

NO. 2 NEWS RELEASE July 9, 1999

The Fraser River Panel met today to review information available on the status of the Early Stuart sockeye run. Increased daily escapements at Mission July 7-8 gave encouragement to the Panel that the provisional run-size estimate of 150,000 fish, set July 6, would be reached. There was no decision to change this estimate today but, rather, the escapement over the July 9-12 period will be reviewed on Tuesday, July 13, to decide if the estimate is to be revised.

Environmental conditions in the Fraser River have deteriorated this week as water levels rose in response to warmer temperatures and heavy rains in the interior of British Columbia. Sunny, warm weather in the latter part of the current week and the forecast for these conditions to continue into next week are expected to increase the melt of the high elevation snow pack. River levels are forecast to rise over the next several days. The discharge at Hope, B.C. today reached 9,500 cubic meters per second. This is slightly higher than the level that created a blockage to migration in the Fraser Canyon in 1997 and led to a severe en route mortality of Early Stuart sockeye. Compared to conditions in 1997, the size of fish in 1999 is larger, water temperatures are cooler and the run size is lower, all of which may increase survival during passage.

Commission test fishing in Canadian Area 20 and the Fraser River and escapement monitoring at Mission via echo sounding provide the basic data for assessment of Early Stuart sockeye salmon. River levels have adversely affected the operations in the Fraser. Therefore, the Panel must depend largely on Area 20 gillnet test fishing to provide the index of daily abundance and racial identification samples needed to estimate the numbers of fish in each sockeye stock management group returning to the Fraser River. Samples of coho taken in test fishing operations will be provided to Fisheries and Oceans Canada for racial identification. Purse seine test fishing will commence in Area 20 approximately July 20.

The Pacific Salmon Commission makes available news releases and test fishing information on the Internet at: www.psc.org/testfish. In addition, daily test fishing catches of sockeye and pink salmon are provided on its recorded message at (604) 666-8200. 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 1-800-562-6513. Canadian fishing regulations will be announced on the Fisheries and Oceans Canada recorded message at (604) 666-2828.