



WATERSHED TALK

NEWSLETTER

Produced by the Fraser River Aboriginal Fisheries Secretariat

2016 FRASER SALMON UPDATE:

By: Pete Nicklin, Fraser Fisheries Biologist

Today's update is brief. The overall picture for the 2016 Fraser sockeye has not really changed from the Special Edition update on August 10th, with the exception that the Panel **downgraded the Summers to 600,000 from 700,000 and adopted a July 31st timing, 3 days earlier than pre-season expectations.** This year's overall Fraser sockeye return continues to be very low. At this time, the Lates appear to be showing abundance consistent with the pre-season forecast. However, the Lates comprise a small proportion of the overall run, and this doesn't significantly alter the overall reality of a very small Fraser sockeye return. **In addition to the poor return, Fraser River temperatures are now climbing, and forecast to approach levels which are a stressful for migrating fish.**

The following table has been updated, and today's information includes updated information related to Summers from the Aug 12th Fraser River Panel meeting. The table compares the in-season adopted run sizes to the pre-season forecast. **An overall Fraser sockeye return of this magnitude would be a record low.**

The Early Summers and the Summers are in a Low Abundance Exploitation Rate (LAER) scenario, which means fisheries are being managed to limit impacts to 10% for the respective management groups. The LAER is in place to allow for incidental mortality and by-catch from fisheries directed at more abundant stocks or species, but may also include limited harvest (refer to page 290 of the South Coast IFMP). Current catch estimates (including projections for fisheries yet to close) exceed the LAER for both Early Summer and Summer groups.

| Sockeye Management Group | Pre-Season Planning Forecast (P50) | In-Season Adopted Run Size | Area 20 Timing (for 50% of run) |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| Early Stuart | 36,000 | 18,000 | July 3 |
| Early Summer | 447,000 | 250,000 | July 21 |
| Summer | 1,677,000 | 600,000 | July 31 |
| Lates | 111,000 | N/A | Aug 12 |
| TOTAL | 2,271,000 | N/A (too early for run size update) | |

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Early Summers

Early Summers are estimated at 250,000 which compares to a pre-season forecast of 447,000. At this run size and Management Adjustment (MA), the Early Summers have no harvestable surplus and are being managed at the Low Abundance Exploitation Rate (LAER).

Summer Run

The pre-season forecast of Summers is 1,677,000 (P50). Unfortunately, test fishery catches, stock component proportions and age class data are all pointing towards a much lower than forecast return. **Therefore, the Panel adopted a reduced in-season abundance estimate of 600,000 at Friday's Panel meeting**, which followed last Tuesday's downgrade. Data available at the time indicated a lower number, setting the stage for further reductions. At this run size, the Summers have no harvestable surplus and are being managed at the Low Abundance Exploitation Rate (LAER).

Late Sockeye

Lates are forecasted at 111,000 (P50). Current information shows this management group may be tracking at pre-season expectations. It is expected Panel will update the in-season run size at next week's meetings. The LAER for Lates is 20% or approximately 22,000 at the current run sizes.

Sockeye Closures

Fraser First Nations directed sockeye fisheries have been closed, or will be closing due to the Early Summer and Summer run sizes. *It is important to note: Fisheries restrictions on sockeye don't all happen at once in these situations. In the same manner that the openings following the Early Stuart closure begin in the marine approach areas and move up the river, it is anticipated fisheries will close in a step-wise manner, dependent on a combination of discussions between First Nations and DFO, timing, catch-to-date, access and opportunity for harvest.*

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 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>

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Fraser Sockeye

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 12th, 2016) and the Fraser River Panel meeting from the same day.

Test fisheries are in place in the Fraser River (gill net) and both marine-approach areas (Strait of Juan de Fuca and Johnstone Strait – purse seines). Hydroacoustics programs are in operation at Mission and Qualark (Yale). A total of 615,600 Fraser sockeye have been accounted-to-date. 7,900 Fraser sockeye have been caught in Panel approved test fisheries, 1,700 in US fisheries, 400 in the Albion test fishery and 112,000 in Canadian First Nations Food, Social & Ceremonial fisheries. Current accounting is comprised of 18,000 Early Stuart sockeye, 227,400 Early Summer run sockeye, 344,300 Summers and 25,900 Lates.

The next Fraser River Panel meeting is scheduled for 11AM Tuesday August 16th.

Links

With Chinook and sockeye approaching and in the Fraser, these links may be of interest:

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

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/news_frpnews.htm

Fraser River Mission Escapement Reports: http://www.psc.org/info_inseasonfraserescapement.htm

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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