

Tuesday, August 18, 2009

The Fraser River Panel met Tuesday, August 18 to receive an update on the migration of the Fraser River sockeye and pink salmon runs and review the status of migration conditions in the Fraser River watershed.

Test fishing catches of Fraser sockeye have continued to be generally low over the past several days. However, the marine migration of some Fraser sockeye stocks is more protracted than was expected, which has caused some run size assessments to increase slightly. At the meeting today, the run size estimate of 175,000 Early Summer-run sockeye was unchanged, while the estimate of 600,000 Summer-run sockeye was increased to 700,000 fish with 50% marine timing through Area 20 of August 6. The Panel adopted a run size estimate of 100,000 fish for the Birkenhead stock-group, which is below their 90% probability level forecast of 132,000 fish. Their estimated 50% marine timing through Area 20 is August 18, which is seven days later than expected. At the meeting today, the run size estimate of Harrison sockeye was increased from 150,000 fish to 200,000 fish, which exceeds their 25% probability level forecast of 160,000 fish. The estimated peak marine timing of Harrison sockeye through Area 20 is August 8, which is five days later than expected. The Panel also approved a run size estimate for Weaver/Shuswap sockeye of 250,000 fish, which is slightly below their 75% probability level forecast of 277,000 fish. Their estimated 50% marine timing through Area 20 is August 19, which is seven days later than expected. The estimate of total True Late-run sockeye abundance is 450,000 fish, which is the sum of the estimates of Harrison and Weaver/Shuswap sockeye abundances. The estimated total Fraser sockeye return this season is currently 1,510,000 fish, which is less than half of their 90% probability level forecast of 3,556,000 fish.

Test fishing catches of pink salmon in marine areas have generally been increasing over the past week. Assessments of the abundance of Fraser River pink salmon will be made near their expected peak migration through the marine approach areas, which usually occurs in late August.

On August 17 the Fraser River discharge at Hope was approximately 2,800 cms, which is 20% lower than average for this date, while the water temperature at Qualark Creek was 18.1 °C, which is 0.6 °C higher than average for this date. Fraser River water temperatures are forecast to increase to almost 20 °C by August 26. Water temperatures exceeding 19 °C may cause stress to sockeye and slow their upstream migration.

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 21, 2009.