



## PACIFIC SALMON COMMISSION

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

**July 15, 2005**

At the Fraser River Panel meeting today, PSC staff provided an update on the status of the Early Stuart and Early Summer-run sockeye runs. The migration of sockeye through marine and Fraser River assessment areas has continued to be very low over the past week. The Area 12 gillnet test fishery and United States Area 7 reef net observations began this week and will assist in assessing the abundance and migration pattern of Early Stuart sockeye. Few sockeye have been caught in either the Area 20 or Area 12 test fisheries thus far, indicating that the migration of Fraser sockeye has been very low through both the southern and northern approach routes to the Fraser River. Sockeye assessments in the Fraser River at Whonnock, Mission and Hell's Gate also indicate very low passage of sockeye.

DNA analysis of sockeye caught in the Fraser River by the Whonnock test fishery from July 1 to 12 indicated that 98% were Early Stuart sockeye and 2% were Early Summer-run sockeye. DNA estimates from an Area 12 gillnet test fishery sample taken on July 10 were 82% Early Stuart, 14% Early Summer-run, and 4% Canadian non-Fraser sockeye.

At the meeting on July 12, the Panel approved a run size estimate of 35,000 Early Stuart sockeye (far below the 50% probability level forecast of 258,000 fish, which was based on the fry abundance resulting from an escapement of approximately 171,000 fish in the 2001 brood year). The 2005 run of Early Stuart sockeye is the lowest on this cycle since at least 1953, and only a small fraction of the average Early Stuart sockeye run size on this cycle (approximately 900,000 fish). The cause of this very low return is presently unknown; however adverse marine survival conditions may have persisted through a portion of their marine residence period. The estimated escapement of Early Stuart sockeye past Mission through July 14 is 26,000 fish.

Early Summer-run sockeye (e.g. Fennell, Bowron, Raft, Gates, Nadina, Pitt, Seymour, and Scotch stocks) will be continuing to enter the marine assessment areas over the next few weeks. The 50% probability level forecast for these sockeye is 718,000 fish. An in-season estimate of their run size should be possible in late July, unless their marine timing is much later than normal (50% arrival date in Area 20 of July 23). The estimated escapement of Early Summer-run sockeye past Mission through July 14 is 1,000 fish, which is far lower than the expected escapement for this date if the return timing was normal and the abundance was consistent with the 50% probability level forecast.

Returns of sockeye this season to several stocks in British Columbia and Washington are below forecasted levels of abundance to-date. This suggests that similar to Early Stuart sockeye, marine conditions may have been unfavorable for at least a portion of their ocean residence period. Further evidence supporting the possibility of adverse marine conditions is that fact that the average size of Fraser sockeye continues to be substantially smaller than average.

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 5% lower than average. The water

temperature of the Fraser River (at Qualark Creek) on July 14 was 15.8 °C, which is average for this date. Fraser River water temperatures are expected to increase over the next several days due to warmer weather that is forecasted.

On July 13, the Canadian Minister of Fisheries and Oceans announced the 2005 Integrated Fisheries Management Plans for salmon. The exploitation rates for Cultus sockeye and Late-run Fraser sockeye were maintained (as in 2004) at 10-12% and 15%, respectively. The fisheries management plans of the Fraser River Panel will reflect the harvest constraints on these sockeye stocks.

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](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 19. 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.