



# WATERSHED TALK

## NEWSLETTER

Produced by the Fraser Salmon Management Council

AUGUST 18, 2023

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 4

### 2023 WATERSHED TALK NEWSLETTER UPDATE

By: Kristin Hrapchak, FSMC Executive Assistant/Communications Coordinator

*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 18, 2023

#### Test Fishing and Stock Identification Information

Most of the sockeye have been caught in Area 12 resulting currently in a northern diversion rate of 65%. DNA analysis of a fish sample recently collected from the Area 12 purse seine test fishery indicated Fraser River sockeye contributions of 8% Early Summer, 60% Summer and 32% Late run. Pink salmon catches have decreased in marine test fisheries, however, the proportion of Fraser River pink salmon has increased with the most recent sample from Area 20 indicating 51% Fraser pink. Observations in reef net test gear in the San Juan Islands area indicate that sockeye salmon accounted for 21% of the observations from August 14-16.

#### Assessment Results

##### Fraser River Sockeye Salmon

As of August 17, 292,200 Early Summer-run sockeye have passed Mission. Most Early Summer run have passed through the marine and in-river test fisheries. On Friday, the Panel adopted an updated Early Summer-run run size of 310,000 sockeye with an associated Area 20 timing of July 24.

Summer-run sockeye continue to dominate the proportions of observed sockeye in the marine test fisheries with most of these fish being Chilko sockeye. The Summer run escapement past Mission, as of August 17, is 335,200 sockeye. Based on in-season observations, Summer run seems to be smaller than preseason expectations (median preseason forecast of 1,167,000). At the median preseason forecast, this group is managed under a Low Abundance Exploitation Rate, indicating there is no available harvestable surplus. On Friday, the Panel adopted a reduced run-size estimate for the Summer run of 800,000 and an associated Area 20 run timing of August 13. Late-run sockeye abundances have increased 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 17 is 21,000.

### Fraser River Pink Salmon

Substantial pink salmon have been caught in marine test fisheries, and there is evidence that Fraser pink salmon abundances are greater than the pre-season forecast of 6.1 million. At Tuesday's meeting, the panel adopted an increased pink salmon run size of 8,575,000 with an associated Area 20 timing of August 18. The early timing of pink salmon this year is in line with the trend in recent years toward earlier migration timing, increasing the overlap between sockeye and pink salmon migration. This increases the difficulty to access international TAC for pink salmon while minimizing the impacts on sockeye salmon. Pink salmon catches in test fisheries in the river are increasing and some pink salmon have been observed migrating past Hells Gate. To date, 31,500 pink salmon have been observed migrating past Mission.

On Friday, the PSC staff presented analyses to the Panel indicating that the Fraser River pink salmon run size was larger than the 8,575,000 adopted earlier in the week. The Panel adopted an updated run size of 17,000,000 Fraser pink salmon, with an associated Area 20 timing of August 13.

### 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 17, the Fraser River water discharge at Hope was 2,188 cms, which is 29% lower than average for this date and below the historical minimum. The temperature of the Fraser River at Qualark was 20.8oC, which is 2.2oC 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 1,971 cms over the next 10 days.

### Escapement Update

Visual surveys for the Early Stuart spawning escapement assessment program began July 23 and most sockeye are past peak of spawn and in many tributaries are past peak die off. Low water conditions are still present throughout the system but water temperatures in all creeks have remained favorable for spawning. Sockeye continue to appear vigorous and healthy.

The counting fence at Scotch Creek has been operational since August 11 but no sockeye have passed through. As there is an evacuation alert in the area due to wildfires, the fence has been left open after August 16 to allow for fish passage until crews are able to access the site. Visual surveys in the North/South Thompson system began August 17 but data is not available at this time. In the lower Fraser, visual surveys on the Upper Chilliwack River started August 1 and water levels are characterized as being very low for this time of year. An aerial survey on August 14 and a concurrent ground survey indicated sockeye are primarily holding in the upper Chilliwack River. In the first survey of Nahatlatch River and Lake no sockeye were observed. The Nadina River hydroacoustic site was operational as of July 27 and as of August 14 an estimated 21,562 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 15, 1,025 sockeye have migrated past the Chilko hydroacoustic site and 1,416 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 15, an estimated 43,058 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 has passed to date. The water temperature is 26.0oC.

## 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:**

#### **TREATY TRIBAL FISHERY:**

3 Areas 4B, 5, and 6C: Open for drift gillnet fishing from 12 p.m. (noon), Saturday, August 19, 2023, through 12 p.m. (noon), Tuesday, August 22, 2023.

Areas 6, 7, and 7A: Open for net fishing from 5 a.m. through 9 p.m., Sunday, August 20, 2023.

Canada did not approve of either of the proposed US fisheries due to conservation concerns for Fraser River sockeye.

## **Pacific Salmon Commission**

### **Fraser River Panel Canadian Section First Nations Co-Chair Interim Role and Responsibilities Framework (2023-24) Role**

Whereas there is a collective desire to increase Indigenous leadership within the Canadian section of Fraser River Panel, it is proposed that a new Fraser River Panel Canadian Section First Nations Co-Chair (FN Co-Chair) role for the Canadian Section be implemented for the 2023-24 meeting cycle.

The function of the FN Co-Chair is to bring increased attention to Canadian Indigenous perspectives and interests that are identified and communicated during Fraser River Panel business, including during Panel and Canadian Caucus meetings, to facilitate the development of Canadian positions on specific topics, interests, and decisions of the Fraser River Panel.

The FN Co-Chair will work closely with the Canadian Panel Chair and/or Canadian Panel Alternate Chair to develop, refine and advance common positions that represents the collective interests of Canada and the Canadian Section, through the Fraser River Panel and Pacific Salmon Commission process.

#### **Designation**

The FN Co-Chair will be nominated by the First Nations Caucus and selected from the First Nation Canadian Fraser River Panel membership. Formal designation of the nominated member as the FN CoChair will be made by the Regional Director General, Pacific.

***For the 2023-24 period, Mr. Marcel Shepert has been nominated and designated as the First Nations Co-Chair.***

#### **Responsibilities**

The FN Co-Chair will provide a leadership role/function for the Canadian Fraser River Panel delegation.

The FN Co-Chair will work collaboratively with the Canadian Panel Chair in the development of any Canadian Caucus Agendas.

The FN Co-Chair will work collaboratively with the Canadian Panel Chair as well as their US Counterparts in the development of any Bi-lateral agendas.

The FN Co-Chair will endeavor to define and communicate a cohesive First Nation perspective to the Canadian Panel Chair in advance of Canadian Section and at bilateral Fraser River Panel meeting sessions.

The FN Co-Chair will work closely with the Canadian Panel Chair to develop a united Canadian position and to support advancement of the collective Canadian delegation position during bilateral Fraser River Panel meetings.

The FN Co-Chair will respect the confidentiality of First Nation and Canadian Caucus discussions as may be warranted.

The FN Co-Chair will serve alongside the Canadian Panel Chair at Fraser River Panel and Canadian Caucus meetings.

### **Remuneration**

The FN Co-Chair will be remunerated for time spent delivering their functions and supporting Fraser Governor in Council appointees to agencies, boards, and commissions.

### **Implementation and Review**

This *Interim Roles and Responsibilities Framework* Fraser River Panel Canadian Section First Nations CoChair will be implemented and in-effect for the 2023-24 season (June 2023 to February 2024). The interim framework will be reviewed following the conclusion of the 2024 Pacific Salmon Commission Annual Meeting with the intent to develop a longer-term Roles and Responsibilities Framework for the position.

---

*The narrative noted below for this week's WST is intended to provide general knowledge from the PSC website. You can go to the Pacific Salmon Commission website here <https://www.psc.org/>*

### **PACIFIC SALMON COMMISSION**

*This week FSMC is highlighting a recent news publication from the Pacific Salmon Commission raises forecast for B.C. Fraser River pink salmon run.*

*Significant hike sparked by the abundance of pink being caught by test fisheries*

*To read the full article click [here](#)*



Spawning salmon are seen making their way up the Adams River in Roderick Haig-Brown Provincial Park near Chase, B.C. Tuesday, Oct. 14, 2014. The run of pink salmon on British Columbia's Fraser River is exceeding expectations this summer. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Jonathan Hayward

---

*The narrative noted below for this week's WST is intended to provide readers with some information on the First Nations Fishery Council of BC (FNFC). All information provided has been taken from the FNFC website.*

The FNFC builds processes, capacity, and relationships to help First Nations in BC influence the integrated planning and management of Pacific fisheries and aquatic resources at the province-wide level.

Their mandate given to us by BC First Nations through the BC First Nations Fisheries Action Plan (2007), ratified by the participants at the 2009 Fall Fisheries Assembly in Nanaimo BC, and endorsed by resolution of the BC Assembly of First Nations, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, and the First Nations Summit. It is a shared vision on how to effectively achieve progress on First Nations' goals and priorities and create transformative change in Pacific fisheries.

The Council is appointed by First Nations communities and organizations from 14 geographic regions. The regional model was designed by First Nations to reflect the diversity in ecology, cultures, expertise, fisheries practices, and

perspectives across the province. Each member of the council is a strong ambassador connecting people in their region to the conversation on fisheries issues of common interest for all First Nations in BC. Together, the council helps create a strong, coherent First Nations voice throughout the province of BC.

The FNFC has a dedicated team of over 26 dedicated full-time professionals who work from our office located in the Territory of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations in Vancouver. The team's diverse skill set has supported FNFC's significant growth since its early days, allowing us to steadily broaden the scope of our work to support First Nations capacity and collaboration.

To learn more about the FNFC and their projects, events, and resources, go to their website [here](#).

---

*The narrative noted below for this week's WST is intended to provide general information on Fisheries & Oceans Canada's highlight to the **Food, Social and Ceremonial Fisheries** and what the federal government currently states as FN rights holders as protected under section 35 of the Constitution.*

### ***Food, Social and Ceremonial Fisheries***

The right to fish for food, social and ceremonial (FSC) purposes is protected under section 35 of the Constitution. It is a collective right, not an individual one. Designated Indigenous harvesters can catch what is needed for themselves and/or their community for FSC purposes. FSC fishing does not provide an opportunity for the sale of catch. It may also occur at various times of the year, which are not always aligned with commercial fishery seasons or areas. Decisions about when a fishery is opened or closed are made through the fish management process.

To read more on this topic and other information pertaining this this please click on the link [here](#).

If you are interested in finding out more on Aboriginal Fisheries, click on the link to be taken to the Aboriginal Fisheries webpage on the Government of Canada website. <https://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fisheries-peches/aboriginal-autochtones/index-eng.html>

**Salmon Joke of The Week:**  
**Where does a salmon go to deposit a  
check?**  
***To the riverbank!***

Follow us on Facebook here: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100009897519200>

Sign up for all the FSMC distributions here: <https://frasersalmon.us3.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=52b75e17647b0b4460687b60d&id=d5bde22f9a>

Subscribe to the FSMC calendar by clicking the subscribe to calendar button found at the bottom, right under the calendar by clicking here: <https://frasersalmon.ca/events/>

The next Fraser River Panel meeting is scheduled for 11AM Tuesday August 22<sup>nd</sup>. 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](mailto: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://bcrfc.env.gov.bc.ca>

Environment Canada's Water Office Website: [http://www.wateroffice.ec.gc.ca/index\\_e.html](http://www.wateroffice.ec.gc.ca/index_e.html)

Pacific Salmon Commission Website: [www.psc.org](http://www.psc.org)

Pacific Salmon Commission Test Fisheries: [http://www.psc.org/info\\_testfishing.htm](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>