

The Fraser River Panel met Wednesday, August 8, to review the Summer-run sockeye run size. The Panel adopted a provisional total return estimate of 4,000,000 fish and announced that commercial fishing for Fraser River sockeye in Panel Area waters will be closed until further notice pending reassessment of the run size. At the meeting today, the Panel confirmed its intent to maintain the Summer-run estimate at this level until, and if, test fishing and Mission hydroacoustic estimates of escapement indicate otherwise.

Much lower than expected numbers of Summer-run sockeye have returned to inshore areas to date this year. Historically, Summer-run Fraser River sockeye have produced the great majority of fish on the 2001 cycle. In 2001, the pre-season forecast was given at both the 50% probability level (11,715,000 fish) and the 75% probability level (6,159,000). Early indications of return strength were encouraging; however, there was a very high proportion of age 5 fish in the early segment of the run (over 50%). While age 5 fish from the 1996 brood year are adding to the numbers returning in 2001, historical proportions of age 4 and age 5 fish of a brood indicate that the age 5 return in 2001 will not exceed approximately 750,000 fish. Age 5 fish constitute 28% of the Summer-run sockeye escapement to date. Although PSC staff expect that this will drop to approximately 20% overall, these data point to a very low return of age 4 Summer-run sockeye. As well, recent commercial and test fishing catches indicate lower numbers of Summer-run stocks have arrived at the time that the peak of the run should have been present. The current estimate of Summer-run sockeye gross escapement is 1,495,000 fish. The gross escapement target for Summer-run sockeye is over 3,000,000 fish.

The 1997 brood year spawning escapement of Summer-run sockeye was 3,807,000 fish. This was the second largest escapement for the cycle on record (1993 had 5,071,000 spawners). Juvenile production from the Quesnel and Chilko sockeye stocks were near average levels for the cycle. Thus, the question remains: what has been the cause of the low return of age 4 Summer-run sockeye? While the answer is not known, data on earlier timed stocks provide some insight. Low numbers of age 4 fish were noted for the Early Stuart and Early Summer stock groups. While mitigating circumstances (high discharge during the upstream migration) may have explained, in part, the low returns of early stocks, river discharge was at normal levels during the upstream migration of Summer-run sockeye in 1997. During the summer of 1997, a strong El Nino occurred which led to unusually late arrival timing for some Summer-run sockeye. Egg viability studies suggested that the Horsefly River sockeye had experienced stress that led to lower-than-normal egg fertilization rates. Juvenile numbers appeared normal, however, so this does not seem to explain the low return.

Assessment of incoming sockeye numbers will continue in Areas 20 and 12 and in the Fraser River. The Panel will provide periodic updates on the Summer- and Late-run sockeye run-timing groups until their abundance declines. If later assessments point to larger numbers, the Panel will attempt to provide further fishing opportunities if the run size permits. However, conservation requirements for Late-run sockeye will become an important part of any decision regarding further harvest of Summer-run sockeye.

For more information, please contact: Canada – Mr. Wayne Saito, Chair, Fraser River Panel, at (604) 666-3271. United States – Mr. David Cantillon, Vice-Chair, Fraser River Panel, at (206) 526-4140.

All Panel Area commercial fisheries remain closed. The Panel will meet again Monday, August 13, to review the status of the runs.

## 2001 Fraser River Panel Sockeye Review

Week of: [Aug. 5 - Aug. 11, 2001](#)

Date: August 10, 2001

		<b>Fraser Sockeye</b>
Area	Gear	Cumul.
<b>Commercial Catch</b>		
<b><u>Canada</u></b>		
A & C Areas 1-10	Net	0
F Areas 1-10	Troll	0
G Areas 123-127,11-12	Troll	17,100
B Areas 11-16	PS	29,200
D Areas 11-16	GN	93,900
H Areas 12-16	Troll	35,500
H Areas 18-29	Troll	24,900
B Area 20	PS	45,900
E Area 29	GN	0
Canadian Total		246,500
<b><u>United States</u></b>		
<u>Alaska</u>	Net	0
<u>Washington</u>		
T.I. Areas 4B/5/6C	Net	34,800
T.I. Areas 6/7/7A	Net	124,700
N.I. Areas 7/7A	Net	74,800
Washington Total		234,300
U.S. Total		234,300
<b>Non-commercial Catch</b>		
PSC Test		48,800
Other Test		1,900
Canadian Selective		31,300
Fraser River Aboriginal		283,000
Areas 12-124 Aboriginal		60,000
Recreational		0
Charter		2,800
U.S. TI Ceremonial		2,500
Non-comm. Total		430,300
<b>Catch and Escapement</b>		
Catch Accounted-to-date		911,100
Potential Net Escapement (Mission esc. less Aboriginal & sport catch above Mission)		1,754,500
Total Accounted-to-date		2,665,600

### Gross Escapement (includes Pitt R. sockeye)

Run	Stock/Group	Adjusted Target	Mission Esc.	FN Below Mission	Total Esc.	% Complete
EStu	Early Stuart	222,000	219,200	2,000	221,200	100%
ESum	Early Summer	204,000	284,600	11,900	296,500	145%
Summ	Chilko/Quesnel	-	915,200	80,000	1,495,500	-
	L.Stu./Stel.		464,700	35,600		
Late	Birk./Adams/Cult.	-	23,800	600	24,400	-
	Weav/L.Misc.		0	0		