



WATERSHED TALK

NEWSLETTER

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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 25, 2023

Test fishing and stock identification information Sockeye catches in marine areas have been declining with the majority caught in Area 12, indicating a shift in migration through Johnstone Strait rather than through Juan de Fuca Strait, a typical behavior for sockeye this late in the season. DNA analysis of a fish sample recently collected from the Area 12 purse seine test fishery indicated Fraser River sockeye contributions of 59% Summer run and 41% Late run. Pink salmon catches have recently increased in the Area 20 marine test fishery (Juan de Fuca Strait) and the proportion of Fraser River pink salmon has increased with the most recent sample from Area 20 indicating 51% Fraser pink.

The estimated diversion rate of sockeye salmon through Johnstone Strait has increased over the last week to 86% which is well above the pre-season forecast of 67%. The current diversion rate of pink salmon is 19% based on recent purse seine test fishery catches in the two approach areas which is below the pre-season forecast of 62%.

Assessment results

Fraser River Sockeye Salmon

Most Early Summer run have passed through the marine and in-river test fisheries. On Tuesday, the Panel adopted an updated Early Summer-run run size of 335,000 sockeye with an associated Area 20 timing of July 26.

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 24, is 707,800 sockeye. At the meeting on Tuesday, the Panel adopted a run size estimate for the Summer run of 950,000 and an associated Area 20 timing of August 13. This is still below the median preseason forecast of 1,167,000. Late-run

sockeye abundances have increased in the marine test fisheries, but observations in river test fisheries have been limited and approximately 72,000

Late run sockeye are estimated to be delaying their entry into the Fraser River. The accounted run to date past Mission as of August 24 is 118,400.

As of August 24, 1,186,300 Fraser River sockeye salmon have passed Mission and the current in-season run size estimate for total Fraser River sockeye based on adopted run size estimates for the individual management groups is 1,606,000 sockeye, which is very similar to the preseason forecast of 1,564,000. Given the adopted run size estimates and management adjustments, all Fraser River sockeye management groups remain managed under a Low Abundance Exploitation Rate, indicating there is no available harvestable surplus.

Fraser River Pink Salmon

Pink salmon catches in in-river test fisheries have increased substantially in the last week and they have also been observed at Hells Gate. To date, 533,300 pink salmon have been observed migrating past Mission. While the current in-season run size estimate of 17 million implies a higher productivity than recent years it is not unprecedented.

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 24, the Fraser River water discharge at Hope was 1,998 cms, which is 2.8 % lower than average for this date and similar to the historical minimum. The temperature of the Fraser River at Qualark was 17.7 oC, which is -0.2oC lower than average for this date and a substantial decrease from last week's temperatures. DFO's Environmental Watch program projects that river temperature will remain high, and discharge is forecast to decrease to 1,703 cms over the next 10 days.

Escapement Update

Visual surveys for the Early Stuart spawning escapement assessment program began July 23 and concluded for the season August 20.

The counting fence at Scotch Creek has been operational since August 11 but no sockeye have passed through. As there is an evacuation order due to wildfires, the fence was left open August 17 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 due to the wildfires in the area access has been limited. In the upper Barriere, 80 sockeye were observed of the mouth of the river. Water levels are very low in several systems. 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. Sockeye in the upper Chilliwack River are in or approaching peak spawning in the upper areas and primarily holding in the lower areas of the river. Surveys of the Nahatlatch River and Lake have been temporarily halted due to wildfire activity. The Nadina River hydroacoustic site was operational as of July 27 and as of August 22 an estimated 45,352 sockeye have migrated past the Nadina hydroacoustic site. Due to a software/technical failure, partial data loss occurred August 16 and 18 and no data was collected August 17. Sockeye near the Nadina spawning channel were observed holding and appeared healthy. A visual survey of Gates Creek was conducted August 20 and no sockeye were observed.

The Chilko River and Quesnel River hydroacoustic sites have been operational since August 2. As of August 15, 7,428 sockeye have migrated past the Chilko hydroacoustic site and 5,511 sockeye have migrated past the Quesnel hydroacoustic site. Visual surveys in the Quesnel system began August 23. The Stellako River hydroacoustic site

has been operational since July 26 and as of August 22, an estimated 65,326 sockeye have migrated past the site, the majority migrating to the Nadina River this early in the migration. No sockeye were observed during visual surveys of the North Thompson system on August 21.

The Birkenhead hydroacoustic site has been operational as of August 16 and 78 sockeye have passed to date. No sockeye were observed on visual surveys in the Harrison-Lillooet area on August 21. 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 22.0oC.

Regulatory Announcements & Resources

The Panel announced the following regulations for commercial salmon fisheries in Panel Area waters however Canada did not approve the U.S. fishery proposal due to conservation concerns for impacts on Late-run sockeye.

CANADIAN FRASER RIVER PANEL AREA WATERS

Areas 29-3, 29-4, and 29-6: Open for Area H troll ITQ fishery not earlier than 00:01 Thursday, August 24, 2023. Non-retention of sockeye. (Please refer to DFO Fishery Notice for further details)

UNITED STATES FRASER RIVER PANEL AREA WATERS TREATY TRIBAL FISHERY:

Areas 4B, 5, and 6C: Extend for drift gillnet fishing from 12 p.m. (noon), Friday, August 25, 2023, through 12 p.m. (noon), Wednesday, August 30, 2023. Sockeye must be released. Areas 6, 7, and 7A: Open for net fishing 5 a.m., Saturday, August 26, 2023, through 9 a.m., Wednesday, August 30, 2023. Sockeye must be released.

ALL CITIZEN FISHERY:

Areas 7 and 7A: Open for purse seine fishing 5 a.m. through 9 p.m., Saturday, August 26, 2023; 5 a.m. through 9 p.m., Sunday, August 27, 2023; 5 a.m. through 9 p.m., Monday, August 28, 2023; and 5 a.m. through 9 p.m., Tuesday, August 29, 2023. Sockeye must be released. Areas 7 and 7A: Open for drift gillnet fishing from 8 a.m. through 11:59 p.m., Saturday, August 26, 2023; 8 a.m. through 11:59 p.m., Sunday, August 27, 2023; 8 a.m. through 11:59 p.m., Monday, August 28, 2023; and 8 a.m. through 11:59 p.m., Tuesday, August 29, 2023. Sockeye must be released. Areas 7: Open for reef net fishing 5 a.m. through 9 p.m., Saturday, August 26, 2023; 5 a.m. through 9 p.m., Sunday, August 27, 2023; 5 a.m. through 9 p.m., Monday, August 28, 2023; and 5 a.m. through 9 p.m., Tuesday, August 29, 2023. Sockeye must be released.

The narrative noted below for this week's WST is intended to provide general knowledge from Namgis First Nation, which is one of the 76 Nations that joined the FSMC. You can go to their website [here](#).

Community Profile



Big House by Alert Bay – Used for culture & governance.

The contents of this section were provided by Victor Issacc, Chief of the Namgis Nation. Victor is the FSMC Approach representative on the Main Table for the FSMC. He was first elected to council at 19 years of age in 1980 and I am proud to say I was recently elected Chief Councilor on May 12th, 2023. Alert bay is a small island off the northeastern tip of Vancouver Island.

The Namgis nation is one of fourteen Kwagwiltz nations. We are rich in culture and value our youth and our elders through dance and language programs and by hosting summer camps to show and teach the youth about our territory. How to strip cedar trees for basket making etc. We recently purchased the Western Brave a 65 foot seine boat to make sure that we pass on the teachings of working on the water and harvesting our traditional foods. Cruise ships anchor in our harbor in the summer months and passengers are offloaded by the hundreds to visit our island to see the tallest totem pole in the world at 173 feet tall our Umista museum, the graveyard where numerous totem poles are showcased to represent the family's history. There are too many sites to list. If ever get a chance to come up to our beautiful territory you will not be disappointed



Salmon Joke of The Week:

**Why don't salmon watch cable television?
They prefer streams! 😊**

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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 29nd. 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://bcrfc.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>