

The abundance of Fraser River sockeye salmon migrating through Juan de Fuca Strait increased over the past week, while the number of Fraser sockeye migrating through Johnstone Strait remained low. It is anticipated that a higher rate of diversion of Fraser sockeye through Johnstone Strait will occur over the next few weeks, since the diversion rate forecast is 64%. The size of four year-old Fraser sockeye caught in the test fisheries has been smaller than average thus far this season.

Recent DNA analyses of sockeye sampled from the Area 20 gillnet test fishery indicate that the marine migration of Early Stuart sockeye is complete. The Panel agreed to increase the in-season estimate of the run size of Early Stuart sockeye today from 25,000 fish to 30,000 fish, which is approximately one-third of the pre-season 50% probability forecast level of abundance (89,000 fish). The escapement of Early Stuart sockeye past Mission now totals 28,000 fish. The 50% arrival timing of Early Stuart sockeye in Area 20 is estimated to be July 4, which is one day later than the long-term average.

Fraser sockeye migrating through Juan de Fuca Strait are now comprised of similar proportions of Early Summer-run and Summer-run sockeye. Abundance estimates for the early-timed component of Early Summer-run sockeye are tracking between the 50% and 75% probability levels of abundance. Estimates of the timing of these sockeye through Area 20 are variable although current analyses suggest that they are about six days later than normal. Pitt River sockeye are presently comprising a much higher proportion of the Early Summer-run abundance than was expected based on the pre-season forecast. The estimated migration of Early Summer-run sockeye past Mission now totals 28,000 fish. An in-season run size estimate for Early Summer-run sockeye will be made next week, after their projected 50% arrival timing through Area 20 has occurred.

Summer-run sockeye (Chilko, Quesnel, Stellako, and Late Stuart) are expected to comprise over 60% (3,360,000 fish at the 50% probability forecast level) of the total Fraser River sockeye run in 2003 and harvest opportunities are focused on this timing-group. The forecast of the 50% migration timing of Chilko sockeye through Area 20 is August 13, which is six days later than the long-term average for this stock. An in-season estimate of Summer-run abundance will likely not be available for at least two weeks, i.e., until after their 50% arrival timing through Area 20 has occurred. Summer-run sockeye escapement past Mission totals 9,000 fish to date.

Migration conditions for sockeye in the Fraser River have degraded considerably over the past few days. The sustained hot weather throughout the Fraser River watershed over the past week in conjunction with the lack of precipitation (and snowpack) has resulted in a large decrease in the discharge measured at Hope (from 4,400 cms on July 18 to presently 3,550 cms). Along with this decline in discharge, water temperatures have increased to 18.8 °C, which may impart physiological stress and slow the migration of sockeye. The rising water temperatures in the Fraser River are beginning to follow a similar pattern to that observed in 1998 when water temperatures exceeded 20 °C during late July and early August and high en route mortality was estimated. The weather is forecast to remain hot throughout much of the Fraser River watershed over the next several days. Environmental conditions for migrating Fraser River sockeye will be monitored closely over the coming weeks.

Enumeration fences have been installed in the following Early Stuart creeks: Forfar, Gluske, Kynock, and Dust. Surveys at these fences began on July 20. No sockeye have been observed at these fences to date, although sockeye have been seen in lakes within the Early Stuart system.

The Panel announced the following regulations for Panel Area waters:

**United States Fraser River Panel Area Waters:**

Treaty Indian Fisheries:

Areas 4B, 5, and 6C:

Open for drift gillnets from 4:00 p.m., Friday, July 25 to 12:00 p.m. (noon), Wednesday, July 30.

Non Indian Fisheries:

Remain closed to fishing.

**Canadian Fraser River Panel Area Waters:**

Remain closed to fishing.

The Pacific Salmon Commission (PSC) 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/TestFish/>. The PSC has updated information on Late-run Fraser River sockeye migration behavior, en route mortality, and research results and plans on the Internet at: <http://www.psc.org/Pubs/LateRun/Index.htm/>. In addition, Fraser River Panel news releases, fishery regulations, sockeye and pink escapement data, and sockeye and pink salmon stock status reports are available on the Internet at: [www.psc.org](http://www.psc.org). United States fishing schedules during the season are available for Treaty Indian fisheries through the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission at 1-800-562-6142. Non-Indian fishing schedules are 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 and via fishery notices.

The Panel will meet again Monday, July 28<sup>th</sup> to evaluate the Fraser River sockeye migration status and to consider regulatory actions.