



WATERSHED TALK

NEWSLETTER

Produced by the Fraser Salmon Management Council

AUGUST 23, 2024

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 7

2024 WATERSHED TALK NEWSLETTER UPDATE

Contributors: Tina Chestnut, FSMC Stewardship Coordinator

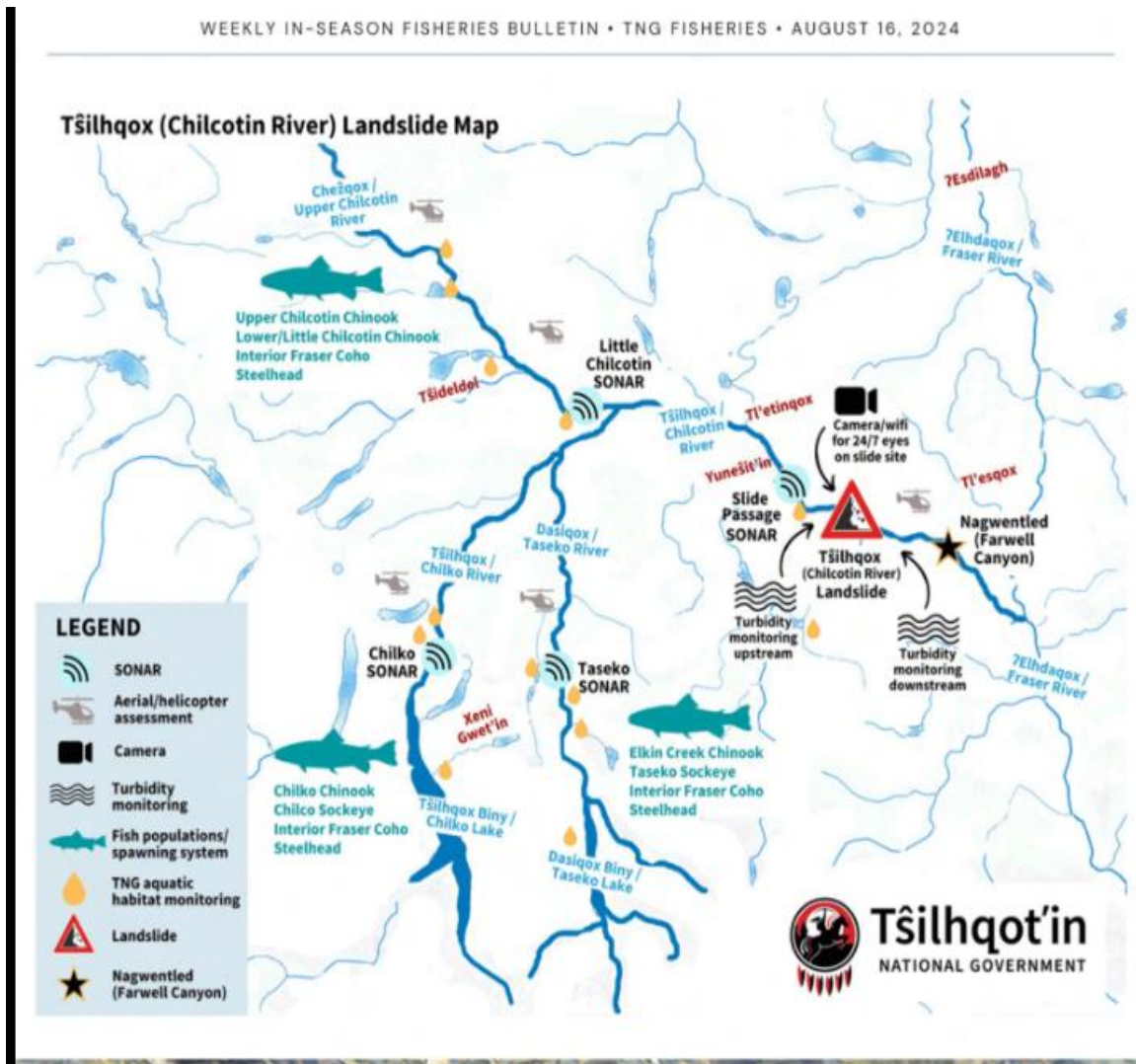
Today's issue of the WST contains a T̓silhqot̓in National Government Emergency Task Force update, the Fraser River Panel summary data, links to DFO in-season reports and hatchery press release, an overview of the First Nations Fisheries Council recent communique, a Save the Date notice for the Lower Fraser Fisheries Alliance 10th Anniversary Celebration, and a notice that registration for the BC Salmon Recovery and Resilience Conference in December is now open.

T̓SILHQOX (CHILCOTIN RIVER) LANDSLIDE

On August 20th the T̓silhqot̓in National Government's (TNG) Emergency Salmon Task Force shared its second [Situation Report](#).

Current Conditions – Helicopter assessments over the slide site suggest hydraulic conditions within the river are slowly improving, however, fish passage is likely impeded at the site. SONARs are being used to monitor salmon location throughout T̓silhqot̓in Territory (see map). A new SONAR was installed above the slide site, at Hanceville, and a team is on site daily to review SONAR files and report results in near-real time. Since the slide occurred 31 Chinook and 16 sockeye have been detected. This low detection suggests a delay or obstruction as thousands of Chilko sockeye would be expected to be moving through at this time.

TNG Fisheries also has existing SONAR programs and monitoring in the Little Chilcotin and Chilko systems (in partnership with DFO) and the Taseko (TNG-led). The Task Force is working with DFO to have a SONAR reinstalled on the Fraser River at Churn Creek to monitor salmon migration between Big Bar and the Chilcotin River to help determine if migration within the Fraser River has been slowed due to effects from the slide.



*Map credit to TNG

Please visit Situation Report (linked above) for more information on other monitoring activities and details on emergency conservation actions.

Note: all situation reports and landslide updates are posted on the TNG website

<http://www.tsilhqot'in.ca/our-territory/fisheries/communications/>

For questions please email: tngsalmontaskforce@tsilhqot'in.ca

Fraser Panel Weekly Summary for August 23, 2024

See the full version of the Panel report [here](#)¹

Test Fisheries and Stock Identification¹ - In-river test fishing catches have remained steady over the last week. DNA analysis of the most recent sockeye samples collected on August 20 from Brownsville Bar test fishery indicated Fraser River sockeye contributions of 79% Summer run and 21% Late run. The last day of operations for the Brownsville Bar test fishery will be August 25. The test fishery at Whonnock will continue its operation until September 10.

Assessment Results¹ – As of August 22, a total of 414,300 Fraser River sockeye have passed Mission, consisting of 141,900 Early Summer run, 258,000 Summer run and 19,100 Late run. Harrison sockeye, which had previously delayed their in-river migration, continue to move into the river. Birkenhead and Big Silver sockeye appear to have later timing than forecast and are tracking above the pre-season forecast (24,000). The run size of Late run stocks that traditionally delay their upstream migration (Weaver, Cultus, Late Shuswap, Portage) is expected to be very small (median preseason forecast of 4,000) and difficult to assess in-season. The current in-season run size estimate for total Fraser River sockeye based on adopted run size estimates is 460,000 with a timing of July 29, which is less than the pre-season forecast of 567,000 and one day later.

On Friday the Panel adopted updated run sizes for three management groups: the Early Summer run was updated to 143,000 (increase of 1,000); the Summer run was lowered to 275,000 (down from 300,000), with a run timing of August 1; and the Late run was increased to 38,000 (up from 18,000) with a timing of August 15. Currently only the Late run is trending at or above the preseason forecast (p50), with the total Fraser River sockeye run closer to the p25 abundance level.

Migration conditions in the Fraser River¹ - Migration conditions in the Fraser River continue to be worse than normal as a consequence of the Chilcotin slide and above average temperatures. Within the Chilcotin River, turbidity levels remain high, and turbidity monitoring sensors have been installed at five locations ranging from Big Bar to Chilko Lake. As turbidity disrupts migration, these monitoring sites will help determine when fish movement may be expected.

Sediment levels in the river are gradually decreasing but have not yet returned to pre-event levels. Observers at Hells Gate now report active fish passage. To better monitor fish passage past the slide area, the Fisheries Department of the T̓silhqot'in National Government in collaboration with their technical partner EcoFish has deployed a new sonar at Hanceville, upstream of the slide site. As of August 20, only 31 Chinook and 16 sockeye have been detected passing through the slide area, indicating probable delay and an interruption of fish migration.

On August 22, the Fraser River water discharge at Hope was about 1,915 cms, which is 33% below the historical mean discharge level for this date while the temperature was 19.4°C, which is 1.1°C higher than average and is expected to decrease to 18.1°C by August 28.

On Friday the Panel adopted a revised pMA for Late run (lowered to 0.43 from 0.49), with the higher abundances in the Birkenhead and Big Silver stocks than forecast.

Taseko and Chilko sockeye assessment and migration within the Chilcotin River¹- The current in-season run size for Chilko is 99,000 sockeye. At the hydroacoustic site at Lingfield (5 migration days upstream of the slide area), a total of 515 sockeye have been observed to date, while under normal migration conditions 17,100 sockeye would have been expected. Peak migration of Chilko sockeye past the landslide area (normally around August 25-26) may be delayed due to the current migration conditions in the Fraser River.

Due to the low expected Taseko sockeye return, it is not possible to provide in-season updates of run size and timing. The Tsilhqot'in National Government, in partnership with DFO, monitor Taseko sockeye arriving at the spawning grounds. In late July, a few sockeye were detected by the sonar and seemed to have reached the spawning ground prior to the slide. Taseko sockeye has been identified as an endangered stock by COSEWIC (Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife) and emergency enhancement had been planned prior to the occurrence of the slide.

Escapement update¹ - Surveys for Early Stuart began July 20, and small numbers of sockeye, past peak spawning, have been observed in various tributaries. At Scotch Creek no sockeye have passed the counting fence to date which has been operational since August 16. Visual surveys of the North/South Thompson system began on August 21. The Upper Chilliwack River hydroacoustic site has been operational since July 10 and a total of 19,205 sockeye have been estimated into the river as of August 17. The first visual survey of Gates Creek was conducted on August 17 and no sockeye were observed. Water conditions at Gates Creek are characterized as very turbid with higher water levels than in previous years. The Nadina River hydroacoustic site has been operational since July 26 and as of August 17, 63,307 sockeye have been estimated. The Stellako River hydroacoustic site has been operational since July 25, and 91,754 sockeye have been estimated as of August 20. Most of the sockeye salmon estimated at the Stellako site in August are assumed to be Nadina River sockeye. The Chilko River hydroacoustic site has been operational since July 31 and as of August 20, 515 sockeye have been estimated. The Birkenhead hydroacoustic site was operational on August 14 and an estimated 77 sockeye have been counted as of August 20. The counting fence at Sweltzer Creek (Cultus Lake) has been operational since July 29 but no sockeye have been counted through the fence.

Regulatory Announcements & Resources¹ – Both Canadian and United States Fraser River Panel area waters remain closed to commercial salmon fishing.

The next in-season meeting of the Panel is scheduled to occur on Tuesday, August 27, 2024.

FISHERIES AND OCEANS CANADA – FRASER RIVER SOCKEYE IN-SEASON UPDATE FOR AUGUST 23, 2024

[2024 Fraser River Sockeye Escapement In-season Update No.6](#)

[2024 Chilko Sockeye Escapement Update - August 23, 2024](#) - as of August 21, an estimated 524 sockeye have been counted past the Chilko River hydroacoustic site. Cumulative migration values are currently tracking below recent high-abundance years 2021-2023.

[2024 Chilko Sockeye Escapement Update -August 21, 2024](#)

[Government of Canada and Lheidli T'enneh First Nation partner to support Fraser River Salmon](#)

On August 16, 2024 the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Diane LeBouthillier announced the Government's intention to build a new Pacific salmon hatchery in Prince George to support conservation and rebuilding of Chinook and sockeye salmon. The hatchery will be built using federal investments under the Pacific Salmon Strategy Initiative and operated by DFO in collaboration with Lheidli T'enneh First Nation and with support from Canfor Pulp Ltd. The hatchery will be located on federally administered land on the north bank of the Nechako River, near its confluence with the Fraser.

The hatchery will address a critical infrastructure gap in the Upper Fraser River Region. Once built, the hatchery will help boost survival of numerous at-risk salmon stocks by helping to mitigate threats posed to salmon while in the freshwater rearing environment. The hatchery will also offer a platform for increased assessment and understanding of Upper Fraser salmon stocks.

Please click the linked title above to read the full news release.

COMMUNITY UPDATES & OPPORTUNITIES

[First Nations Fisheries Council August, 2024 Communique](#)



The FNFC released a communique this week. The Communique includes a reflection by Stu Barnes, the FNFC's new Executive Director and updates from the various Units within the FNFC including Corporate Services, Policy and Fish Management, Habitat and Environmental Protections, and Partnerships and Intergovernmental Relations units, as well as a save the date for the FNFC Annual General Assembly (November 6 & 7, 2024). The following updates may be of interest to FSMC member Nations:

- **POLICY AND FISH MANAGEMENT**

- **First Nations Conditions of License (COL)** (page 9) – the FNFC is working with DFO's Aquaculture Coordinating Committee to develop a template for First Nations COL that will serve as a resource for strengthening First Nations self-determination in the aquaculture industry. A First Nations COL template will incorporate First Nations knowledge and priorities into the regulatory framework governing aquaculture. If you are looking for more information please contact Mike Gray @ mike@fnfisheriescouncil.ca
- **Legislation and Fishery Policy Updates** (page 11) – the FNFC is hosting Policy Forums and Salmon Allocation Policy engagements this fall and winter. Session will convene First Nations to focusing on the UNDA Action Plan (especially on Actions 36 and 37 – legislation, policies and collaborative structures) and on recommendations towards the development of a new Salmon Allocation Policy. For more information on Policy initiatives refer to the FNFC website or contact Janson Wong @ janson@fnfisheriescouncil.ca

▪ **Save the Date**

- Tier 1 Policy Forum #1 on **UNDA Action Plan**, October 7, 2024
- **Salmon Allocation Policy** regional engagement, October 8, 2024
- Tier 1 Policy Forum #2 on **UNDA Action Plan**, February 18, 2025

- **Pacific Salmon Commission (PSC) First Nations Caucus** (page 12) – The FNFC and the First Nations (FN)  Caucus is working to increase the role and participation of First Nations in the PSC process and to support FN rights and to prepare for upcoming Pacific Salmon Treaty Negotiations. The goal is to develop an MOU and build a formal relationship between Tribal and FN delegates at the PSC. There is an intention to finalize the MOU in the coming year. Additionally, the FN Caucus is working to prepare itself and BC Nations for upcoming PST negotiations. The FNFC is working with DFO to coordinate a series of engagement workshops to ensure FN voices are heard. Look for engagement information in the coming months. 

- **PARTNERSHIPS AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS**

- **Historic signing of the Trilateral Salmon Accord and Declaration** (page 18) – An agreement that represents a joint commitment between the Federal Government, Province of BC and the First Nations Fisheries Council of BC to take urgent action to safeguard the species for future generations. The agreement establishes a collaborative process to align and coordinate work on shared wild Pacific salmon recovery priorities and will help the signing partners to develop long-term comprehensive strategies and to share resources to address the decline of wild Pacific salmon in a coordinated matter. Priority areas include climate adaptation, ecosystem monitoring, habitat restoration, recovery plans and watershed security. For more information contact Hanna McComber @ hanna@fnfisheriescouncil.ca.

[BC SALMON RECOVERY & RESILIENCE CONFERENCE \(December 3 & 4, 2024\)](#)

The Province of British Columbia and the Pacific Salmon Foundation are hosting this conference at the Vancouver Convention Centre on December 3 and 4th. Registration is now live (click link above). The conference is looking to connect the growing network of salmon experts and their efforts to advance shared priorities for building resilient salmon populations. The conference offers a platform to connect, share knowledge and encourage collaborative thought leadership on salmon recovery and resilience. Registration bursaries for Indigenous people or First Nations related organizations are being offered.

Please contact conference@PSF.ca for more information.



LOWER FRASER FISHERIES ALLIANCE 10+ YEAR ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Join us in celebrating over a decade of Sq'eptset Syoyes Sth'o'th'eqwi – fishers working together – on the lower Fraser River.

WHEN

Celebrations will span three days: **Tuesday, October 1, Wednesday, October 2, and Thursday, October 3.** You're invited to participate in as many activities as your schedule allows!

WHERE

Each day we will celebrate a different region of the territory. We will begin and end the day at a host Nation in each of these three regions:

- **DAY 1** will be hosted in Kwikwetlem, Musqueam, Semiahmoo, Tsawwassen and Tseil-Waututh territories
- **DAY 2** will be hosted in Yale, Union Bar, Chawathil, Skawahlook, Skwah, Sumas, Peters, Sts'ailes, Soowahlie, Shxw'ow'hamel, Seabird, Scowlitz, Kwakwa'apilt, Cheam, Yakweawkwoose, Tzeachten, Squiala, Skowkale, Shxwha:y, Popkum, Leq'á:mel and Aitchelitz territories
- **DAY 3** will be hosted in Kwantlen, Katzie and Matsqui

WHAT TO EXPECT:

During the celebrations, we will:

- Visit active habitat restoration and stewardship project sites being led by First Nations in the Lower Fraser region;
- Share cultural teachings through guided place names tours;
- Highlight the gains we made together in the last decade, from greater leadership from Nations to a growing number of community members working on the land and waters;
- Reconnect, network, and learn about each others latest projects; and
- Share food and ceremony, and recognize the people wo have helped build the momentum of First Nations-led stewardship in the Lower Fraser

HOW TO RSVP - for now save the dates October 1, 2nd and 3rd . -Go to the LFFA website <http://www.lffa.ca> and click on the yellow highlighted link provided at the bottom of the "Save the Date!" post to be notified when registration opens.

If you have questions please reach out to communications@lffa.ca

Hých'ka Sí:yem! We thank you!

Ken Malloway & Sally Hope
Co-Chairs, Lower Fraser Fisheries Alliance

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 27th**.
(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/89632608507>

One tap mobile:

8887880099,89632608507# US Toll Free

Telephone:

Dial In:

855 703 8985 Canada Toll Free

Webinar ID: 896 3260 8507

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>