

The Fraser River Panel met several times this week to review the status of the Fraser River sockeye runs and plan appropriate harvest management actions based on the early appearance of Late-run sockeye in marine approach areas. On July 29, the Panel accepted a provisional run-size estimate on the early-timed component of the Early Summer-run sockeye of 160,000 fish. In United States Panel waters Treaty Indian fisheries in Areas 4B, 5, and 6C have caught 25,000 sockeye to date, while Treaty Indian fishers in Areas 6, 7, and 7A harvested approximately 55,000 sockeye in a net fishery on July 31. In Canadian Panel waters, a commercial purse seine fishery in Area 20 harvested approximately 175,000 sockeye on August 1, and a gillnet fishery in Area 29 (also on August 1) harvested approximately 40,000 sockeye.

At the meeting today, the Panel accepted an in-season estimate of the aggregate run-size of Early Summer-run sockeye of 550,000 fish, with over 70% of the run being attributed to the later-timed component (Scotch and Seymour stocks). The total catch of Early Summer-run sockeye in all areas is 110,000 fish, while the gross escapement is 169,000 fish, which is 42% of the goal. The proportion of Fraser sockeye in Area 20 that are Early Summer-runs has averaged 20% over the past week. The presence of Early Summer-run sockeye in the marine approach areas (Johnstone Strait and Juan de Fuca Strait) is expected to decline quickly over the next several days. The current estimate of the 50% arrival timing of Early Summer-run sockeye through Area 20 is July 28, which is two days later than normal.

It is too early to provide an in-season update of the run-size of Summer-run sockeye. As noted in prior News Releases, Summer-run sockeye are forecasted to be five days later than normal in their migration timing. Preliminary assessments of the Summer-run migration suggest that it is currently tracking between the 50% to 75% probability forecast levels of abundance (9,006,000 to 5,204,000 fish). An updated assessment of their run-size will be available by late next week. The total catch to date of Summer-run sockeye in all areas is 360,000 fish. The escapement of Summer-run sockeye past Mission has reached 300,000 fish, which is approximately 8% of the goal.

The most serious management problem currently facing the Panel relates to the extremely early presence of significant numbers of Late-run sockeye in the marine approach areas. From July 22 to July 27, DNA analyses of sockeye samples collected in Area 20 purse seine test fishery catches increased steadily from 12% to 26%. Similarly, from July 21 to July 28 the proportion of Late-runs estimated in Johnstone Strait purse seine test fishery catches increased from 6% to 35%. These data suggest that Late-run sockeye are returning much earlier than normal. Recent DNA samples taken from the Whonnock test fishery in the Fraser River confirm that Late-run sockeye are migrating upstream earlier than normal, which follows the pattern observed in recent years that has been associated with high pre-spawning mortality (www.psc.org/pubs/LateRun/). The Panel has taken into account the presence of increasing proportions of Late-run sockeye in fishery planning and has notified researchers involved in a Late-run tagging study (see attached notice "Attention Fishers"; www.psc.org/pubs/laterun/LateRunTagNotice2002.pdf).

During pre-season planning, the Panel adopted a 15% exploitation rate ceiling on Late-run sockeye as a precautionary measure to conserve these valuable stocks. The maximum allowable catch for Late-run sockeye at the 50% probability level forecast of abundance is 474,000 fish. The current catch of Late-run sockeye (excluding Birkenhead sockeye) is approximately 100,000 fish. As a result of the exploitation rate ceiling on Late-runs, fisheries that were planned on Summer-run sockeye may have to be curtailed before fully harvesting Summer-run sockeye.

Catch and other assessment data indicates that the diversion rate of Fraser River sockeye through Johnstone Strait is currently about 10%. The pre-season forecast of the diversion rate of Fraser River sockeye (all stocks combined) was 27%.

Migration conditions for sockeye in the Fraser River have improved steadily over the past week. The present discharge level at Hope is 4,300 cms, which is approximately the average discharge for this date. Water temperatures throughout the watershed have also declined over recent days, and are now approximately 16.9 °C at Qualark Creek and 15.9 °C in the Nechako River. The forecast over the next week is that discharge levels will continue to decline but water temperatures in the Fraser River will increase by an amount that could adversely impact fish migration (over 19 °C).

Early Stuart sockeye were first observed in the Stuart River at Fort St. James on July 24, which was 15 days after the first substantial migration of sockeye was seen at Hells Gate (July 9). This transit period is slightly longer than the average for the migration between these two locations (13 days). However, this was expected as high water flows were observed in the Fraser River during their migration.

The Panel announced the following regulations for Panel Area waters:

United States Fraser River Panel Area Waters:

Treaty Indian Fisheries:

Areas 4B, 5, and 6C:

Open for drift gillnets from 4:00 p.m., Friday, August 2 to 12:00 p.m. (noon), Monday, August 5.

Areas 6, 7 and 7A:

Open for net fishing 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m., Saturday, August 3.

Non-Indian Fisheries:

Areas 7 and 7A:

Open for reef nets 5:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, August 3, 4, and 5.

Canadian Fraser River Panel Area Waters:

Area 29-7 and 9-17:

An Area E gillnet fishery is planned for Tuesday, August 6. This will be a short duration fishery using 100 fathom nets to target a limited harvest of fish. At this time the fishery is scheduled to start at 8:00 am. on Tuesday morning. The next Fraser River Panel meeting is scheduled for Monday, August 5. An update will be provided on Monday, August 5 specifying the complete details for this fishery.

Areas 18-1, 4 and 11:

Open for gear license Area H troll 00:01 a.m. Saturday, August 3 to 11:59 p.m. Monday, August 5, with a review on Monday, August 5.

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.

The Panel will meet again Monday, August 5 to consider regulations for the remainder of the week.

2002 Fraser River Panel Sockeye Review

Week of: Jul. 28 - Aug. 3, 2002

Date: August 2, 2002

Area	Gear	Weekly Catch	%Fraser	Fraser Sockeye	
				Weekly	Cumul.
Commercial Catch					
Canada					
A & C Areas 1-10	Net				0
F Areas 1-10	Troll				0
G Areas 123-127,11-12	Troll				75,000
B Areas 11-16	PS				17,000
D Areas 11-16	GN				60,000
H Areas 12-16	Troll				2,000
H Areas 18-29	Troll				0
B Area 20	PS				175,000
E Area 29	GN				40,000
Canadian Selective					20,800
Canadian Total					389,800
United States					
Alaska	Net&Troll				0
Washington					
T.I. Areas 4B/5/6C	Net				25,000
T.I. Areas 6/7/7A	Net				58,400
N.I. Areas 7/7A	Net				0
Washington Total					83,400
U.S. Total					83,400
Non-commercial Catch					
PSC Test					72,500
Other Test					6,300
Fraser River Aboriginal					44,800
Areas 12-124 Aboriginal					10,600
Recreational					0
Charter					400
U.S. TI Ceremonial					400
Non-comm. Total					135,000
Catch and Escapement					
Catch Accounted-to-date					608,200
Potential Net Escapement (Mission esc. less Aboriginal & sport catch above Mission)					547,500
Total Accounted-to-date					1,155,700

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	399,000	165,100	4,400	169,500	42%
Summ	Quesnel/Chilko	3,828,000	177,100	3,200	305,800	8%
	L.Stu./Stel.		122,600	2,900		
Late	Birkenhead	2,942,000	1,400	0	56,200	2%
	Adams/L.Shuswap		19,700	400		
	Weav/L.Misc.		33,900	800		