



PACIFIC SALMON COMMISSION

ESTABLISHED BY TREATY BETWEEN CANADA
AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
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NEWS RELEASE

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The Fraser River Panel met today to review assessment data on Fraser River sockeye salmon. The abundance of Fraser sockeye migrating through Juan de Fuca Strait has been much lower than expected since test fishing began on June 21. Sockeye catches at the test fishery at Whonnock in the lower Fraser River have also been extremely low. The Mission hydroacoustic programs have estimated very low escapements of sockeye since late June. In addition to the weak return of sockeye to-date, the average weight of Early Stuart sockeye thus far this season (2.2 kg., 4.9 lbs) has been much less than average (2.6 kg., 5.7 lbs.), which may result in later marine timing of these sockeye. DFO provided a revised forecast (based on May and June oceanographic data) of the diversion rate of Fraser sockeye through Johnstone Strait this season of 78%.

DNA analysis of a sockeye sample collected in Area 20 from July 3-4 indicated that approximately 65% were Early Stuart sockeye, 31% were Lake Washington sockeye and the remaining 4% were from the Early Summer-run timing group. PSC staff advised the Panel that current estimates of Early Stuart sockeye abundance are well below forecast (258,000 fish at the 50% probability level) and that the total run is unlikely to exceed 100,000 fish. An update on Early Stuart run size will be provided at the next Panel meeting on July 12. The escapement of Early Stuart sockeye past Mission through July 7 is 12,000 fish.

The early-timed component of the Early Summer-run sockeye run (Chilliwack, Fennell, Bowron, Raft, Gates, Nadina, Pitt, and several smaller stocks) currently comprises only a low proportion (4%) of the sockeye migrating through Juan de Fuca Strait. The 50% arrival timing of these fish in Area 20 is normally about July 21. The escapement of Early Summer-run sockeye past Mission through July 7 is 1,000 fish.

Returns of sockeye to other areas (e.g. Barkley Sound and Lake Washington) have also been lower than expected to-date. The Panel will closely monitor the progress of the Fraser sockeye migration over the next several weeks.

Migration conditions for sockeye in the Fraser River are presently satisfactory. The discharge level in the Fraser River (at Hope) is currently 5,350 cms, which is 12% lower than average. The water temperature of the Fraser River (at Qualark Creek) on July 7 was 15.7 °C, which is only 0.7 °C warmer than average.

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_2005.htm. In addition, Fraser River Panel news releases, fishery regulations, sockeye and pink 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. 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 12. 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.