

NO. 5 NEWS RELEASE July 23, 1999

Early Stuart and the early segment of the Early Summer sockeye salmon stocks had been blocked in the Fraser Canyon for up to three weeks due to the extremely high river discharge. The discharge dropped from 9,100 cubic meters per second (cms) on Monday, July 19, to 7,700 cms today. Sockeye salmon began migrating past Hells Gate on Tuesday and since that time the daily counts have risen sharply as the accumulation of fish between Yale and Sawmill Creek appears to have been able to resume their upstream migration. While many of the delayed Early Stuart sockeye will likely pass Hells Gate, a low proportion are expected to successfully arrive at the spawning grounds over 900 km upstream. Early Summer sockeye may also suffer en route losses due to the high discharge and consequent delay in their migration.

The cumulative escapement of Early Summer sockeye has increased to 64,000 fish. Increased daily abundance of this stock management group has been observed in the Juan de Fuca Strait (Area 20) gillnet test fishery in the past four days. Most of these fish will enter the Fraser River as part of the gross escapement requirement. Given the current status of the run, the escapement is expected to reach required levels.

Summer-run sockeye (Chilko, Quesnel, Stellako and Late Stuart) now predominate in Area 20 catches. These stocks are expected to provide the bulk of the catch of Fraser River sockeye in 1999. While it is too early to project the actual arrival timing of these stocks, their appearance at this date is consistent with the forecast peak arrival timing in early August.

Ocean temperatures are below normal and, as a consequence, the migration of Fraser River sockeye salmon via Johnstone Strait remains low. Test fishing in Areas 12 and 13 has yielded very low catches of sockeye. While the Johnstone Strait diversion rate will likely increase over time, current in-season information is consistent with the DFO pre-season forecast of 16.4%.

Based on the appearance of Summer-run sockeye salmon, the Panel approved the following regulations for Fraser River Panel Area waters for the week commencing July 25.

UNITED STATES FRASER RIVER PANEL AREA FISHERIES:

TREATY INDIAN FISHERIES:

Area 4B, 5 and 6C: Open to drift gillnets 12:00 p.m. (noon) Sunday, July 25, to 12:00 p.m. (noon) Wednesday, July 28.

The Panel will meet on Monday, July 26, to review the progress of escapement into the Fraser River and the arrival of sockeye in approach areas, and to consider further fisheries in Panel Areas.