



PACIFIC SALMON COMMISSION

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

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NEWS RELEASE

August 28, 2009

The Fraser River Panel met today to review stock assessment data on the Fraser sockeye and pink salmon runs and discuss fisheries management plans for the harvest of pink salmon. The marine migration of Fraser sockeye has been at low abundance levels over the past several days, while the marine migration of Fraser River pink salmon through the assessment areas has been increasing. The diversion rate of Fraser River sockeye through Johnstone Strait is currently estimated to be 73%, while for Fraser River pink salmon it is presently estimated to be about 50%. The estimated total non-commercial catch of Fraser sockeye this season is 79,000 fish; harvested in test fisheries and First Nations FSC fisheries. The estimated total catch of Fraser River pink salmon thus far is approximately 25,000 fish, although it will be substantially higher after the catch from ongoing U.S. commercial pink salmon-directed fisheries is included.

The marine migration of Early Summer-run sockeye has extended over a very long period this season with an especially protracted migration of North Thompson River sockeye. At the meeting today the run size estimate of 175,000 Early Summer-run sockeye was unchanged. The estimated escapement of Early Summer-run sockeye past Mission through August 27 is approximately 155,000 fish.

At the meeting on August 25, the Panel reduced the run size estimate of 700,000 Summer-run sockeye to 650,000 fish and at the meeting today the run size estimate was unchanged. The estimated escapement of Summer-run sockeye past Mission through August 27 is approximately 556,000 fish.

At the August 25 meeting, the Panel reduced the run size estimate for the Birkenhead stock-group from 100,000 fish, to 60,000 fish with 50% migration timing through Area 20 of August 12 which is one day later than expected. This run size estimate was unchanged at the meeting today. The estimated escapement of Birkenhead sockeye past Mission through August 27 is 40,000 fish.

Data collected by the gulf troll test fishery suggests that over 100,000 True Late-run sockeye may be delaying in the lower Strait of Georgia prior to entering the Fraser River. The proportion of True Late-run sockeye currently delaying is unusually high relative to recent years when most True Late-run sockeye migrated upstream with little or no delay. If this pattern of marine-area delay continues, it could increase the en route survival and spawning success of these delaying True Late-run sockeye. At the meeting today, the run size estimate of 200,000 Harrison sockeye was unchanged, while the Panel approved a decrease in the run size estimate of 250,000 Weaver/Late Shuswap to 200,000 fish. The estimated total True Late-run sockeye abundance is now 400,000 fish (which exceeds their 75% probability level forecast of 323,000 fish), with 50% migration timing through Area 20 of August 10, which is two days earlier than expected. The estimated escapement of True Late-run sockeye past Mission through August 27 is approximately 195,000 fish.

The estimated total Fraser sockeye return this season is currently 1,370,000 fish, which is less than half of the 90% probability level forecast of 3,556,000 fish. This total run size estimate is based on current estimates of: 85,000 Early Stuart; 175,000 Early Summer-run; 650,000 Summer-run; 60,000 Birkenhead; and 400,000 True Late-run sockeye.

Test fishing catches of pink salmon by purse seines in both marine approach areas have increased in recent days. DNA analyses of pink salmon sampled from the marine area test fisheries earlier this week indicate average contributions of approximately 60% Fraser River pink salmon. There is still considerable uncertainty in run size assessments of Fraser River pink salmon; however they are currently tracking abundance levels near or exceeding their 50% probability level forecast of 17,535,000 fish, depending on assumptions about their marine migration timing. A run size estimate for Fraser River pink salmon should be available next week, after their peak migration period through the marine assessment areas has occurred. Abundance levels in this range are sufficient to support commercial fisheries; subject to conservation needs for Fraser River sockeye salmon that are still migrating through areas where fisheries may occur as well as other species of concern.

Fraser River environmental conditions are currently satisfactory for the migration of Fraser River sockeye and pink salmon. On August 27 the Fraser River discharge at Hope was approximately 2,300 cms, which is about 23% lower than normal, while the water temperature at Qualark Creek was 17.5 °C, which is 0.8 °C higher than average for this date. Water temperatures are forecast to decrease to 16.3 °C by September 5. At the meeting on August 25, after reviewing environmental and stock assessment information, the Panel approved an increase in the management adjustment factor for Summer-run sockeye from 0.21 to 0.28. Management adjustments are employed to help achieve spawning escapement targets for Fraser River sockeye salmon.

DFO's spawning ground enumeration programs are underway at several locations throughout the Fraser River watershed. Enumeration of Early Stuart sockeye is complete and a total of approximately 7,200 sockeye escaped past the enumeration fences on Forfar, Gluske, and Dust Creeks in the Early Stuart system, which is one-third of the brood year (2005) level of about 21,600 fish. Observers at the enumeration fence on Scotch Creek have counted approximately 600 sockeye past the fence through August 24. Approximately, 1,400 sockeye have entered the Gates Creek spawning channel through August 23. Operators at the Nadina River spawning channel report that approximately 700 sockeye had passed through the counting fence and were in the channel as of August 24. The first Chilko sockeye was observed at Henry's Bridge on August 19, however, observers are reporting poor counting conditions due to high water levels and high turbidity. Cultus sockeye migrating through the enumeration fence on Sweltzer Creek total seven fish as of August 23.

The Panel announced the following regulations for Panel Area waters:

CANADIAN FRASER RIVER PANEL AREA WATERS:

Area 18-4: Open for Area H troll ITQ fishery for pink salmon with non-retention of sockeye salmon 12:01 a.m. Sunday, August 30 until further notice (Please refer to DFO Fishery Notice for further details).

UNITED STATES FRASER RIVER PANEL AREA WATERS:

TREATY INDIAN FISHERY:

Areas 6, 7, and 7A: As previously announced, open to net fishing from 5:00 a.m., Friday, August 28, 2009 to 8:00 a.m. Saturday, August 29, 2009.

Areas 6, 7, and 7A: Open to net fishing from 5:00 a.m., Sunday, August 30, 2009 to 8:00 a.m. Monday, August 31, 2009 and from 5:00 a.m. Tuesday, September 1, 2009 to 8:00 a.m. Wednesday, September 2, 2009 southerly and easterly of a straight line drawn from the Iwersen's Dock on Point Roberts in the State of Washington to the Georgina Point Light at the entrance to Active Pass in the Province of British Columbia.

Areas 4B, 5 and 6C: As previously announced, open to drift gillnets from 12:00 p.m. (noon), Wednesday, August 26, 2009 to 12:00 p.m. (noon) Saturday, August 29, 2009.

Areas 4B, 5 and 6C: Extended for drift gillnets from 12:00 p.m. (noon), Saturday, August 29, 2009 to 12:00 p.m. (noon) Wednesday, September 2, 2009.

NON INDIAN FISHERY:

Area 7 and 7A: Open to purse seines for pink salmon with non-retention of sockeye salmon from 5:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Saturday, August 29, 2009; and 5:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Monday, August 31, 2009 southerly and easterly of a straight line drawn from the Iwersen's Dock on Point Roberts in the State of Washington to the Georgina Point Light at the entrance to Active Pass in the Province of British Columbia.

Area 7 and 7A: Open to gillnets for pink salmon with non-retention of sockeye salmon from 8:00 a.m. to 11:59 p.m. (midnight) Saturday, August 29, 2009; and 8:00 a.m. to 11:59 p.m. (midnight), Monday, August 31, 2009 southerly and easterly of a straight line drawn from the Iwersen's Dock on Point Roberts in the State of Washington to the Georgina Point Light at the entrance to Active Pass in the Province of British Columbia.

Areas 7 and 7A: As previously announced, open to reefnets for pink salmon with non-retention of sockeye salmon from 5:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Wednesday, August 26, 2009; 5:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Thursday, August 27, 2009; and from 5:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Friday, August 28, 2009.

Areas 7 and 7A: Open to reefnets for pink salmon with non-retention of sockeye salmon from 5:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Saturday, August 30, 2009; 5:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Sunday, August 31, 2009; 5:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Monday, August 31; and from 5:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Tuesday, September 1, 2009 southerly and easterly of a straight line drawn from the Iwersen's Dock on Point Roberts in the State of Washington to the Georgina Point Light at the entrance to Active Pass in the Province of British Columbia.

(Note: U. S. Non-Treaty fishers should check the U.S. hotline and WDFW regulations before fishing as there are additional State of Washington regulations, including time restrictions that may be in effect).

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_2009.htm In addition, Fraser River Panel news releases, fishery regulations, sockeye and pink salmon escapement data, and sockeye and pink 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 and pink salmon in the Fraser River Panel Management Area.

The next in-season meeting of the Panel is scheduled to occur on September 1. 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 and pink salmon runs.