

FAQ on MSC's Certification of the Fraser

Who is the proponent?

The proponent (otherwise described as the "Client" by MSC) has been the BC fishing industry. The processing sector has recently taken over as the proponent and is funding the Certification

Who certifies the fishery that a fishery meets MSC's Principles and Criteria for Sustainable Fishing?

Independent third party for-profit companies

Who chooses, hires and pays the "Independent" Certifier?

The Client.

Who does the Certifier report to?

The Client.

What is the Certifier's job? What does it get paid for?

The Certifier's responsibility is to achieve MSC Certification for the Client. It compiles information and data supplied by the Client (most of which is provided by the management agency) and hires and supervises an "Assessment Team" to write a detailed report that scores the information received against MSC's Principles and Criteria for Sustainable Fishing. The job of the Certifier is to ensure the scoring of the fishery (which is largely subjective) exceeds MSC's minimum thresholds. The Certifier's job is not to promote, develop, or otherwise be involved in building a sustainable fishery.

Have British Columbia's NGO's concerns been listened to?

We have had an opportunity to provide written input during two separate 30 day periods. Stakeholder input must address the Certifier's often subjective scores. The report contains the Certifier's reasoning but does not contain the background information upon which the Certifier based their conclusions. Thirty days is an unreasonably short timeframe in which to supply a detailed, technical response to a Report which would have taken the Certifier's Assessment team at least a year to produce.

There is little opportunity for ongoing feedback or dialogue to ensure stakeholder concerns are included in the final Report. Indeed, upon reading the final report it is clear that most of our concerns were not incorporated.

Is there a Peer Review process?

Yes, but the peer reviewers, who are hired by the Client, are only provided – and asked to report on - the submission prepared by the Certifier. They do not receive any of the concerns, reports or briefs submitted by stakeholders.

How does the Objection process work?

The objection process is a technical and procedural review to assess whether the Certifier complied with MSC's procedures. It is not an independent assessment of whether the certification will lead to a sustainable fishery. The Objection process is a quasi-judicial arbitration and decision making process that begins with stakeholders submitting a detailed and comprehensive Notice of Objection within fifteen working days of the release of the final report by the Certifier. This Notice of Objection must be based on the technical information and scoring contained in the hundreds of pages of detailed information contained in the final report. Anything left out of the Notice of Objection cannot be brought up later in the process. BC's NGO's (or anyone else attempting to object to an MSC fishery) must accomplish all this within 15 working days. The groups objecting are also responsible for paying costs up to \$25,000, not including any costs they may incur developing the Notice of Objection or appearing before the arbitrator.

Has a fishery ever been denied certification because of an objection?

No

Who performs and pays for the annual audits once the fishery is certified?

The Certifier, the same body that certified the fishery in the first place, performs the annual audits. The audits are paid for by the Client.

David Suzuki Foundation
Headwaters Initiative
Skeena Watershed Conservation Trust
Watershed Watch Salmon Society