

NO. 2 NEWS RELEASE June 30, 2000

The Fraser River Panel today released information on the progress of the Early Stuart sockeye run. Pacific Salmon Commission sockeye salmon monitoring programs have been initiated in the past ten days. Test fishing in Canadian Area 20 (Juan de Fuca Strait) and at Whonnock (Fraser River) commenced June 20 and June 23, respectively. The Commission's Mission echo sounding program also began operating on June 23. Test catches in Area 20 have been good for the date, compared to past cycle years. However, approximately 50% of the sockeye caught to date have been from the Lake Washington run near Seattle. Whonnock area test fishing catches also have been good for the date, reaching 165 fish on June 28. Daily Mission hydroacoustic estimates of Early Stuart gross escapement now total 98,000 Early Stuart sockeye.

Current analyses based on the above information suggest (1) that the Early Stuart run is arriving earlier than the normal timing of July 3, and (2) that the pre-season forecast of 291,000 sockeye (50% probability point) will be reached or exceeded. In addition, test fishing catches show that fish size is larger than average. Early Stuart sockeye in Whonnock test fishery catches have averaged 6.1 lb (2.75 kg), about 0.4 lb heavier than the long-term average weight. Large age 5 sockeye (12%) are partly responsible for the large average weight although the more abundant age 4 fish appear to be larger than the long-term average for this age group.

Further data collection and analysis over the coming weekend should provide adequate information for the Panel to make an in-season update of the run size. Until that update occurs, no Panel Area commercial fisheries for Early Stuart sockeye are planned.

Commission staff also reported that some other sockeye stocks in Washington, British Columbia and Alaska appear to be returning at earlier than average dates. The early time of arrival of Early Stuart sockeye salmon does not guarantee that other Fraser sockeye stocks will be early, but does not preclude this possibility. Additional indications of run timing will be obtained when Early Summer sockeye begin arriving in the next week or two. Anticipated fishing times may be advanced if the stocks arrive earlier than normal in coastal fishing areas.

Fraser River discharge and temperature conditions are near average values for the date. While the water level is approximately 6,700 m³/sec, Early Stuart sockeye should not experience migrational difficulties unless conditions degrade substantially in the next few weeks.

Daily test fishing results and news releases are available on the Commission's web site at: www.psc.org. The first in-person meeting of the Panel is now planned for 10:00 a.m., Friday, July 14 at the Richmond Inn, Richmond, B.C. The next meeting of the Panel will be by telephone conference at 11:00 a.m., Monday, July 3. Any announcements following that meeting will be available on the Commission's recorded message at (604) 666-8200 after approximately 1:00 p.m.