



WATERSHED TALK

NEWSLETTER

Produced by the Fraser River Aboriginal Fisheries Secretariat

Volume XVI, Issue 9

2019 FRASER SALMON UPDATE

By: Aidan Fisher, FRAFS Biologist

Some very good news from the Big Bar slide, is natural passage that has been identified over the slide site as of September 1. The preliminary estimate is 100,000 sockeye have migrated over the slide to date. It seems that the extensive rock manipulation and dropping water levels has allowed for natural fish passage over the Big Bar slide.

As far as Fraser salmon fisheries updates, in-river pink test fisheries have been fairly successful over the past few days. Large test fishery catches at Whonnock and Cottonwood show substantial daily abundance in the Lower Fraser of pink salmon. The CPUE of both in-river test fisheries for pink are substantially higher than previous years. Due to high daily passage through the Mission hydroacoustic site, the daily estimates of passage are subject to change. It is unlikely they will change substantially from the reported estimates, but during periods of high daily migration it can be challenging to produce exact estimates of daily passage.

PSC staff proposed an in-season run size of 20,000 for Late run sockeye with a run timing for August 18. Also an adjustment of the other management units as follows: Early Stuart 26,000 with a run timing July 8, Early Summer 94,000 with a run timing July 29, and Summer 330,000 with a run timing August 18. The Fraser Panel has decided to not adopt the proposed in-season run size adjustments of the PSC staff, instead they will keep managing to the previously adopted run sizes, considering the changes are small and would not impact fisheries management decisions.

This summary table will be updated throughout the season as information and decisions become available.

Sockeye Management Group	Pre-Season Planning Forecast (P50)	Run Accounted to Date	In-Season Adopted Run Size	Area 20 Timing (for 50% of run)
Early Stuart	41,000	25,900	27,000	July 8
Early Summer	465,000	93,400	90,000	July 27
Summer	3,393,000	317,000	400,000	August 21
Lates	359,000	11,800	40,000	August 26
TOTAL	4,795,000	448,100	557,000	August 18

	Pre-Season Planning Forecast (p50)	Run Accounted to Date	In-Season Adopted Run Size	Catch to Date	Area 20 Timing (50% of return)

Fraser Pinks	5,018,600	3,210,900	5,000,000	253,000	August 17
--------------	-----------	-----------	------------------	---------	------------------

Big Bar Slide

Chinook, sockeye and Pink salmon have been observed naturally passing the Big Bar slide site. Over 100,000 fish have been recorded passing the slide site. This is very good news for Fraser salmon stocks above the Big Bar slide.

To date 59,765 chinook and sockeye have been transported over the slide site via helicopter. A few pink and coho salmon have also been air lifted to date. As of this week the helicopter transportation has been suspended due to significant numbers of observed natural passage of salmon.

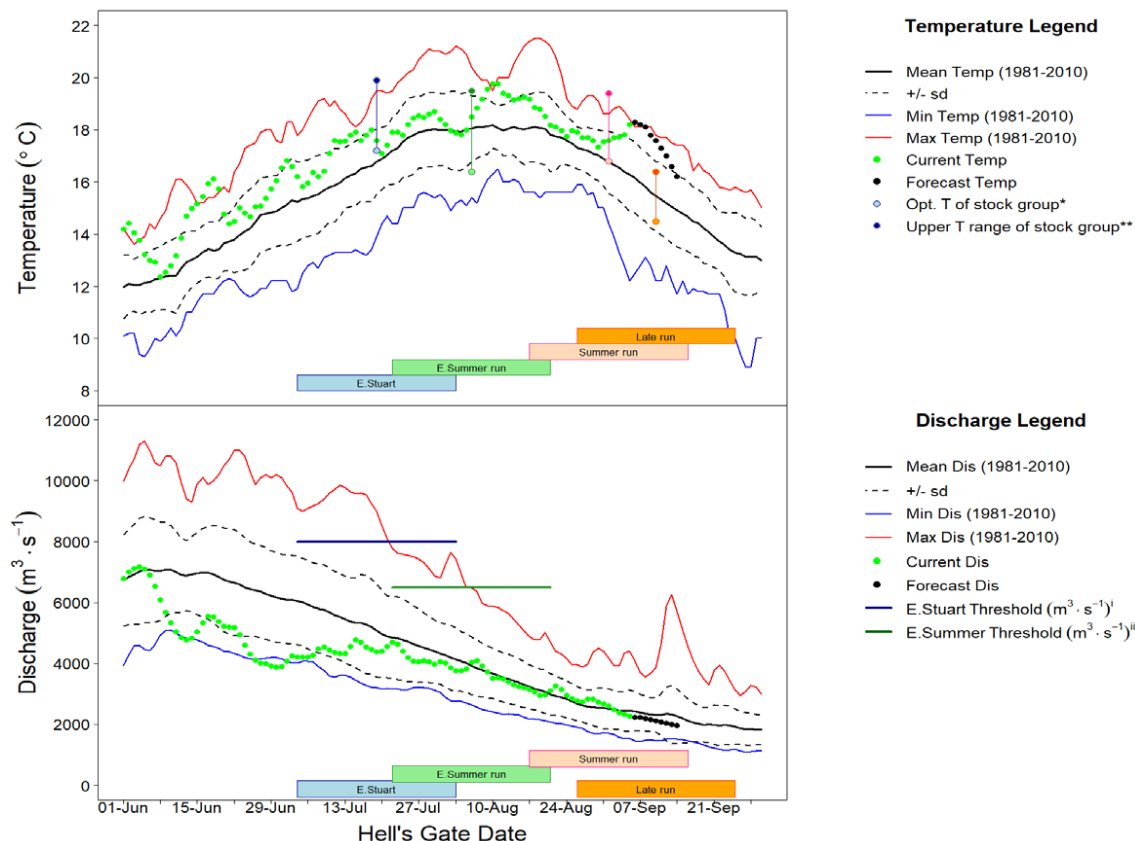
Fraser River Conditions

The main source of information for Temperature and Discharge data and forecasts is DFO's Environmental Watch Program (see link below).

The BC River Forecast Centre website (see links below) has information and links related to discharge and temperatures at various monitoring stations throughout the Fraser watershed, including snow pillow and melt updates.

Environment Canada's Water Office webpage provides access to real time hydrometric data at many locations throughout the Fraser watershed (see links below).

Fraser Discharge and temperatures at Hope and Qualark Creek (near Hope) respectively look like this (graphs from the Fraser River Panel Distribution September 6th, 2019):



The Fraser River water temperature at Hope is currently 18.2 degrees Celsius (1.9 degrees Celsius above average for this time of year), and is forecast to decrease to 17.3 degrees Celsius by September 11th. The Fraser River discharge is within the usual annual differences at 2,279 m³/sec at the Qualark water station on September 5th (7% below average for this time of year). The discharge is continuing to tracking at the average discharge, with a forecast discharge of 2,073 m³/sec by September 11th.

Environmental data and observations are critical in identifying Management Adjustments (MA) in-season. Currently, the flow and temperature data are sitting within the historic range for pre-season MA forecasts, we are currently not expecting a major change in MAs compared to pre-season forecasts. The Panel is unlikely to announce a major change in MAs for sockeye MUs based on environmental variables because we are now past the peak of river temperatures and moving into cooler weather. The Panel may still announce changes to the MA based on the Big Bar slide and its impact to Fraser sockeye migration.

Fraser River Fisheries Information

Fraser First Nations Fisheries information can be found on the DFO website at:

<http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/fraser/index-eng.html>

DFO staff will be distributing Fraser Salmon Bulletins, and we strongly encourage people to review and comment on the DFO bulletin if time and resources permit. Contact your local DFO Resource Manager for a copy, and addition to the distribution list.

Fraser Sockeye Salmon

The Pacific Salmon Commission (PSC) distributes the Fraser River Panel meeting agenda and technical information for Panel members and observers to the process. The following information is a summary of key information from that document (August 30th, 2019) and the Fraser River Panel meeting from the same day.

Stock Identification

Only in-river test fisheries remain for stock ID. Due to low Late run abundance, the stock ID is still dominated by Summer run sockeye. Of the Summer run sockeye, the majority remains Chilko/Quesnel complex similar to previous weeks.

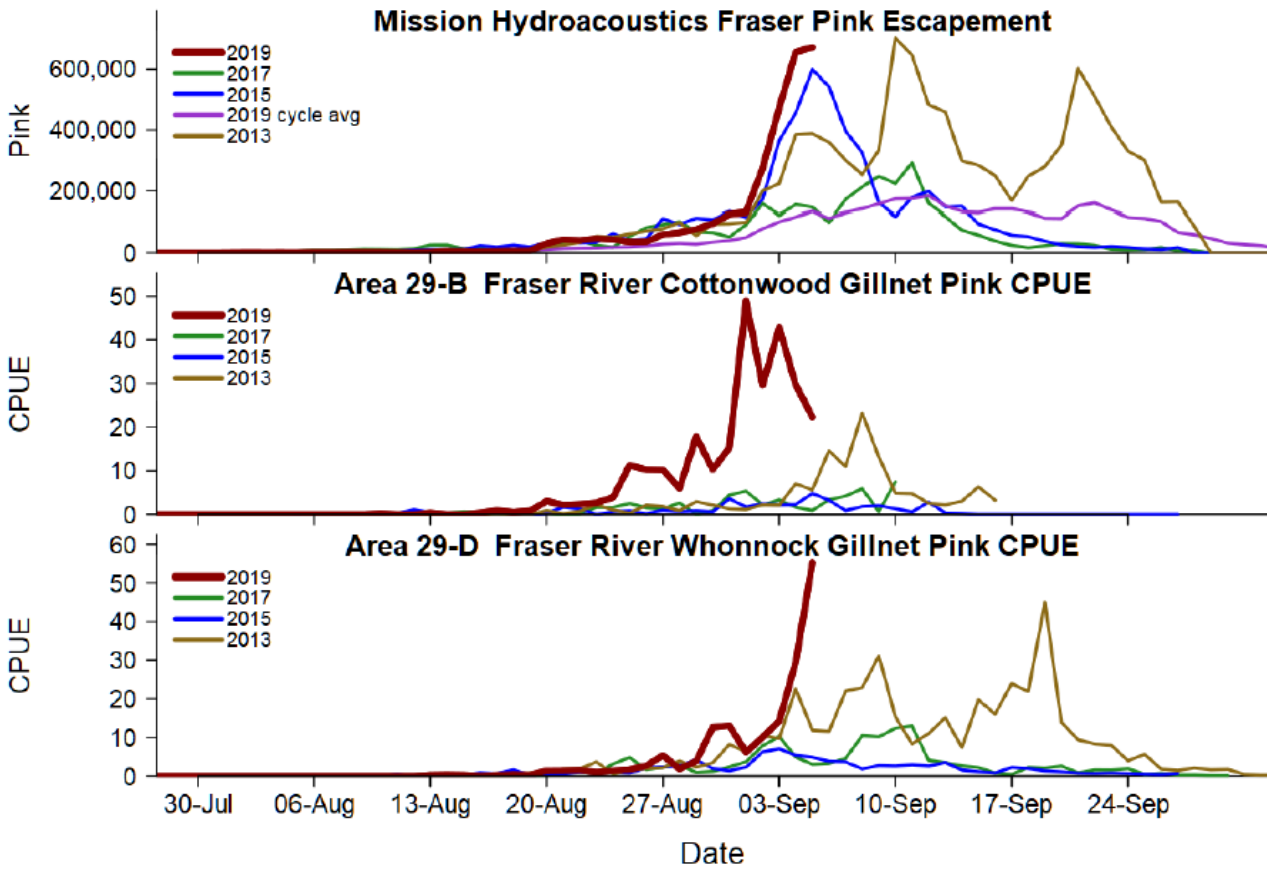
There is no marine test fishery information for pinks, as they have all be completed and are no longer fishing.

Test Fisheries

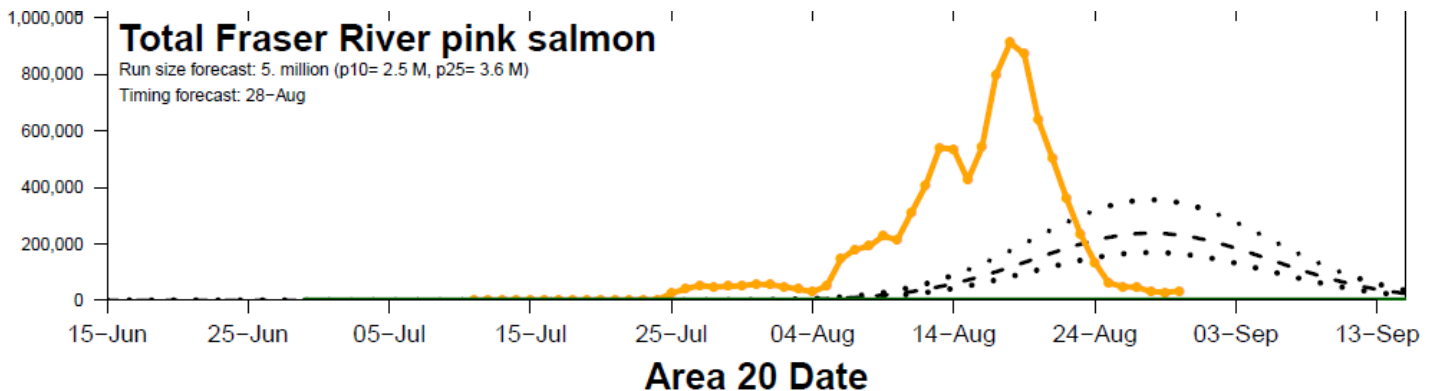
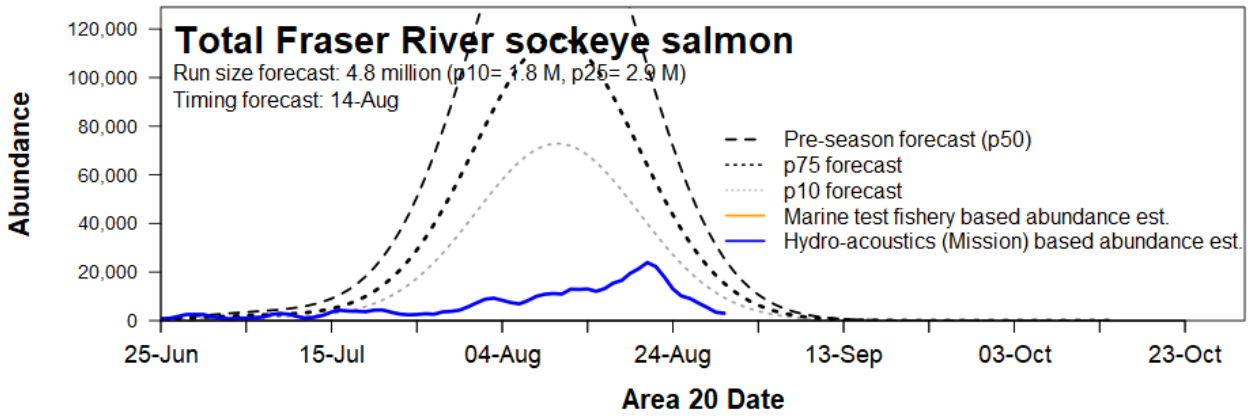
Marine test fisheries have been completed for the year and are no longer producing in-season information.

In-river test fisheries are observing record pink catches for this time of year, indicating in-river migration of Fraser pinks.

Test fishing graphs and Mission hydro-acoustics information from the PSC distribution package:



Estimated Abundance and In-Season Timing Compared to Forecast



The next Fraser River Panel meeting is scheduled for 11:00 AM next Tuesday.

Fraser River Panel Schedule:
Tuesday and Friday 11am.

Canada dial-in: 1-888-299-2873
(USA dial-in: 1-888-585-9008)
Conference ID: 287-053-397

Links

Big Bar Slide Updates are available: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/emergency-response-and-recovery/incident-summaries/big-bar-landslide-incident>

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>

For more information contact Aidan Fisher by email: Aidan.Fisher@lffa.ca