



PACIFIC SALMON COMMISSION

ESTABLISHED BY TREATY BETWEEN CANADA
AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
MARCH 18, 1985

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NEWS RELEASE

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The Fraser River Panel met today to review assessment data for Fraser River sockeye and pink salmon. Test fishing catches of sockeye salmon indicate that the marine migration of sockeye is nearly complete; small daily abundances continue to migrate primarily via Johnstone Straits. The current estimated total sockeye escapement into the Fraser River to date is 1,820,300 fish. Catches of Fraser River pink salmon in the purse seine test fisheries in both marine areas decreased substantially last weekend and have remained very low on both routes this week. Pink salmon abundances now dominate the in-river migrations of salmon past the Mission acoustics site. Approximately 1,657,000 pink salmon have been estimated to have migrated into the Fraser River to date. Over the past week, the observer at Hells Gate continued to report strong migrations of both sockeye and pink salmon past that site. Hells Gate Counts of pink salmon have increased to levels greater than the sockeye counts in recent days.

DNA analysis of a fish sample recently collected from the Area 12 purse seine test fishery indicated Fraser sockeye contributions of approximately, 2% Early Summer-run, 76% Summer-run, and 22% Late-run sockeye. Analysis of a DNA sample collected August 28th from the Area 12 test fishery indicated that 59% of the pink salmon encountered were of Fraser River-origin, 19% were from Puget Sound, and 22% are from Canadian South Coast stocks. The proportions of Fraser river pink salmon are much lower than the historical average (>80%) for the time of year, consistent with the relatively low total abundance evident from other assessment indices.

The estimated diversion rate of sockeye salmon through Johnstone Strait has increased to 99% while the diversion rate of Fraser River pink salmon has also increased to 77% based on recent seine test fishery catches in the two approach areas.

The influx of pink salmon in the Fraser River has stimulated a change to the methods used to estimate the escapements of sockeye past the Mission acoustics site. This change was applied retroactively to the past week and has led to a decrease in the sockeye escapement estimates over this period. There were no changes to sockeye run-sizes today but future changes to in-season run size estimates for the Summer-run and Late-run groups are possible following a more detailed review of the changes to sockeye escapement methodology.

There were no changes to previously adopted run-size estimates of Early Summer-run sockeye today. Further in-season changes to Early Summer-run run-size estimates are unlikely. The estimated escapement of Early Summer-run sockeye past Mission through September 3rd is 346,600 fish.

Because Summer-run stocks predominate in the upstream passage, estimates for these groups were most significantly impacted by the reduction in sockeye escapement estimates. The estimated escapement of Summer-run sockeye past Mission through September 3rd is 1,332,800 fish.

To date, only 165,000 Late-run sockeye are estimated to have migrated through marine assessment areas. The Panel decreased the Late-run run size from 419,000 to 300,000 on Tuesday. Estimates suggest that a small abundance of this group could be delaying their upstream migration by holding off the mouth of the Fraser River. However, probable abundance levels are low, and insufficient for assessment by the Gulf troll test fishery. Thus no Gulf troll surveys will be conducted for either sockeye, or for similar reasons, pink salmon in 2015. The estimated escapement of Late-run sockeye past Mission through September 3rd is 109,000 fish. Given the total return estimates and escapement to date, it appears that the median upstream migration date for the Late Shuswap, Weaver, Portage, Cultus component of Late-run sockeye run-timing aggregate may have occurred in recent days, continuing the pattern of early upstream migration observed in most past years since 1995 for this group.

As indicated above, the daily abundance of Fraser River pink salmon estimated to have past marine assessment areas decreased substantially over the past week in both the Juan de Fuca and Johnstone Straits migration routes. Marine test fishery indications of the daily abundance of most Fraser sockeye run timing groups can be verified approximately 1 week later based on lower river acoustic estimates because these fish migrate directly upstream

without significant delay. Conversely, because pink salmon delay their upstream migration for variable periods (ranging from a few to several weeks), in-season assessments of Fraser River pink salmon run size abundance depend almost exclusively on the test fishery catches in marine areas, and thus are very uncertain. Earlier this week assessments suggested there was only a one in four chance that the total return of Fraser River pink salmon would exceed 6,000,000 fish; a level associated with minimal harvestable surplus. Consequently, the Panel adopted a 6,000,000 total run size provisionally for management purposes on Tuesday. Assessments today confirmed this estimate and the Panel formally adopted the 6 million run size. If marine areas test fishery catches of pink salmon remain low, future changes to in-season estimates for this group, are unlikely. Test fisheries will continue to operate over the weekend to rule out any substantial increase in pink salmon migration that has occurred after the first week in September in a few past years.

In response to the low pink salmon run-sizes, the Panel implemented further management actions to restrict harvests in all fisheries that impact Fraser River pink salmon. The US Commercial fisheries directed at Fraser River salmon that were announced earlier this week closed as scheduled. These actions were incremental to those adopted earlier to protect Fraser sockeye populations. No further Fraser River pink or sockeye salmon directed commercial fisheries are planned at this time.

On September 3rd, the Fraser River water discharge at Hope was 1,982 cms, which is approximately 19% lower than average for this date. The temperature of the Fraser River at Qualark Creek was 16.1°C on September 3rd, approximately 0.4°C lower than average for this date. River conditions have improved significantly over the past week with temperatures decreasing to below average levels for the time of year. Observations of fish condition continue to suggest that river conditions are not having significant impacts on sockeye migration success in most areas of the watershed. The potential for early upstream migration of components of the Late-run group was anticipated in the management adjustments adopted by the Panel during pre-season planning. Thus, there were no changes made to management adjustments today and future changes are unlikely. Management adjustments are additional fish that are removed from identified allowable harvest levels and instead allowed to escape upstream to help achieve spawning escapement targets for Fraser River Sockeye.

Environmental data collected in the Fraser River watershed through DFO's Environmental Watch program will be included in weekly in-season news releases from the Pacific Salmon Commission (<http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/science/habitat/frw-rfo/index-eng.html>). River discharge level is forecast to drop to 1,870 cms by September 9th. Fraser River temperatures are forecast to remain at levels below average for the time of year for most of the forecast period. Fraser River discharge levels and water temperatures will continue to be monitored closely to guide specific Panel management actions that may be required during the in-river Sockeye migratory period to help achieve escapement goals.

The following summarizes DFO's sixth weekly report of ongoing Fraser River sockeye spawning assessment programs. Sockeye in the Nahatlatch River are reported to be in the early stages of spawning. Sockeye in the Upper Chilliwack River are at the peak of spawn, though recent rain events of have resulted in poor visual survey conditions. The Nadina River Channel was operational the evening of August 14th; 18,267 sockeye have been counted into the channel to date. Fish in the channel are reported to be primarily holding and in good condition. The counters at Gates Creek and the Gates Creek spawning channel were operational August 7th, and 9,039 sockeye have been counted into the channel with an additional 8,964 sockeye counted into the creek upstream of the channel to date. Sockeye in the channel are in the early stages of spawning. The counting fence on Scotch Creek was operational on August 9th; 3,498 sockeye have passed through the fence to date. Most sockeye observed are reported to be in good condition, but some have lesions. Visual surveys of Early Summer-run streams that are tributary to the North and South Thompson Rivers began on August 10th. Sockeye have now been observed in the Lower Adams, Anstey, Eagle, Lower Momich, and Seymour Rivers as well as Cayenne Creek. Sockeye in the Upper Barriere River are reported to be nearing peak of spawn. The first aerial and ground surveys of the Bowron River were conducted on September 2nd. Sockeye are reported to be nearing the start of peak spawning activity. The Chilko River hydroacoustic site was operational on August 8th. Sockeye numbers continue to steadily increase with very few observations of pre-spawn mortality to date. Carcass recovery efforts began on September 1st. Most sockeye appear to be in good condition. The Quesnel River hydroacoustic site was operational August 13th. Sockeye migration into the system has remained steady but overall migration levels are relatively low. Visual surveys of the Quesnel system began on August 27th. Sockeye have only been observed in the Horsefly River thus far, and fish there are reported to be either holding or in early stages of spawning. The Stellako River hydroacoustic site was operational August 22nd. Sockeye continue to be in the early stages of migration into the river. Visual surveys of Summer-run sockeye streams in the North Thompson drainage began Aug 11th. Sockeye in the Raft River continue

to be reported to be in good condition and nearing the peak of spawn. A visual survey of the Bridge River was conducted September 2nd. Sockeye are reported to be near the peak of spawn. The Birkenhead hydroacoustic site became operational August 26th. Sockeye migration past the site is still in the early stages. The counting fence at Sweltzer Creek (Cultus sockeye) was operational as of July 20th; 240 sockeye have passed through the fence to date and 25 sockeye have been retained for broodstock.

The Pacific Salmon Commission reports daily test fishing catches of sockeye salmon on its recorded message at 604-666-8200 and on the internet at: http://www.psc.org/info_testfishing.htm.

United States fishing schedules during the season will be available for Treaty Indian fisheries through the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission at 1-800-562-6142. All Citizen fishing schedules will be available through the National Marine Fisheries Service's Hotline in Seattle at 1-800-662-9825. Canadian commercial fishing regulations will be announced on the Fisheries and Oceans Canada recorded message at 604-666-2828 (from the lower B.C. mainland), and toll free from outside the lower B.C. mainland at 1-866-431-3474, and via fishery notices. Consult the appropriate regulatory agency regarding fisheries regulations pertaining to species other than sockeye and pink salmon in the Fraser River Panel Management Area.

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 Tuesday September 8th. News releases 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 runs. News releases and regulatory announcements can be obtained via http://www.psc.org/news_frpnews.htm or by subscribing to our eNews <http://tinyurl.com/PSCeNews>.

2015 Run status of Fraser sockeye and pink salmon

Date: Sep. 4, 2015

Week of: Aug. 30 - Sep. 5, 2015	Sockeye				Pink	
	Management Group				Total	Total
	E.Stuart	E.Summer	Summer	Late	Fraser	Fraser
Mission passage (includes Pitt, Alouette, Coquitlam)	31,900	346,600	1,332,800	109,000	1,820,300	0
Catch downstream of Mission	200	24,300	123,300	6,900	154,700	387,800
Accounted run-to-date	32,100	370,900	1,456,100	115,900	1,975,000	0
Run size adopted in-season¹	32,000	400,000	1,700,000	300,000	2,432,000	6,000,000
Run size forecasted pre-season	16,000	837,000	4,675,000	1,236,000	6,764,000	14,455,000
Area 20 timing adopted in-season	6/Jul	31/Jul	12/Aug	23/Aug		21/Aug
Area 20 timing expected pre-season	8/Jul	1/Aug	7/Aug	17/Aug		28/Aug

¹ Run sizes are usually not adopted until after the peak of the run has passed through marine test fishery areas in Juan de Fuca and Johnstone Straits.

2015 Catch-to-date by fishery

Date: Sep. 4, 2015

Week of: Aug. 30 - Sep. 5, 2015		Sockeye		Pink	
		Total	Fraser	Total	Fraser
Canada		153,700	152,400	16,100	3,000
	Commercial	0	0	0	0
	B Purse Seine	0	0	0	0
	D Gillnet	0	0	0	0
	E Gillnet	0	0	0	0
	F Troll	0	0	0	0
	G Troll	0	0	0	0
	H Troll	0	0	0	0
	First Nations	153,100	151,900	16,100	3,000
	Food, Social & Ceremonial (FSC)	153,100	151,900	16,100	3,000
	Marine	41,000	39,900	15,500	2,300
	Fraser R.	112,000	112,000	600	600
	Economic Opportunity (EO) & Demonstration (Demo)	0	0	0	0
	Marine	0	0	0	0
	Fraser R.	0	0	0	0
	Recreational	100	0	0	0
	Marine	100	0	0	0
	Fraser R. *	0	0	0	0
	Charter (Albion gillnet test fishery)	500	500	0	0
United States		47,300	46,100	659,600	337,500
	Commercial	45,200	44,100	637,500	334,300
	Treaty Indian (TI)	34,000	33,100	386,700	184,000
	All Citizen (AC)	11,300	11,000	250,800	150,300
	Treaty Indian Ceremonial & Subsistence (C&S)	2,000	2,000	22,200	3,200
	All Citizen Recreational	0	0	0	0
	Alaska *	na	na	na	na
Panel-approved Test Fisheries		40,800	37,000	121,000	47,800
	Panel Waters	19,300	16,300	79,200	37,900
	Non-Panel Waters	21,400	20,600	41,800	9,900
Total		241,700	235,500	796,800	388,300

* Recent LFA Recreational catches may be projected based on a scalar applied to Mission Escapement.

** Alaska catch is processed post-season and so is unavailable in-season.