



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:

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NEWS RELEASE

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The Fraser River Panel met today and reviewed stock assessment data on the Fraser sockeye runs and considered harvest opportunities. The abundance of Fraser sockeye migrating through the marine approach areas has been lower than forecast thus far this season, although the passage of sockeye through Juan de Fuca Strait has increased in recent days. The marine timing of Early Stuart sockeye was later than average this season and the data suggests that the other Fraser sockeye runs also have later than forecast marine timing. Early Summer-run and Summer-run sockeye currently dominate Fraser sockeye that are present in the marine approach areas. The diversion rate of Fraser sockeye through Johnstone Strait is currently estimated to be less than 20%, however it is estimated to increase considerably over the next several weeks. The Mission enumeration site continues to indicate low passage of sockeye in the Fraser River.

Recent DNA analyses confirm that the marine migration of Early Stuart sockeye is almost complete. The current run size estimate for Early Stuart sockeye is 70,000 fish. The migration of these sockeye is nearly complete and only 60,000 fish have past Mission through July 27. It appears likely that the current run size estimate will not be reached and it will be revised at a future Panel meeting.

The abundance of Early Summer-run sockeye currently migrating through the marine approach areas is presently tracking below expectations, unless their marine timing is several days later than forecast. Assessments of Early Summer-run sockeye run size relative to their forecast run size (1,303,000 fish at the 50% probability forecast level) should be available by next week. The estimated escapement of Early Summer-run sockeye past Mission through July 27 is 32,000 fish.

It is early in the marine migration of Summer-run sockeye through the assessment areas; however, recent DNA analyses of sockeye samples from the marine areas indicate that Quesnel sockeye (which are forecast to contribute over 60% of the Summer-run sockeye production this season) are present in lower than expected proportions, while Stellako, Late Stuart and Chilko Summer-run sockeye contributions are close to pre-season expectations. Summer-run sockeye run size estimates should be available within two weeks, unless their return timing is much later than forecast (50% passage timing through Area 20 of August 9). The estimated escapement of Summer-run sockeye past Mission through July 27 is 10,000 fish.

The 50% probability level forecast for true Late-run sockeye (Late Shuswap, Cultus, Portage, Harrison and Weaver stocks, but excluding Birkenhead) is 8,379,000 fish, while Birkenhead sockeye are expected to return at an abundance level of 433,000 fish (50% probability level). Late-run sockeye returns are forecast to be dominated by Late Shuswap sockeye, while Cultus Lake sockeye are forecast to return in low numbers (5,800 fish at the 50% probability level). The forecast 50% migration timing of Birkenhead and true Late-run sockeye through Area 20 are August 14, and 15, respectively. Recent DNA analyses of marine area sockeye samples indicates that a small proportion of Harrison and Late Shuswap sockeye have already migrated through the marine approach areas. The presence of these sockeye in marine samples is consistent with the typically early marine timing of Harrison sockeye (relative to other

Late-run stocks) and the large return of Late Shuswap sockeye forecast this season. Assessments of Late-run sockeye timing, abundance, delay in the lower Strait of Georgia and in-river entry behavior will be conducted over the next several weeks.

Fraser River water temperatures (measured at Qualark Creek) have exceeded 20 °C over the past few days and record water temperatures for the dates occurred on July 24 and 25. The water temperature of the Fraser River on July 27 was 20.7 °C, which is over 3 °C, warmer than average for this date. Water temperatures are forecast to decline to slightly over 18 °C by August 3. It is likely that a portion of Fraser sockeye that encounter these high river temperatures will die before they reach their spawning grounds. Fraser River discharge at Hope is currently 3,200 cms (31% lower than normal for this date). The weather forecast is projecting cooler conditions in the Fraser watershed over the next several days. If cooler weather and river temperatures in the Fraser watershed occur in August, the migration conditions for the larger Fraser sockeye runs (which will be entering the river over the next month) would be enhanced relative to the current migration conditions. Environmental conditions will continue to be assessed and adjustments to escapements past Mission may be required to reaching spawning targets.

Enumeration fences on four creeks in the Early Stuart system (Gluske, Forfar, Kynock, and Dust) are now operational. A total of 191 sockeye have been counted through the Kynock Creek fence to July 26. Sockeye have also been observed downstream of the other fences as well as in the Driftwood River and several other creeks. The fish are reported to be in good condition and water temperatures are generally satisfactory for spawning.

The Panel announced the following regulations for Panel Area waters:

CANADIAN FRASER RIVER PANEL AREA WATERS:

Remain closed to fishing.

UNITED STATES FRASER RIVER PANEL AREA WATERS:

TREATY INDIAN FISHERY:

Areas 4B, 5 and 6C: As previously announced: Open to drift gillnets 12:00 p.m. (noon), Friday, July 28, 2006, to 12:00 p.m. (noon) Wednesday, August 2, 2006.

NON INDIAN FISHERY:

Remains closed to fishing.

(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. 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.

The Panel will meet again on July 31 to evaluate the status of the Fraser River sockeye migration and to consider regulatory actions.