



PACIFIC SALMON COMMISSION

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

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No. 3

NEWS RELEASE

July 25, 2008

The Fraser River Panel met Thursday, July 24 to examine biological and other assessment data on Fraser River sockeye salmon and discuss fisheries plans. Estimates of Fraser sockeye abundance thus far this season are generally exceeding the pre-season forecast, which is positive given the extremely adverse river conditions (high water temperatures) that occurred in the 2004 brood year for most of the adult sockeye now returning to the Fraser River. Assessments of the marine timing of the Fraser sockeye runs that have returned to-date indicate that they are earlier than average. Cooler marine water temperatures, ocean currents and slightly larger than average body size of adult Fraser sockeye are likely contributing to the early marine timing that is being observed. The diversion rate of Fraser River sockeye through Johnstone Strait is presently low and is estimated at 12%. The migration of sockeye past Mission and Hells Gate has been steady over the past several days. In United States Panel waters, Treaty Indian fisheries in Areas 4B, 5, and 6C have caught approximately 14,000 Fraser sockeye to-date. First Nations FCS fisheries in the Fraser River, total 65,000 fish thus far.

At the Panel meeting on July 22, the Panel adopted a run size estimate of 500,000 Early Summer-run sockeye, which is substantially higher than their 50% probability level forecast of 349,000 fish. DNA analyses indicate that Early Summer-run sockeye currently comprise approximately 20% of the Fraser sockeye migrating through marine assessment areas. Assessments suggest that their marine timing is several days earlier than their expected 50% arrival timing in Area 20 of July 24. The estimated escapement of Early Summer-run sockeye past Mission through July 23 is 246,000 fish.

Summer-run sockeye currently comprise approximately 70% of the sockeye migrating through the marine approach areas. While it is too early in their migration to update their run size, assessments of their abundance indicate that they are tracking close to their 50% probability level forecast (1,810,000 fish) and their marine migration timing is slightly earlier than expected. A more accurate assessment of their run size should be available next week after their expected peak migration through marine assessment areas has occurred. The estimated escapement of Summer-run sockeye past Mission through July 23 is 150,000 fish.

Migration conditions for sockeye in the Fraser River are currently satisfactory. On July 23, the Fraser River discharge at Hope was about 3,900 cms, which is approximately 25% lower than average, while the water temperature of the Fraser River at Qualark Creek was 17.3 °C, which is about 0.5 °C warmer than average

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans has initiated spawning ground assessments in the Early Stuart system, with enumeration fences installed on Forfar and Gluske creeks. The first sockeye passed the Gluske Creek fence on July 23. An enumeration fence has not been installed on Kynock Creek due to several high-water channels above the site that have adversely affected the configuration of the stream-bed where the fence is usually installed.

At the meeting on July 24, the Panel announced the following regulations for Panel Area waters:

CANADIAN FRASER RIVER PANEL AREA WATERS:

Area 20-1, 3, 4: Open to Area B purse seine, ITQ Demonstration Fishery, 6:00 a.m. Sunday, July 27, 2008 until further notice on a daily basis between the hours of 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. An update on the status of this fishery including the duration will be made on Monday, July 28 at the next Fraser River Panel meeting (please refer to DFO Fishery Notice FN0510 for further details).

Area 18-1, 18-4 and 18-11 and Area 29-1 to 6: Open to Area H troll, ITQ Demonstration Fishery 12:01 a.m., Saturday, July 26 until further notice (please refer to DFO Fishery Notice FN0508 for further details).

UNITED STATES FRASER RIVER PANEL AREA WATERS:

TREATY INDIAN FISHERY:

Areas 4B, 5 and 6C: Extended for drift gillnets from 12:00 p.m. (noon), Wednesday, July 23, 2008 to 12:00 p.m. (noon) Tuesday, July 29, 2008.

Areas 6, 7, and 7A: Open to net fishing from 6:00 a.m., Sunday, July 27, 2008 to 10:00 a.m., Monday, July 28, 2008.

NON INDIAN FISHERY:

Areas 7 and 7A: Open to purse seines from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Friday, July 25, 2008.

Areas 7 and 7A: Open to gillnets from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Friday, July 25, 2008

Areas 7 and 7A: Open to reefnets from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday, July 28, 2008.

(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_2008.htm. In addition, Fraser River Panel news releases, fishery regulations, sockeye escapement data, and stock status reports will be available on this website.

United States fishing schedules during the season are available for Treaty Indian fisheries through the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission at 1-800-562-6142. Non-Indian fishing schedules are available through the National Marine Fisheries Service's Hotline in Seattle at 1-888-858-9319. 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 salmon in the Fraser River Panel Management Area.

The next in-season meeting of the Panel is scheduled to occur on Monday, July 28. Periodic 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 salmon runs.