



WATERSHED TALK

NEWSLETTER

Produced by the Fraser Salmon Management Council

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2023 WATERSHED TALK NEWSLETTER UPDATE

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Today's issue of the WST contains the Fraser River Panel deliberations summary data below with important information to assist readers with better understanding the current fisheries management decisions made by the Fraser River Panel.

Fraser Panel Weekly Summary August 11, 2023

Test fishing and stock identification information

Sockeye catches in Johnstone Strait remain substantially higher than in Juan de Fuca Strait resulting currently in a northern diversion rate of 74%. DNA analysis of a fish sample recently collected from the Area 12 purse seine test fishery indicated Fraser River sockeye contributions of 12% Early Summer, 70% Summer and 18% Late run. Very large increases in pink salmon catches have been observed in marine test fisheries; however, the proportion of Fraser River pink salmon is still relatively low with the most recent sample from Area 20 indicating 18% Fraser pink.

Assessment Results

Fraser River Sockeye Salmon

On Friday, the Panel adopted an in-season run size adjustment for Early Stuart down to 41,000 from 43,000. The timing remained the same, July 2.

As of August 10, 239,300 Early Summer-run sockeye have passed Mission. Proportions of Early Summer run have been declining in the marine test fisheries. Despite the larger than forecasted returns, this group remains managed under a Low Abundance Exploitation Rate, given expected en-route losses within the Fraser River due to adverse environmental conditions. On Friday, the Panel adopted an increase in the Early Summer-run run size to 288,000, with an associated Area 20 timing estimate of July 23.

Summer-run sockeye dominate the proportions of observed sockeye in the marine test fisheries with most of these fish from the Chilko/Quesnel stock group. The Summer run escapement past Mission, as of August 10, is 138,400 sockeye. Based on in-season observations, summer run seems to be either later timed than previously

anticipated (assuming a peak migration timing on August 6) or smaller than preseason expectations (median preseason forecast of 1,167,000) or a combination of both. At the median preseason forecast, this group is managed under a Low Abundance Exploitation Rate, indicating there is no available harvestable surplus.

Late-run sockeye, have been observed in the marine test fisheries, but observations in river test fisheries have been limited as some of the Late run may be delaying their entry into the Fraser River. The accounted run to date past Mission as of August 10 is 8,200.

Fraser River Pink Salmon

While substantial pink salmon have been caught in marine test fisheries, it is still very early in terms of the assessment of Fraser River pink salmon given that they currently make up a small portion of the catches. Only 10 pink salmon have been caught in the in-river test fisheries. To date, 9,100 pink salmon have been observed migrating past Mission.

Migration Conditions in the Fraser River

The extreme low discharge and high temperatures are expected to negatively impact migration conditions for Fraser River sockeye. As of August 10, the Fraser River water discharge at Hope was 2,057 cms, which is 42% lower than average for this date and below the historical minimum. The temperature of the Fraser River at Qualark was 20.5oC, which is 1.9oC higher than average for this date. DFO's Environmental Watch program projects that river temperature will remain high, and discharge is forecast to decrease to 1,866 cms over the next 10 days.

Escapement Update

Visual surveys for the Early Stuart spawning escapement assessment program began July 23 and sockeye are primarily in or past peak spawning in the Middle River tributaries. Fresh sockeye arrivals have been observed in the Takla Lake area. Low water conditions continue throughout the system. Multiple creek mouths are almost dry and while water temperatures in creeks have slightly increased, sockeye continue to appear vigorous and healthy.

Visual surveys on the Upper Chilliwack River started August 1 and water levels are characterized as being very low for this time of year. The Nadina River hydroacoustic site was operational as of July 27 and as of August 5 an estimated 801 sockeye have migrated past the Nadina hydroacoustic site.

The Chilko River and Quesnel River hydroacoustic sites have been operational since August 2. As of August 8, 168 sockeye have migrated past the Chilko hydroacoustic site and 275 sockeye have migrated past the Quesnel hydroacoustic site. Visual surveys started on the Nechako River tributaries August 1, but no surveys were conducted within this reporting period. The Stellako River hydroacoustic site has been operational since July 26 and as of August 8, an estimated 15,099 sockeye have migrated past the site, the majority migrating to the Nadina River this early in the migration. The counting fence at Sweltzer Creek (Cultus Lake) has been fish tight since July 25 and night video recording started July 27. No sockeye have passed to date. The water temperature is 24 C.

Regulatory Announcements & Resources

The Panel announced the following regulations for commercial salmon fisheries in Panel Area waters:

CANADIAN FRASER RIVER PANEL AREA WATERS:

Remain closed to commercial salmon fishing.

UNITED STATES FRASER RIVER PANEL AREA WATERS:

Remain closed to commercial salmon fishing.

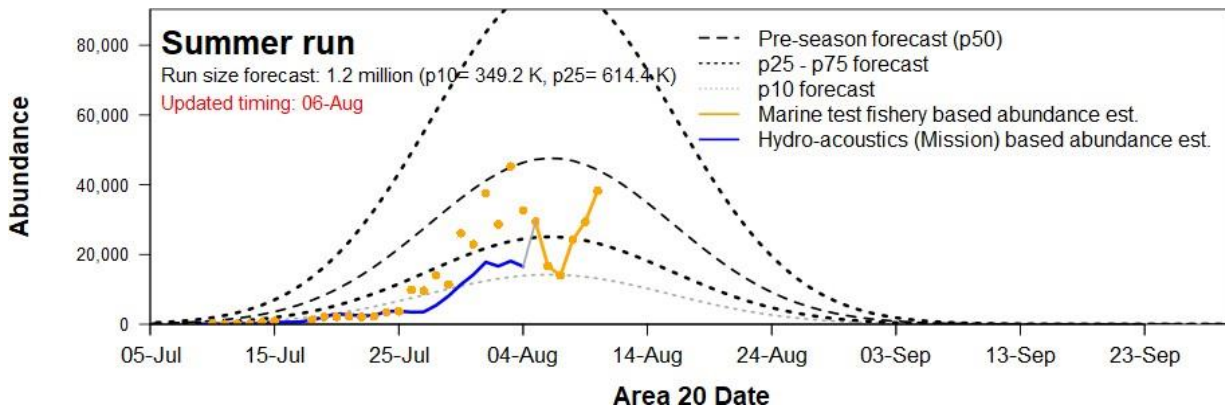
2023 Run status of Fraser sockeye and pink salmon

Date: Aug. 11, 2023

The information presented in this distribution has been prepared by PSC Secretariat staff and should be considered preliminary until reviewed by the Fraser River Panel

Week of: Aug. 6 - Aug. 12, 2023	Sockeye				Pink	
	Management Group				Total Fraser	Total Fraser
	E.Stuart	E.Summer	Summer	Late		
Mission passage (inclds Pitt, Alouette, Coquitlam)	40,900	239,300	138,400	8,200	426,800	9,100
Catch downstream of Mission	200	3,100	3,500	500	7,300	400
Accounted Run To Date	41,100	242,400	141,900	8,700	434,100	9,500
Run size adopted in-season ²	43,000	240,000	na	na	na	na
Run size forecasted pre-season	23,000	186,000	1,167,000	188,000	1,564,000	6,135,000
Area 20 timing adopted in-season	2/Jul	20/Jul	na	na	na	na
Area 20 timing expected pre-season	7/Jul	6/Aug	17/Aug	24/Aug	16/Aug	25/Aug
Johnstone Str. Diversion Rate	In-season 5-day average				74%	16%
	Preseason forecast of annual rate:				67%	62%

² Run sizes are usually not adopted until after the peak of the run has passed through marine test fishery areas in Juan de Fuca and Johnstone straits.



The narrative noted below for this week’s WST is intended to highlight one of our Indigenous communities. This week we are highlighting Lillooet Tribal Council and some of what happens within their community. Thank you to Rebecca (Becky) Riley, Fisheries Manger for your time and submission. <https://lillooettribalcouncil.ca/>



Update of St'at'imc Nation, (Located on the Mid Fraser)

We held a St'at'imc Fish Forum on July 18, 2023. The meeting is to inform all communities and members of our Nation as to what the future holds for the future of fishing.

As we all know the numbers were extremely low because of The Big Bar Landslide. Fishing has been closed, and most communities would not fish even if it were open. Most members agree, if we DO NOT fish while numbers are low, there is a chance of enhancement in the Fraser River, along with the closure of commercial and sport fisheries. We had a few presentations on enhancement going on in rivers and creeks within our own Territory.

Daniel O'Farrell, Fisheries biologist, presented the Xwisten, N'Quatqua & BC Hydro Bridge River Chinook Recovery Program. Developed by St'at'imc and BC Hydro to mitigate the impacts of high flows of the Bridge River Chinook. The hatchery program was relocated to N'Quatqua Fish Hatchery due to rearing space at other hatcheries. Since brood stock and releases started in 2018 the numbers have been slowly climbing.

Jordon Uittenbogaard DFO Fisheries Biologist updated on the Tsal'alh-Seton brood stock collection and releases of the unique run of Chinook at Portage Creek. The run is unique because in June, they travel from Fraser River to Seton Lake then Anderson Lake. The run stays in Anderson Lake holding to let their gametes mature until Mid to End of October. After their break they come back to Portage Creek to spawn late autumn. Most species spawn within weeks after they get to their homeland waters. Since the start of 2019 the numbers have been very slowly climbing.

Jessica Hopkins, General Manager of Splitrock Environmental, Council member of Sekw'el'was and Member of the Joint Planning Forum gave an update from our Joint Planning Forum. Horseshoe bend located on the Bridge River is being surveyed and final road design. This improved habitat will give Chinook, Coho, and Steelhead salmon a place to rest during the high flows from BC Hydro on the Bridge River. Works of sediment excavation and revegetation work at Bluenose and Applespring on the Bridge River. Funding Gates Creek Hatchery and Brood stock collection.

P'eg'p'ig'lha Council (PC) Natural Resource Specialist, Denise Antoine (T'it'qet) introduced the PC 3 Land and 2 Fisheries Guardians. Topic Focus is collaboration with other St'at'imc communities and nations and attending various events. Efforts toward natural resource certifications and obtaining college courses from Environment Natural Resources Technology Certification. Guardians applying for a Registered Status of Biologist in Training (BlT) or Forester in Training (FiT) Field surveys included Ground truthing, observing, monitoring on Traditional lands and occupancy. Hunting and mortality pressures on wildlife include Nonindigenous hunting and back roads being used by vehicles.

Randy Billyboy, Fisheries Manager of the T̓̓ilhqot'̓̓in National Government. (Neighbor from North of St'at'imc) presented their Nation-Wide Fisheries vision; 5-year strategic plan that will protect and rebuild fish stocks, support T̓̓ilhqot'̓̓in fishery for their communities, creating and supporting healthy habitats for fish, career development and employment. Information of why we should be letting certain runs of fish through our Territory, to reach the Upper Fraser Creeks and Rivers.

Ellen Reyes, Environmental Manager, St'at'imc Government Services presented the White Sturgeon Environmental DNA (eDNA) Study within the Seton Watershed. SGS Environment are developing an eDNA assay for Fraser River White Sturgeon and the genetic tool will be used by the St'at'imc to determine that the species persists, or historically has occurred, in the Seton River Watershed upstream of Seton Dam. This presentation outlined the importance of White Sturgeon to the St'at'imc and the need for community engagement and consultation on White Sturgeon conservation issues.

**Salmon Joke of The Week:
A salmon's pick-up line starts with, "Hey
gill, what's up?"**

The next Fraser River Panel meeting is scheduled for 11AM Tuesday August 15th. In-person in Richmond, BC
Fraser River Panel Schedule:

Tuesdays and Fridays 11am.

You can also access the webinar for observing the Fraser River Panel meetings:

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://psc-org.zoom.us/j/88416242194>

Mid- Fraser River attendees please text your questions during FRP calls to Greg Witzky at 778-694-9154. Can also email them to executivedirector@frasersalmon.ca

Links

With Chinook and sockeye approaching and, in the Fraser, these links may be of interest:

BC River Forecast Centre Website: <http://bcrcfc.env.gov.bc.ca>

Environment Canada's Water Office Website: http://www.wateroffice.ec.gc.ca/index_e.html

Pacific Salmon Commission Website: www.psc.org

Pacific Salmon Commission Test Fisheries: http://www.psc.org/info_testfishing.htm

Pacific Salmon Commission News and Regulatory announcements: <http://www.psc.org/publications/fraser-panel-in-season-information/fraser-river-panel-regulatory-announcements/>

Fraser River Mission Escapement Reports: <http://www.psc.org/publications/fraser-panel-in-season-information/fish-passage-past-the-psc-hydroacoustic-counting-station-near-mission-bc/>

Fraser River Environmental Watch Reports: <http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/science/habitat/frw-rfo/index-eng.html>

The Albion Test Fishery information can be found at:

<http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/fraser/docs/commercial/albionchinook-quinnat-eng.html>