



PACIFIC SALMON COMMISSION

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

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NEWS RELEASE

August 5, 2005

The Fraser River Panel met today to review the status of sockeye salmon abundance estimates, catches, migratory behavior and escapements. Current estimates of the diversion rate of Fraser sockeye through Johnstone Strait are projected to be approximately 50%. Based on pre-season forecasts, the maximum daily Fraser sockeye migration through the marine assessment areas was projected to occur over the next few days. However, the migration of sockeye through the northern and southern approach routes to the Fraser River continues to track far below expectations. It is possible that the marine timing of Early Summer-run and Summer-run sockeye is extremely late. The apparent weakness in the return of 4 year old Fraser sockeye this season is of increasing concern to the Panel. Most of the harvest opportunities on Fraser sockeye this season depend on strong abundance of age 4 Summer-run sockeye, which were forecast to contribute approximately 88% of the total Fraser sockeye production in 2005. Fraser sockeye escapements past Mission have also been lower than expected over the past week.

In United States Panel waters, Treaty Indian fisheries in Areas 4B, 5, and 6C have caught approximately 500 Fraser sockeye to-date, while a gillnet assessment-fishery in Area 12, harvested approximately 1,000 Fraser sockeye. Non-commercial catches of Fraser sockeye total approximately 31,000 in First Nations and 18,000 in test fisheries to-date.

The marine migration of Early Stuart sockeye this season has been the latest on record, but is now virtually complete. The estimated escapement of Early Stuart sockeye past Mission through August 4 is 202,000 fish. In total, 205,000 Early Stuart sockeye have been accounted for thus far (20 % lower than the 50% p level forecast of 258,000 fish).

The marine and in-river migration of Early Summer-run sockeye has been far below expectations. At the meeting today, the Panel approved an in-season run size estimate of 250,000 Early Summer-run sockeye, with 50% migration timing through Area 20 of July 31 (eight days later than average). This run size estimate is much lower than the 75% probability level forecast of 391,000 fish, and is attributable to the weak return of age 4 Early Summer-run sockeye to-date. The estimated escapement of Early Summer-run sockeye past Mission through August 4 is 113,000 fish.

It is too early to provide an in-season estimate of Summer-run sockeye run size; however their migration through Area 20 is currently tracking far below the 75% p level abundance even with a marine timing projection of eight days later (August 16) than average (August 8). The escapement of Summer-run sockeye past Mission through August 4 is tracking behind the 50% p level abundance expectation (assuming their in-river timing is also eight days late) and is currently estimated at 135,000 fish.

The 50% probability level forecast for true Late-run sockeye (Late Shuswap, Cultus, Portage, Harrison and Weaver stocks, but excluding Birkenhead) is 247,000 fish, while the Birkenhead stock group are expected to return at an abundance level of 277,000 fish (50% probability level). Late-run sockeye returns are forecast to be dominated by the Harrison and Weaver stocks, while Cultus Lake

sockeye are forecast to return in very low numbers (< 500 fish). The forecast 50% migration timing of Birkenhead and true Late-run sockeye through Area 20 is August 13, and 14, respectively. However, if Late-run sockeye follow the pattern of the other run timing-groups this season, marine timing from nearly all stocks would be later than these forecasts. In recent years, the marine migration of Harrison River sockeye has occurred much earlier than the other true Late-run stocks. Thus far this season, assessments of Harrison sockeye suggest that their migratory timing has been consistent with this recent pattern. The estimated escapement of Harrison sockeye past Mission through August 4 is 38,000 fish. 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.

Migration conditions for sockeye in the Fraser River watershed have continued to be generally favorable over the past week. The water temperature of the Fraser River (at Qualark Creek) on August 4 was 17.7 °C, which is slightly above average for this date. Fraser River discharge at Hope continues to decline and on August 4, it was 3,700 cms (11% lower than average for this date). The management adjustment for Early Summer-run sockeye is currently 61,000 fish. These additional sockeye that are added to the escapement objective will help ensure that the target escapement reaches the spawning grounds.

Approximately 3,600 sockeye have been counted through the enumeration fences on four creeks in the Early Stuart system through August 3. Spawning conditions for Early Stuart sockeye are favorable and the fish are reported to be in good condition. The first Gates Creek sockeye were enumerated on July 27, and the total counted through August 3 is 168 fish. The daily counts of Chilko sockeye at Henry's Bridge began on August 2 and none have been observed to-date. The counting fence at Sweltzer Creek was operational on July 29, and no Cultus Lake sockeye have been observed thus far.

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: Extended for drift gillnets from 12:00 p.m. (noon), Saturday, August 6, 2005, to 12:00 p.m. (noon) Monday, August 8, 2005.

NON INDIAN FISHERY:

Remain 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_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.

The Panel will meet again on August 7 to evaluate the status of the Fraser River sockeye migration and to consider regulatory actions.

2005 Fraser River Panel Sockeye Review

Week of: Jul. 31 - Aug. 6, 2005

Date: Aug. 5, 2005

		Fraser Sockeye	
Area	Gear		Cumul.
Commercial Catch			
<u>Canada</u>			
A & C Areas 1-10	Net		0
F Areas 1-10	Troll		0
G Areas 123-127,11-12	Troll		0
B Areas 11-16	PS		0
D & E Areas 11-16	GN		1,100
H Areas 12-16	Troll		0
H Areas 18-29	Troll		0
B Area 20	PS		0
E Area 29	GN		0
Canadian Selective			0
FRA Economic Opportunity			0
Canadian Total			1,100
<u>United States</u>			
<u>Alaska</u>	Net&Troll		0
<u>Washington</u>			
T.I. Areas 4B/5/6C	Net		600
T.I. Areas 6/7/7A	Net		0
N.I. Areas 7/7A	Net		0
Washington Total			600
U.S. Total			600
Non-commercial Catch			
PSC Test			15,000
Other Test			4,000
Fraser River Aboriginal (FSC)			29,100
Areas 12-124 Aboriginal			1,400
Recreational			0
Charter			0
U.S. TI Ceremonial			200
Non-comm. Total			49,700
Catch and Escapement			
Catch Accounted-to-date			51,400
Potential Net Escapement (Mission esc. less Aboriginal & sport catch above Mission)			473,300
Total Accounted-to-date			524,700

Gross Escapement (includes Pitt R. sockeye)

Run	Stock/Group	Adjusted Target *	Mission Esc.	FN Below Mission	Total Esc.	% Complete
EStu	Early Stuart	204,000	202,000	1,000	203,000	100%
ESum	Early Summer	255,000	113,000	4,000	117,000	46%
Summ	Quesnel/Chilko	6,868,000	38,000	3,000	142,000	2%
	L.Stu./Stel.		97,000	4,000		
Late	Birkenhead	356,000	0	0	40,000	11%
	Adams/L.Shuswap		0	0		
	Weav/L.Misc.		0	0		
	Sub 1s		38,000	2,000		