



PACIFIC SALMON COMMISSION

ESTABLISHED BY TREATY BETWEEN CANADA
AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
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NEWS RELEASE

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The Fraser River Panel met today to receive assessments from the Pacific Salmon Commission staff on the status of the Fraser River sockeye and pink salmon runs as well as migration conditions for sockeye in the Fraser River. The migration of Fraser sockeye through the marine approach routes has continued at low abundance levels over the past week, while the marine migration of Fraser River pink salmon through the assessment areas has been increasing. The diversion rate of Fraser River sockeye through Johnstone Strait is currently estimated to be 41%, while for Fraser River pink salmon it is presently estimated to be 50%. The estimated total non-commercial catch of Fraser sockeye this season is 61,000 fish; harvested in test fisheries and First Nations FSC fisheries. The estimated total non commercial catch to-date of Fraser River pink salmon is approximately 8,000 fish.

At the meeting today the run size estimate of 175,000 Early Summer-run sockeye was unchanged. The estimated escapement of Early Summer-run sockeye past Mission through August 20 is approximately 144,000 fish.

At the meeting on August 18, the Panel adopted a run size estimate of 700,000 Summer-run sockeye; with 50% migration timing through Area 20 of August 6, which is one day later than expected. At the meeting today this run size estimate was unchanged. The estimated escapement of Summer-run sockeye past Mission through August 20 is approximately 481,000 fish.

At the August 18 meeting, the Panel adopted a run size estimate for the Birkenhead stock-group of 100,000 fish, with 50% migration timing through Area 20 of August 18, which is seven days later than expected. This run size estimate was unchanged at the meeting today. The estimated escapement of Birkenhead sockeye past Mission through August 20 is 30,000 fish.

At the meeting on August 18, the run size estimate for Harrison sockeye was increased from 150,000 fish to 200,000 fish, with 50% migration timing through Area 20 of August 8, which is five days later than expected. Also at the meeting on August 18, the Panel approved a run size estimate of 250,000 Weaver/Late Shuswap sockeye with 50% migration timing through Area 20 of August 19, which is seven days later than expected. These run size estimates were unchanged at the meeting today. The estimate of total True Late-run sockeye abundance is 450,000 fish (below their 50% probability level forecast of 573,000 fish), which is the sum of the estimates of Harrison and Weaver/Shuswap sockeye abundances. Current assessments suggest that a considerable proportion of Weaver/Shuswap sockeye may be delaying in marine areas prior to entering the Fraser River. The estimated escapement of True Late-run sockeye past Mission through August 20 is approximately 178,000 fish.

The estimated total Fraser sockeye return this season is currently 1,510,000 fish, which is less than half of the 90% probability level forecast of 3,556,000 fish. This total run size estimate is based on current estimates of: 85,000 Early Stuart; 175,000 Early Summer-run; 700,000 Summer-run; 100,000 Birkenhead; and 450,000 True Late-run sockeye.

DFO's forecast of the 50% migration timing of Fraser River pink salmon through Area 20 is August 31 and the forecast of their diversion rate through Johnstone Strait this season is 31%. Test fishing catches of pink salmon by purse seines in both marine approach areas have increased substantially over

the past week. Recent DNA analyses of pink salmon sampled from the Area 12 and 20 purse seine test fisheries indicate that Fraser River pink salmon contributions in these areas have increased to approximately 50%. It is too early to provide a run size estimate for Fraser River pink salmon since their forecast peak migration period through the marine assessment areas has not yet occurred. However, present assessments indicate that Fraser pinks are tracking abundance levels near or exceeding their 75% probability level forecast of 12,490,000 fish, depending on assumptions about their marine migration timing. Abundance levels in this range are sufficient to support commercial fisheries; subject to conservation concerns for Fraser River sockeye salmon that are still migrating through areas where fisheries may occur as well as other species of concern.

On August 20 the Fraser River discharge at Hope was approximately 2,500 cms, which is about 25% lower than normal, while the water temperature at Qualark Creek was 18.9 °C, which is 1.4 °C higher than average for this date. Water temperatures are forecast to increase to 19.4 °C by August 26 and then decline. Water temperatures exceeding 19 °C may cause stress to sockeye and slow their upstream migration. At the meeting today, after reviewing environmental and stock assessment information, the Panel approved a decrease in the management adjustment factor for Summer-run sockeye from 0.32 to 0.21. Management adjustments are employed to help achieve spawning escapement targets for Fraser River sockeye salmon.

The DFO spawning escapement update for Fraser sockeye on August 17 reported that through August 16, the enumeration fences on Forfar and Gluske Creeks counted 3,234 and 1,489 sockeye through them, respectively. The Dust Creek fence has passed 2,260 sockeye through August 13. Thirteen sockeye have passed through the enumeration fence on Scotch Creek through August 16. Chilko sockeye had not been observed at Henry's Bridge as of August 16. Four Cultus Lake sockeye have passed the Sweltzer Creek enumeration fence through August 16.

The Pacific Salmon Commission reports daily test fishing catches of sockeye salmon on its recorded message at (604) 666-8200 and on the internet at: http://www.psc.org/info_testfishing_collections_2009.htm In addition, Fraser River Panel news releases, fishery regulations, sockeye and pink salmon escapement data, and sockeye and pink salmon stock status reports will be available on this website.

United States fishing schedules during the season will be available for Treaty Indian fisheries through the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission at 1-800-562-6142. Non-Indian fishing schedules will be available through the National Marine Fisheries Service's Hotline in Seattle at 1-800-662-9825. Canadian commercial fishing regulations will be announced on the Fisheries and Oceans Canada recorded message at 604-666-2828 (from the lower B.C. mainland), and toll free from outside the lower B.C. mainland at 1-866-431-3474, and via fishery notices. Consult the appropriate regulatory agency regarding fisheries regulations pertaining to species other than sockeye and pink salmon in the Fraser River Panel Management Area.

All commercial fisheries in Panel Area waters remain closed to fishing.

The next in-season meeting of the Panel is scheduled to occur on August 25. News releases in this series will be provided by the Panel through the Commission to inform those interested in the progress of the Fraser River sockeye and pink salmon runs.