



## PACIFIC SALMON COMMISSION

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

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**No. 8**

**NEWS RELEASE**

**August 18, 2006**

The Fraser River Panel met today and reviewed stock assessment data on the Fraser sockeye runs and considered harvest opportunities. Assessments of Fraser sockeye abundance migrating through the marine approach areas in August continue to indicate a steady but lower than expected passage of sockeye. The diversion rate of Fraser River sockeye through Johnstone Strait has increased since last week and is presently estimated to be slightly over 50%. Estimates of sockeye migrating into the Fraser River have increased in recent days.

The proportion of Early Summer-run sockeye in marine assessment areas has begun to decline recently, which was anticipated since these sockeye are now past their apparent peak migration timing through marine areas. However, their relatively strong contribution to fisheries in Johnstone Strait and Juan de Fuca Strait this late in their migration through the marine approach routes reflects a later and larger than forecast return of these sockeye and also underscores the apparent weakness of the Summer-run sockeye run. The Panel adopted a run size estimate of 1,500,000 Early Summer-run sockeye at the meeting on August 17 and at the meeting today a run size estimate of 1,700,000 fish was adopted, which exceeds the 50% probability level forecast of 1,303,000 fish. The 50% passage timing of Early Summer-run sockeye through Area 20 is now estimated to have occurred on August 11, which is ten days later than forecast. The estimated escapement of Early Summer-run sockeye past Mission through August 17 is 533,000 fish.

DNA analyses of sockeye sampled in the marine assessment areas indicate that Chilko sockeye have consistently contributed an unexpectedly large portion of the total return of Summer-run sockeye thus far. Although this suggests strength in the Chilko sockeye run this season, it also highlights the weakness of the Quesnel sockeye run to-date since only 24% of the Summer-run abundance was expected to be from the Chilko stock and about 64% derived from Quesnel sockeye. Furthermore, Quesnel (excluding Mitchell sockeye, which are later-timed) and Chilko sockeye generally have similar marine timing and therefore if they were at abundance levels close to the forecast, much higher proportions of Quesnel should have been identified in the DNA samples to-date.

In the first Fraser River Panel News Release this season (provided at the end of June), it was stated that the much smaller than average body size of Quesnel fry from the brood year (2002) may result in low marine survival. Assessments of the Quesnel sockeye run this season are consistent with this statement since thus far they are returning at a much lower level (currently less than a quarter of the 50% probability level forecast of 4,613,000 fish) than the forecast abundance. This is of significant concern to the Panel since Quesnel sockeye were expected to comprise a considerable portion of the total available Fraser sockeye catch this season. The weakness of the Quesnel run observed to-date has resulted in estimates of a lower than expected Summer-run return and smaller allowable harvests that could reduce future fishing opportunities directed at Summer-run sockeye.

The Panel has been concerned about the apparent lower than forecast abundance of Summer-run sockeye in marine assessment areas over the past few weeks. The Panel adopted the 75% probability level

forecast of 4,020,000 fish at the meeting today. The 50% passage timing of Summer-run sockeye through Area 20 is presently estimated to be over a week later than the forecast of August 9. The estimated escapement of Summer-run sockeye past Mission through August 17 is 533,000 fish.

Late-run sockeye comprise a generally increasing proportion of the sockeye migrating through the marine approach areas. Stock identification of sockeye samples collected from the lower Fraser River gillnet test fisheries indicate that a substantial proportion of Late-run sockeye are currently entering the Fraser River with little or no delay in the Strait of Georgia. Preliminary assessments of Late-run sockeye abundance suggest that they may be tracking a run size lower than the 50% probability level forecast (8,250,000 fish, excluding Birkenhead sockeye). To return at the forecast run size level their marine timing through Area 20 would have to be considerably later than the forecast of August 15. More accurate assessments of their run size will be available over the next few weeks. The estimated escapement of Late-run sockeye past Mission through August 17 is 327,000 fish.

The water temperature of the Fraser River (measured at Qualark Creek) was 18.4 °C on August 16, which is approximately 1 °C higher than average for this date. Fraser River water temperatures are forecast to reach approximately 20 °C by late next week, which could create adverse migration conditions for sockeye en route to their spawning grounds. Fraser River discharges at Hope have recently been the lowest in the historic record and the discharge is presently about 2,050 cms. Based on the previously adopted MA factor for Early Summer-run sockeye and the increase in their estimated run size to 1,700,000 fish, the Panel approved an increase in the management adjustment for Early Summer-run sockeye from 254,000 sockeye to 332,000 sockeye at the meeting today. Environmental conditions will continue to be assessed and management adjustments to escapements past Mission will be changed as required to help ensure spawning targets are achieved.

The peak spawning period for Early Stuart sockeye is complete. The total escapement of sockeye past the enumeration fences on four creeks in the Early Stuart system through August 16 has reached almost 9,400 sockeye, which exceeds the brood year (2002) escapement past the fences. The enumeration fence on Scotch Creek was operational on August 6 and almost 5,900 sockeye have migrated past the fence thus far. The Nadina River spawning channel operator has counted almost 500 sockeye through the fence to-date. The McKinley Creek enumeration fence was operational on August 9, however no sockeye have passed the fence thus far. Chilko sockeye were first observed at Henry's Bridge on August 11 and over 700 sockeye were observed on August 16. The counting fence at Sweltzer Creek has enumerated 160 Cultus Lake sockeye through August 16.

The Panel announced the following regulations for Panel Area waters:

**CANADIAN FRASER RIVER PANEL AREA WATERS:**

Area 18-1, 18-4 and 18-11 and Area 29-1 to 6: As previously announced: the Area H troll: ITQ Demonstration Fishery remains open until further notice.

Area 20 – 1, 3, 4: Open to Area B purse seine in waters deeper than 55 meters or 30 fathoms from 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Monday, August 21, 2006. Fishery may extend subject to by-catch concerns (Please refer to DFO Fishery Notices for further details).

Area 29: Portions of 29-4, 6,7 , 9, 10 and 11 to 17: Open to Area E gillnets from 7 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., Tuesday, August 22, 2006. There will be a possible re-opening of this fishery on Wednesday. (Please refer to the DFO Fishery Notices for further updates that will be available Tuesday evening).

## **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), Saturday, August 19, 2006, to 12:00 p.m. (noon) Wednesday, August 23, 2006.

Areas 6, 7, and 7A: Open for net fishing from 4:00 a.m., Monday, August 21, 2006 to 10:00 p.m. Tuesday, August 22, 2006.

### **NON INDIAN FISHERY:**

Areas 7 and 7A: As previously announced: Open to gillnets from 8:00 a.m. to 11:59 p.m. (midnight) Friday, August 18, 2006. Open to gillnets from 8:00 a.m. to 11:59 p.m. (midnight) Wednesday, August 23, 2006.

Areas 7 and 7A: As previously announced: Open to reef nets from 5:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Saturday, August 19, 2006. Open to reef nets from 5:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Sunday, August 20, 2006.

Areas 7 and 7A: As previously announced: Open to purse seines from 5:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., Friday, August 18, 2006. Open to purse seines from 5:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., Wednesday, August 23, 2006.

(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.htm](http://www.psc.org/info_testfishing.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 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 1-888-858-9319. 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.

Estimated catches and escapements of Fraser River sockeye salmon thus far this season are provided in the table below. The Panel will meet again on August 21 to evaluate the status of the Fraser River sockeye migration and to consider regulatory actions.

## 2006 Fraser River Panel Sockeye Review

Week of: Aug. 13 - Aug. 19, 2006

Date: Aug. 18, 2006

Area	Gear	Weekly Catch	%Fraser	Fraser Sockeye	
				Weekly	Cumul.
<b>Commercial Catch</b>					
<b><u>Canada</u></b>					
A & C Areas 1-10	Net				0
F Areas 1-10	Troll				0
G Areas 123-127,11-12	Troll				170,900
B Areas 11-16	PS				659,100
D & E Areas 11-16	GN				169,100
H Areas 12-16	Troll				196,900
H Areas 18-29	Troll				200
B Area 20	PS				29,400
E Area 29	GN				146,200
Canadian Selective					0
FRA Economic Opportunity					162,500
Canadian Total					1,534,300
<b><u>United States</u></b>					
Alaska	Net&Troll				0
<b><u>Washington</u></b>					
T.I. Areas 4B/5/6C	Net				18,900
T.I. Areas 6/7/7A	Net				194,200
N.I. Areas 7/7A	Net				148,400
Washington Total					361,500
U.S. Total					361,500
<b>Non-commercial Catch</b>					
PSC Test					48,100
Other Test					43,200
Fraser River Aboriginal (FSC)					119,800
Areas 12-124 Aboriginal					32,500
Recreational					0
Charter					100
U.S. TI Ceremonial					500
Non-comm. Total					244,200
<b>Catch and Escapement</b>					
Catch Accounted-to-date					2,140,000
Potential Net Escapement (Mission esc. less Aboriginal & sport catch above Mission)					1,340,500
Total Accounted-to-date					3,480,500

### Gross Escapement (includes Pitt R. sockeye)

Run	Stock/Group	Adjusted Target *	Mission Esc.	FN Below Mission	Total Esc.	% Complete
EStu	Early Stuart	68,500	67,600	400	68,000	99%
ESum	Early Summer	972,500	532,700	56,500	589,200	61%
Summ	Quesnel/Chilko	2,434,900	406,500	49,800	593,400	24%
	L.Stu./Stel.		126,200	10,900		
Late	Birkenhead	5,297,000	5,100	500	372,200	7%
	Adams/L.Shuswap		255,400	34,600		
	Weav/L.Misc.		14,900	2,800		
	Sub 1s		51,800	7,100		
	3 sub 1s		0		0	