No. 2 **NEWS RELEASE** **July 12, 2002**

Data obtained through the PSC test fishing programs in the Fraser River and in Canadian Area 20 (Juan de Fuca Strait), provided the Fraser River Panel with sufficient information on July 12th to establish an in-season run-size estimate for Early Stuart sockeye at 60,000 fish. This number is similar to the 75% probability forecast of 59,000 fish but is less than the 50% probability level forecast of 105,000 fish. At this level (60,000), the 2002 Early Stuart run would be about half the average return on this cycle. The low return is not totally unexpected, as the parent fish encountered high water temperatures along their migration path through the Fraser watershed in 1998 that resulted in large en route mortality and severe stress on the fish that eventually spawned.

PSC staff now project that Early Stuart sockeye will have a 50% migration date in Area 20 on July 4th, 4 days later than forecast prior to the season by Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and 1 day later than the long term average timing for this stock. The estimated escapement of Early Stuart sockeye past Mission based on test fishery catch per unit effort now totals 33,000 fish. The Mission hydroacoustics program will begin operation over the weekend. The first half of the 2002 Early Stuart migration faced very high river discharge levels. Such levels have been associated with high enroute and prespawn mortality in the past. PSC staff predict that a significant amount of fish which pass Mission will not reach the spawning grounds under such conditions.

While Early Stuart sockeye still comprise the majority of the fish in Area 20 and in the Fraser River, Early Summer sockeye stocks (Nadina, Gates, Pitt, Fennell, Bowron, and several smaller stocks), have begun to appear as expected in both areas. The estimated escapement of Early Summer sockeye now totals 4,000 fish. However, there is insufficient in-season data at this time to provide information about timing and abundance of the Early Summer run.

Environmental conditions have improved for sockeye salmon migration in the Fraser River. The Fraser River discharge at Hope has dropped significantly over the last week (currently 6,450 cubic meters per second (cms)) but discharge levels remain above normal for this time of year. Projections call for decreasing river flows over the next few weeks. However, a significant rainfall event could cause discharge levels to rise. Fraser River water temperatures are favorable and within the preferred range for sockeye, however the temperature of the Nechako River (part of the Early Stuart sockeye salmon's migration route) is currently rising quickly. High Fraser River temperatures are not normally a concern during years of high river discharge, but the warmest water temperatures normally do not occur until late July and early August. Weekly updates on the environmental conditions will be provided in this news release series and are also available on Fisheries and Oceans Canada's Environmental Watch website at: http://www-sci.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fwh .

The Pacific Salmon Commission makes available daily test fishing catches of sockeye and pink salmon and fishery regulations on its recorded message at (604) 666-8200. These and other data are available on the Internet at: www.psc.org/TestFish/ 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 1-888-858-9319. Canadian fishing regulations will be announced on the Fisheries and Oceans Canada recorded message at (604) 666-2828.