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WEEKLY REPORT

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The Fraser River Panel (Panel) met today to review assessment data on Fraser River sockeye and pink salmon. The current in-season Panel-adopted total Fraser River sockeye run size of 557,000 is 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 180,000 sockeye will have reached the Big Bar site as of August 29 based on abundances observed at Mission. Limited numbers of Chinook have been able to migrate past the slide since August 13 and since August 22 sockeye have also been observed passing the slide area using the natural fish way created through rock manipulations. A total of 17,947 salmon are now estimated to have made it past the rock slide area naturally. In addition 49,500 salmon (41,347 sockeye, 8,120 Chinook, 30 pink and 3 coho salmon) have been transported upstream from the slide via helicopter but only 56% of those transported appear to have successfully resumed migration. As a result of the restricted natural passage of Chinook and the helicopter transport, a total of 39,116 salmon have now been estimated at the hydroacoustic site, 40 km upstream of the Big Bar site. Efforts continue to improve natural fish passage through further rock manipulations and the installation of prefabricated fish ladder. With road construction to the area above the rock slide now completed, salmon relocation efforts are planned to 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 continues to be very low, 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 allows for by-catch mortalities of sockeye in fisheries directed at other species with available surpluses (e.g. pink salmon). Pink salmon catches in the test fisheries in both approaches have decreased substantially from last week. At the meeting today, the Panel decided to terminate both the Area 20 and Area12 purse seine test fisheries.

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 (96%) and in particular Chilko, while Early Summer run contributed 4%. There was no Late run in this sample. Analyses of recent pink salmon DNA samples collected from the Area 7 purse seine fishery indicate that 82% of the pink salmon encountered are of Fraser River origin and 18% are from Puget Sound.

The estimated diversion rate of sockeye salmon through Johnstone Strait remains high at 90%; this is similar to the pre-season plan. Diversion rate of Fraser pink salmon is 59%, based on recent purse seine test fishery catches in the two approach areas.

Management Groups

Fraser River Sockeye Salmon

For Summer-run sockeye, abundances associated with marine test fishing catches decreased. The presence of the Chilko stock group, which was expected to contribute more than half of the total Fraser sockeye return this year continues to increase in catch samples. Thus far, only a total of 265,500 Summer-run sockeye have been detected past Mission.

Overall, Late run abundances have been very low. To date, 10,000 Late-run sockeye have been estimated to have migrated past Mission with very low numbers estimated to be delaying their upstream migration in the Gulf.

Fraser River Pink Salmon

Marine test fishing catches for pink salmon in Juan de Fuca Strait decreased over the last week. The estimated escapement of pink salmon past Mission through August 29 is 461,400. Data collected from the US fishery openings indicated abundances that were lower than abundances associated with the 7.4 million adopted previously by the Panel. As a result, at the meeting on Tuesday, the Panel agreed to provisionally manage the pink-run run size to the median forecast (5.0 million) for planning purposes. Further analyses of the US data confirmed the lower run size and at the meeting on Friday, the Panel adopted a run size of 5.0 million with a 50% marine timing in Area 20 of August 17.

Environmental Update

On August 29, the Fraser River water discharge at Hope was about 2,829 cms, which is approximately 11% higher than average for this date. The temperature of the Fraser River at Qualark on August 29 was 17.6°C, which is 0.5°C higher than average for this date. DFO's Environmental Watch program projects that river temperature will increase to 18.2°C and discharge to also decrease to 2,543 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 are reported to be past peak spawning. Final surveys were conducted August 28.

For the Early Summer run, a fence at Scotch Creek has been operational since August 6, and 431 sockeye have passed through the fence to date. Cyclic visual surveys started in the North/South Thompson on August 20 on the Upper Barriere and Seymour Rivers. Sockeye are reported to be primarily holding. Visual surveys started August 6 on the Lower Fraser. It has been reported that sockeye are in peak spawning in the Upper Chilliwack River and sockeye in the Nahatlatch River are primarily holding. The Nadina River Channel operator has not observed any sockeye in the river or the river adjacent to the channel. A hydroacoustic site has been operational on the Stellako River since August 1 and 706 sockeye have been counted past the site as of August 27 and most of these are thought to be Nadina sockeye. It is expected that Stellako sockeye will now be entering the system. Six hundred and seventy 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 27, 26 and 9 sockeye have been counted past the Chilko and Quesnel sites, respectively. Cyclic visual surveys started in the North Thompson system at Raft River on August 21 and sockeye are reported to be primarily holding. Visual surveys also started on Bridge River and sockeye are reported to be primarily holding.

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 25. The Birkenhead River hydroacoustic site has been operational since August 23 and 21 sockeye have been estimated past the sonar site as of August 27.

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:

Remain closed to commercial salmon fishing.

The next in-season meeting of the Panel is scheduled to occur on September 3. 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