



## PACIFIC SALMON COMMISSION

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

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**NEWS RELEASE**

**September 11, 2015**

The Fraser River Panel met today to review assessment data for Fraser River sockeye and pink salmon. Marine area purse test fisheries along both migration routes were terminated on September 8<sup>th</sup> following declines in the catches of both species. There was a large increase in the daily escapement of Fraser pink salmon over the past weekend but daily levels have since declined from a peak observed on September 5<sup>th</sup>. Approximately 4,256,000 pink salmon are estimated to have migrated into the Fraser River to date. Daily escapements of Fraser sockeye salmon have continued to decline over the past week, as estimated from the Whonnock test fishery catch per unit effort. The current estimated total sockeye escapement into the Fraser River to date is 1,919,400 fish. Over the past week, the observer at Hells Gate reported declining migrations of sockeye and increased migration of pink salmon past that site.

Over the final week of marine test fisheries, the estimated diversion rates for sockeye and pink salmon through Johnstone Strait remained very high, with 99% and 91% of migrating sockeye and pink salmon, respectively, using the northern migration route.

As reported last week, the influx of pink salmon in the Fraser River stimulated a change to the methods used to estimate the escapements of sockeye past the Mission acoustics site. This change was applied retroactively to August 27<sup>th</sup> and has led to a decrease in the sockeye escapement estimates. As a consequence of this change, the Panel decreased the in-season run estimates for Summer-run sockeye to 1,500,000 and for Late-run sockeye to 200,000 at its Tuesday meeting. The current in-season total run sizes for Early Stuart and Early Summer-run sockeye remained at 32,000 and 400,000, respectively. There were no further changes to sockeye run-sizes today. The sum of these estimates results in a total Fraser sockeye run for the season of 2,132,000 fish, which is less than the one in ten pre-season forecast probability level of 2,364,000 fish. The causes of the poorer than expected return are not known at this time. But given that most Fraser sockeye populations are forecast based on spawning escapements in prior brood years (2011 for age 4 fish and 2010 for age 5 fish), causes are likely related to a combination of factors associated both the freshwater and marine environments. Small changes to accounted total sockeye run size estimates for each timing group may occur following the completion of their upstream migration.

The low returns of Fraser river sockeye have resulted in very limited harvest and high fractions of the total returns of each group being estimated using data from the lower Fraser River assessment sites. The estimated escapements of Early Stuart, Early Summer-run, Summer-run and Late-run sockeye past Mission through September 10<sup>th</sup> are 31,900, 348,100, 1,398,700, and 140,700 fish respectively. Relatively small additional Mission escapements of Summer and Late-run sockeye are anticipated to occur as their upstream migration continues in September.

Low daily abundances of Fraser River pink salmon have migrated past the marine areas over the past week. At the Panel meeting on Tuesday, the run size estimate of Fraser pink salmon was increased slightly to 6,200,000 fish. There were no further changes to pink salmon run size estimates today. This final in-season run size for Fraser pink salmon is also less than the one in ten probability forecast level of 7,661,000 fish. Again causes are unknown, but are more likely to be related to marine events, because pre-season forecasts for Fraser pink salmon are based on out-migrating fry and fry residence time in freshwater is very short prior to fish entering marine areas where they reside for a period of about 18 months prior to their return as adults.

Given the final adopted in-season pink salmon run size estimate of 6,200,000 fish, there is a small uncaught TAC for Canadian fishers. Consequently, on Tuesday, Canada announced a very limited (2 vessel) pink directed purse seine fishery in subareas of Area 29 (off the mouth of the Fraser River). One of the goals of this fishery was to identify areas where small abundances of pink salmon could be harvested with minimal bycatch of sockeye and coho salmon which were not permitted to be retained. This fishery was unsuccessful in finding abundances of Fraser River pink salmon sufficient to justify further opportunities and as such the fishery was terminated on September 11.

On September 7<sup>th</sup>, the Fraser River water discharge at Hope was 1,990 cms, which is approximately 17% lower than average for this date. The temperature of the Fraser River at Qualark Creek was 15.3°C on September 7<sup>th</sup>, approximately 0.7°C lower than average for this date. River flows and temperatures have remained lower than average for the date. 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. In-season data indicate that portions of the Late-run sockeye aggregate excluding the Birkenhead group continue to migrate upstream much earlier than observed historically. Early river entry has resulted in variable levels of en-route losses in this group since the behavior began in 1995. Fortunately, this migration behavior and its potential consequences were anticipated in the management adjustments adopted by the Panel during pre-season planning. Thus, there were no changes made to management adjustments today and no future in-season changes are anticipated. 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.

The following summarizes DFO's seventh weekly report of ongoing Fraser River sockeye spawning assessment programs. The first surveys of the Upper Pitt River and tributaries were conducted this past week and sockeye are reported to be primarily holding in schools. Sockeye in the Nahatlatch River are nearing the peak of spawning activity. Sockeye in the Upper Chilliwack River are reported to be past the peak of spawn. The Nadina River Channel was operational the evening of August 14<sup>th</sup>; 21,027 sockeye have been counted into the channel to date. Fish in the channel are reported to be in the early stages of spawning and in good condition. The first aerial surveys of the Nadina River and Glacier Creek were conducted on September 8<sup>th</sup>. The counters at Gates Creek and the Gates Creek spawning channel were operational August 7<sup>th</sup>, and 10,072 sockeye have been counted into the channel with an additional 14,967 sockeye counted into the creek upstream of the channel to date. Sockeye in the channel and the creek are reported to be in the early stages of spawning. The counting fence on Scotch Creek was operational on August 9<sup>th</sup>; 5,741 sockeye have passed through the fence to date. Sockeye are reported to be in the peak of spawn and most are reported to be in good condition. Pink salmon have also been observed in the Gates and Scotch creeks. Visual surveys of Early Summer-run streams that are tributary to the North and South Thompson Rivers began on August 10<sup>th</sup>. Sockeye have now been observed in some additional systems relative to the last report including: Huihill, McNomee, Nikwikwaia, Yard and Harper Creeks. Sockeye in most systems are reported to be nearing the peak of spawn with the exception of the Upper Barriere River where sockeye are reported to be nearing the end of the peak of spawn. The Chilko River hydroacoustic site was operational on August 8<sup>th</sup>. Sockeye migration continues to be constant with very few observations of pre-spawn mortality to date. Spawning activity is in the early stages in the North end of the Chilko Lake, while sockeye in the river are reported to be primarily holding. Most sockeye appear to be in good condition. The Quesnel River hydroacoustic site was operational August 13<sup>th</sup>. Sockeye migration into the system has remained steady with some larger groups of fish beginning to migrate past the site. Visual surveys of the Quesnel system began on August 27<sup>th</sup>. Sockeye in the Horsefly River are nearing or in peak of spawn. First surveys of the Quesnel Lake shoreline and tributaries (other than Horsefly and Mitchell Rivers) began this past week. Sockeye have been observed at Deception Point and in Summit Creek and are in the early stages of spawning. The Horsefly spawning channel operations began September 7<sup>th</sup>; approximately 1,000 sockeye have entered the channel to date. The Stellako River hydroacoustic site was operational August 22<sup>nd</sup>. Sockeye migration into the river is steadily increasing. Visual surveys of Summer-run sockeye streams in the North Thompson drainage began Aug 11<sup>th</sup>. Sockeye in the Raft River continue to be reported to be in good condition and in the peak of spawn. Pink salmon have also been observed in the Raft River. A visual survey of the Bridge River was conducted September 2<sup>nd</sup>. Sockeye are reported to be in the peak of spawn. The Birkenhead hydroacoustic site became operational August 26<sup>th</sup>. Sockeye migration past the site is reported to be steady, but abundance is relatively low. Cyclic surveys of the late-run components of the Harrison-Lillooet streams began on August 31<sup>st</sup>. Sockeye in the Big Silver and Cogburn creeks are reported to be primarily holding and pinks have been observed in both streams. The counting fence at Sweltzer Creek (Cultus sockeye) was operational as of July 20<sup>th</sup>; 684 sockeye have passed through the fence to date and 60 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](http://www.psc.org/info_testfishing.htm).

Considering assessed high northern diversion rates for sockeye and pink salmon returning to the Fraser River, and the very low abundance of migrating Fraser River-origin sockeye and pink salmon remaining in U.S. marine waters, effective 11:59 (midnight) September 8<sup>th</sup>, the Panel relinquished regulatory control for the remainder of the 2015 season of U.S. Catch Reporting Areas 4B, 5, 6, 6C, 7, and the majority of Area 7A. The area defined as the Apex in Area 7A remains under Panel regulatory control until October 10<sup>th</sup>, when control will be relinquished as scheduled pre-season. The Apex includes 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.

United States salmon fishing schedules for other species and stocks will remain available for the All Citizen fishing hereafter through the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Hotline in Olympia at 1-360-902-2500. Treaty Indian fisheries provided through the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission are specific to Fraser River Panel managed fisheries and only maintain when the Panel has regulatory control and is actively managing these fisheries in-season. 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:**

Area 29-6, 29-7 and 29-9: Area B seine assessment ITQ (two vessels) seine fishery for pink salmon with non-retention of sockeye salmon closed effective 16:20, September 10 until further notice. (Please refer to DFO Fishery Notice for further details).

**UNITED STATES FRASER RIVER PANEL AREA WATERS:**

Remain closed to commercial salmon fishing.

The Panel will be updated on Monday September 14<sup>th</sup> to determine if an in-season meeting is required on Tuesday September 15<sup>th</sup>. This is the last in-season News Release for the 2015 season. News releases and regulatory announcements can be obtained via [http://www.psc.org/news\\_frpnews.htm](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. 11, 2015

Week of: Sep. 6 - Sep. 12, 2015	Sockeye				Pink	
	Management Group				Total	Total
	E.Stuart	E.Summer	Summer	Late	Fraser	Fraser
Mission passage (includes Pitt, Alouette, Coquitlam)	31,900	348,100	1,398,700	140,700	1,919,400	4,255,600
Catch downstream of Mission	200	24,300	123,600	7,100	155,200	371,800
Accounted run-to-date	32,100	372,400	1,522,300	147,800	2,074,600	4,627,400
<b>Run size adopted in-season<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>32,000</b>	<b>400,000</b>	<b>1,500,000</b>	<b>200,000</b>	<b>2,132,000</b>	<b>6,200,000</b>
Run size forecasted pre-season	16,000	837,000	4,675,000	1,236,000	6,764,000	14,455,000
<b>Area 20 timing adopted in-season</b>	<b>6/Jul</b>	<b>31/Jul</b>	<b>10/Aug</b>	<b>21/Aug</b>		<b>22/Aug</b>
Area 20 timing expected pre-season	8/Jul	1/Aug	7/Aug	17/Aug		28/Aug

<sup>1</sup> 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. 11, 2015

Week of: Sep. 6 - Sep. 12, 2015		Sockeye		Pink	
		Total	Fraser	Total	Fraser
<b>Canada</b>		<b>165,900</b>	<b>164,600</b>	<b>17,300</b>	<b>4,100</b>
	<b>Commercial</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
	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
	<b>First Nations</b>	<b>165,300</b>	<b>164,100</b>	<b>17,200</b>	<b>4,100</b>
	Food, Social & Ceremonial (FSC)	165,300	164,100	17,200	4,100
	Marine	41,000	39,900	15,500	2,300
	Fraser R.	124,200	124,200	1,700	1,700
	Economic Opportunity (EO) & Demonstration (Demo)	0	0	0	0
	Marine	0	0	0	0
	Fraser R.	0	0	0	0
	<b>Recreational</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
	Marine	100	0	0	0
	Fraser R. *	0	0	0	0
	<b>Charter (Albion gillnet test fishery)</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>United States</b>		<b>47,300</b>	<b>46,100</b>	<b>662,300</b>	<b>322,000</b>
	<b>Commercial</b>	<b>45,200</b>	<b>44,100</b>	<b>640,100</b>	<b>319,300</b>
	Treaty Indian (TI)	34,000	33,100	389,100	175,100
	All Citizen (AC)	11,300	11,000	251,000	144,200
	<b>Treaty Indian Ceremonial &amp; Subsistence (C&amp;S)</b>	<b>2,000</b>	<b>2,000</b>	<b>22,200</b>	<b>2,700</b>
	<b>All Citizen Recreational</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b>Alaska *</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>na</b>
<b>Panel-approved Test Fisheries</b>		<b>41,500</b>	<b>37,700</b>	<b>122,000</b>	<b>47,500</b>
	<b>Panel Waters</b>	<b>19,700</b>	<b>16,800</b>	<b>80,100</b>	<b>37,500</b>
	<b>Non-Panel Waters</b>	<b>21,800</b>	<b>21,000</b>	<b>41,900</b>	<b>9,900</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>254,700</b>	<b>248,400</b>	<b>801,500</b>	<b>373,500</b>

\* 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.