



PACIFIC SALMON COMMISSION

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

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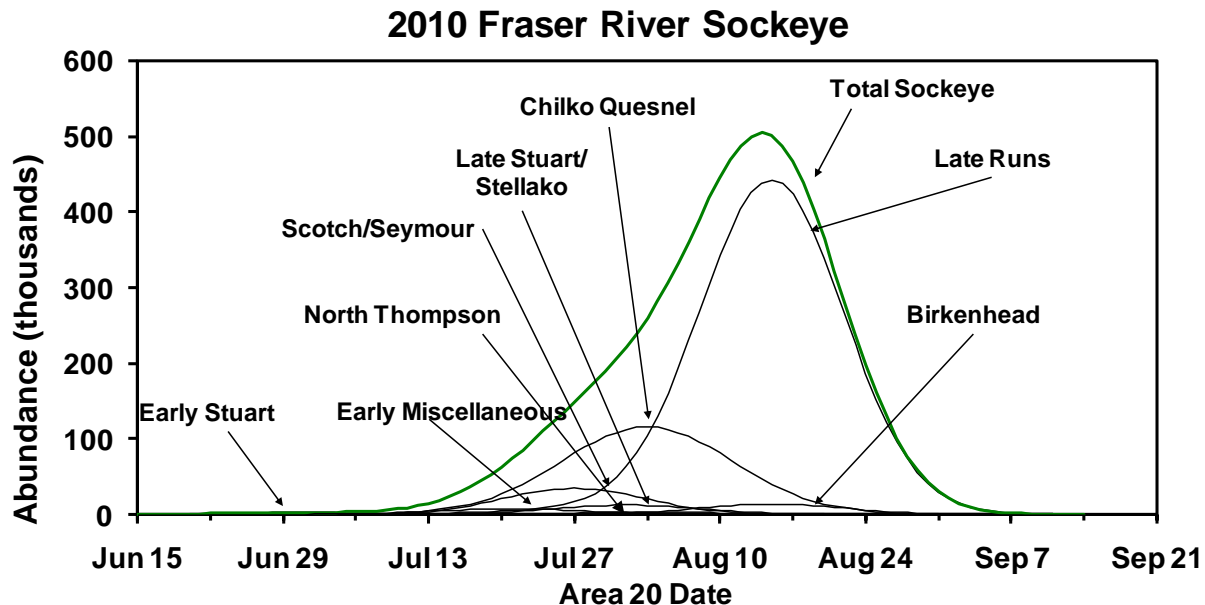
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NEWS RELEASE

July 9, 2010

The Fraser River Panel (Panel) of the Pacific Salmon Commission has developed management plans for 2010 Fraser River sockeye salmon fisheries in Panel Area waters. Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) provided forecasts of Fraser River sockeye salmon abundance to the Panel, as well as a plan for calculating sockeye spawning escapement targets at different run sizes. DFO has advised that Fraser sockeye salmon forecasts for 2010 remain highly uncertain and vary depending on the assumptions underlying the chosen forecast models. The run size forecasts are based on the recent, low productivity exhibited by Fraser sockeye (brood years 1997-2003). There is a one in four chance at the 25% probability level that the actual number of returning sockeye will be at or below 7,028,000 fish and there is a three in four chance at the 75% probability level that the actual number of returning sockeye will be at or below 18,315,000 fish. For planning fisheries, the Panel adopted the 50% probability level pre-season forecasts: 41,000 Early Stuart; 783,000 Early Summer-run; 2,612,000 Summer-run; and 8,003,000 Late-run sockeye.

Expected abundance-timing curves for Fraser River sockeye stock-groups in coastal areas (i.e., Juan de Fuca Strait, Area 20), are shown below.



The forecasts for all of the Fraser sockeye run-timing groups in 2010 are below the cycle year average (1982-2006), which is consistent with the generally declining productivity of several Fraser sockeye runs in recent years. Research is being conducted into possible reasons for the declining productivity of Fraser sockeye. For 2010, Early Stuart sockeye are forecast to return at an abundance of 41,000 fish, which is approximately 36% of the cycle year average. The forecast return of Early Summer-

run sockeye of 783,000 fish is approximately 73% of the cycle year average. Scotch and Seymour sockeye are forecast to comprise almost 60% of the Early Summer-run sockeye return this season. Summer-run sockeye are forecast to return at an abundance of 2,612,000 fish, which is 52% of their cycle year average. Chilko and Quesnel sockeye are expected to comprise over 90% of the Summer-run sockeye return in 2010. The forecast for Late-run sockeye abundance this season of 8,003,000 fish is about 88% of the cycle year average. The 2010 cycle is the dominant-line cycle for Late Shuswap (primarily from the Adams River) sockeye, and the forecast for Late Shuswap comprises 90% of the total Late run forecast.

The problem of early entry of Late-run sockeye stocks has continued every year since 1996 and it continues to adversely impact their survival and productivity, substantially reducing harvest opportunities on these stocks and on co-migrating Summer-run sockeye salmon. Research is continuing on identifying the cause(s) of the early entry behavior of Late-run sockeye. The potential continuation of a high in-river mortality rate experienced by several Late-run stocks is still a serious conservation concern and there is special concern for the very depressed Cultus sockeye run for which recovery efforts have been implemented by Canada to ensure this stock's long-term viability. The Panel is concerned about this phenomenon and the 2010 management plan was developed under the assumption that this abnormal upstream migratory behavior of Late-run sockeye will continue and that substantial in-river mortality will occur. 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 and Sakinaw sockeye.

Commercial fisheries in Panel Areas this year will be directed at Summer-run and Late-run sockeye. Commercial fishery openings are planned for the period from approximately late July to mid-August to reduce effects on the weaker Early Stuart and Early Summer-run management groups. Commercial fishery openings in Panel Area waters in 2010 will be based on abundance estimates and run timing of Fraser sockeye and on their corresponding spawning escapement needs. Assuming that actual, in-season updated run sizes for Early Summer-run and Summer-run sockeye salmon are approximately at the 50% probability level forecast of abundance, and that the runs arrive at near normal dates, some low impact fisheries in Panel Areas would be expected to commence during the last week of July. If the in-season estimated return abundances of Early Summer-run and Summer-run sockeye vary from their 50% probability level forecasts, or the runs return earlier or later than forecast the projected start dates and duration of fisheries may be adjusted. Conservation concerns for other species and stocks identified by Canada and the United States will be taken into account throughout the 2010 management season

The pre-season forecast of the proportion of Fraser River sockeye salmon diverting their migration to the Fraser River through Johnstone Strait is 32%. DFO's pre-season forecast of the 50% marine timing of Early Stuart sockeye through Area 20 is July 2 (2 days earlier than the average for the period 1980-2009); while the adjusted forecast for Chilko sockeye is August 3, which is their historic average timing.

At the meeting today, the Fraser River Panel approved an increase in the run size estimate of Early Stuart sockeye to 110,000 fish. The 50% migration timing of Early Stuart sockeye through Area 20 is estimated to be July 6th, which is 4 days later than the pre-season forecast, and 2 days later than average. The estimated escapement of Early Stuart sockeye past Mission through July 8th is approximately 34,000 fish.

Recent DNA analyses of sockeye sampled in the Juan de Fuca Strait gillnet test fishery indicate that Early Stuart sockeye are the pre-dominant Fraser sockeye population in this area, with Early Summer-run sockeye comprising approximately 10% of the fishery mixtures. In-season assessments of Early Summer-run sockeye abundance should be available later in July after their peak migration through marine areas has occurred.

The June 1 snow-pack update indicated that snow-pack levels in the Fraser River watershed were lower than average and consequently discharge levels in the Fraser River will likely be lower than average this summer. Cooler than average weather in the Fraser River watershed in May and June has delayed snow-melt, which has resulted in a lower peak discharge during freshet and extending the period of satisfactory migration conditions in the Fraser River for sockeye. However, the lower than expected river flows increase the likelihood of above average river temperatures. Long-range weather forecasts project that the estimated mean water temperatures encountered by Fraser sockeye run-timing groups will average approximately 0.5 to 1.0 °C higher than the historic means.

On July 8 the discharge of the Fraser River at Hope was approximately 4445 cms, which is approximately 26% below average for this date. The temperature of the Fraser River at Qualark Creek on July 8 was 15.5 °C, which is slightly above average for this date.

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. 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.

Gillnet test fishing in Panel Area waters began on June 21 in Areas 20 (San Juan) and on June 22 in Area 29 (Fraser River at Whonnock). 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_collections_2010.htm In addition, Fraser River Panel news releases, fishery regulations, sockeye and escapement data, and sockeye salmon stock status reports will be available on this website.

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 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 Tuesday July 13th. News releases in this series will be provided by the Panel through the Commission to inform those interested in the progress of the Fraser River sockeye salmon runs. They are posted on our website (<http://www.psc.org/news.htm>) and can be received via email by subscribing to the Commission's eNews service (www.psc.org see "PSC eNews registration" at the bottom right of the home page).