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**No. 8**

**WEEKLY REPORT**

**August 28, 2020**

The Fraser River Panel (Panel) met earlier this week to review assessment data on Fraser River sockeye salmon. No changes were made to the current adopted run size for Fraser River sockeye of 283,000 which is the lowest run size on record. Further changes to total sockeye run size estimates may occur later in the season following the completion of the salmon's migration into the Fraser River. Given the low abundances this year, no directed sockeye fisheries have been licensed and authorized to date. Those fisheries directed on other salmon species have required the non-retention of sockeye. To date, approximately 7,500 sockeye have been caught and kept in either Chinook directed fisheries or unlicensed/unauthorized fisheries.

### **Management Groups**

Daily in-river gill net test fisheries at Whonnock and Qualark Creek continue as do the Mission and Qualark hydroacoustics programs. Daily abundances of all sockeye salmon have been tracking well below their median forecast levels for 2020. Harrison sockeye, which had previously been delaying their in-river migration, have now been observed moving into the river. As of August 27, the accounted run to date is estimated to be 16,000 Early Stuart, 69,300 Early Summer run, 184,000 Summer and 6,100 Late-run sockeye salmon, for a total accounted run to date of 275,400 sockeye.

### **Environmental Update**

On August 27, the Fraser River water discharge at Hope was about 3,246 cms, which is approximately 24% greater than average for this date. The temperature of the Fraser River at Qualark on August 27 was 17.6°C, which is 0.4°C higher than average for this date. DFO's Environmental Watch program projects that river temperature will decrease, to further below average, and discharge is forecast to decrease to 2,936 cms over the next 10 days.

### **Big Bar Update**

Of the total returning sockeye, about 50% will need to pass the Big Bar area to reach their spawning grounds. Discharge levels continue to decrease throughout the Fraser River watershed and the majority of the sockeye currently reaching the Big Bar slide area seem to be able to make it past the slide using the natural fish way. Of the 128,859 salmon observed below the slide, 117,392 have been accounted for at Churn Creek, 40 km upstream of the slide. These estimates for August 26 are preliminary and are an underestimate as two additional days of data are still being processed. Currently, the majority of the salmon migrating past Big Bar are sockeye while earlier in the season, natural migration past Big Bar was dominated by Chinook. In addition to using the natural fish way, 7,782 salmon been transported through the Whooshh™ system to date.

## **Escapement Update**

DFO reports that the Early Stuart spawning escapement assessment program began on July 26, and sockeye have been observed in certain tributaries but in very low abundances. Early Stuart sockeye are anticipated to arrive later than normal at the spawning grounds given that natural passage past Big Bar began the first week of August. As a result, the survey period has been extended for the Early Stuart streams that had substantial escapement in 2016.

For Early Summer run stocks, the counting fence at Scotch Creek was fish tight as of August 7 and 883 sockeye have passed by the fence. Visual surveys of the Early Summer populations in the North/South Thompson began on August 24. Sockeye in the Upper Barriere River are primarily holding. In the Nahatlatch River and Lake, visual surveys started on August 19 and 26 respectively. The Upper Chilliwack River hydroacoustic site has been operational since July 16 and 27,580 sockeye have been observed as of August 25 which is slightly above the in-season run size estimate of 25,000. Sockeye are in peak spawning. The Nadina River channel operator has been at the channel since August 10 and has observed no sockeye in the river adjacent to the channel to date. The Stellako River hydroacoustic site was operational since August 7. Through August 25, 15,371 sockeye have passed the hydroacoustic site, the majority being Nadina River sockeye. The first visual survey for Gates was conducted on August 23 and sockeye in the creek are primarily holding.

For Summer run sockeye, visual surveys for several Nechako River tributaries started on August 14. The Chilko River hydroacoustic site has been operational since August 7. Through August 25, 2,264 sockeye have passed the hydroacoustic site. The first visual survey at Bridge River was conducted on August 26 and the sockeye are currently in peak spawning.

For Late run sockeye, the Birkenhead hydroacoustic site has been operational since August 22. The sockeye are in the early stages of migration into the system and 97 sockeye have been observed through August 25. The counting fence at Sweltzer Creek (Cultus Lake) was fish tight as of July 27 and 34 sockeye have been observed through the fence as of August 25.

## **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 1. 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 and DFO's environmental watch program 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 <a href="https://www.psc.org/publications/fraser-panel-in-season-information/test-fishing-results/">https://www.psc.org/publications/fraser-panel-in-season-information/test-fishing-results/</a>
DFO's Environmental Watch program	<a href="http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/science/habitat/frw-rfo/index-eng.html">http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/science/habitat/frw-rfo/index-eng.html</a>
Province of B.C.: Big Bar Landslide Incident	<a href="https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/fish/aquatic-habitat-management/fish-passage/big-bar-landslide-incident">https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/fish/aquatic-habitat-management/fish-passage/big-bar-landslide-incident</a>
DFO: Salmon counts at the Big Bar landslide site	<a href="https://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/pacific-smon-pacifique/big-bar-landslide-eboulement/smon-count-denombrement-eng.html">https://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/pacific-smon-pacifique/big-bar-landslide-eboulement/smon-count-denombrement-eng.html</a>
MacDonald, B.L., Grant, S.C.H., Wilson, N., Patterson, D.A., Robinson, K.A., Boldt, J.L., King, J., Xu, Y., Davis, B., Decker, S., Leaf, B., Pon, L., Selbie, D.T. (2020) State of the Salmon: Informing the survival of Fraser Sockeye returning in 2020 through life cycle observations. Can. Tech. Rep. Fish. Aquat. Sci. (in press)	<a href="https://waves-vagues.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/Library/4088546x.pdf">https://waves-vagues.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/Library/4088546x.pdf</a>

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

**Contacts**

United States: Kirt Hughes, Chair, Fraser River Panel

Canada: Jennifer Nener, Vice-chair, Fraser River Panel