

The Fraser River Panel met today to focus on the status of the migration of Late-run sockeye. The Summer-run migration is nearing completion and virtually all sockeye now migrating into the Fraser River are from the Late-run timing group. Over the past four days, very large escapements have been estimated at the Mission hydroacoustic site, averaging almost 600,000 sockeye per day. The catch of Fraser River sockeye to date now totals 4,037,000 fish, with United States and Canadian fishers harvesting 450,000 fish, and 3,432,000 fish, respectively.

The current run size estimate for Summer-run sockeye was increased slightly today to 6,800,000 fish. The gross escapement of Summer-run sockeye into the Fraser River now totals 5,047,000 fish.

As a result of the very high escapement of sockeye over the past four days, the Panel approved an increase in the run-size to 7,500,000 Late-run sockeye (excluding Birkenhead), which is almost two and a half times the forecast abundance (at the 50% probability level). An estimate of 300,000 Birkenhead sockeye (which is approximately midway between the 50% and 75% probability forecast levels of abundance) was also approved by the Panel. Although slightly over 6,000,000 Late-run sockeye (excluding Birkenhead) have escaped into the Fraser River, if the en route and pre-spawning mortality rates of these fish follow the pattern observed in recent years, the probable number of successful spawners may be within the range of 2,500,000 fish. An escapement of this magnitude would be similar to the most recent four year cycle-average.

The estimated run size of Fraser River sockeye now totals 15,561,000 fish (62,000 Early Stuart fish; 899,000 Early Summer-run fish; 6,800,000 Summer-run fish; 300,000 Birkenhead sockeye; and 7,500,000 Late-run sockeye), which is approximately 16% higher than the pre-season forecast level of abundance (50% probability forecast level).

The tagging program on Late-run sockeye is ongoing and the results will be carefully reviewed by the Fraser River Panel during the post-season period to gain information on their abnormal migratory behavior and to assist in the development of future management strategies.

Migration conditions for sockeye in the Fraser River in terms of discharge levels and temperatures remain favorable. The current discharge level measured at Hope is 1,900 cms, which is slightly lower than average at this time (2,300 cms). DFO is continuing spawning ground enumerations of several Early Summer-run, Summer-run and Late-run stocks. In the lower Fraser River watershed, over 1,200 Cultus Lake sockeye had now been enumerated at the Sweltzer Creek counting fence.

All Panel regulated commercial fisheries remain closed. The next scheduled meeting of the Panel is Wednesday, September 25.