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WEEKLY REPORT

August 23, 2019

The Fraser River Panel (Panel) met today to review assessment data on Fraser River sockeye and pink salmon. Despite the small increase in the Early Summer and Summer-run run size earlier in the week the current in-season Panel-adopted total run size of 557,000 remains lower than the lowest run size on record of 858,000 observed in 2016.

The landslide at Big Bar continues to be a major source of concern for the Panel as migrating sockeye salmon will need to pass this area to reach their spawning grounds. It is estimated that about 117,600 sockeye will have reached the Big Bar site as of August 22 based on abundances observed at Mission. Since August 12, limited numbers of Chinook have been able to migrate past the slide using the natural fish way created through rock manipulations. In addition 31,625 salmon (25,108 sockeye and 6,517 Chinook salmon) have been transported upstream from the slide via helicopter but only 52% of those transported are able to successfully resume migration. As a result of the restricted natural passage of Chinook and the helicopter transport, a total of 22,334 sockeye and Chinook salmon have now been estimated at the hydroacoustic site, 40 km upstream of the Big Bar site. Thus far, no natural passage of sockeye salmon has been detected. Efforts continue to improve natural fish passage through further rock manipulations and once road construction has concluded, salmon relocation efforts will be increased through additional truck transport using aerated holding tanks. For further information on the landslide please see the web link in Table 1 at the end of this report.

Run Status

The migration of sockeye through both marine and Fraser River assessment areas has been very low to date, as indicated by the low sockeye catches in all areas. All sockeye management groups are now being managed using low abundance exploitation rates (LAER); 10% for Early Stuart and 20% for the other management groups. As a result, there will be no sockeye salmon directed fisheries this season. The LAERs for all sockeye management groups however allow by-catch of sockeye in fisheries directed at other species with available surpluses (e.g. pink salmon). Pink salmon catches in Juan de Fuca Strait have been high and exceeding historic averages. Following the strong pink salmon abundance estimated to date, the U.S. opened pink salmon directed fisheries this past week, but with the understanding that all efforts would be made to release any sockeye by-catch alive.

DNA analysis of a sockeye catch sample recently collected from the Area 12 purse seine test fishery indicated sockeye abundances currently observed consisted primarily of Summer run sockeye (88%) and in particular Chilko, while Early Summer run and Late run contributed 3% and 9% respectively. Analyses of recent pink salmon DNA samples collected from the Area 13 test fishery indicate that 75% of the pink salmon encountered are of Fraser River origin, 9% are from Puget Sound, and 16 % are from South Coast stocks.

The estimated diversion rate of sockeye salmon through Johnstone Strait remains high at 93%; this is similar to the pre-season plan. Diversion rate of Fraser pink salmon is 4%, based on recent purse seine test fishery catches in the two approach areas; well below the pre-season plan.

Management Groups

Fraser River Sockeye Salmon

The estimated escapement of Early Summer-run sockeye past Mission through August 22 is 84,700 fish. All of the Early Summer-run groups have been represented in the catch samples from marine test fisheries. During the Panel meeting Tuesday, August 20, the decision was made to slightly increase the Early Summer-run run size from 85,000 to 90,000 with an associated Area 20 timing of July 27 due to a small increase in the later timed Early Summer run stocks (e.g., Gates, Nahatlatch).

For Summer-run sockeye, abundances have been increasing in the marine test fisheries. The presence of the Chilko stock group, which was expected to contribute more than half of the total Fraser sockeye return this year has increased in catch samples. As a result, at the Panel meeting on Tuesday August 20, the Panel increased the Summer-run run size to 400,000 with a 50% marine timing in Area 20 of August 21. Thus far, only a total of 135,200 Summer-run sockeye have been detected past Mission.

To date, 6,400 Late-run sockeye have been estimated to have migrated past Mission. Birkenhead sockeye which comprise 64% of the Late-run stock are returning in very small numbers to date and there has been no evidence of Late-run delay to date. The Panel adopted an in-season run size of 40,000 for the Late run with a 50% marine timing in Area 20 of August 26.

Fraser River Pink Salmon

Marine test fishing catches for pink salmon in Juan de Fuca Strait exceeded preseason expectations as well as historical averages. Taking into account the number of Fraser River pink salmon fry produced in 2018 (192 million) which is the lowest number observed since the method for enumerating out-migrating fry was standardized in 1968, the in-season run size models produced a run size estimate of 7.4 million. This estimate exceeded the preseason median forecast of 5 million. The estimated escapement of pink salmon past Mission through August 22 is 120,000. The Panel adopted an in-season run size of 7.4M for Fraser River pink salmon with a 50% marine timing in Area 20 of August 20.

Environmental Update

On August 22, the Fraser River water discharge at Hope was about 3,265 cms, which is approximately 12% higher than average for this date. The temperature of the Fraser River at Qualark on August 22 was 18.1°C, which is 0.4°C higher than average for this date. DFO's Environmental Watch program projects that river temperature will decrease to 16.7°C and discharge to also decrease to 2,934 cms over the next 10 days.

Escapement Update

DFO reports that the Early Stuart spawning escapement assessment program has begun. Cyclic visual surveys began July 24, and sockeye have been observed at the Middle River.

For the Early Summer run, a fence at Scotch Creek has been operational since August 6, and one fish has passed through the fence to date. No sockeye have been observed downstream of the fence. Cyclic visual surveys started in the North/South Thompson on August 20 on the Upper Barriere River. Visual surveys started August 6 on the Lower Fraser. It has been reported that sockeye are holding in the Upper Chilliwack River and sockeye are reported to be in the early stages of spawning. The Nadina River Channel will start up in early September once there has been some visual confirmation of sockeye in the Nadina River. A hydroacoustic site has been operational on the Stellako River since August 1 and 50 sockeye have been counted past the site as of August 20. Eight sockeye have been counted into the Gates Creek spawning channel to date.

For the Summer run, hydroacoustic sites have been operational on the Chilko River and Quesnel River since

August 9 and 12, respectively. As of August 20, no sockeye have been counted past either site. Cyclic visual surveys started in the North Thompson system at Raft River on August 21.

For Late run, the counting fence at Sweltzer Creek has been operational since July 30 and no sockeye have been counted through the fence as of August 20.

Regulatory Announcements & Resources

The Panel announced the following regulations for commercial salmon fisheries in Panel Area waters:

CANADIAN FRASER RIVER PANEL AREA WATERS:

Remain closed to commercial salmon fishing.

UNITED STATES FRASER RIVER PANEL AREA WATERS:

TREATY INDIAN FISHERY:

Areas 4B, 5, and 6C: Open for drift gillnet fishing from 12 p.m. (noon), Saturday, August 24, 2019, through 12 p.m. (noon), Wednesday, August 28, 2019. Sockeye non-retention.

Area 7: Open for reef net fishing from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m., Sunday, August 25, 2019, and 5 a.m. to 9 p.m., Monday, August 26, 2019. Sockeye non-retention.

ALL CITIZEN FISHERY

Area 7: Open to reef net fishing from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m., Sunday, August 25, 2019, and from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday, August 26, 2019. Must release all sockeye, unmarked Chinook, unmarked coho and chum.

Areas 7 and 7A, excluding the Apex: Open to purse seine fishing from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m., Saturday, August 24, 2019, and from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m., Sunday, August 25, 2019. Pink salmon retention only.

Areas 7 and 7A, excluding the Apex: Open to drift gillnet fishing from 8 a.m. to 11:59 p.m., Saturday, August 24, 2019, and Sunday, August 25, 2019. Non-retention of sockeye.

The Apex is those waters north and west of the Area 7A "East Point Line," defined as a line projected from the low water range marker in Boundary Bay on the International Boundary through the east tip of Point Roberts in the state of Washington to the East Point light on Saturna Island in the Province of British Columbia.

The next in-season meeting of the Panel is scheduled to occur on August 27. Weekly reports in this series will be provided by the Panel through the Commission every Friday during the in-season management period to inform those interested in the progress of the Fraser River sockeye salmon run. Weekly reports and regulatory announcements can be obtained via <http://www.psc.org/publications/fraser-panel-in-season-information> or by subscribing to our eNews <http://tinyurl.com/PSCeNews>. Regulations and resources for fishing schedules, test fishing catch, DFO's environmental watch program as well as information on the Big Bar landslide can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Regulations & Resources

Fishing Schedule Contacts/Resources	Phone Number/ Website Links
United States fishing schedules (Treaty Indian)	1-800-562-6142
United States fishing schedules (Non-Indian)	1-800-662-9825
Canadian commercial fishing regulations (from the lower B.C. mainland)	604-666-2828
Canadian commercial fishing regulations (from outside the lower B.C. mainland)	1-866-431-3474
PSC Daily Test Fishing Catch (recorded message)	604-666-8200 http://www.psc.org/info_testfishing.htm .
DFO's Environmental Watch program	http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/science/habitat/frw-rfo/index-eng.html
Big Bar Landslide Incident	https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/emergency-response-and-recovery/incident-summaries/big-bar-landslide-incident .

Note: For species other than sockeye salmon consult the appropriate regulatory agency regarding fisheries regulations in the Fraser River Panel Management Area.

Contacts

Canada: Jennifer Nener, Chair, Fraser River Panel

United States: Lorraine Loomis, Vice-chair, Fraser River Panel