



PACIFIC SALMON COMMISSION

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

600 – 1155 ROBSON STREET
VANCOUVER, B.C. V6E 1B5
TELEPHONE: (604) 684-8081
FAX: (604) 666-8707

Our File:

Your File:

No. 1

NEWS RELEASE

July 13, 2007

2006 Post-season Update

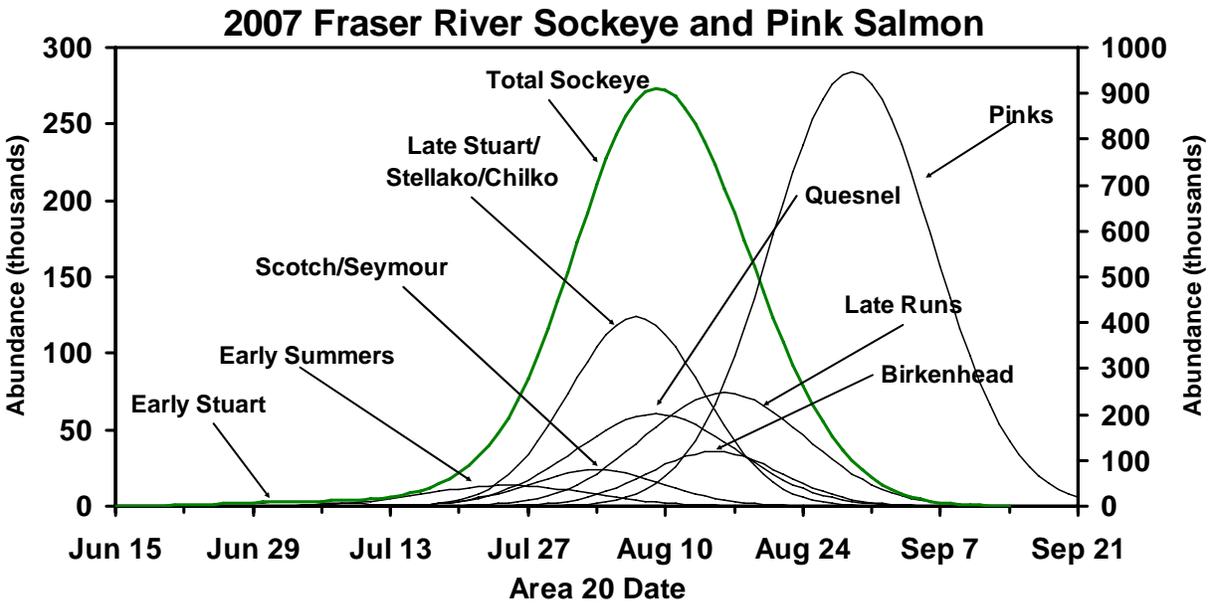
An extensive post-season analysis of data collected during the 2006 Fraser sockeye management season has recently been completed. The current post-season estimates of Fraser River sockeye total return abundances in 2006 are: 56,000 Early Stuart, 1,817,000 Early Summer-run, 2,519,000 Summer-run, 633,000 Birkenhead, and 7,922,000 true Late-run sockeye (excludes Birkenhead sockeye) for a total of 12,947,000 fish. These post-season abundance estimates are similar to those used by the Panel during the period of active in-season management when most fisheries management decisions were made. However, with the exception of Early Stuart sockeye these post-season abundance estimates are substantially greater than the final total in-season estimate of 8,500,000 fish. The primary reason for the increased abundance estimate is that spawning ground estimates of escapement are considerably higher than those projected from the Mission hydroacoustic program after adjusting for catches and in-river survival rates upstream of Mission.

The increase in the abundance estimates has decreased estimates of exploitation rates. The post-season estimate of the Cultus Lake sockeye exploitation rate in 2006 is 34.9%, which is substantially lower than the exploitation rate estimated from the final in-season data, and close to the pre-season target exploitation rate objective of 30%.

The 2007 Management Season

The Fraser River Panel (Panel) of the Pacific Salmon Commission has completed the management plan for 2007 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. The Panel developed fishery plans for Fraser River sockeye and pink salmon at the 50% probability forecast levels of abundance (6,247,000, and 19,570,000 fish, respectively).

Forecast abundances for Fraser sockeye run-timing groups at the 50% probability levels are as follows: Early Stuart, 45,000; Early Summer-run, 690,000; and Summer-run, (e.g. Chilko, Quesnel, Stellako, and Late Stuart stock-groups) 3,369,000 fish. The 2007 cycle is the sub-dominant line for Adams/Late Shuswap sockeye, which are the most abundant Late-run sockeye stock-group on this return year. The 2007 forecast return of Late-run sockeye is 2,143,000 fish (1,530,000 of these sockeye are true Late-run sockeye, and 613,000 are from the Birkenhead and Big Silver stock-group). 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 problem of early entry of Late-run sockeye stocks has continued every year since 1996 and it continues to adversely impact their productivity and substantially reduce harvest opportunities on these stocks and on co-migrating Summer-run sockeye and Fraser River pink salmon. The in-river mortality rate of Late-run sockeye has varied substantially since 1996 and was estimated from radio-tagged fish to be 31% in 2006. However, a consistent pattern has been observed since 1996; Late-run sockeye that enter the river prior to mid-August have a very low chance of surviving to reach their spawning grounds and of the small fraction of fish that do successfully reach the spawning grounds, most females die un-spawned. The Panel remains concerned about this phenomenon and the 2007 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. Research is continuing on identifying the cause(s) of the early entry behavior, however though substantial progress has been made documenting the behavior and understanding the causes of mortality, the causes of the behavior are still unknown. Further background information about this problem and the research being conducted is available on the Pacific Salmon Commission website at www.psc.org. Management objectives and actions implemented in 2007 will place high priority on conserving Fraser River Late-run sockeye (which include Cultus Lake sockeye).

Commercial fisheries in Panel Areas directed at Summer-run sockeye will be concentrated in late July and August in response to constraints for Early Stuart, Early Summer-run and Late-run sockeye. Commercial fishery openings in Panel Area waters in 2007 will be based on abundance estimates and run timing of sockeye and pink salmon, and on their corresponding spawning escapement needs. Based on the assumption that run size estimates for Early Summer-run and Summer-run sockeye salmon are approximately at the 50% probability level forecast of abundance and the runs arrive at near normal dates, low impact fisheries in Canadian and United States Panel Areas would be expected to commence during the week of July 22 to 28. If the estimated return abundances of Early Summer-run and Summer-run sockeye vary from the 50% probability level forecasts, it could change the projected start dates and duration of fisheries.

Fisheries targeted on Fraser River pink salmon will be constrained by conservation concerns for Late-run sockeye stocks until late in the season after the majority of Late-run sockeye have cleared marine waters. Conservation concerns for other species and stocks identified by Canada and the

United States will be taken into account throughout the 2007 management season.

The pre-season forecast of the proportion of Fraser River sockeye salmon diverting through Johnstone Strait is 30%. DFO's forecast of the 50% marine timing of Early Stuart sockeye through Area 20 was July 1 (two days earlier than average); while for Chilko sockeye it is August 5 (two days later than average).

In-season assessments of Early Stuart sockeye indicate that they are currently tracking below the 50% probability level forecast of abundance (45,000 fish); however a more accurate assessment of their abundance will be available next week. The estimated escapement of Early Stuart sockeye past Mission through July 12 is approximately 10,000 fish. DNA analyses indicate that Early Summer-run sockeye (primarily Chilliwack Lake sockeye) have begun entering the Fraser River.

The recent hot weather in the Fraser River watershed has melted much of the remaining snow-pack. On July 12, the discharge of the Fraser River at Hope was approximately 6,750 cms, which is slightly below the level that the first signs of physiological stress to migrating sockeye are typically observed. The water temperature of the Fraser River at Hope on July 12 was about 16.2 °C, which is slightly above average for this date. 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 determine specific management actions that are required during the in-river migratory period to help achieve escapement goals.

Funding has been provided by the United States and by Canada through a Joint Partnership Agreement to the Pacific Salmon Commission staff to conduct normal test fishery operations in Canadian waters in a manner consistent with the recent court case (Larocque vs. Canada). Test fisheries in United States waters are unaffected by the decision and will proceed as usual. Test fishing in Panel Area waters began on June 25 in Area 29 (Fraser River at Whonnock). The start-up date for the Area 20 gillnet test fishery has been delayed to July 14, to minimize harvest impacts on Early Stuart sockeye. The delay in initiating this test fishery this season will substantially reduce staff capability to make in-season run timing and run size estimates for Early Stuart sockeye in 2007. 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_2007.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 [number to be checked]. Non-Indian fishing schedules will be 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 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 20. 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 and pink salmon runs.