



# PACIFIC SALMON COMMISSION

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

600 – 1155 ROBSON STREET  
VANCOUVER, B.C. V6E 1B5  
TELEPHONE: (604) 684-8081  
FAX: (604) 666-8707

Our File:

Your File:

No. 6

NEWS RELEASE

August 14, 2013

## Fraser River Panel Curtails Test Fisheries to Reduce Sockeye Impacts

The Fraser River Panel met yesterday to review assessment data on Fraser River sockeye and pink salmon and environmental conditions in the Fraser River watershed. The abundance of Summer-run sockeye remains in the lower range of pre-season expectations. Fraser River temperatures remained at record high levels (>21 °C) over the weekend and are forecast to remain at elevated levels for the next week. Sustained exposure to river temperatures in this range is likely to cause significant pre-spawn and en route mortality of sockeye salmon migrating upstream to spawn. Over the last several days, Fraser River water temperatures have exceeded those observed in 2004 when less than 30% of the potential escapement of Summer-run sockeye reached their spawning areas. Although assessments of both Summer-run abundance and the impacts of environmental conditions are ongoing and estimates will change, the best available in-season data currently indicate a low potential for these changes to result in harvestable surpluses of Summer-run sockeye salmon.

In response to these serious conservation concerns, the Fraser River Panel announced changes to its pre-season test fishing plan in order to minimize test fishing harvest impacts on Fraser River sockeye salmon. In limiting test fishing impacts, the Panel's objectives are to further increase the number of sockeye available to help meet spawning escapement goals, while maintaining certain reduced-impact test fisheries that remain critical for providing sockeye and pink salmon run size, timing, and stock composition data. To limit test fishery impacts, marine gillnet test fisheries in Johnstone and Juan de Fuca Straits were terminated on Monday; four days earlier than scheduled. Until further notice, sockeye and pink retention in marine purse seine test fisheries on both migration routes will be severely constrained beginning August 14, with only a few hundred sockeye and pink salmon retained per week for biological samples critical to stock identification programs. Pink salmon retention in purse seine test fisheries is being restricted so that sockeye salmon encountered with pink salmon can be released from purse seine nets unharmed. Retention of pink salmon in purse seine test fisheries may resume later this summer, if encounter rates for sockeye stocks needing protection are at acceptably low levels. The reefnet test fishery program in San Juan Island and Lummi Island waters will also be suspended today, until further notice. With these changes, about half of the Panel's test fisheries in the pre-season plan will remain operational. The Panel will continue to look for opportunities to further reduce Fraser sockeye harvest impacts in its test fisheries as the season progresses. All remaining test fisheries will be terminated when their data is no longer deemed critical for assessments.

The changes to test fisheries announced today are consistent with management actions taken to date with respect to other fisheries impacting Summer-run sockeye. The Panel has allowed very little commercial harvest of Fraser sockeye in US fishing areas. There have as yet been no commercial or recreational fisheries in Canadian areas directed on Fraser sockeye. In addition, Fisheries and Oceans Canada has informed the Panel that First Nations food, social and ceremonial fisheries directed on Fraser sockeye in Canada are being closed in an orderly fashion.

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) . Note that the catches reported for purse seine will reflect the total number of fish encountered. The number of fish retained for samples will be reflected in the comments section of each daily report.

Environmental data collected in the Fraser River watershed and their potential implications for salmon migration are summarized in biweekly reports issued by DFO's Environmental Watch program (<http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/science/habitat/frw-rfo/index-eng.html>), and will be included in weekly in-season news releases from the Pacific Salmon Commission. 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>. In addition, sockeye catch and escapement data and sockeye and pink salmon in-season stock status reports are available on the PSC websites "Scientific Information" tab ([www.psc.org](http://www.psc.org)).