No. 7 **NEWS RELEASE** **August 16, 2002**

At a meeting of the Fraser River Panel on August 12, the following run size estimates were approved: 800,000 Early Summer-run sockeye; 7,000,000 Summer-run sockeye; and 4,000,000 Late-run sockeye. The current estimated catch of Fraser sockeye by United States fishers has reached 442,000 fish, and Canadian fishers have harvested an estimated 2,545,000 fish to date.

A large shift in the diversion rate of Fraser River sockeye through Johnstone Strait has been observed over the past several days. Recent analyses indicate that over the past week, the diversion rate has increased from about 15% to almost 80%. This shift in the diversion rate contributed to the relatively large catches of Fraser sockeye (380,000 fish) in the 6 hour purse seine fishery in Johnstone Strait on August 12. Large migrations of Fraser sockeye have also been estimated at the hydroacoustic site at Mission, with estimated escapements averaging almost 200,000 sockeye per day over the past two weeks. These large escapements have resulted in increased observations of sockeye passing Hells Gate.

At the meeting today, the Panel approved an increase in the run size of Early Summer-run sockeye to 850,000 fish, which is approximately 25% larger than the 50% probability level forecast of 678,000 fish. The current estimate of the 50% passage timing of these sockeye (all Early Summer-runs) through Juan de Fuca Strait is July 29 (approximately three days later than normal). The gross escapement of Early Summer-run sockeye into the Fraser River has reached 583,000 fish.

The Panel approved a reduction in the run size estimate for Summer-run sockeye today to 6,000,000 fish, which is less than 70% of the forecast abundance (9,006,000 fish at the 50% probability level). The present estimate of average timing for all Summer-run sockeye through Area 20 is August 8, which is approximately four days later than normal. Recent DNA analyses of stock composition indicate that Summer-run sockeye are currently comprising approximately 35% of the total Fraser sockeye run in the seaward, marine-assessment areas (Canadian Areas 12, 13, and 20), with Quesnel sockeye contributing most of the Summer-run production. The gross escapement of Summer-run sockeye into the Fraser River has reached 2,221,000 fish.

The early migration of Late-run sockeye through marine and river assessment sites continues to be of primary management concern to the Panel. DNA techniques estimate that on average, over 60% of sockeye currently passing through Juan de Fuca Strait and Johnstone Strait are Late-run sockeye. Recent DNA analyses of samples from the lower Fraser River suggest Late-run sockeye comprise an increasing proportion of fish entering the Fraser River. Prior to 1996, Late-run sockeye delayed in the Strait of Georgia for three to six weeks and did not usually enter the Fraser River until late September.

At the meeting today, the Panel approved an increase in the Late-run sockeye run size to 5,500,000 fish, which exceeds the 25% probability forecast level of abundance (5,134,000 fish). This increase in the run size of Late-run sockeye was based on the high proportion of Late-run sockeye estimated in marine areas and on the relatively high catches of these fish in commercial and test fisheries over recent days. The current estimate of the 50% arrival timing of Late-run sockeye through Area 20 is August 12, which is about eight days earlier than normal. The lateness in the timing of Summer-run sockeye in conjunction with the earliness in Late-run sockeye timing has resulted in only a small difference in timing between these runs (approximately four days) through Area 20. Historically, the normal difference in timing was approximately two weeks, enabling fisheries to be targeted on specific timing-groups. This large overlap in the timing of these two runs has made efforts to harvest Summer-run sockeye and minimize harvest of Late-run sockeye a difficult fisheries management problem for the Panel. The gross escapement of Late-run sockeye into the Fraser River has reached 558,000 fish.

The Late-run tagging program (www.psc.org/pubs/laterun/LaterunTagNotice2002.pdf) planned to radio-tag 260 sockeye in Canadian Areas 13 and 20 during the "peak" period of Late-run sockeye abundance in marine areas between August 13 to 15 (fishers are reminded to remove the radio tag and spaghetti tag from tagged fish upon their capture and contact appropriate personnel at the numbers noted in the website above). Several Fraser River sockeye that were radio-tagged during the "early" period of tagging (August 3 to 7) have been caught in recent Canadian and United States fisheries and others have been detected passing the receiver sites in the Fraser River at Barnston Island (approximately 42 km, or 25 miles upstream from the mouth) and Mission. In addition to the marine radio-tagging program, a disk-tagging program commenced this week in the Thompson River to measure the survival rate to spawning of Adams and Lower Shuswap sockeye migrating in the early, peak, and late-timed segments of the migration.

Environmental conditions in the Fraser River for the migration of sockeye remained favorable over the past week. The discharge level measured at Hope is presently 3000 cms, which is approximately 600 cms below normal. River temperatures throughout the watershed have also generally remained moderate and the current temperature in the Fraser River at Qualark Creek is 17.2 ^{o}C.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) have conducted escapement enumeration of several Early Stuart sockeye stocks for the past several weeks. DFO has reported that Early Stuart sockeye appear to be in good physical condition and that peak spawning is occurring in several populations. In the lower Fraser River watershed, the enumeration of the abnormally early, Cultus Lake sockeye at the Sweltzer Creek counting fence to August 15 had reached 311 fish. A boat survey on August 9 observed approximately 300 sockeye holding near the confluence of the Harrison River and Weaver Creek.

The Pacific Salmon Commission provides daily test fishing catches of sockeye salmon and fishery regulations on its recorded message at (604) 666-8200. These and other data are available on the Internet at: http://www.psc.org/testfish/. United States fishing schedules during the season are available for Treaty Indian fisheries through the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission at 1-800-562-6142. Non-Indian fishing schedules are available through the National Marine Fisheries Service's Hotline in Seattle at 1-888-858-9319. Canadian fishing regulations will be announced on the Fisheries and Oceans Canada recorded message at (604) 666-2828.

All Panel regulated commercial fisheries remain closed. The next scheduled meeting of the Panel is Monday, August 19.

2002 Fraser River Panel Sockeye Review

Week of: Aug. 11 - Aug. 17, 2002 Date: August 16, 2002

	Area	Gear	Weekly Catch	%Fraser	Fraser Sockeye Weekly	Fraser Sockeye Cumul.
			Commercial Catch			
Canada						
A & C	Areas 1-10	Net				0
F	Areas 1-10	Troll				0
G	Areas 123-127,11-12	Troll				113,800
B	Areas 11-16	PS				402,400
D	Areas 11-16	GN				166,000
H	Areas 12-16	Troll				50,000
H	Areas 18-29	Troll				15,500
B	Area 20	PS				228,500
E	Area 29	GN				930,800
Canadian Selective						71,500
	Canadian Total					1,978,500
United States						
Alaska		Net&Troll				0
Washington						
	T.I. Areas 4B/5/6C	Net				43,600
	T.I. Areas 6/7/7A	Net				254,600
	N.I. Areas 7/7A	Net				127,900
	Washington Total					426,100
	U.S. Total					426,100
			Non-commercial Catch			
PSC Test						115,100
Other Test						10,000
Fraser River Aboriginal						353,600
Areas 12-124 Aboriginal						166,800
Recreational						45,000
Charter						1,600
U.S. TI Ceremonial						15,400
	Non-comm. Total					707,500
			Catch and Escapement			
Catch Accounted-to-date						3,112,100
Potential Net Escapement (Mission esc. less Aboriginal & sport catch above Mission)						3,024,500
	Total Accounted-to-date					6,136,600

Gross Escapement (includes Pitt R. sockeye)

Run	Stock/Group	Adjusted Target	Mission Esc.	FN Below Mission	Total Esc.	% Complete
EStu	Early Stuart	62,000	60,900	0	60,900	98%
ESum	Early Summer	380,300	557,500	25,200	582,700	153%
Summ	Quesnel/Chilko	2,713,000	1,676,400	92,300	2,221,200	82%
	L.Stu./Stel.		433,600	18,900		
Late	Birkenhead	4,986,800	15,200	400	558,300	11%
	Adams/L.Shuswap		439,800	16,700		
	Weav/L.Misc.		84,100	2,100		