

Friday, August 7, 2009

The Fraser River Panel met Friday, August 7 to receive an update on the migration of the Fraser River sockeye runs and review the status of migration conditions in the Fraser River watershed.

Based on pre-season forecasts, the maximum daily Fraser sockeye migration through the marine assessment areas was projected to be occurring now. However, test fishing catches over the past week indicate that the migration of Fraser sockeye through both the northern and southern approach routes continues to track far below expectations. The run size estimate for Early Summer-run sockeye of 150,000 fish was unchanged at the meeting today. Estimates of the run size of Summer-run sockeye are still highly uncertain because their peak migration timing through marine assessment areas is not yet known. Given the current assessment data and their expected marine timing, current estimates of Summer-run sockeye run size are considerably below their 90% probability level forecast of 2,858,000 fish and are less than those needed to provide harvestable surpluses. A more accurate assessment of the run size of Summer-run sockeye should be available next week. It is still early in the marine migration of most Late-run sockeye stocks. Assessments of Late-run sockeye abundance and marine timing will be provided over the next few weeks. The expected peak migration of Fraser River pink salmon through Juan de Fuca Strait is late August. Assessments of their migratory timing, stock composition and abundance will be conducted over the next several weeks.

Migration conditions for sockeye entering the Fraser River have been adverse for the past two weeks. On August 6 the Fraser River water temperature at Qualark Creek was 19.6 °C, which is 1.9 °C higher than average for this date. Water temperatures in this range may cause increased pre-spawning mortality of Fraser River sockeye. Due to cooler weather in the Fraser River watershed, water temperatures are forecast to decrease to 19.2 °C by August 15.

Due to the low abundance of Fraser sockeye thus far this season, there have been no directed commercial fisheries for Fraser River sockeye. All commercial fisheries in Panel Area waters remain closed to fishing at the present time.

The next in-season meeting of the Panel is scheduled to occur on August 11, 2009.