



PACIFIC SALMON COMMISSION

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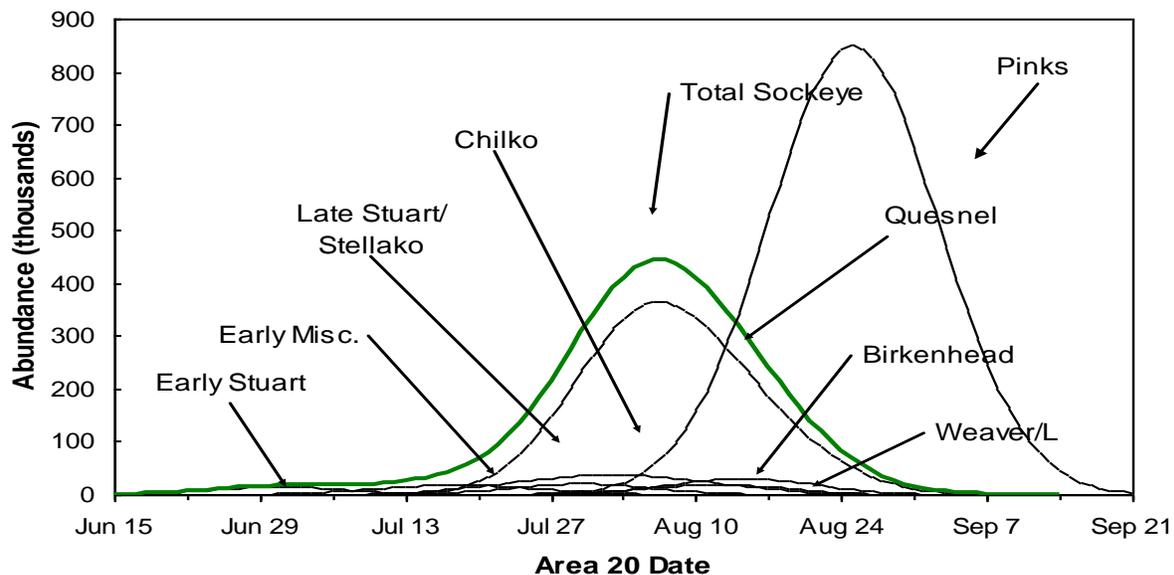
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NEWS RELEASE

July 10, 2009

The Fraser River Panel (Panel) of the Pacific Salmon Commission has developed management plans for 2009 Fraser River sockeye and pink salmon fisheries in Panel Area waters. Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) provided forecasts of Fraser River sockeye and pink salmon abundance to the Panel, as well as a schedule for calculating sockeye spawning escapement targets at different run sizes. For planning fisheries, the Panel adopted the 75% probability level pre-season forecast for Early Stuart sockeye (165,000 fish), and the 50% probability level pre-season forecasts for Early Summer-run (739,000 fish), Summer-run (8,677,000 fish), Birkenhead (334,000 fish), True Late-run (573,000 fish) and for Fraser River pink salmon (17,535,000 fish).

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



The 2009 cycle is the dominant cycle for Early Stuart sockeye. The brood year (2005) escapement of Early Stuart sockeye was 55% below the recent cycle year average. The 75% probability level forecast of 165,000 fish is closer to the recently observed returns of Early Stuart sockeye than the 50% probability level forecast of 255,000 fish. The forecast return of Early Summer-run sockeye exceeds the recent cycle average. The 2009 cycle is the dominant cycle for Quesnel and Late Stuart Summer-run sockeye. An estimated 77 million Chilko smolts out-migrated in 2007, which is the highest on record for

this stock; however the overall forecast for Summer-run sockeye abundance this season is lower than average on this cycle. The 2009 cycle is the second off-line cycle for Adams River sockeye, and True Late-run sockeye have historically experienced small returns on this cycle line relative to Summer-run sockeye, with Weaver Creek sockeye the primary Late-run stock. The forecast for True Late-run sockeye abundance this season is lower than average on this cycle.

An estimated 497,000,000 Fraser River pink salmon fry out-migrated in 2008, which exceeds the average of 376,000,000 fry. The 50% probability level forecast of 17,535,000 adult Fraser pinks this season exceeds the average return of approximately 12,000,000 fish.

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. The in-river mortality rate of Late-run sockeye has varied substantially since 1996. However, the high in-river mortality rate experienced by several Late-run stocks continues to pose a serious conservation problem and there is a special concern for Cultus sockeye for which recovery efforts have been implemented by Canada to ensure this stock's long term viability. The Panel remains concerned about this phenomenon and the 2009 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 and actions implemented in 2009 will place a high priority on conserving Fraser River Late-run sockeye (which include Cultus Lake sockeye).

Commercial fisheries in Panel Areas this year will be directed at Summer-run sockeye, with fisheries openings concentrated in late July and early August to reduce effects on the weaker Early Stuart, Early Summer-run and Late-run sockeye stock groupings. Commercial fishery openings in Panel Area waters in 2009 will be based on abundance estimates and run timing of sockeye and pink salmon, 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 week of July 19 to 25. If the in-season estimated return abundances of Early Summer-run and Summer-run sockeye vary from the 50% probability level forecasts, 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 2009 management season. Fisheries targeting Fraser River pink salmon will be constrained by conservation requirements approved by the Panel for Late-run sockeye stocks until late in the season, after the majority of Late-run sockeye have cleared marine waters.

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 4 (1 day later than average); while for Chilko sockeye it is August 3, which is their historic average timing.

At the meeting today, the Fraser River Panel approved a decrease in the run size estimate of Early Stuart sockeye from their 75% probability level forecast of abundance of 165,000 fish to 140,000 fish. The 50% migration timing of Early Stuart sockeye through Area 20 is estimated to be June 29, which is five days earlier than the pre-season forecast. The estimated escapement of Early Stuart sockeye past Mission through July 9 is approximately 91,000 fish.

Recent DNA analyses of sockeye sampled in the Juan de Fuca Strait gillnet test fishery indicate that Early Stuart sockeye are still the dominant run-timing group in this area, with Early Summer-run sockeye comprising approximately one-third of the fishery mixtures and Summer-run sockeye comprising low proportions. 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 the upper Fraser River watershed was above normal, while levels in the mid and lower portions of the watershed were below normal. The warm weather in the Fraser River watershed through much of June has reduced the snow-pack. On July 9 the discharge of the Fraser River at Hope was approximately 4,600 cms, which is approximately 23% lower than average for this date. The temperature of the Fraser River at Qualark Creek on July 9 was 15.8 °C, which is 0.4 °C higher than average for this date. At the meeting today, after reviewing environmental and stock assessment information, the Panel approved a decrease in the management adjustment factor for Early Stuart sockeye from the pre-season estimate of 0.46 to 0.33. Management adjustments are employed to help achieve spawning escapement targets for Fraser River sockeye. Present long-range forecasts project that Early Stuart, Early Summer-run and Summer-run sockeye will encounter lower than average Fraser River discharge this season while water temperatures will be slightly above average.

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 22 in Areas 20 (San Juan) and 29 (Fraser River at Whonnock). The gillnet test fishery at Cottonwood in the Fraser River began on July 6. 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.

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 14. 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.