



PACIFIC SALMON COMMISSION

ESTABLISHED BY TREATY BETWEEN CANADA
AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
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NEWS RELEASE

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The Fraser River Panel (Panel) of the Pacific Salmon Commission has developed management plans for 2014 Fraser River sockeye salmon fisheries in Panel Area waters.

Pre-season Expectations

Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) provided forecasts of Fraser River sockeye salmon abundance to the Panel, as well as a schedule for calculating sockeye spawning escapement targets at different run sizes. The 2014 cycle has the largest average return of the four cycles of Fraser River sockeye salmon, with an average return (1954-2010) of 13,300,000 fish. The Late Shuswap stock group (which includes the famous Adams River stock) has historically been the main contributor to total Fraser sockeye returns on this cycle and this season it is expected to comprise approximately half of the total return in 2014. The total 2014 Fraser sockeye forecast median or 50% probability level forecast is 22,854,000 fish. The 2014 run size forecast projects a very strong return of Fraser sockeye largely due to the high 2010 brood year escapements for several stocks, including record escapements for the Scotch, Seymour, Harrison, Late Shuswap and Portage stocks. However, the forecast models were extrapolated beyond their historically observed stock-recruitment data range and consequently the run size forecasts for 2014 returns have higher than average uncertainty associated with them. To put the recent forecast uncertainty into context, there is a one in four chance that the actual number of returning sockeye will be at or below the 25% probability level forecast of 12,788,000 fish and there is a three in four chance that the actual number of returning sockeye will be at or below the 75% probability level forecast of 41,121,000 fish. For pre-season planning purposes, the Panel used the Fraser sockeye 50% probability level forecast abundance of 22,854,000 (equal chance that actual return will be higher or lower).

The Early Stuart sockeye return forecast at the 50% probability level is 299,000 fish (ranges from 189,000 to 476,000 fish at the 25% and 75% probability levels). The forecast for Early Summer-run sockeye at the 50% probability level is 4,126,000 fish (ranges from 1,741,000 to 8,470,000 fish at the 25% and 75% probability levels). The Summer-run sockeye return forecast at the 50% probability level is 5,699,000 fish (ranges from 3,393,000 to 10,116,000 fish at the 25% and 75% probability levels), with Chilko and Quesnel sockeye expected to comprise approximately 73% of the total Summer-run sockeye return at the 50% probability forecast. The Late-run sockeye return forecast at the 50% probability level is 12,730,000 fish (ranges from 7,465,000 to 22,059,000 fish at the 25% and 75% probability levels).

The Panel developed its pre-season plan based on the median expected abundance-timing curves for Fraser River sockeye stock-groups in coastal areas (i.e., all marine migration timed to Juan de Fuca Strait, Area 20; Fig 1. shown below) and preliminary forecast that 66% of the Fraser River sockeye will divert through Johnstone Strait.

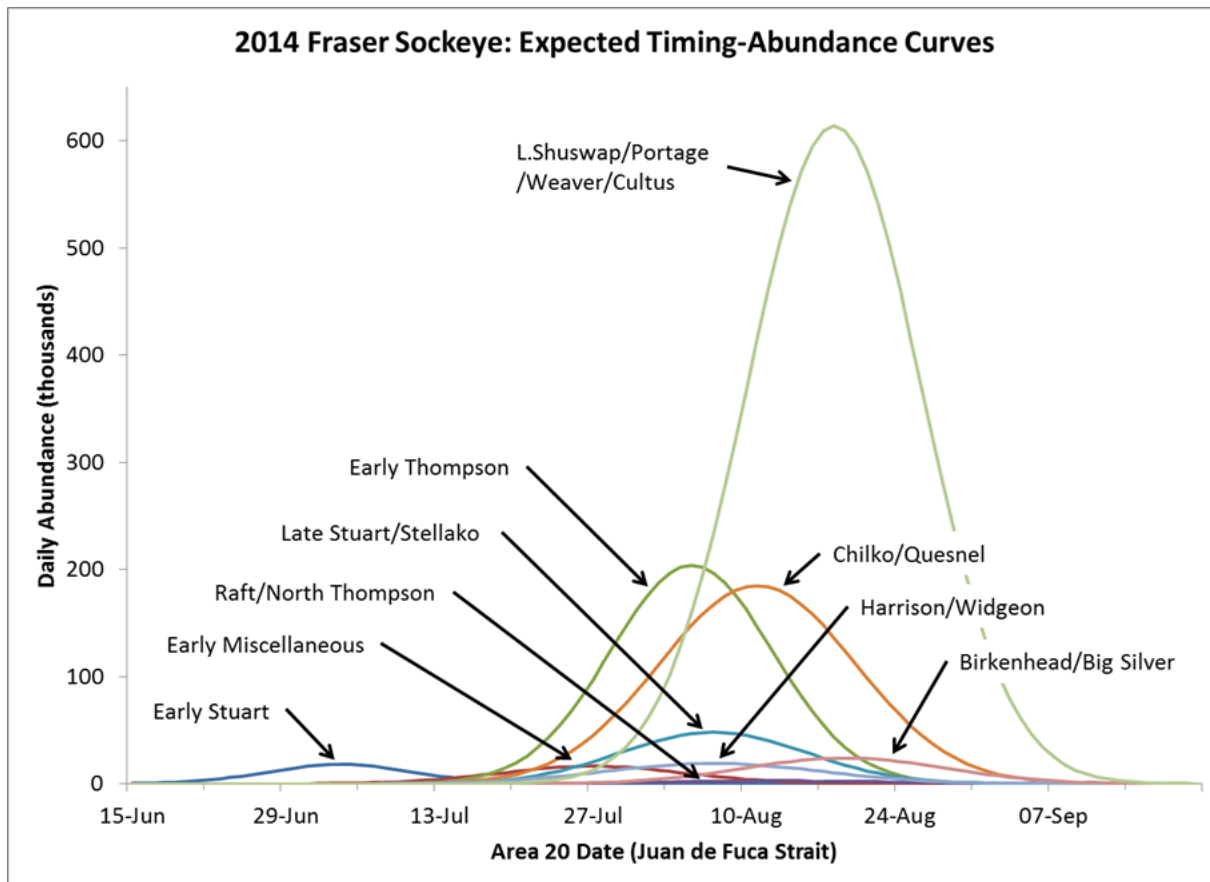


Figure 1. Expected timing abundance curves for Fraser River sockeye in 2014.

DFO subsequently provided pre-season forecasts of timing and an updated expectation for the diversion rate. The updated diversion rate forecast is 50% based on the average sea surface temperatures at Kains Island for the months of May and June. The preliminary forecast 50% marine timing of Early Stuart sockeye through Area 20 is July 7, which is 3 days later than average. The preliminary forecast marine timing for Chilkco sockeye is August 15, which is about 4 days later than average.

The Environment Canada snow survey bulletin for June 15 indicated that high elevation snowpacks in the upper Fraser and North Thompson areas had 20% to 60% of the season’s snowpack remaining. Much of the snowpack in mid and lower Fraser areas has already melted. Stream flows in middle and lower Fraser areas this season are expected to be lower than average this summer. Fraser River discharge measured at Hope peaked at approximately 10,000 cms near the end of May and then decreased in early June to approximately the 6,000 to 7,000 cms range. Seasonal weather forecasts indicate an increased likelihood of above average air temperatures across B.C., particularly in the south and south-west portions of the province. If water flows are lower than average and water temperatures are higher than average this season, they could pose more difficult migration conditions for Fraser sockeye en route to their spawning grounds. The Panel has adopted pre-season management adjustments in response to this potential. Management adjustments are additional fish that are allowed to escape upstream to help achieve spawning escapement targets for Fraser River sockeye.

Management Constraints and Expectations

The problem of early entry of Late-run sockeye stocks has occurred in all years since 1996 and it continues to adversely impact their survival and productivity, substantially reducing harvest opportunities in most years on these stocks and on co-migrating Summer-run sockeye salmon, particularly in off-cycle Adams return years (e.g., 2012 & 2013 cycles). The Panel’s management approach for Late-run sockeye

assumes that, similar to recent years, Late-run sockeye will enter the Fraser River earlier than the long-term average, and some proportion will not survive to spawn. Panel management objectives will place a high priority on achieving Fraser sockeye escapement goals, including those for Late-run sockeye. Additional management actions may be taken by Canada to protect Cultus, Nimpkish, and Sakinaw sockeye. Conservation concerns for other species and stocks identified by Canada and the United States will be taken into account throughout the management season.

If the abundance of Early Summer-run and Summer-run sockeye is tracking near the 50% probability level forecasts and the runs arrive at or near expected dates, low impact commercial fisheries would be expected to commence during the last week in July in Panel waters. Actual fisheries schedules will depend on in-season assessments of abundance, migration timing and river conditions.

In-season Assessments

Gillnet test fishing began on June 21 in Area 20 (Juan de Fuca Strait) and in Area 29 (Fraser River at Whonnock) on June 23. The Fraser River gillnet test fishery at Qualark began on July 3 and the Fraser River gillnet test fishery at Cottonwood will begin on July 14. The gillnet test fishery in Area 12 (near Round Island) began on July 10. Hydroacoustic assessments in-river began on June 29 at Mission and July 2 at Qualark. Recent stock identification analyses from samples collected in the Area 20 gillnet test fishery indicate Fraser sockeye contributions of approximately 60% Early Stuart, 10% Early Summer-run and 30% Summer-run sockeye. The Summer-run proportions are currently confined to the Harrison stock that has an earlier-timed and more protracted migration than other Summer-run stocks. Samples collected from the lower Fraser River indicates that Early Stuart comprise most of the sockeye migrating through this area. At the meeting today, the Fraser River Panel approved a run size estimate of 189,000 (p25 probability forecast) Early Stuart sockeye with 50% marine timing through Area 20 of July 7th. This compares to the 2010 return for Early Stuart of 105,000. The estimated escapement of Early Stuart sockeye past Mission through July 10 is approximately 49,400 fish. In-season assessments of Early Summer-run sockeye abundance should be available in early August after their peak migration through marine areas has occurred. The updated run size estimate for Early Stuart sockeye is within the pre-season forecast range. As indicated above (e.g. Fig. 1), most of total Fraser sockeye return is expected to be comprised of Summer and Late-run stock-groups and in-season assessments of those populations are unlikely to be available until mid to late August after their peak migrations through marine areas has occurred.

On July 10, the Fraser River water discharge at Hope was about 5,500 cms, which is approximately 8% lower than average for this date. The temperature of the Fraser River at Qualark Creek on July 10 was 17.0 °C, which is 1.7 °C higher than average for this date. At the meeting today, after reviewing environmental and stock assessment information, the Panel made no changes to the pre-season management adjustment factor for Early Stuart sockeye of 0.86 as there were not enough days in the forecast to make a formal change. Expectations based on the available forecast water temperatures for the coming week suggest the management adjustment will increase significantly and will be reviewed at the next Panel meeting on Tuesday, July 15th.

Monitoring Plans and In-season Resources

Several additional test fisheries are expected to commence as follows in July and August: Area 4B, 5 gillnet (July 17); Area 12 gillnet near Naka Creek (July 18); (Areas 12, 13, and 20 purse seine as well as Area 7 reef net (July 21); and Area 29, gulf troll (August 11). 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. In addition, Fraser River Panel news releases, fishery regulations, sockeye catch and escapement data and sockeye salmon stock status reports will be available on this website.

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>). Fraser River discharge levels and water temperatures will be monitored closely this summer to guide specific Panel management actions that may be required during the in-river sockeye migratory period to help achieve escapement goals.

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. Non-Indian 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.

All commercial fisheries in Panel Area waters remain closed to fishing.

The next in-season meeting of the Panel is scheduled to occur on July 15. 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.