

Tuesday, August 4, 2009

The Fraser River Panel met Tuesday, August 4 to receive an update on the migration of the Fraser River sockeye runs and review the status of migration conditions in the Fraser River watershed.

Test fishing catches of sockeye in the marine approach areas increased modestly over the weekend but abundances are still lower than expected during pre-season planning. The run size estimate of 150,000 Early Summer-run sockeye was unchanged at the meeting today. The abundance of Summer-run sockeye that have migrated through Johnstone Strait and Juan de Fuca Strait thus far is lower than was expected during pre-season planning. Additional assessment data will be collected on Summer-run sockeye and an in-season estimate of their abundance should be available later this week, unless their peak marine timing is substantially later than forecast. It is too early in the migration of most Late-run stocks to provide an update on their abundance. However, Harrison sockeye exhibit earlier marine timing than other Late-run stocks, and assessments indicate that they are considerably more abundant than their 50% probability level forecast of 69,000 fish.

Migration conditions for sockeye entering the Fraser River have been adverse over the past several days. On August 3 the Fraser River discharge at Hope was approximately 4,100 cms, which is slightly lower than normal, while the water temperature at Qualark Creek was 21.0 °C, which is 2.5 °C higher than average for this date. Water temperatures exceeding 20 °C may cause high pre-spawning mortality of Fraser River sockeye. As a result of cooler weather that is forecast in the Fraser River watershed, water temperatures are forecast to decrease to 18.6 °C by August 12.

Due to the low abundance of Fraser sockeye thus far this season, there have been no directed commercial fisheries for Fraser River sockeye. All commercial fisheries in Panel Area waters remain closed to fishing at the present time.

The next in-season meeting of the Panel is scheduled to occur on August 7, 2009.