



WATERSHED TALK

NEWSLETTER

Produced by the Fraser River Aboriginal Fisheries Secretariat

Volume XVI, Issue 11

2019 FRASER SALMON UPDATE

By: Aidan Fisher, FRAFS Biologist

Since last week there has been a substantial increase in Fraser pink salmon. Usually the Fraser pink migration pattern has two peaks of migration, with the second peak being smaller than the first. This year, the second peak of migration is substantially larger than the first. Earlier this week the preliminary estimate of daily passage for one day was 1.4 million pinks. To date the Mission hydroacoustic program has estimated 7.9 million pinks, with over 3 million being counted this week. The Fraser Panel was not expecting this amount of Fraser pink migration, and is far exceeding the p50 forecast for Fraser pinks.

Yesterday there was a Fraser Panel meeting called to increase the in-season run size for Fraser pinks to 8.9 million, and many US pink fisheries were licenced to start Friday morning. The Panel adopted changes to the Early Stuart (26,000), Early Summer (94,000), Summer (360,000) and Late (20,000) sockeye run sizes, and approved a variety of US pink fisheries.

There is still expectation of up to 14% of the pink run size. The adopted run size of 8.9 million Fraser pinks could potentially be larger for 2019. The CCTAC identified for Fraser pinks at this run size is around 2.1 million, in order to harvest that amount the marine commercial fisheries must be very successful this weekend. There is substantial interest in implementing commercial fisheries for pink salmon before the Steelhead window closure is in place.

Canada has proposed the following pink directed commercial fisheries: Area B purse seine fisheries, and Area H troll. Both these fisheries have a short window to harvest some of the Canadian TAC, as the Steelhead window closure will be implemented early next week in most of the licenced waters. There are some management areas that will continue to be open into next week for pink access.

The US has proposed to continue the variety of pink fisheries proposed yesterday, including reef net, purse seine and gillnet. There was reported limited effort in US pink fisheries this morning.

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 Run Size	Adopted	Area 20 Timing (for 50% of run)
Early Stuart	41,000	25,900	26,000		July 8
Early Summer	465,000	93,400	94,000		July 27

Summer	3,393,000	340,400	360,000	August 21
Lates	359,000	20,600	20,000	August 26
TOTAL	4,795,000	480,300	468,000	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	7,989,500	8,900,000	262,600	August 17

Big Bar Slide

Truck transportation is now available at the Big Bar slide. It has not been implemented to date due to strong natural passage. If natural passage is once again impeded, truck transportation will occur.

Both chinook, sockeye and pink salmon have been observed naturally passing the Big Bar slide site. To date, upwards of 166,400 fish have been recorded passing the slide site. This is very good news for Fraser salmon stocks above the Big Bar slide.

To date 51, 449 sockeye, 8,522 chinook, 372 pink and 3 coho have been transported over the slide site via helicopter. As of this week the helicopter transportation has been halted due to observed natural passage of salmon.

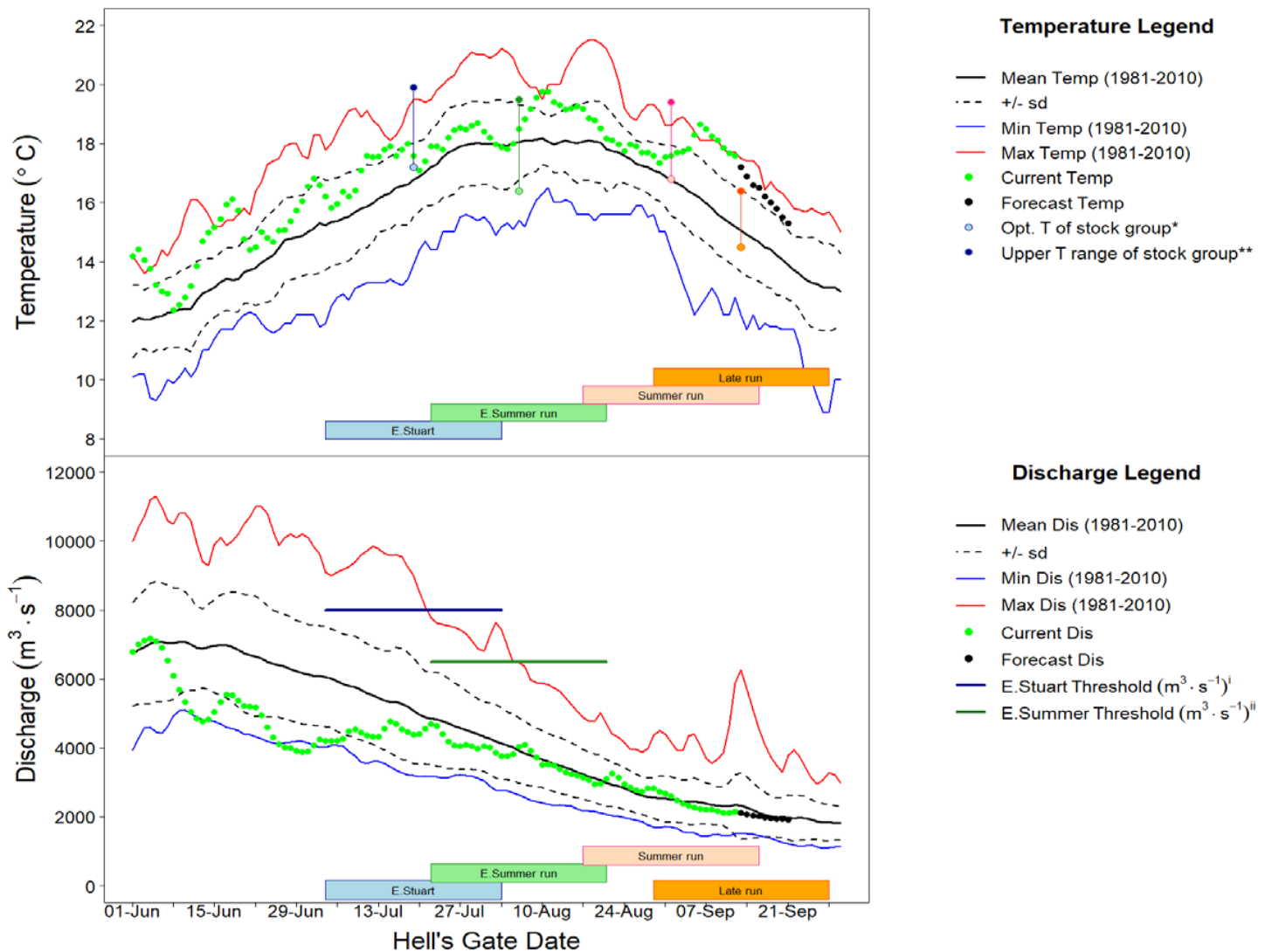
Fraser River Conditions

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 13th, 2019):



The Fraser River water temperature at Hope is currently 17.6 degrees Celsius (2.4 degrees Celsius above average for this time of year), and is forecast to decrease to 16.0 degrees Celsius by September 18th. The Fraser River discharge is within the usual annual differences at 2,163 m³/sec at the Qualark water station on September 12th (8% below average for this time of year). The discharge is continue to tracking at the average discharge, with a forecast discharge of 1,968 m³/sec by September 18th.

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 preseason MA forecasts, we are currently not expecting a major change in MAs compared to preseason 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 (September 13th, 2019) and the Fraser River Panel meeting from the same day.

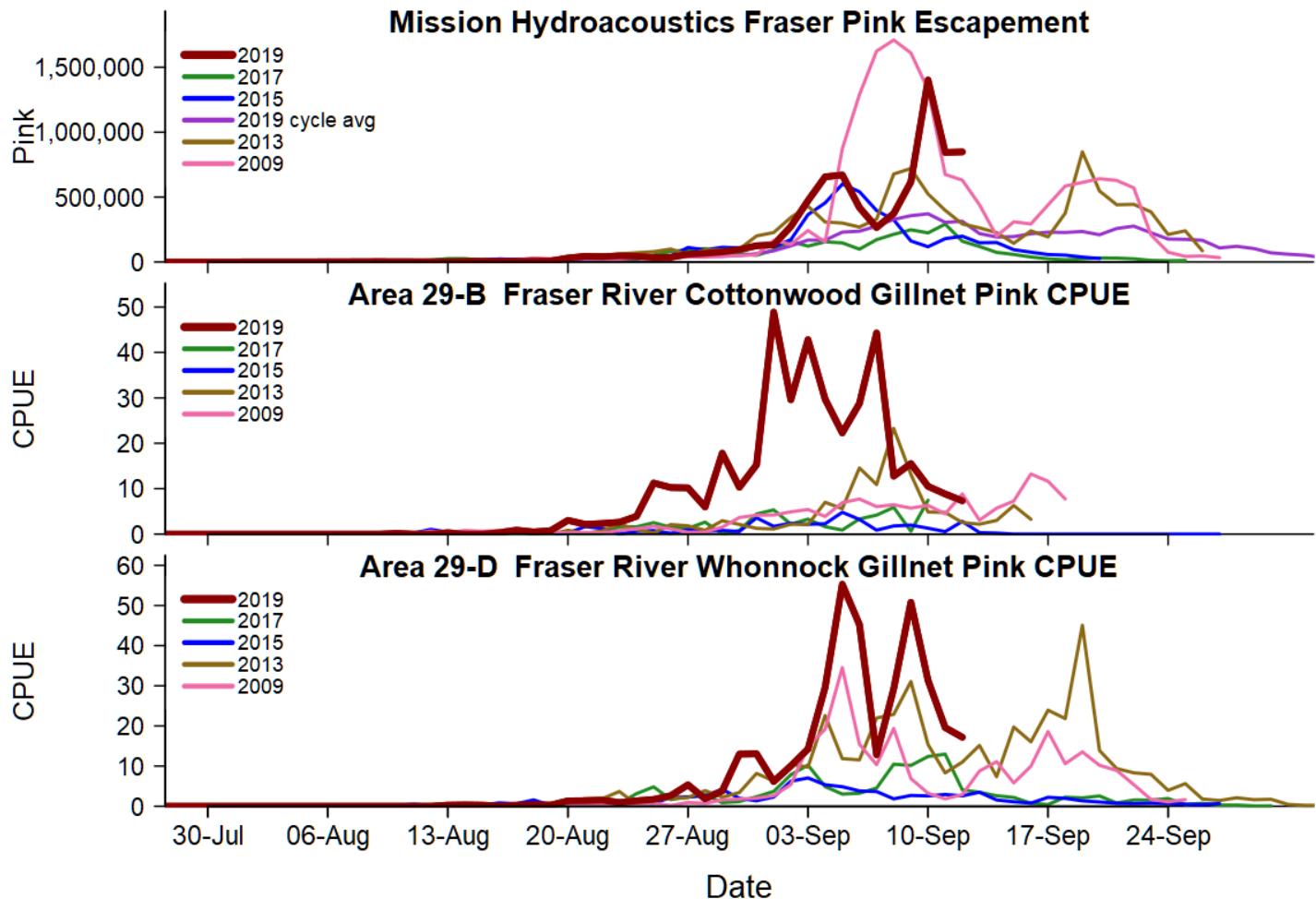
There is no marine test fishery information available for sockeye of pinks due to closure of the marine test fisheries.

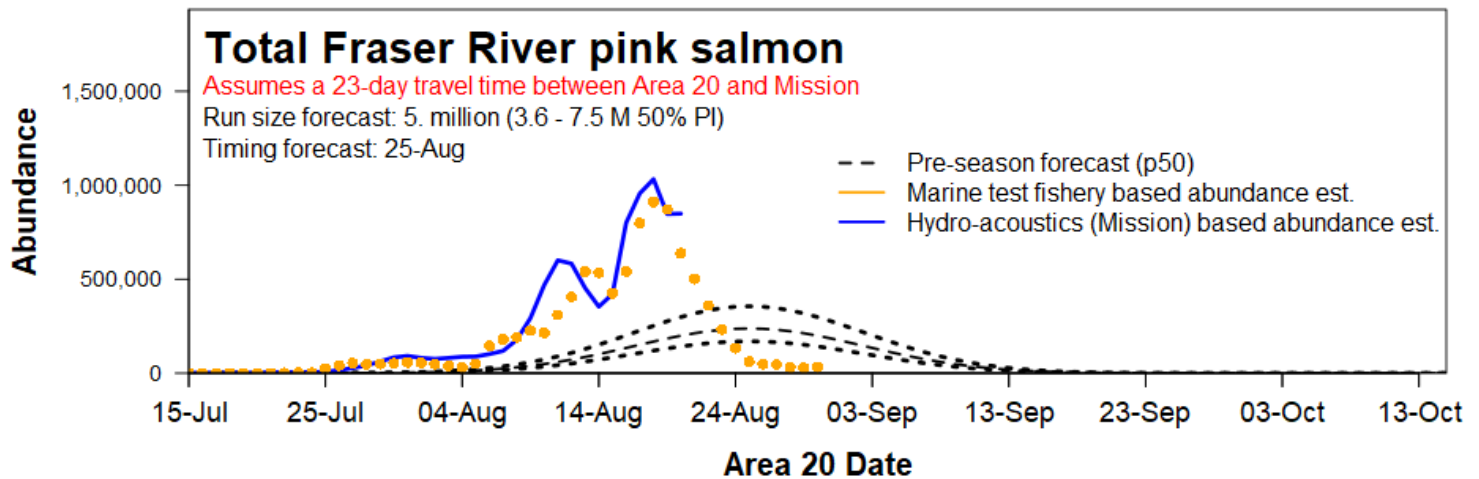
In-river test fisheries have continued, and they are catching substantial amounts of pink salmon at Whonnock.

Hydroacoustic data is driving the changes in in-season run size as substantial passage of pink salmon has been identified past Mission this week. The PSC staff are challenged by extremely high daily passage counts, but the estimates produced are verified by two independent sources to ensure the estimates are as accurate as possible in-season. There will be substantial work post season to verify some of the daily passage counts, but in-season only subsampling is possible. Daily passage estimates are done manually via subsampling, thus the reason for uncertainty reported on the Fraser Panel Call.

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 11:00AM 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>

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