheless, the intent of this long-term sustainability review is to further honour the established low-risk and precautionary approach to the Spring Season management by scheduling an assessment of long-term sustainability. This review provides an opportunity to take a forward-facing view of the management and monitoring framework in place that will support a robust assessment of long-term sustainability in future. Although natural variation in fishery dynamics are beyond Fish & Game’s influence, the key to ensuring future long-term sustainability reviews are as robust as possible is to be as consistent in our influence over the fishery as far as practicable.

Examples of the variable fishery dynamics the fishery has experienced since 2016:

Beyond Fish & Game’s influence:

- Variable water clarity and its potential effects on angler catch monitoring.

- Variable water clarity and its effects on the ability to undertake, or the quality of spawning monitoring.
- Variable weather and its effects on angler use.
- Floods changing the distribution of available spawning gravel.
- Influence of salmon farming operations on fish populations and fishery productivity in the interconnected fishery.

Within Fish & Game's influence:

- River control works effecting fish passage, therefore spawning distribution and catch.
- Variable regulations effecting levels of angler use.
- Variable regulations effecting levels of catch and harvest.
- Variation in angling monitoring.
- Variation in spawning monitoring.
- Spawning enhancement potentially influencing variability in the distribution and density of spawning effort and potentially influencing catch.

Variable fishery dynamics beyond Fish & Game's influence must be recognised and expected. They will occasionally cause incomplete, compromised, or low-resolution assessment on some years and that will reduce the robustness of long-term assessment of trends. One key example of this is likely to be poor water clarity making aerial spawning surveys of live fish unachievable as occurred in 2022.

Variable fishery dynamics within Fish & Game's control should be applied as consistently as is practicable to maximise the comparability of the monitoring data. The following assessment is forward-looking and aims to address consistency and quality of the variable fishery dynamics within Fish & Game's influence.

- River control works effecting fish passage, therefore spawning distribution and catch.

Maintaining open and timely communications between Meridian Energy, other parties and CSIFG around proposed river works including adequate passage for trout of a size 0 to 32 pounds is the key to ensuring fish passage is maintained.

- Variable regulations effecting levels of angler use.

Maintaining the established controlled period and ballot framework will enable the ongoing control of angling numbers and minimise variation in angler use. The ballot schedule must be made as consistent as possible in the long term to provide for consistent angling effort and therefore catch. The 2023 & 2024 ballot schedule should be maintained until such point that a matter of urgency is identified that requires it to change.

- Variable regulations effecting catch and harvest.

The current daily bag limit and permitted methods regulations must stay consistent as possible in the long term. The current daily bag limit of 2 trout and 2 salmon (effectively 2 trout), is rarely utilised by anglers and subject to a controlled period has resulted in sustainable harvest levels and therefore should be maintained in the long term to enable long term data comparisons.

To demonstrate the low impact of the current bag limit we can consider observed fish count against known harvest. In 2024 the September live trout count was 249 trout on 16/09/24, while the harvest for following two-day allocation on the 18-19/09/24 was 3 trout. Theoretically, assuming the same 249 trout remained in the river for the following allocation angler harvested around 1.2% of the

population of the river. In reality, the 249 count is less than the actual number of trout that were in the river on the day and the proportion of the populations harvested would have likely been less than 1%. This is because not all fish present in the river are observed due to depth exceeding clarity, currents, glare, wind ripple cause by wind or rotor wash etc creating observability challenges.

Provision of spin and fly only methods appear to be sustainable and provide opportunity for most whole season licence holders to be able to participate in the Spring Season, therefore spin and fly methods should be maintained in the long term to enable ongoing data comparisons.

- Variation in angling monitoring.

The controlled period online angler catch and satisfaction survey in place from 2022-2024 has provided a high response rate (89% - 93%) proving its worth as a highly functional monitoring tool for minimal resourcing. An alternative survey method option is phone surveys. Phone surveys may provide a similar response rate and data quality, possibly higher. Phone surveys would, however, require significantly higher resourcing. Due to the uncertainty around the benefits of switching to phone surveys and the established high response rate achieved by the online survey, it is sensible to maintain the online survey for the long term to ensure consistency of data acquisition. Importantly, the high response rate of the online survey should be maintained to sustain the quality of data in the long term and action should be taken if response rate drops below the experienced levels.

The online survey is designed to be short, simple and provide a summary of 2-day allocation catch in reflection of the expected 1 – 10 days post fishing survey completion timing. A higher resolution of catch data could be sought by requesting anglers to break down catch by day and by the weight of individual fish. This is likely to lead to a reduction in the accuracy of data due to issues with angler recalling the precise details of their catch at an individual trout level. This issue was experienced by CSIFG staff during surveys of upper Tekapo canal fishery when a high level of detail was sought from anglers within two days of their fishing. The current allocation level / grouped catch and fish size data has provided suitable data during the 2022-2024 surveys and therefore should be kept consistent in the long term.

- Variation in spawning monitoring – aerial surveys.

Aerial surveys of live trout have provided valuable data of the number of trout in the river during the Spring Season. The continuation of these surveys when clarity is suitable is critical to enable assessment of long-term sustainability. To maximise comparability of aerial surveys across years, water clarity measurements must be undertaken on the survey day. Further, a minimum water clarity threshold should be established that aims to ensure a minimum acceptable level of observability (depth) based on water clarity for aerial surveys. This may take several years to establish. To ensure consistency of survey timing, aerial surveys in September should occur in the non-fishing day that occurs after the first three allocations ( fishing days), notwithstanding due to poor weather, within the existing 9-day date range of previous surveys undertaken (11<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> September).

Aerial surveys targeting live brown trout were first undertaken in June 2024. The purpose of the June aerial surveys was to establish a control measure whereby data on the trout spawning populations not directly influenced by Spring Season were established for a point of reference. Brown trout are rarely caught in the Spring Season and tend to spawn from May to August outside of the angling period, therefore, at population level, brown trout are not considered to be appreciably influenced by Spring Season angling. The timing of the survey this year (26 June) resulted in a high number of trout being observed (444) with approximately an even split of brown trout and rainbow run being observed. The peak timing of the brown trout spawning run is unknown from the limited data available

on the Upper Ōhau River and may always time in with the start of the rainbow trout spawning run. To establish brown trout peak spawning run timing pattern, fortnightly aerial surveys through the spawning season May to August would be required to establish such information. That level of resourcing may not be justifiable for the information gain. The June aerial survey requires further data collection to provide assessment whether a survey date around 26 June is suitable for capturing a significant component or peak of the brown trout run. It is possible that the early rainbow run that occurs in late June may also not be impacted by the Spring Season angling, and therefore is a of control measure/metric for assessment the Spring Seasons impact on the interconnected fishery and the rainbow trout spawning run that occurs in September. At this stage a repeat of 26 June survey date, or within a few days either side, is advisable with ongoing assessment required to decide if the June survey is fit for purpose.

As a secondary benefit, aerial surveys have proven valuable for identifying new spawning areas established after floods. This discovery of new spawning sites demonstrates the changing distribution of spawning sites. For this reason, aerial surveys should always be undertaken prior to any paired redd survey to allow new spawning sites to be assessed on foot in timing with the existing monitoring schedule.

- Variation in spawning monitoring – redd surveys.

Redds counts can be difficult to compare between years due to superimposition (repeated/ successive use of gravel throughout the season), variation in availability of gravel due to floods, occasional use of suboptimal spawning habitat making redd ID abnormal, variation in redds identification between observers. The key influence on these limitations is for Fish & Game to keep the staff observers as consistent as possible in the long term to minimise observer error.

Recognising the inherent inaccuracy of redd surveys to record the annual spawning effort, the key benefits of continuing to undertake redds surveys at the Upper Ōhau River can be summarised as: to identify significant reduction in spawning production (fishery collapse / fish passage issues); to monitor the use of enhanced spawning sites, to provide a spawning survey, albeit impacted, whereby water clarity is insufficient for aerial live fish surveys; and to provide assessment of spawning habitat distribution change post flood. Subject to the established low-risk management approach, the continuation of annual redds surveys are justified as fit for purpose by its key benefits.

The current method of surveying redds focusses on sites of significant (SOS) spawning effort only and therefore provides a reduced resolution spawning estimate and increased in potential for inconsistency when compared to an all-river redd count. The benefit of the SOS style survey is that it requires only one staff day as opposed to the previous all-river survey requiring four staff days and reduces health and safety risks associated with wading and river travel. Considering the benefits of the SOS survey its use should continue, acknowledging its limitations and that it requires ongoing optimisation to incorporate the maximum number of SOS spawning sites with changes caused by floods. Additionally, after major floods, a full river redds survey should be undertaken to identify the proportion of all-river redds that the SOS surveys sites represents ensure that SOS sites remain a majority proportion of all river redds and therefore a suitable index of spawning activity.

- Irregular spawning enhancement potentially influencing variability in the distribution and density of spawning effort and potentially influencing catchability.

There are currently two enhanced spawning sites consented on the river. Only one site is established and is irregularly maintained by installing new gravel. To minimise the irregular influence of installing gravels and their redistribution after floods, consistency needs to be introduced into the maintenance

schedule as far as practicable. Once the second enhanced site has been established, then a regular pattern of maintenance must be established, for example, each site has gravel added on alternating years, and post flood the most valuable site is maintained first.

### 7.3 Non-urgent triennial regulations review.

This section of the report is compelled by Councils resolution in May 2021, that:

- (a) Unless a matter of urgency arises, maintain regulations imposed on the 2021/22 season until the next triennial review of the fishery.***

Feedback from Spring Season angler monitoring has consistently, but in relatively low frequency, identified two key themes for suggested regulation change, 1 – fly fishing only, and 2 – zero bag limit (catch and release). The following paragraphs consider the implementing these regulations.

Limiting permitted methods to fly fishing only can be justified to maintain a unique experience or where limiting angler use and/or catch by restricting methods to a single option can be used to minimise risk of unsustainable catch. The unique experience of the Spring Season is the opportunity to sight-fish for canal-origin trophy rainbow trout in a high-country river. Although this opportunity is highly valued by those fly-only anglers who consider that sight fishing for large trout in rivers is the pinnacle of their sports fishing experience, that experience is valued by spin-only anglers too. Subject to the current controlled period, which limits angler use, and with no concern for sustainability arising in 2023 and 2024 monitoring, staff suggested that maintaining opportunity for spin anglers to participate in the Spring Season is more important than creating a unique experience for only fly anglers. Therefore, staff do not support a change to fly only method regulations for the Spring Season, 1 - as it is seen to place an unnecessary restriction on participation, and 2 – spin method poses no risk to sustainability, and 3 – it would introduce inconsistency to the long-term monitoring data.

A zero-bag limit, aka compulsory catch and release is most likely suggested by anglers who either choose to catch and release all their fish; believe the harvest of spawning-run trout is unsustainable; or think it will enhance the trophy trout fishing opportunities. Counter points of view towards providing a bag limit could be that the opportunity to harvest trout is the fundamental opportunity provided by purchasing a sports fishing licence and the introduction of sports fish to New Zealand; that annual and ongoing monitoring suggest current harvest levels are sustainable; and that the trophy aspect of the fishery is monitored and currently healthy.

The current bag limit of two trout (and two salmon) remains endorsed by staff. The justification for the providing of a daily bag limit of two trout has three key components: 1 - harvest monitoring in place identifies that current harvest levels are low and sustainable, 2 - it enables the selective harvest of one table or trophy trout and the continuation of fishing on the same day, 3 - it allows an angler to continue to fish after the unfortunate event of harvesting a trout that they intended to release but was accidentally damaged/killed in the process of catching it.

The final non-urgent matter to consider has been identified by staff. For the purposes of consistency, it can be justified to alter the bag limits for interconnected canal fisheries to be the same. In practice that would mean that any fishery where an angler can expect catch a trophy trout of canal origin or a salmon of salmon farm origin would have the same bag limits. Currently canal fisheries, including Lake Ruataniwha, daily bag limits are 2 sports fish. Interconnected canal fisheries including the Upper Ōhau River, Wairepo Arm and Kelland Pond have a daily bag limit of 2 trout and 2 salmon. It is suggested that the 2 sports fish daily bag limit should be applied to all interconnected fisheries for consistency and therefore simplicity. The differences in annual harvest outcomes for each fishery would likely be

a slight decrease in harvest, if any, but at negligible levels in the context of both sustainability and opportunity. Any loss in opportunity resulting from the change could be transferred adjacent lake fisheries such as lakes Ōhau, Benmore, Pūkaki and Tekapo / Takapō where higher daily bag limits are in place (4 sports fish). For the Upper Ōhau River Spring Season in particular there would be no anticipated difference in annual harvest as salmon are not known to be in the river during the September – October period. Practically, there is no appreciable difference between a ‘2 sports fish’ limit or ‘2 trout and 2 salmon’ limit during the Spring Season other than a consistency and therefore simplification of bag limit regulations for interconnected canal fisheries.

## 8. Recommendations

1. **THAT THE 2025 SPRING SEASON BALLOT SCHEDULE IS A REPEAT OF THE ESTABLISHED “2023 AND 2024” SCHEDULE AS SET OUT IN SCHEDULE 1.**
2. **THAT THE ESTABLISHED “2023 AND 2024” BALLOT SCHEDULE IS REPEATED INDEFINITELY TO MAINTAIN CONSISTENT ANGLER USE IN THE LONG TERM, UNLESS A MATTER OF URGENCY IS IDENTIFIED THAT COMPELS AN ADJUSTMENT TO THE BALLOT SCHEDULE.**
3. **THAT REVIEW OF LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY IS DECOUPLED FROM THE TRIENNIAL REVIEW PROCESS, HONOURING THE SPRING SEASON’S LOW-RISK MANAGEMENT APPROACH OF ASSESSING SUSTAINABILITY ON AN ANNUAL BASIS.**

Schedule 1 – proposed 2025 Spring Season Ballot schedule for the Upper Ōhau River Controlled Period.

<b>Fishing Dates</b>	<b>Allocation</b>	<b>Max anglers</b>	<b>Days</b>	<b>Max Allocation Angler Days</b>
6 - 7 September	1 - Opening Weekend	20	2	40
10 - 11 September	2 - Mid Week	12	2	24
13 - 14 September	3 - Weekend	16	2	32
17 - 18 September	4 - Mid Week	12	2	24
20 - 21 September	5 - Weekend	16	2	32
24 - 25 September	6 - Mid Week	12	2	24
27 - 28 September	7 - Weekend	12	2	24
01 - 02 October	8 - Mid Week	12	2	24
04 - 05 October	9 - Weekend	12	2	24
08 - 09 October	10 - Mid Week	12	2	24
11 - 12 October	11 - Weekend	12	2	24
	<b>Maximum Total</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>296</b>
	<b>Non-Fishing Dates</b>		<b>15</b>	



## 9. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Angler code of conduct supplied with controlled period licences.

### **Ōhau River Spring Season Code of Conduct:**

Central South Island Fish & Game (CSIFG) provide this code of conduct to encourage ballot winners to amicably share the river and act responsibly while enjoying the one-of-a-kind high-country trophy trout fishing provided by the controlled fishery.

For the most part, Ōhau River Spring Season anglers concentrate their efforts at favourite pools or runs and usually drive between different spots rather than walk. However, anglers that choose to walk long stretches of the river may need to bypass pools and runs already occupied by other anglers.

### **Communicate before casting**

Before fishing an occupied area, talk to the occupants to see if they are happy for you to share that area. If they are unwilling, be polite and find a different spot. If the individual or party occupying an area agrees to share, then communicate and agree on how that will work. For example, you may decide that each party occupies opposite banks, or you could split a pool by top and bottom. You may decide that all anglers steadily rotate through the area moving in a bottom to top direction. In any case, communication is the key to sharing a small area amicably.

### **Fish a different spot each morning and afternoon**

We recommend you and your party fish a different pool or area each morning and afternoon. This will help ensure that all ballot winners get at least one morning or afternoon session at one of the more productive spots and encourages you to explore more of what the river offers.

### **Land fish quick and handle with care**

**There is a responsibility for every angler practising catch and release to handle their fish with care. Here are our best practice tips for catch and release.**

1. A short fight is a good fight – big trout require a strong tippet for a quick landing; we recommend using a minimum breaking strain of 8lb /3.5kg tippet.
2. Cool and wet your hands and landing net before touching the fish – dip them in the river first.
3. Use a large landing net for large trout.
4. Keep trout wet – keep the fish in the water while dehooking.
5. Give trout time to revive - face trout headfirst into a gentle current until they regain the strength to swim away unaided.

### **Photography**

There's every chance you will catch a trophy rainbow trout during your allocation, and you will want to get some photos as a memento of your unique catch. We recommend you take the photo of the fish in the water or at water level – that way, if the fish slips out of your hands, there is no “fall”, and it can only end up safely in the water. Also, be super quick if you lift the trout out of the water – a maximum of 5 seconds at a time.

### **Fishery Support**

CSIFG wishes to acknowledge Meridian Energy for valued contributions toward spawning habitat enhancement and aerial spawning monitoring. These contributions help CSIFG to manage, monitor and maintain the long-term sustainability of the Ōhau River Spring Season.

Appendix 2 – Explanations provided by anglers reported to be “unsatisfied” with their overall Upper Ōhau River allocation experience in the 2024 Spring Season.

<b>Allocation / dates</b>	<b>Briefly tell us why you were unsatisfied with your overall fishing experience?</b>
<b>Allocation 2 -</b> Mid Week - Wednesday 11 & Thursday 12 September	The bigger fish seemed relatively few and far between.
<b>Allocation 3 -</b> Weekend - Saturday 14 & Sunday 15 September	My own fault! New to blind fishing large areas of water/knowing where fish might be in spawning season. Made for a very frustrating day of fishing, only saw fish in the pool by the ford (was being fished by another group) and up in the large pool by the top of the river!
<b>Allocation 4 -</b> Mid Week - Wednesday 18 & Thursday 19 September	Competition with other anglers meant we didn't get on to a good pool on day #1. Unpleasant interaction with other party when trying to share the Ford pool with them by fishing from opposite banks. On day two Trout on cliff pool not taking egg flies, and inadvertently foul hooked them, which was unsatisfying. High expectations meant it was hard to be satisfied with not landing a healthy large trout caught in the mouth over the two days. Better luck next time!
<b>Allocation 7 -</b> Weekend - Saturday 28 & Sunday 29 September	we scouted the water on Thursday. we did not spot any fish we spotted two sad spin fishermen. Sat & Sunday no fishermen or vehicles or Ranger to chat with. which says to me the river is not up to it. We where very lucky to have one pool with fish to ourselves or we could have struggled. As newbies it was difficult to know where to fish.
<b>Allocation 8 -</b> Mid Week Wednesday 02 & Thursday 03 October	Hard moody fish .
<b>Allocation 10 -</b> Mid Week - Wednesday 09 & Thursday 10 October	Fish numbers by this time next to nill
<b>Allocation 10 -</b> Mid Week Wednesday 09 & Thursday 10 October	Fish numbers very low. Seems like there were very few large fish in the river. I assume this is due to spawning being largely complete.
<b>Allocation 10 -</b> Mid Week - Wednesday 09 & Thursday 10 October	Low low numbers of fish in the river and a lot of dead fish left on the banks wasn't happy to see that at all not in my homeland
<b>Allocation 10 -</b> Wednesday 09 & Thursday 10 October	high river flow, late in the ballot only saw one fish
<b>Allocation 11 -</b> Weekend - Saturday 12 & Sunday 13 October	People dropping in on the pool I'm fishing from the other side. Fish have been hammered in some of the pools.

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 Fishery?”. \*Anglers names have been removed where provided to protect their privacy.

<b>Which allocation (fishing dates) did you win in the ballot?</b>	<b>How do you rate your overall fishing experience during your allocation?</b>	<b>Before submitting this survey, is there anything you would like to tell us about the Ōhau River Controlled Fishery?</b>
<b>Allocation 1</b> - Opening Weekend - Saturday 07 & Sunday 08 September	Satisfied	A fantastic couple of days fishing even though the weather was challenging on Sat. True McKenzie country experience. Thanks guys for all your great work :)
<b>Allocation 1</b> - Opening Weekend - Saturday 07 & Sunday 08 September	Satisfied	great initiative, was nice to see a couple of young anglers out and about with their Dad who was lucky enough to get a ballot. the kids were having an awesome time, think they managed to get a couple of good fish to.
<b>Allocation 1</b> - Opening Weekend - Saturday 07 & Sunday 08 September	Satisfied	It's an amazing fishery and would like to see kids enjoy it as well
<b>Allocation 1</b> - Opening Weekend - Saturday 07 & Sunday 08 September	Satisfied	Fished to 5-6 of the largest trout I've ever seen (i.e. tanks) - they are also the smartest trout I've ever meet...
<b>Allocation 1</b> - Opening Weekend - Saturday 07 & Sunday 08 September	Satisfied	Most other parties did not heed the instructions about not spending morning and afternoon on same locations - it did not impact our experience but thought it could be helpful feedback for F&G to note.
<b>Allocation 1</b> - Opening Weekend - Saturday 07 & Sunday 08 September	Satisfied	Amazing experience for myself and my boys. The boys absolutely loved it.

<b>Allocation 1</b> - Opening Weekend - Saturday 07 & Sunday 08 September	Satisfied	it was great, that you I would take onion else with me next time
<b>Allocation 1</b> - Opening Weekend - Saturday 07 & Sunday 08 September	Satisfied	The fish are mostly confined to four locations I found. I think spin fishing should be removed as it doesn't seem right to target spawning fish with this method. They get a hard enough time in the canals on this gear. Otherwise great fishery!
<b>Allocation 1</b> - Opening Weekend - Saturday 07 & Sunday 08 September	Satisfied	<p>It was our first year since the ballot started that we got in and greatly appreciated and enjoyed it. Even though the weather was not ideal over the weekend we 've managed to land a few fish. We thought that we would encounter a lot of anglers on the river, but that was not the case. It was a bit tough to locate and get the fish to eat.</p> <p>We picked up on something that happened when a party handled a fish. Maybe there should be more emphasis placed on safe catch, handling and release skills such as wet your hands, hold the fish over the water and do not place the fish on the rocks. Also hold it in your hands and not against your body for a photo.</p> <p>A big thanks to F&amp;G for making this experience possible.</p>
<b>Allocation 1</b> - Opening Weekend - Saturday 07 & Sunday 08 September	Satisfied	Great experience. Massive thanks to Rhys as I understand how much time and effort must go in to arranging this. All anglers I spoke with were very pleasant. I did see some poor handling of fish from some kids test were with their dad fishing. We gently reminded them the best way to keep fish in water etc. Overall a great time. Weather was a challenge on the Saturday. Thanks again
<b>Allocation 1</b> - Opening Weekend - Saturday 07 & Sunday 08 September	Satisfied	Thank your for this rare opportunity to fish this beautiful river, enjoy the spectacular views, and enjoy the sport I love. I am grateful to everyone who contributed to make this possible for me and other lucky fishermen.
<b>Allocation 1</b> - Opening Weekend - Saturday 07 & Sunday 08 September	Satisfied	I really appreciate the opportunity that fish and game have given me to fish these waters at this time. The concept of the ballot system is a very good one I believe. Thank you .

<b>Allocation 1</b> - Opening Weekend - Saturday 07 & Sunday 08 September	Satisfied	Thanks for being selected, an excellent time had, great fishing, tough conditions with wind, etc, but happy with results.
<b>Allocation 1</b> - Opening Weekend - Saturday 07 & Sunday 08 September	Satisfied	I think this a great idea and well done to those involved
<b>Allocation 2</b> - Mid Week - Wednesday 11 & Thursday 12 September	Satisfied	No it was great experience! We are so lucky to have this fishery and fantastic that is on a balloted system now. Great to meet the rangers on the river and have a good chat too'. Keep up the great work FandG !
<b>Allocation 2</b> - Mid Week - Wednesday 11 & Thursday 12 September	Satisfied	Awesome resource took a bit to figure out the fishing. About right for angler numbers on the river for one period cheers guys
<b>Allocation 2</b> - Mid Week - Wednesday 11 & Thursday 12 September	Satisfied	There is certainly plenty of fish. I would have seen in excess of 120 fish between Lake Ohau and the ford on the day prior. From my prospective the ballot definitely works as in the past I've had nowhere to fish prior to the ballot being installed. Most enjoyable two days fishing.
<b>Allocation 2</b> - Mid Week - Wednesday 11 & Thursday 12 September	Satisfied	Ballot system worked very well on the day with great interaction between others on the river
<b>Allocation 2</b> - Mid Week - Wednesday 11 & Thursday 12 September	Satisfied	Thanks for the opportunity! We really enjoyed being able to fish a river in the early Spring for spawners, almost Tongariro style but in the south. Would be epic to have more opportunities like this.

<p><b>Allocation 3</b> - Weekend - Saturday 14 &amp; Sunday 15 September</p>	<p>Satisfied</p>	<p>First time fishing the area. Taking a day earlier to scope the river helped a lot given the potentially risky weather that was expected but didn't eventuate till late in the weekend. Came across 4-7 others fishing besides our group of 4 and it didn't feel packed or crowded so everyone had plenty of area to fish. Big fish were not responding to eggs, more so seemed to be just aggressive manouvers for position allowing for hookups on any lines. Smaller fish were rampant on the eggs at least which is a really interesting unique experience. Want to enter ballot again as didn't fish all possible locations. But unsure how this will go, as with so many entering for the ballot this year, if similar interest occurs next year, something needs to be adjusted to allow for more variety of fishers on the river (e.g.: eligibility after multiple consecutive times fishing needs to be addressed if size of the entries continues to be so high) because increasing the number of ballots isn't a viable option. The experience felt just right with regards to numbers on the river fishing.</p>
<p><b>Allocation 3</b> - Weekend - Saturday 14 &amp; Sunday 15 September</p>	<p>Satisfied</p>	<p>Great fishery, and great initiative using the ballot system. Lots of very large fish spotted on both days.</p>
<p><b>Allocation 3</b> - Weekend - Saturday 14 &amp; Sunday 15 September</p>	<p>Satisfied</p>	<p>This was my second attempt at fishing on an allocated ballot spot, last time I caught no fish. I learnt a lot this time and had a great time. I have no negative feedback.</p>
<p><b>Allocation 3</b> - Weekend - Saturday 14 &amp; Sunday 15 September</p>	<p>Satisfied</p>	<p>A fantastic place that should be looked after for future generations.</p>
<p><b>Allocation 3</b> - Weekend - Saturday 14 &amp; Sunday 15 September</p>	<p>Satisfied</p>	<p>Awesome day spent on the river and great to see Rhys out and about checking in with everyone! Fantastic fishery!</p>
<p><b>Allocation 3</b> - Weekend - Saturday 14 &amp; Sunday 15 September</p>	<p>Satisfied</p>	<p>A wonderful and well managed fishery. Thankyou. South Canterbury</p>
<p><b>Allocation 4</b> - Mid Week - Wednesday 18 &amp; Thursday 19 September</p>	<p>Satisfied</p>	<p>Fishing was fantastic, fish numbers were great.</p>

<b>Allocation 4</b> - Mid Week - Wednesday 18 & Thursday 19 September	Satisfied	Word on the street is that large fish numbers are low . Although it was our first time we didn't see many !
<b>Allocation 4</b> - Mid Week - Wednesday 18 & Thursday 19 September	Satisfied	Only that you have this management spot on
<b>Allocation 4</b> - Mid Week - Wednesday 18 & Thursday 19 September	Unsatisfied	Keep up the good work. Having a angler party quota system is great. Hardly saw an angler on day 2, fishing 12 hours. Great the fish get a rest between ballots!
<b>Allocation 4</b> - Mid Week - Wednesday 18 & Thursday 19 September	Satisfied	great weather great fish great trip
<b>Allocation 4</b> - Mid Week - Wednesday 18 & Thursday 19 September	Satisfied	It was good and the fish were excellent
<b>Allocation 4</b> - Mid Week - Wednesday 18 & Thursday 19 September	Satisfied	Really good. Love the ballot system but a bit annoyed at some who hog pools and use drones.
<b>Allocation 5</b> - Weekend - Saturday 21 & Sunday 22 September	Satisfied	Lot of rubbish on the ground.
<b>Allocation 5</b> - Weekend - Saturday 21 & Sunday 22 September	Satisfied	Thanks Rhys, for running an excellent experience style fishery it is truly unique. Wasn't thousands of fish throughout the river and I suspect most has seen some tackle making them quite flighty, however the saying the one fish is all it takes to make a day is especially true for the Ohau.
<b>Allocation 5</b> - Weekend - Saturday 21 & Sunday 22 September	Satisfied	I answered "No" to "Was this your first time fishing the Ohau River?", as I fished it many years ago several times, during the main season. Of note, the fish numbers encountered for the water covered was low, I was surprised not to catch a lot more smaller fish ( 1-2 lb ), all fish caught were Rainbow Trout. Thank you for the opportunity.

<p><b>Allocation 5 - Weekend - Saturday 21 &amp; Sunday 22 September</b></p>	<p>Satisfied</p>	<p>A Couple of Personal (and Possibly Controversial) Opinions:</p> <p>-Fly Fishing Only on the Ohau: I believe the Ohau should be designated for fly fishing only. With nearly 60 km of canals in the area predominantly fished by spinning methods, fly anglers have limited access to the renowned Mackenzie-sized fish. This short season on a limited section of the Ohau river provides a very tiny window of opportunity for fly anglers to access fish of this calibre. Allowing spinning not just increases pressure on these fish, but increases pressure on the ballot system, which further restricts opportunities for fly anglers in the Mackenzie region. While some may dismiss this perspective as elitist, it highlights the imbalance favouring spinning in the region, which marginalizes fly anglers to having next to no opportunity to engage in the sport in the canal waterway complex.</p> <p>-Enforcement of Code of Conduct: During our ballot period, I observed many anglers mishandling fish via social media, often bringing them up on land for photos, despite requests on the ballot to avoid this. Given the significant size of these fish, improper handling can lead to serious internal injuries. Enforcing a code of conduct, possibly with consequences such as ineligibility for future ballots, could improve handling practices.</p> <p>-Managing Angling Pressure: The fish have been particularly 'fussy' during our ballot period, likely due to angling pressure. Limiting the number of fishing days could distribute opportunities among different angling parties. Implementing a system where each party has a single day of fishing followed by a two-day closure would allow the fish to rest, hopefully improving their catchability throughout the ballot period. Personally, I found that one day of angling was sufficient, and I chose not to fish the second day to give the fish (and my casting arm!) a break. Reducing angling days may decrease the numbers of fish an individual catches but could enhance success for future parties, although it might lead to dissatisfaction among traveling anglers or those affected by adverse weather.</p> <p>-Restricting Catches: Reducing the number of fishing days, alongside other measures, should ideally decrease overall catches. I believe this fishery is unique, and the goal should be to land a fish over twenty pounds in a riverine environment. There seems to be a sub-culture on social media that prioritizes quantity over quality. Introducing restrictions in the code of conduct, such as a limit of two fish landed over 10 kg per angler, could help distribute catches more evenly.</p>
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		<p>-Prohibiting Drones: Drones are increasingly used to spot fish in the river, which diminishes the challenge for anglers and can lead to more efficient catches. Since larger fish are often difficult to spot from the shore, this technology reduces the chance of anglers bypassing or unintentionally catching fish while blind casting. Removing drones could help balance catch rates among anglers.</p> <p>-Reevaluating the Ballot System: A tiered ballot system could be beneficial. For example, unsuccessful parties from the previous year could receive three entries, new parties two, and successful parties one. This system could be adjusted for parties entering at different times in the ballot period. However, this approach may complicate the process and require considerable administrative effort.</p> <p>-Regraveling Spawning Areas: There is a noticeable lack of suitable spawning gravels available to the fish. By adding gravels to certain accessible points, we could enhance their habitat. However, this might concentrate fish in those areas, creating 'shooting galleries' for anglers and increasing pressure.</p> <p>-Periodic Flushing During High Flows: The river suffers from thick layers of Didymo and dense beds of silt and organic matter, detracting from its beauty and posing risks. I'm unsure of the logistics regarding the Ohau weir, but could the lake be temporarily held back to allow for an artificial flush? This might effectively clean the river before spawning runs.</p> <p>-Aside from these points, I'm extremely impressed by CSI's commitment to managing this fishery. The effort put in by staff, particularly Rhys, is greatly appreciated by the angling community. I recognise that managing this resource is neither straightforward nor easy, and the work does not go unnoticed.</p>
<p><b>Allocation 5 -</b> Weekend - Saturday 21 &amp; Sunday 22 September</p>	<p>Satisfied</p>	<p>Great to see the fishery is in great shape. The numbers of fish spotted in pools was great to see. Balloting on the river seems to be working well. Seen a ranger on Saturday on the river on the other side from where we were. But we weren't checked our selves. Great over trip in with approx. 25 fish landed between the 3 of us in the party. Look forward to applying for the ballot again.</p>
<p><b>Allocation 5 -</b> Weekend - Saturday 21 &amp; Sunday 22 September</p>	<p>Satisfied</p>	<p>a bit to much rubbish lying around</p>

<b>Allocation 5</b> - Weekend - Saturday 21 & Sunday 22 September	Satisfied	No one checked our license and fished 12 hours each day we were there
<b>Allocation 5</b> - Weekend - Saturday 21 & Sunday 22 September	Satisfied	The fishing was really hard and we didn't spot large numbers of fish but other people in my party still caught fish and it was a great day. Also like knowing there aren't a lot of other anglers on the river makes it more relaxing and enjoyable.
<b>Allocation 6</b> - Wednesday 25 & Thursday 26 September	Satisfied	Beautiful River, Beautiful fish
<b>Allocation 6</b> - Wednesday 25 & Thursday 26 September	Satisfied	Had one and half days fishing due to weather but was enjoyable fishing was hard but one of our group hooked into three lovely fish between 8 and 15lb all landed safely and returned to fight another day I was lucky to catch a small rainbow on final morning Fish were in fewer pools this year and a bit spooky I expect due to fishing pressure Over all an enjoyable experience and thank you Rhys for all the effort you must put in organising this event so well done and Thankyou .I think the number of fisher persons is about right the only gripe I would have is people hogging the pools as the fish seem to congregate in a few pools
<b>Allocation 6</b> - Wednesday 25 & Thursday 26 September	Satisfied	While it is interesting, wonder if spawning fish should be left to get on with it..i.e.. spawning
<b>Allocation 6</b> - Wednesday 25 & Thursday 26 September	Satisfied	it's amazing
<b>Allocation 7</b> - Saturday 28 & Sunday 29 September	Unsatisfied	very slippery with the silt and didymo. not a pristine river bed, infact its more of a health hazard. maybe that's why we could not share the river with other anglers.
<b>Allocation 7</b> - Saturday 28 & Sunday 29 September	Satisfied	Thank you for organising the ballot. It was an amazing experience. It's a wonderful environment to be fishing in. The very large trout are something special and I'm grateful to have the opportunity to fish for these. We covered a lot of the river, many of the larger trout appeared to be in spawning mode. Didn't meet other anglers in pools which was good and probably because of the well managed ballot system.. Thank you.

<b>Allocation 7</b> - Saturday 28 & Sunday 29 September	Satisfied	<p>a) It's a shame that a 4WD Hilux or similar is needed to access the true-right bank of the river. It's not a cheap option when renting a vehicle, and strictly speaking rental is not allowed off-road there anyway.</p> <p>b) I expected to see more fish given the previous survey records. Most of the fish we spotted (in two pools only) were in spawning mode &amp; not interested in flies.</p> <p>c) We also expected to be more successful with the smaller resident fish. There are excellent runs that just didn't seem to be holding fish.</p> <p>d) We didn't directly encounter any other anglers, which was pleasing.</p>
<b>Allocation 8</b> - Wednesday 02 & Thursday 03 October	Satisfied	I would like to see Soft baits allowed as a method as it would be the most popular fishing method used today, throughout the region as well.it's all about getting more people out there doing these things and limiting people by fly or lure it isn't encouraging anyone. Bigger fish seemed to be in the river this year but less numbers. Cheers
<b>Allocation 8</b> - Wednesday 02 & Thursday 03 October	Satisfied	Trout weren't feeding when we were there. Very hard to catch
<b>Allocation 8</b> - Wednesday 02 & Thursday 03 October	Satisfied	<p>I caught my first brown trout ever!!</p> <p>Didymo made it difficult. Getting the weight right was key to avoid the weed catching on your flies. Was very technical fishing.</p> <p>It was an amazing experience and such a picture perfect place to fish. Thanks for the opportunity.</p>
<b>Allocation 9</b> - Saturday 05 & 06 October	Satisfied	In general a good experience as weather was a cracker, river access good but not many trout about as compared to what we have heard from folks from last year. We bumped into my mate Tony's builder at our campground & he described a completely different set of circumstances where they were fishing to schools of trout last year. May be just a different cycle. We saw tops about half a dozen or so fish and conditions for spotting were excellent with sun, no wind and crystal clear water. Came across 2 dead fish, one had to be 20+ pounds and the other not far behind.
<b>Allocation 9</b> - Saturday 05 & 06 October	Satisfied	The overall experience was excellent despite what we saw as a small number of fish from what we were told could be there based on previous years. Spotting conditions were excellent on the Sunday and we looked in most pools spotting about half a dozen large fish we estimated to be in excess of 10 pounds. We had no issues with other groups fishing and didn't cross paths with any of them over the course of the weekend.
<b>Allocation 9</b> - Saturday 05 & 06 October	Satisfied	<p>Got my first big trout in my life. It was really good to fish in October. Please keep this opportunity open.</p> <p>We spent \$500 in local Twizel over this weekend. Thanks.</p>

<b>Allocation 9</b> - Saturday 05 & 06 October	Satisfied	Brilliant experience, can't wait to go back. We spent over \$500 locally in the two days. Lots of fish seen, it appears a very sustainable option. Can I suggest fishing be allowed 6 days a week not just 4 to enable more anglers and the local economy to benefit.
<b>Allocation 9</b> - Saturday 05 & 06 October	Satisfied	I had an incredible experience in a beautiful fishery and environment. I feel very grateful and privileged to have fished it. The other party we met that we were sharing the pools and fishing with were very nice and we all had a great time. Thank you to Rhys and fish and game for their advice and allowing my son and I this privilege. Kind Regards.
<b>Allocation 10</b> - Wednesday 09 & Thursday 10 October	Unsatisfied	The ballot is a great idea. But I question whether fisherman in the latter ballot periods (in October) will experience good fishing. Seems like, October is so late in the Rainbow Trout spawning run that most fish would have returned to the lake.
<b>Allocation 10</b> - Wednesday 09 & Thursday 10 October	Unsatisfied	Unfortunately it's had a hammering already and it must be hard on the fisheries so I take my hat off to all of you doing your best to keep up the fight for our fish and river well done team
<b>Allocation 11</b> - Saturday 12 & Sunday 13 October	Satisfied	Very few fish in the river this late, only saw 3 fish, 2 broaching and one on a redd. Still a great experience and a beautiful place to spend a day
<b>Allocation 11</b> - Saturday 12 & Sunday 13 October	Satisfied	Really appreciated the opportunity to fish the river and explore some of the holding water. We only saw a couple of large fish. Didn't fish the second day because we felt we were too late and the bigger fish had left and it appeared that the flow of the river was somewhat reduced. We will plan on applying for the ballot again next year. I will be interested in seeing the summary report if one is published. Many thanks.
<b>Allocation 11</b> - Saturday 12 & Sunday 13 October	Satisfied	Thank you for the experience. I caught my PB this weekend and so did my friend on the ballot with me. I would love to try my luck again one day when I have more experience as I haven't been fishing for even a year yet.