

## FRASER SOCKEYE IN-SEASON UPDATE - By Neil Todd, FRAFS

Mike Staley convened his sixth 2010 sockeye in-season update at 4 pm on Thursday August 12 2010 via teleconference call.

### OVERVIEW

Management of the sockeye fisheries is becoming more complicated as various factors have to be taken into account (see information within the stock group headings below). The Fraser River Panel met today; their discussions revolved around when and how to shape future fisheries (commercial) given some stock constraints and uncertainties within a backdrop of uncertain river conditions over the next two weeks.

### TEST FISHERY

Test fishing catches still fluctuate daily, but the catch numbers are larger than in previous weeks. This is a reflection of the building of Late Run sockeye numbers as well as a continuation of Summer Run sockeye. Early Summer Run sockeye are still present in the marine test fisheries, although not as a large percentage of the catches.

In the river there is now a significant overlap/mixing of the three stock groupings. Samples from the Musqueam fishery indicated that Early Summer Run, Summer Run, and Late Run sockeye are in the river in roughly equal proportions.

### EARLY SUMMER RUN SOCKEYE

The current in-season run size estimate is increased to 2 million fish. This is a very large increase over the pre-season forecast.

Despite the high numbers of Early Summer Run sockeye returning, there is concern for meeting spawning escapement targets. Estimated harvestable surplus has been just about exhausted when an updated Management Adjustment (and increased spawning targets) have been factored in. There have been, and continue to be, extensive fisheries (including First Nation fisheries up the Fraser and Thompson) on the Early Summer Runs. With higher than average water temperatures for this time of the year there is concern that en route and pre spawning mortality may be higher than normal, thus affecting the numbers of successful spawners.

With all this in mind, and some Early Summer Run fish still present in marine areas in meaningful numbers, there are now constraints on marine fisheries until Early Summer Run sockeye migration is closer to being finished. The Fraser River Panel adopted the position today that there would be no commercial fishing where Early Summer Run stocks make up 10% or more of the abundance. The Panel will meet on Sunday to consider updated test fishery information and deliberate on where commercial fisheries can be re-opened.

### SUMMER RUN SOCKEYE

There continues to be mixed signals regarding the status of the Summer Run sockeye. Overall, the in season run size estimate is 2.6 million (roughly equal to the pre-season forecast). The migration does not appear to be following a normal "curve"; it is thus difficult to identify the "peak date". Identifying the peak would mean that whatever numbers are estimated at that point, double those would be the total run size estimate. Without an identified peak or halfway point, that calculation cannot be done.

Late Stuart and Stellako appear to be returning in numbers a little higher than forecast, while Chilko (predicted to be the bulk of the Early Summer Run) and Quesnel are weaker than forecast.

As with the Early Summer Runs, higher than normal river temperatures are forecast to have an effect on spawning escapement. Normally, there is almost no management adjustment (MA) applied to Summer Run sockeye; but this year it appears that allowance will have to be made for some en route and/or pre spawn mortality. A Management Adjustment of .24 was recommended today.

### LATE RUN SOCKEYE

Late Run sockeye (Adams/Weaver) are showing up in significant numbers, but it is still too soon assess the run size. It is not yet known if any Late Run sockeye are delaying off the mouth of the Fraser, which is their historically normal behaviour. Many of the Lates that are showing up in the marine test fisheries are migrating directly into and up the Fraser at the present time. The Pacific Salmon Commission will be attempting in the coming days to assess whether or not some Lates are beginning to hold up off the mouth, which will in turn generate some preliminary MA estimates. If the bulk of the run does not hold off the mouth of the Fraser, but instead migrates non-stop into the Fraser, the MA will be very high which might mean that fisheries have to be constrained (over and above the constraint generated by the Cultus sockeye ER) despite the apparent abundances. The PSC estimates roughly 2.5 million Late Run sockeye have passed through Areas 12 and 20 to date.

Harrison River sockeye in-season run size estimate has been recommended to be set at 700,000 – much higher than expected pre-season.

### ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

Fraser River flow continues to be about 20% lower than average. There are fears of rising in-river temperatures to very high stress levels (predicted to reach 21.5C by August 21), resulting in estimating a very high MA for Early Summer Run stocks (need to put up twice the spawning target in order to achieve it) and a significant MA of .24 for the Summer Run stocks.

**First Nations Fisheries Council  
Fall 2010 Assembly**

**November 2, 3 & 4, 2010**

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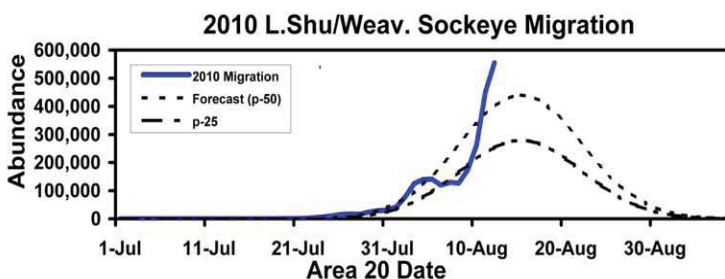
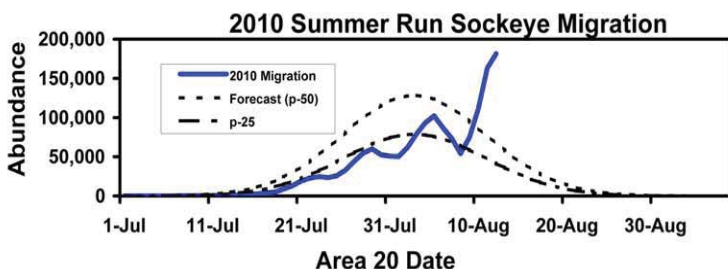
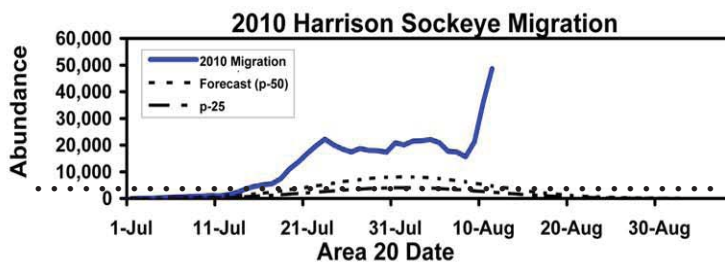
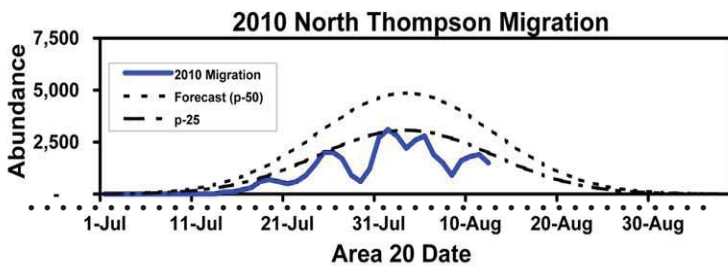
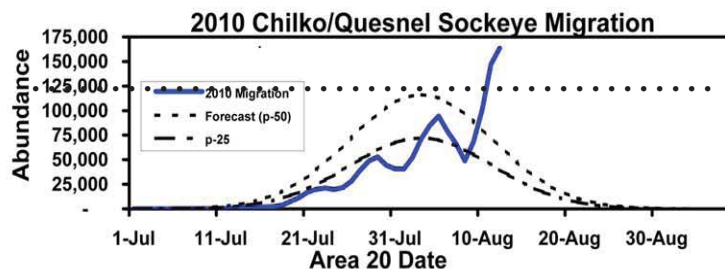
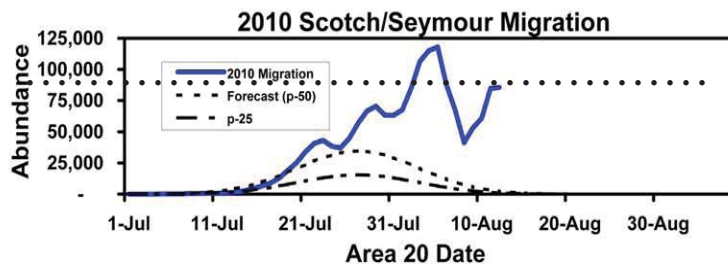
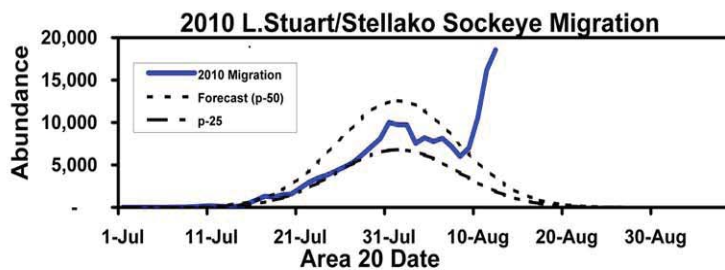
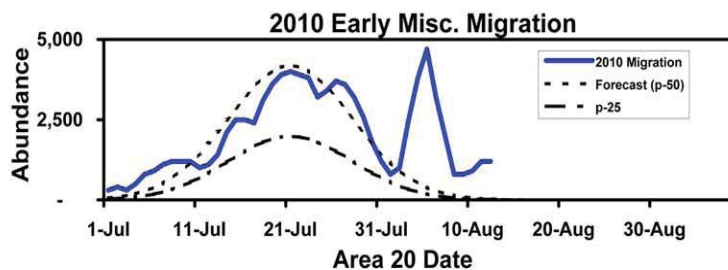
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## FRASER SOCKEYE - IN-SEASON UPDATE (GRAPHS)

Provided by the Pacific Salmon Commission Fraser River Panel



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