

A weekly Aboriginal fisheries newsletter for
fisheries representatives and their organizations

Fraser Sockeye In-season Update - A good year for sockeye! - By Neil Todd & Mike Staley, FRAFS

OVERVIEW

What a difference a week makes! It is evident today that sockeye are returning in numbers that significantly exceed the pre-season forecasts. Managers are confident that the numbers are here to continue supporting strong commercial, recreational, and First Nations fisheries.

TEST FISHERY

Test fishing catches continue to be very strong in the marine areas, albeit with some fluctuations from day to day. Of note is an all time record test fishery one day catch of an estimated 84,000 sockeye.

Mission estimates are now standing at 3,573,000 sockeye into the Fraser, and this is after significant marine fisheries.

QUALARK DIDSON PROJECT

The Fraser Panel heard some very interesting information today from Pacific Salmon Commission staff. They have been tracking their Mission daily passage estimates against the Qualark daily passage estimates for the same fish (adjusted by 2-3 days for the timing difference, and adjusted for fisheries between the two facilities). While the estimates have been correlating fairly well for part of the run, Qualark has been generating slightly higher numbers than has Mission. However, in recent days that difference has grown significantly. Salmon Commission staff have analyzed the differences and are quite confident that the recent Qualark estimates are indeed correctly reflecting a stronger return (higher number of fish) than has Mission. They have adjusted all their in-season run size estimates and are currently assessing the reasons for the discrepancy. The width of the river at Mission, water depth, and fish behaviour are thought to be confounding the Mission hydroacoustic estimates.

EARLY SUMMER RUN SOCKEYE

The current in-season run size estimate is now at 2.9 million fish. The majority of these fish are returning to the Scotch/Seymour systems, but it is hoped that the small earliest timed stocks (Bowron, Taseko, Nadina) are experiencing higher than expected returns as well. It is difficult to determine the status small stocks within an aggregate that is dominated by a couple of large stocks during the migration period. The spawning ground escapement surveys will provide more definitive information for these small stocks.

SUMMER RUN SOCKEYE

There is now confidence that the Summer Run aggregate is exceeding the pre-season forecast of 2.6 million. The new in season run size estimate is 4 million fish.

LATE RUN SOCKEYE

Late Run sockeye (Adams/Weaver) are building rapidly. There is good evidence that this aggregate is going to exceed the pre-season forecast significantly. In discussions at the Fraser Panel meeting today, however, there was a word of caution around the uncertainties associated with the test fishery catches (see Test Fishery above). The Fraser Panel adopted an in-season run size estimate of 11 million for the Adams/Weaver portion Late Run sockeye today. Together with an estimated 900K Harrison and the pre-season forecast for Birkenhead of 241K the Late run aggregate is 12.141 million today.

The total Fraser Sockeye run size is estimated at 19.146 Million, one of the largest on record with continued strength in test fishing today in Johnstone Straights.

Along with the good news about the numbers of Late Runs is the indication that substantial numbers are delaying off the mouth of the Fraser in accordance with their historical behaviour. This bodes well for good survival to the spawning grounds.

Harrison River sockeye in-season run size estimate has been upgraded to 900,000 fish – a huge increase over the pre-season forecast.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

Fraser River flow is about 25% lower than average. Water temperatures continue to hold about 1 degree above average, but have not increased as dramatically as predicted. The Fraser Panel made a policy decision last weekend to reduce the estimated Management Adjustment (MA) for operational purposes of planning fisheries and spawning escapements. While it is too soon to say if this decision is a sound one, observations near and on the spawning grounds indicate that the fish are arriving in better condition than the higher MA would predict, and similarly that fewer pre-spawn mortalities are being observed. The MA for Early Summers was reduced to .39, based on a temperature model for the dominant/sub dominant Scotch/Seymour years only.

Commercial fisheries in all usual areas in Canada and the US were planned for the next week.

**First Nations Fisheries Council
Fall 2010 Assembly**

November 2, 3 & 4, 2010

at the Nisga'a Hall, Prince Rupert BC

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VISIONS WORKSHOP

October 13 & 14, 2010

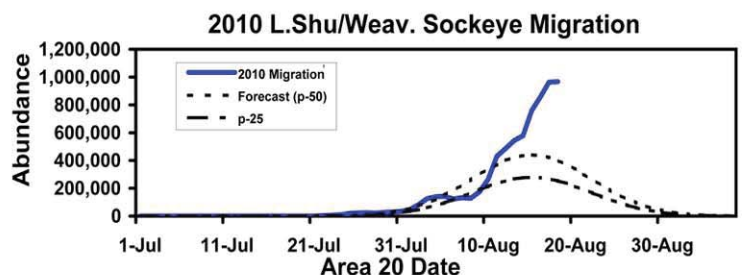
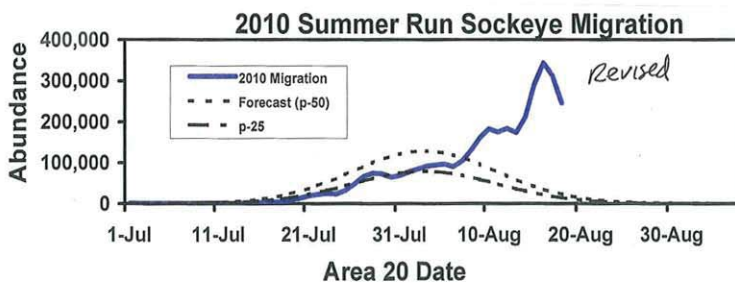
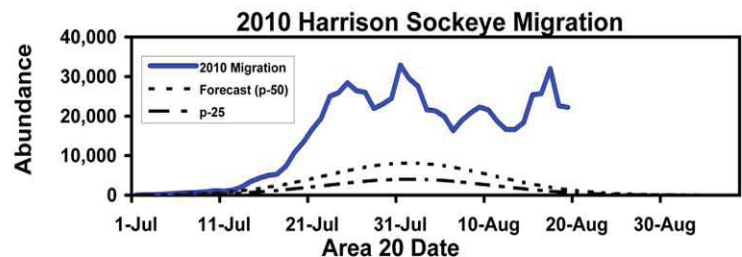
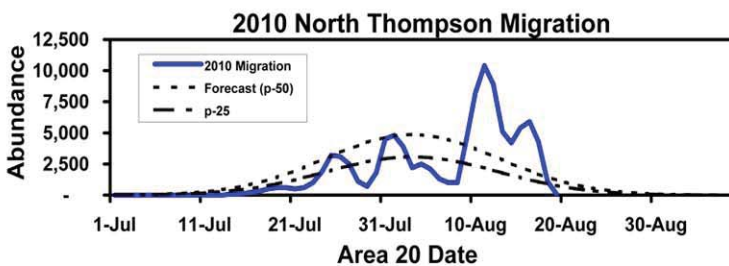
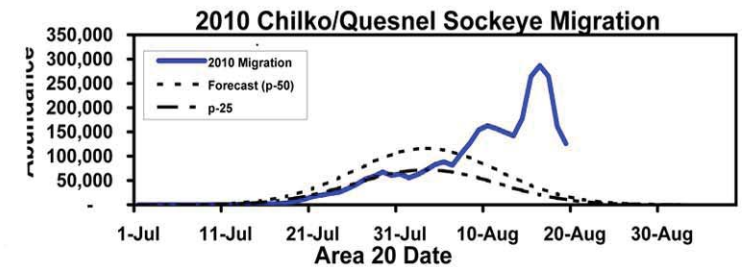
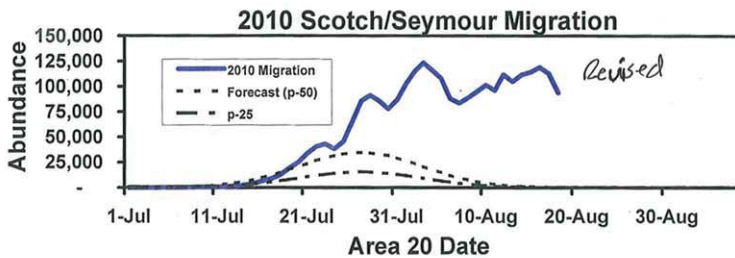
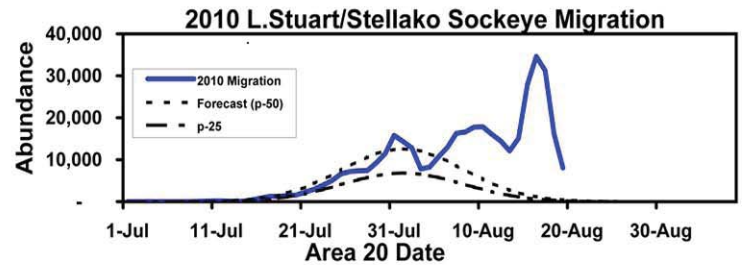
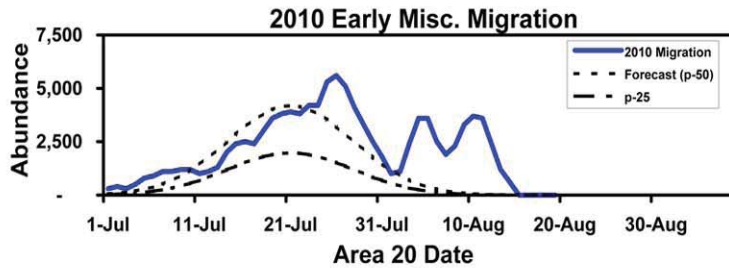
**at Seabird Island Band
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FRASER SOCKEYE - IN-SEASON UPDATE (GRAPHS)

Provided by the Pacific Salmon Commission Fraser River Panel



In-Season Technical Update Conference Calls Thursdays at 4:00pm

Hosted by FRAFS Biologist Mike Staley
Open to all interested First Nations
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