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The Fraser River Panel today received a summary report on the status of the Early Stuart sockeye salmon run. The daily abundance of this stock entering the Fraser River declined from 9,000 to 16,000 fish per day between July 8 and 13 to 1,000 on July 16. The run arrived at the Commission's Mission, B.C., hydroacoustic site in a bimodal pattern with peak periods of July 2-5 and July 9-13. The 50% date of the migration in Canadian Area 20 was July 2, one day earlier than the long-term average (July 3). A total gross escapement (number entering the lower Fraser River) of 160,000 Early Stuart sockeye was estimated at Mission between June 22 and July 16. We presently account for 165,000 fish of this stock compared to the Canada Department of Fisheries and Oceans pre-season forecast of 175,000 fish. Early migrating fish have been sighted at Ft. St. James (outlet of Stuart Lake). The passage of fish at Ft. St. James will continue into early August as those Early Stuart fish currently at Mission take 15-20 days to migrate to the spawning grounds.

Some improvement in Fraser River migration conditions has been observed in the past week. Water levels have risen slightly and temperatures have declined but remain near or above the highest on record. Early Stuart sockeye are susceptible to pre-spawning mortality at high river water temperatures.

Early Summer sockeye now comprise the majority of fish currently migrating into the lower Fraser River. This stock group is made up of sockeye heading for spawning grounds throughout the watershed. Included in the early-timed component of the stock group are sockeye originating in the Upper Pitt River, Chilliwack Lake, Nahatlatch River, Gates Creek, Fennell Creek, Raft River, Nadina River and Bowron River. Average peak arrival timing of these stocks in Area 20 has been July 21. In DFO's pre-season forecast, the largest component is expected to be the stocks that spawn in tributaries to Shuswap Lake, including Seymour River, Scotch Creek, Eagle River and Anstey River sockeye. These stocks are normally about one week later in arrival timing than the stocks in the first group. The pre-season forecast for all Early Summer stocks totals 642,000 fish. The first in-season run-size update should be available in approximately 10 days. Gross escapement of these stocks past Mission now totals 18,000 fish.

Small numbers of Summer-run sockeye are now present in Area 20 and Area 12 (Round Island) test fishing catches. The stocks in this group (Chilko, Quesnel, Late Stuart and Stellako) are expected to provide the bulk of the catch in 1998. The long-term peak arrival timing of these stocks is approximately August 3.

The next meeting of the Fraser River Panel is scheduled for July 21. The Panel will meet at the Richmond Inn on July 24 to set fishing times in Panel Area waters for the period commencing July 25.