

NO. 1 NEWS RELEASE June 30, 1997

The absence of an agreed management plan between the Parties on allocation of the total allowable catch of Fraser River sockeye and pink salmon continues. If unresolved, this lack of agreement will prevent the Fraser River Panel from acting in its normal role as the regulatory authority for sockeye and pink fisheries in Panel Area waters. Regulation of the fisheries will be conducted by the respective United States and Canadian regulatory bodies.

Canada Department of Fisheries and Oceans has provided forecasts of return abundances and spawning escapement goals for Fraser River sockeye and pink salmon. As well, Canada has provided preliminary arrival timing for Early Stuart sockeye and Johnstone Strait diversion forecasts.

Early Stuart sockeye arrival timing is expected to be six days later than normal, i.e. the projected peak date in Area 20 is July 9. Warmer than average coastal sea surface temperatures have led to a DFO forecast of 78% sockeye diversion through Johnstone Strait.

Commission staff have commenced test fishing and hydroacoustic monitoring of sockeye salmon in Juan de Fuca Strait (Area 20) and the Fraser River (Area 29) and DFO has begun gillnet test fishing in Johnstone Strait (Area 12). Canada's forecast return of Early Stuart sockeye is 1,044,000 fish; however, in-season assessment of the actual total abundance will not be possible until after the peak passes through Area 20.

Commission staff are concerned that high water levels in the Fraser River may present migration difficulties for Early Stuart sockeye in 1997. This year's river levels have been the highest recorded since 1972. High river levels in the past have been associated with on-route mortalities of Early Stuart sockeye. As well, present river flows are impeding PSC monitoring programs.

Canada's abundance forecast for 1997 Early Summer stocks (Gates, Nadina, Pitt, Fennell, Bowron, Raft, Scotch, and Seymour) totals 351,000 sockeye. The greater portion of the 1997 Fraser sockeye return will be from Summer-run stocks, the major of which are Quesnel, Late Stuart, Chilko, and Stellako. The pre-season forecast is for a total return of 15,691,000 fish from these stocks. Birkenhead River and Weaver Creek sockeye stocks are expected to predominate in the Late run group in 1997 (1,144,000 fish forecast). In addition, a return of 11.4 million Fraser River pink salmon is forecast for 1997. Time/abundance curves of arrival of each component of the sockeye run and for pink salmon based on long-term average timing are shown in the attached graph.

The Pacific Salmon Commission makes available daily test fishing catches of sockeye and pink 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 Commission to help inform all those interested in the progress of the run during the fishing season.