

Limited commercial fishing in Fraser River Panel Area waters began this week with a Treaty Indian gillnet fishery in United States Areas 4B, 5, and 6C that commenced on July 21. In total, 36,000 Fraser River sockeye salmon have been caught in all areas, including 13,000 in United States waters, 12,000 fish in Panel authorized test fisheries, and 2,000 fish in Marine First Nations and 9,000 fish in Fraser River First Nations fisheries.

The escapement of Early Stuart sockeye past Mission has reached 61,000 fish. The migration of these fish in the Fraser River to the Stuart system is ongoing. The first observations of Early Stuart sockeye near Fort St. James, at the outlet of Stuart Lake should occur over the coming week. The migration of Early Stuart sockeye from Hells Gate to the outlet of Stuart Lake normally takes approximately 13 days, however their migration may take longer this year because of higher than average river discharge conditions.

Current projections indicate that the early-timed component of the Early Summer-runs (which is forecasted to comprise approximately 35% of the run) are approximately 2-5 days later than the average arrival timing in Area 20 (July 21). Depending upon the lateness of their migration timing, these fish are tracking between the 75% and 50% probability level forecasts (129,000 to 240,000 fish, respectively). An in-season estimate of their run size is expected next week. Sockeye have been reported in the Pitt River, which is not unusual for this time of year. The later-timed component of the Early Summer-runs (Scotch and Seymour) currently constitute approximately 20% of Fraser River sockeye in Area 20, however it is too early to provide a projection on its run size. The gross escapement of Early Summer-runs past Mission has reached 56,000 fish.

Summer-run sockeye (Quesnel, Chilko, Late Stuart, and Stellako) now comprise over 50% of the Fraser River sockeye run in marine migratory areas (Juan de Fuca Strait and Johnstone Strait). Test fishing catches in marine areas increased over the past week and the age composition of Fraser River sockeye in assessment areas is shifting strongly towards 4 year old fish, which is consistent with a building abundance of Summer-run fish. Assessments over the next few weeks will provide data for in-season estimates of Summer-run sockeye abundance and timing, which is forecasted to be about five days later than normal. Gross escapements of Summer-run sockeye past Mission thus far are estimated at 46,000 fish and the target gross escapement is 3,828,000 fish.

In addition to gillnet test fishing in the Fraser River at Whonnock and in Area 20 that have been conducted since June 24, the following Panel-approved test fisheries were initiated on the dates noted: Area 12 gillnet (July 10), Area 29B gillnet at Cottonwood (July 13), Areas 12 and 13 purse seine (July 21), United States Area 7 reef net (July 21), and Area 20 purse seine (July 22). An experimental test fishery in Area 20 by purse seiners will commence on July 29.

Fraser River discharge levels measured at Hope have declined to approximately 5,300 cms, which is conducive to successful sockeye migration. The rapid decline in river discharge has coincided with warm weather conditions and dissipation of the snow pack throughout the Fraser River watershed. While temperatures in the Fraser River (17.3 °C at Qualark Creek) remain acceptable, the mean water temperatures in the Nechako River have increased from 17.3 °C to 19.2 °C over the past week. At this

water temperature sockeye usually become physiologically stressed and their migration is likely to be slowed. Water temperatures in the Fraser River and the Nechako River will be of increasing concern over the coming week.

The Panel announced the following regulations for Panel Area waters:

United States Panel Area waters:

Treaty Indian Fishery:

Areas 4B, 5, and 6C:

Closes as announced previously at 12:00 p.m. (noon), Saturday, July 27.

All other Treaty Indian and non-Indian fisheries in United States Panel Area waters remain closed to fishing.

Canadian Panel Area waters:

Remains closed to fishing.

The Pacific Salmon Commission makes available daily test fishing catches of sockeye and pink salmon and Panel Area 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 regulations during the season will be available for Treaty Indian fisheries through the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission at 1-800-562-6142. Non-Indian fishing regulations 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.

The Panel will meet again July 29 to consider regulations for the remainder of the week.