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On July 2, 1998, Canada and the United States concluded a one-year agreement on the international sharing and management of 1998 Fraser River sockeye salmon. The Pacific Salmon Commission's Fraser River Panel will manage the stocks in 1998 to achieve Canada's gross escapement goals by stock group, the international sharing of the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) and the domestic allocation goals identified by each Party. In conducting fisheries in Panel Area Waters, the Panel will take into account the conservation of other species and stocks. During the management season, which runs through early September, the Panel plans to meet in-person each Friday at the Richmond Inn, Richmond, B.C., beginning July 24.

Canada Department of Fisheries and Oceans has provided forecasts of return abundance by stock management group, Johnstone Strait diversion rate and arrival timing. DFO has also provided spawning escapement targets by stock group. The forecast return of Fraser River sockeye for 1998 totals 11,200,000 fish. Run strength and spawning escapement targets by management group at the respective return levels are as follows:

Stock Group Forecast Return Escapement Target

Early Stuart 175,000 97,000

Early Summer 642,000 400,000

Summer 6,647,000 2,326,000

Late 3,754,000 2,947,000

The majority of the 1998 return is expected to occur from Summer-run stocks dominated by the Quesnel (Horsefly) stocks but with significant contribution from the Chilko stocks, and with smaller returns to the Stellako and Late Stuart stock groups. The Late Run is expected to be dominated by the Adams River and Lower Shuswap River stocks, with significant returns also expected to the Birkenhead and Weaver Creek stocks.

Canada has provided a forecast that 62% of the 1998 Fraser River sockeye run will approach the Fraser River via Johnstone Strait (northern approach). It is important to recognize that this diversion rate forecast is particularly uncertain because of the anomalous temperature patterns in 1998 as a result of the recent El Nino event.

The Panel met today to review the current status of the Early Stuart run. PSC staff analyses indicate that the 1998 return of this stock will be close to the pre-season forecast (175,000). The peak arrival timing of this stock appears to be near normal (Lower Fraser - July 8) rather than a few days late as forecast. The escapement of Early Stuart sockeye past Mission stands at 106,000 fish. Approximately 90% are 5-year-old fish from the 1993 brood spawning. This high proportion of large age 5 fish has led to an average weight of about 6.5 lb (2.9 kg), compared to a normal weight of 5.7 lb (2.6 kg). Early summer sockeye have begun to appear in Area 20 and now constitute approximately 25% of Fraser River fish in test fishing catches.

The Fraser River water level is currently near the minimum discharge on record for the time of year. However, water temperatures are at record high levels. Early Stuart sockeye are susceptible to pre-spawning mortality at high river water temperatures. Also, in the past, enroute mortalities have been recorded when water temperatures are high.

The Pacific Salmon Commission makes available daily test fishing catches of sockeye salmon on its recorded message at (604) 666-8200 and on the Internet at: www.psc.org/testfish/daily.htm. United States fishing schedules during the season will be available for non-Indian fisheries on the National Marine Fisheries Service's

Hotline in Seattle at 1-800-562-6513 and, for Treaty Indian Fisheries, through the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission at 1-800-562-6142. Canadian fishing regulations will be announced on the Canada Department of Fisheries and Oceans recorded message at (604) 666-2828.

Periodic news releases in this series will be provided by the Panel through the Commission to help inform all those interested in the progress of the run during the fishing season.

The Fraser River Panel is scheduled to meet next on Tuesday, July 14, 1998, at 10:00 a.m. by telephone conference call to review the status of the sockeye run.