



WATERSHED TALK

NEWSLETTER

Produced by the Fraser River Aboriginal Fisheries Secretariat

July 11, 2014

Volume XI, Issue 9

Fraser Salmon Update

By Pete Nicklin, FRAFS Fraser Fisheries Biologist

The Fraser sockeye and environmental update is a summary of information from the July 10th Fraser River Panel Technical Committee (FRPTC) distribution, FRAFS in-season update call, and July 11th Fraser River Panel teleconference.

Early Stuart Sockeye

With respect to environmental conditions and in-season update for the Early Stuart sockeye, the current picture is not as favourable when compared to pre-season expectations. The Early Stuart run size has now been downgraded from the mid-point forecast to the p25 level of 189,000, and Fraser temperatures are approaching 40 year record highs if the forecast holds over the next several days. The spawning escapement goal is 108,000 so management adjustments to address these warm water conditions will mean there is no TAC other than the Low Abundance Exploitation Rate (LAER) of 10%.

Fraser River Conditions

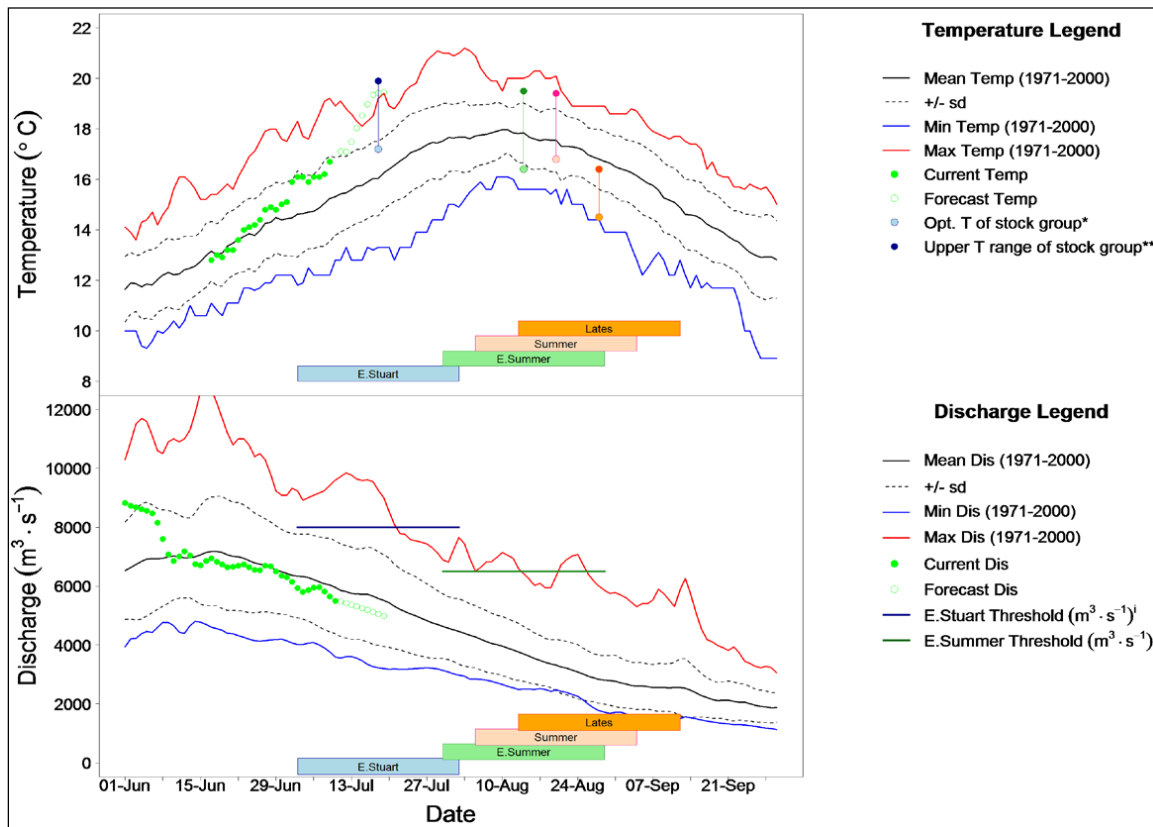
The BC River Forecast Centre website (<http://bcrfc.env.gov.bc.ca>) has information and links related to discharge and temperatures at various monitoring stations throughout the Fraser watershed, including snow pillow and melt updates.

Environment Canada's Water Office webpage provides access to real time hydrometric data at many locations throughout the Fraser watershed (http://www.wateroffice.ec.gc.ca/index_e.html).

Continued next page

Fraser Salmon Update *(continued)*

Fraser Discharge and temperatures at Hope and Qualark Creek (near Hope) respectively look like this (graphs from the Fraser River Panel Distribution July 11, 2014):



Fraser temperatures are predicted to be on a rapid increase, and forecasted to be the highest in the past 40 years if the weather forecast holds (July 16th river temperature forecast is 19 degrees Celsius). In general, Fraser temperatures of 18 degrees Celsius and warmer are considered stressful for sockeye salmon, and may affect upstream migration and spawning success. The Fraser discharge continues to decrease from its peak in late May, and is tracking slightly lower than average. Current discharge (July 10th) is about 5,500 m³ per second (cms) and 8% below average.



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Fraser Chinook Albion Test Fishery

The Albion Chinook Test fishery graphs haven't been updated for this week, but it is worth mentioning the relatively large catches in the test fishery from June 26th to July 6th. The chinook numbers to date are similar to those seen in 2009 and 2006. The test fishery catches are also significantly higher than 2013 thus far. Weight distribution information from the multi-panel net (provided by DFO - thank you!) indicates an increasing number of bigger chinook (the five-year olds) over the past few weeks, and a continuing presence of smaller weighted chinook (the four year olds). It is good to see the larger Chinook, a continued presence of the smaller bodied Chinook and the relatively strong test fishery catches!

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>

Fraser First Nations Chinook Catch

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>

Mid and Upper Fraser First Nations Chinook catch estimates have not been provided by DFO at this time. Current fisheries openings have been updated for this year, but the 2014 harvest report isn't on the website yet. The onset of the Early Stuart closure window and associated First Nations catch monitoring programs will provide the first official updates for the harvest report in the next week or so.

The Lower Fraser First Nations Chinook catch estimate to July 6th is 6,480. Most of that Chinook catch has occurred in fisheries conducted after mid-June.



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Fraser Sockeye

The Pacific Salmon Commission (PSC) distributes the Fraser River Panel agenda and technical information for Panel members and observers to the process. The following information is a summary of key information from that document (July 11th).

In general, test fishing catches are lower than expected for Early Stuarts. **Current data show a signal of both lower Early Stuart abundance and later timing than pre-season forecast.** The later timing, combined with the rapidly increasing Fraser River temperatures, will likely result in an increase in the Management Adjustment (MA) from the pre-season value (0.86). **At the July 11th Fraser Panel meeting, the Fraser River Panel adopted an in-season Early Stuart estimate equal to the P25 forecast (189,000) with July 7th Area 20 timing.** The required number of observed temperature/discharge days in order to update the MA model will be available for the **next Fraser River Panel meeting on Tuesday July 15th.**

Approximately 50,000 Early Stuart and 5,500 Early Summer and Summer sockeye are estimated past the Mission hydro-acoustics station, for a total sockeye passage of 55,500 to date. The expected 50% date for Early Summers isn't until August 4th, so it's important to keep in mind - other than Early Stuarts - the remainder of the Fraser sockeye return is very much in the early stages.

Please see graph on following page



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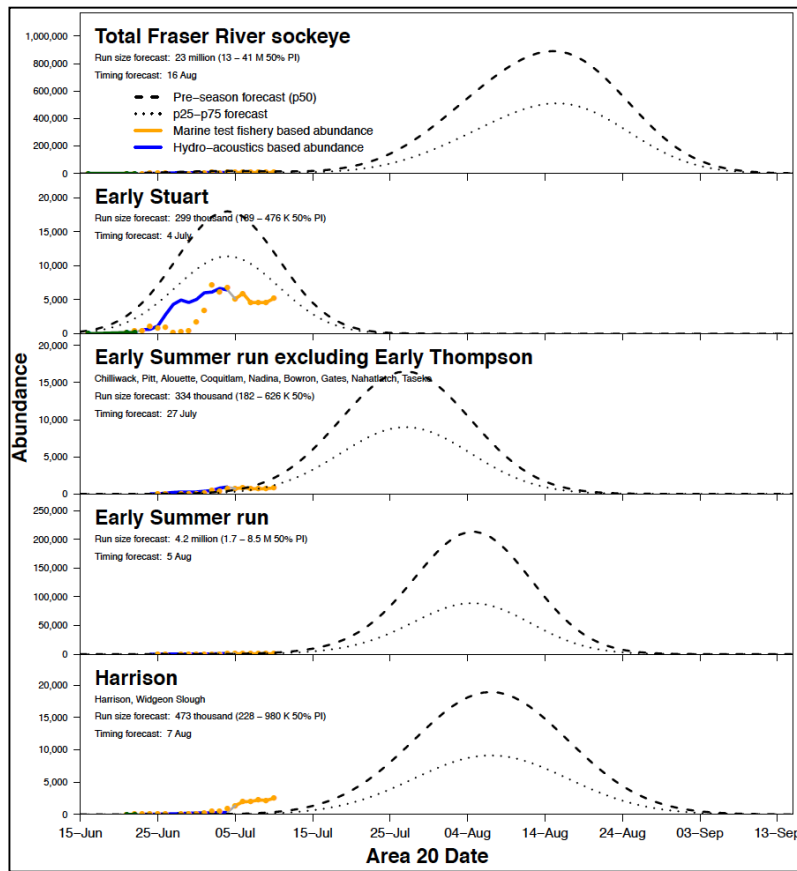
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2014 Estimated Abundance and Timing



This graph shows the 2014 estimated abundance and timing based on Marine and in-river test fisheries and Mission hydro-acoustics compared to forecast. With the exception of Early Stuart, all other return information is still very early in the season. Harrison sockeye have been showing in significant proportions in stock identification samples in the Area 20 test fishery.



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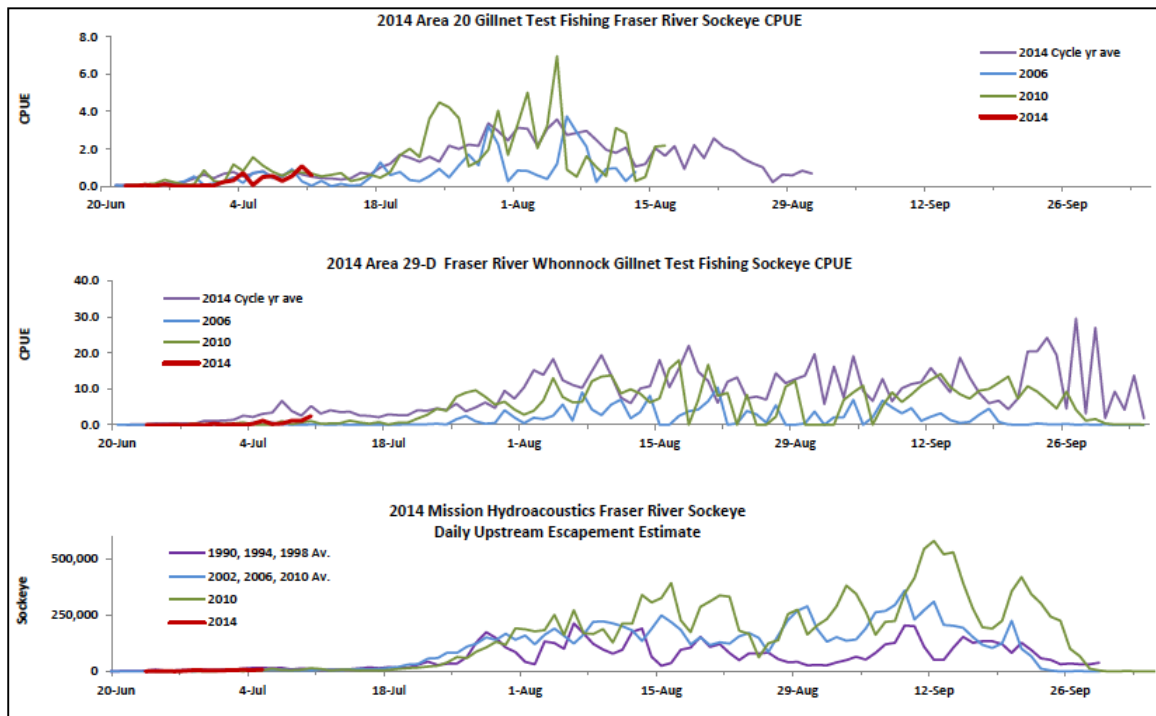
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Test fishing graphs and Mission hydro-acoustics information from the distribution package look like this:



The next Fraser River Panel meeting is scheduled for July 15th.

For more information contact Pete Nicklin by email: pnicklin@telus.net



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General Information

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

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>