

**NO. 5 NEWS RELEASE August 15, 1997**

Substantial catches of Fraser River sockeye were made by net and troll fishers in Canadian fisheries in Johnstone Strait (Areas 11-13) this week. Approximately, 1.6 million sockeye were harvested by the purse seine and gillnet fleets. Troll catches for the first five days of the week amounted to 300,000 sockeye. United States catches continue to be much lower owing to the high proportion (est. 89%) of the sockeye run that is approaching the Strait of Georgia from the northern (Johnstone Strait) route. Cumulative catches in commercial fisheries now amount to 4,015,000 sockeye in Canadian waters and 551,000 in the United States (including 116,000 in Alaska). Non-commercial catches, including Fraser River First Nations Pilot Sales fisheries, total 623,000 sockeye. Adding escapements past Mission, B.C., the total number of Fraser River sockeye accounted to date is 7.2 million fish (see attached table).

Analysis of catch and effort data in commercial fisheries the past two weeks indicates that Summer run sockeye reached their peak abundance in Johnstone Strait this week. Commission staff reported to the national section managers that current run size estimates place the total Summer run abundance at 12 million fish. While this estimate may increase slightly over the next week, the expectation is that the Summer run will be less than the pre-season forecast of 15.7 million. At the 12 million estimate for Summer runs, the total 1997 return of Fraser River sockeye stocks assessed to date should amount to approximately 14.2 million fish: Early Stuart - 1,527,000; Early Summer - 650,000; and Summer - 12,000,000; This total would be 17% lower than the pre-season forecast of 17,086,000 sockeye. Late run stocks which were forecast pre-season by DFO to total an additional 1,144,000 are now present throughout the migratory areas. Assessment of actual return strength of this stock group will take place over the next two weeks.

The combined Late Stuart and Stellako sockeye appear to be returning substantially below the pre-season forecast of 3,738,000 fish. Current estimates of abundance place the Late Stuart/Stellako abundance at 2,000,000 fish. Chilko River and Lake sockeye appear to be returning close to the forecast of 1,992,000 sockeye. The largest stock in the Summer run group is the Quesnel (Horsefly) sockeye run. While the return of these fish is projected to be strong at 8,000,000, the run would be somewhat below the pre-season forecast of 9,661,000 sockeye.

Canada Department of Fisheries and Oceans staff report that Early Stuart sockeye continue to arrive at their spawning grounds in numbers substantially below expectations. Large numbers of Early Stuart sockeye have been observed in tributaries between Hope and Prince George, including tributaries of the Thompson River and in the lower Quesnel River. The highly unusual behaviour of these fish stems from their delay in the Fraser Canyon during the extreme high water in mid- to late July. No future production can be expected from Early Stuart sockeye that spawn in non-natal streams.

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. This lack of agreement prevents the Fraser River Panel from acting in its normal role as the regulatory authority for sockeye fisheries in Panel Area waters. Regulation of the fisheries is being conducted by the respective United States and Canadian domestic management agencies.

Fraser River Panel Sockeye Review

Week of: Aug. 10 - Aug. 16, 1997

Date: August 15, 1997

Area	Gear	Catch	%Fraser	Fraser Sockeye Catch	
				Weekly	Cumul.
Commercial Catch					
Canada					
Areas 1-10	Net	0	0%	0	131,700
Areas 1-11	Troll	0	0%	0	160,000
Areas 121-127, 12	Troll	224,000	100%	224,000	519,000
Areas 11-16	Net	1,560,000	100%	1,560,000	2,510,900
Areas 12-16	Troll	79,000	100%	79,000	340,000
Areas 17-18-29	Troll	0	0%	0	0
Area 20	Net	24,000	100%	24,000	24,000
Area 29	Net	125,000	100%	125,000	329,000
Canadian Total				2,012,000	4,014,600
United States					
Alaska (Dist. 104)	Net	0	0%	0	116,100
Washington					
T.I. Areas 4B/5/6C	Net	0	0%	0	10,400
T.I. Areas 6/7/7A	Net	55,000	100%	55,000	150,000
N.I. Areas 7/7A	Net	103,000	100%	103,000	274,000
U.S. Total				158,000	550,500
Non-commercial Catch					
PSC Test					48,900
Other Test					39,400
Fraser River Indian					486,000
Areas 12-124 Indian					41,000
Recreational/Charter					7,200
Non-comm. Total					622,500
Catch and Escapement					
Catch Accounted-to-date					5,187,600
Potential Net Escapement (Mission esc. less IF & sport catch above Mission)					2,033,100
Total Accounted-to-date					7,220,700

Gross Escapement (includes Pitt R. sockeye)

Run	Stock/Group	Goal	Mission Esc.	AFS Below Mission	Total Esc.	% Complete
EStu	Early Stuart	n/a	1,093,900	43,400	1,137,300	n/a
Esum	Early Summer	n/a	367,900	11,300	379,200	n/a
Summ	Quesnel/Chilko	n/a	689,600	25,100	1,005,900	n/a
	Late Stuart/Stellako	n/a	275,200	16,000		n/a
Late	Bikenhead	n/a	3,900	0	3,900	n/a
	Weav/L.Misc.	n/a	0	0		n/a