



## PACIFIC SALMON COMMISSION

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

**July 17, 2009**

At the Fraser River Panel meeting today, PSC staff provided an update on the status of the Early Stuart and Early Summer-run sockeye runs. Sockeye catches in marine and Fraser River test fisheries thus far this season indicate that the migration of sockeye has been low. Four-year-old Fraser sockeye are forecast to provide most of the return of Fraser sockeye this season. However, to-date this sockeye age class has comprised a lower than expected proportion of the total number of sockeye that have been sampled in test fisheries. Observations of sockeye passing Hells Gate have also been low over the past several days, which is consistent with the low passage of sockeye estimated by the Mission hydroacoustic program. Although the return of Fraser sockeye has been lower than expected to-date, the total return of sockeye to some other west coast stocks have exceeded pre-season forecast levels of abundance.

The marine migration of Early Stuart sockeye is nearly complete. At the meeting today, the Fraser River Panel decreased the run size estimate for Early Stuart sockeye from 140,000 fish to 110,000 fish, which is close to the 90% probability level forecast of 107,000 fish. The estimated 50% migration timing of the Early Stuart sockeye run through Area 20 is June 28 (six days earlier than forecast). The estimated escapement of Early Stuart sockeye past Mission through July 16 is approximately 100,000 fish.

Early Summer-run sockeye (e.g. Fennell, Bowron, Raft, Gates, Nadina, Pitt, Seymour, and Scotch stocks) will be continuing to enter the marine assessment areas over the next few weeks. The 50% probability level forecast for these sockeye is 739,000 fish. The migration of Early Summer-run sockeye through marine assessment areas has been lower than expected to-date. Assessments over the next week will help in determining if the marine timing of Early Summer-run sockeye is later than expected and/or the return is weaker than forecast. An in-season estimate of Early Summer-run sockeye run size should be available between late July and early August, assuming that their peak marine timing is near average. The estimated escapement of Early Summer-run sockeye past Mission through July 16 is approximately 28,000 fish.

Migration conditions for sockeye entering the Fraser River are presently satisfactory. On July 16 the Fraser River discharge at Hope was approximately 4,700 cms, which is about 15% lower than normal, while the water temperature at Qualark Creek was 17.2 °C, which is 1.2 °C higher than average for this date. Fraser River water temperatures are forecast to reach approximately 19 °C over the next ten days. Water temperatures exceeding 19 °C may stress sockeye and slow their upstream migration. At the meeting today, after reviewing environmental and stock assessment information, the Panel approved an increase in the management adjustment factor for Early Stuart sockeye from 0.33 to 0.49. Management adjustments for Fraser sockeye are typically applied when the runs encounter adverse river migration conditions attributable to high river temperatures and flows. The adjustments are intended to compensate for natural, environmental, or stock assessment factors and help allow additional fish to escape and reach the spawning grounds at target levels.

The Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans recently announced that the exploitation rate limit for Cultus Lake sockeye in 2009 will be 20%. Fishing plans will reflect this exploitation rate limit.

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](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.

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 21. 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.