



WATERSHED TALK

NEWSLETTER

Produced by the Fraser River Aboriginal Fisheries Secretariat

2015 FRASER SALMON UPDATE

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As time ticks on, the 2015 Fraser sockeye salmon run continues to track well below the pre-season forecast of 6.76 million. The table below outlines the current situation where most components across the total run have thus far have not returned in abundances anticipated. In-season information has resulted in a total adopted run size of 2.4 million.

Sockeye Management Group	Pre-Season Planning Forecast	In-Season Adopted Run Size
Early Stuart	16,000 (P25 Forecast)	32,000
Early Summer	837,000 (P50 Forecast)	350,000
Summer	4,675,000 (P50 Forecast)	1,600,000
Lates	1,236,000 (P50 Forecast)	419,000
TOTAL	6,764,000	2,401,000

Although we continue to hope for the best, below is a summary of the less than favorable situation we are currently faced with:

Early Stuarts

Conservation concerns for **Early Stuarts** resulted in planning at the P25 forecast. In-season information and assessment showed Early Stuarts returning at a level similar to the P50 forecast, which ended up at 32,000.

Early Summers

Early Summers were forecast at 837,000. Even though they continue to trickle in, the aggregate remains below the p50 forecast with a current adopted run size of 350,000. The majority of the abundance of the Early Summer forecast was the Early Thompson group, however in-season information shows that this component of the group continues to track well below forecast. The Early Summers excluding the Early Thompson component show returns closer to the pre-season forecast for this component. No changes to the run size or timing as a result of the information presented during the Fraser Panel call today.

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Summer Run

Pre-season, the Summer aggregate of the 2015 run was predicted to be the largest contributor to the forecast. The story for this group is similar to that of last week's with test fishery information and assessment showing these stocks all returning lower than the P25 forecast. The Summer run size was increased today to 1,600,000 (timing Aug 11th) as a result of continued presence of high proportions of DNA in the marine test fisheries and the possibility of a later timing for the Chiko/Quesnel component of the group. There have been recent discrepancies between the marine and Mission test numbers suggesting a higher expansion factor be applied to test catches (1 sockeye caught = 380 fish). The Fraser River Panel adopted the P25 forecast for Summers on August 11th – 1.7 Million, and further downgraded the run size to 1.13 million on August 14th prior to increasing the run size to 1.6 million today. Despite increasing the run size, the Summers remain in a Low Abundance Exploitation Rate (LAER) situation with no Total Allowable Catch (TAC) remaining. The LAER is intended to allow a small amount of sockeye mortality (10%) while fisheries are targeting other species.

Late Sockeye

Unfortunately the story, at this point, continues for the Late aggregate as well. The test fishery and hydroacoustic information for Late sockeye continue to indicate a run size below the pre-season expectations. On August 14th, the Fraser River Panel adopted the P10 abundance of 419,000 and no further changes were made at this time.

Sockeye Closures

First Nations fisheries directed at sockeye remain closed in the marine area, lower Fraser and mid-Fraser. Sockeye fisheries in the Thompson system and the upper Fraser remain open at this time. There were US fisheries on the Early Summers and part of the Summers, as well as test fisheries on these stocks, however, since August 13th test fisheries have been instructed to release sockeye with the exception of sample fish for collection of scales and DNA. There have been no Canadian commercial or recreational directed sockeye fisheries on Fraser sockeye this year.

The Fraser environmental and sockeye update is a summary of information from the August 20th Fraser River Panel Technical Committee distribution, FRAFS in-season update call (August 20th) with FRAFS Biologist Mike Staley, and August 21st Fraser River Panel teleconference.

Fraser River Conditions

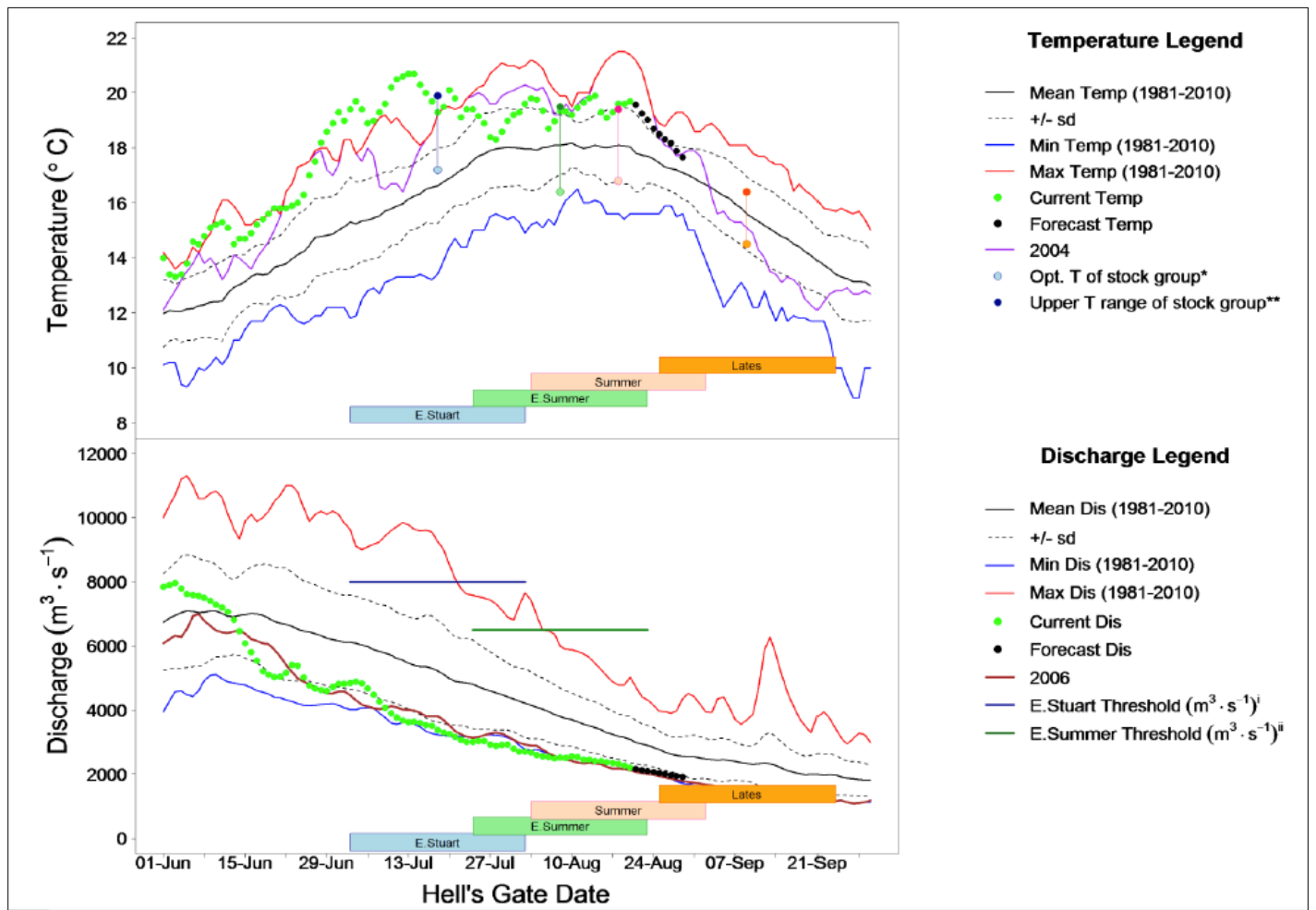
The main source of information for Temperature and Discharge data and forecasts is DFO's Environmental Watch Program (see link below).

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 August 21st, 2015):

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The Fraser River water temperature remains similar to last week's report at 19.7 degrees Celsius (1.7 degrees Celsius above average for this time of year), and is forecast to decrease to a temperature of 18.3 degrees Celsius by August 26th mainly as a result of night timing cooling. The Fraser River discharge continues to track at near-record low levels for this time of year with a flow of 2,203 m³/sec at the Qualark water station, well below the average flow of 3078 m³/sec for this time of year. The discharge is predicted to continue tracking at the minimum observed values, with a forecast discharge of 1,999 m³/sec by August 26th.

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>

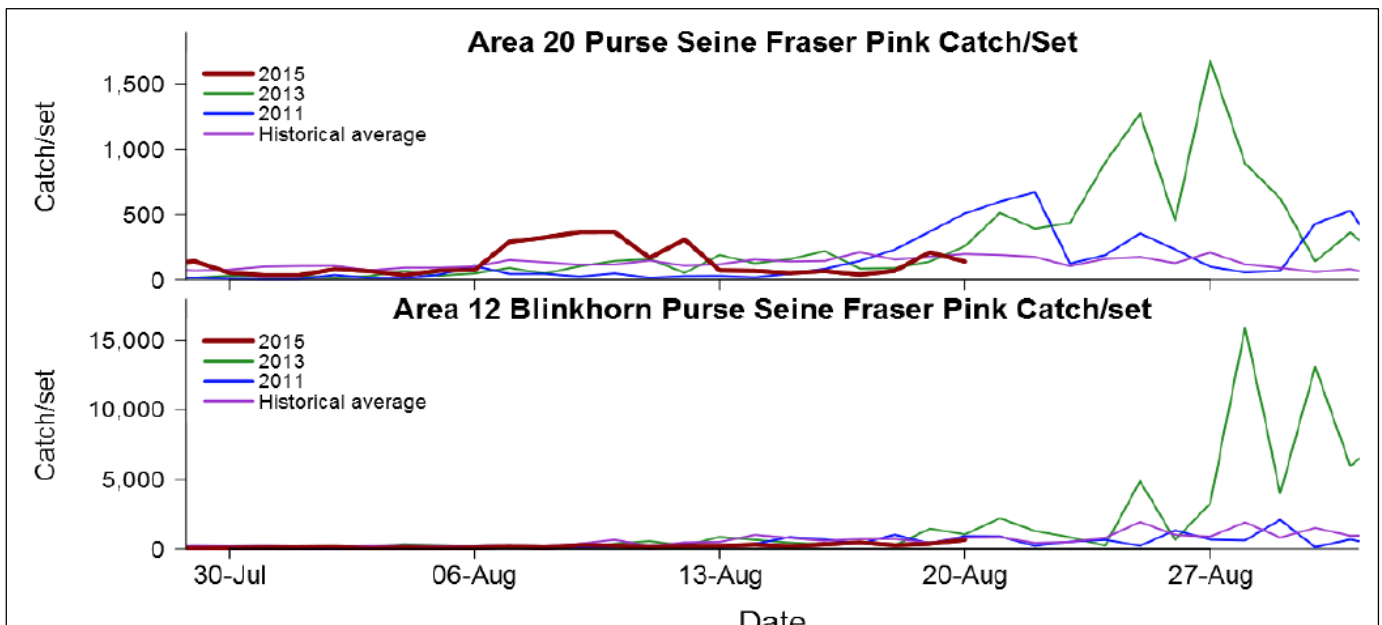
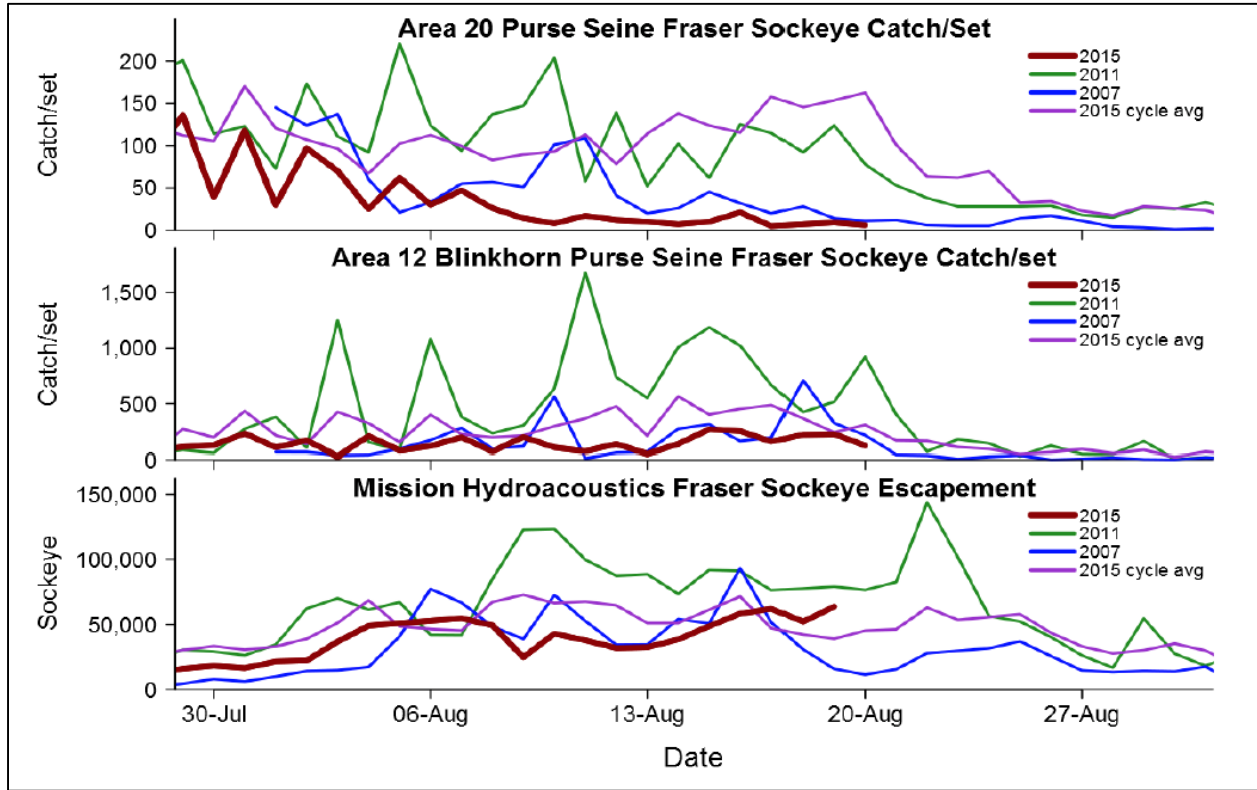
Fraser Sockeye & Pink Salmon

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 21st, 2015) and the Fraser River Panel meeting from the same day.

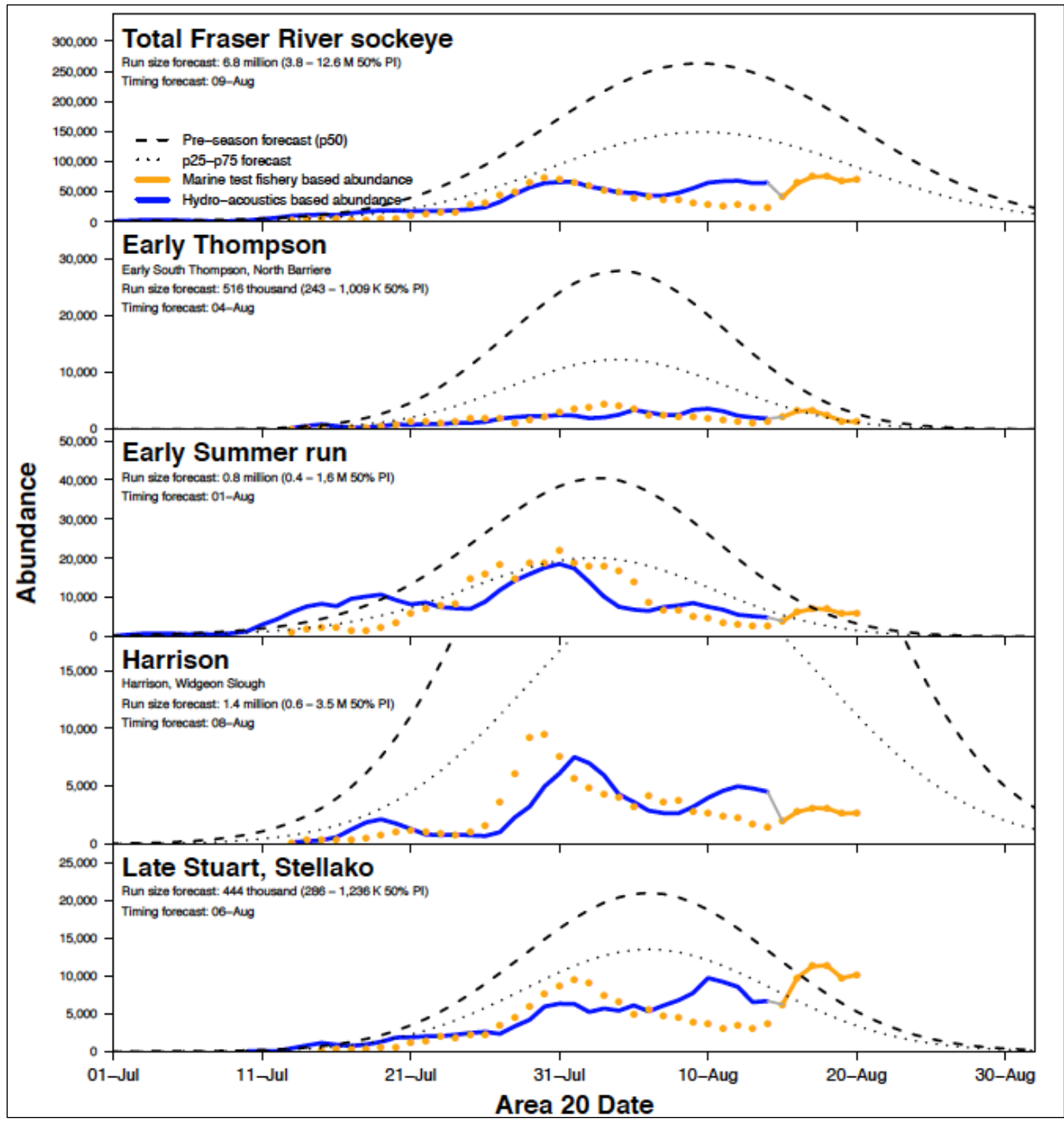
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At this time, marine gillnet test fisheries have been suspended as a result of low abundance. The purse seine test fisheries are still in operation in marine-approach areas (Strait of Juan de Fuca and Johnstone Strait) but, as stated above, are no longer retaining sockeye with the exception of some fish for sampling purposes. Hydroacoustics programs remain in full operation at Mission and Qualark (Yale). A total of 1,335,000 Fraser sockeye have been accounted-to-date, comprised of an in-season estimate of 32,000 Early Stuart sockeye, 328,000 Early Summer run sockeye, 949,000 Summers and 26,000 Lates. The Fraser Pink migration is underway, with an accounted catch + escapement of 330,388.

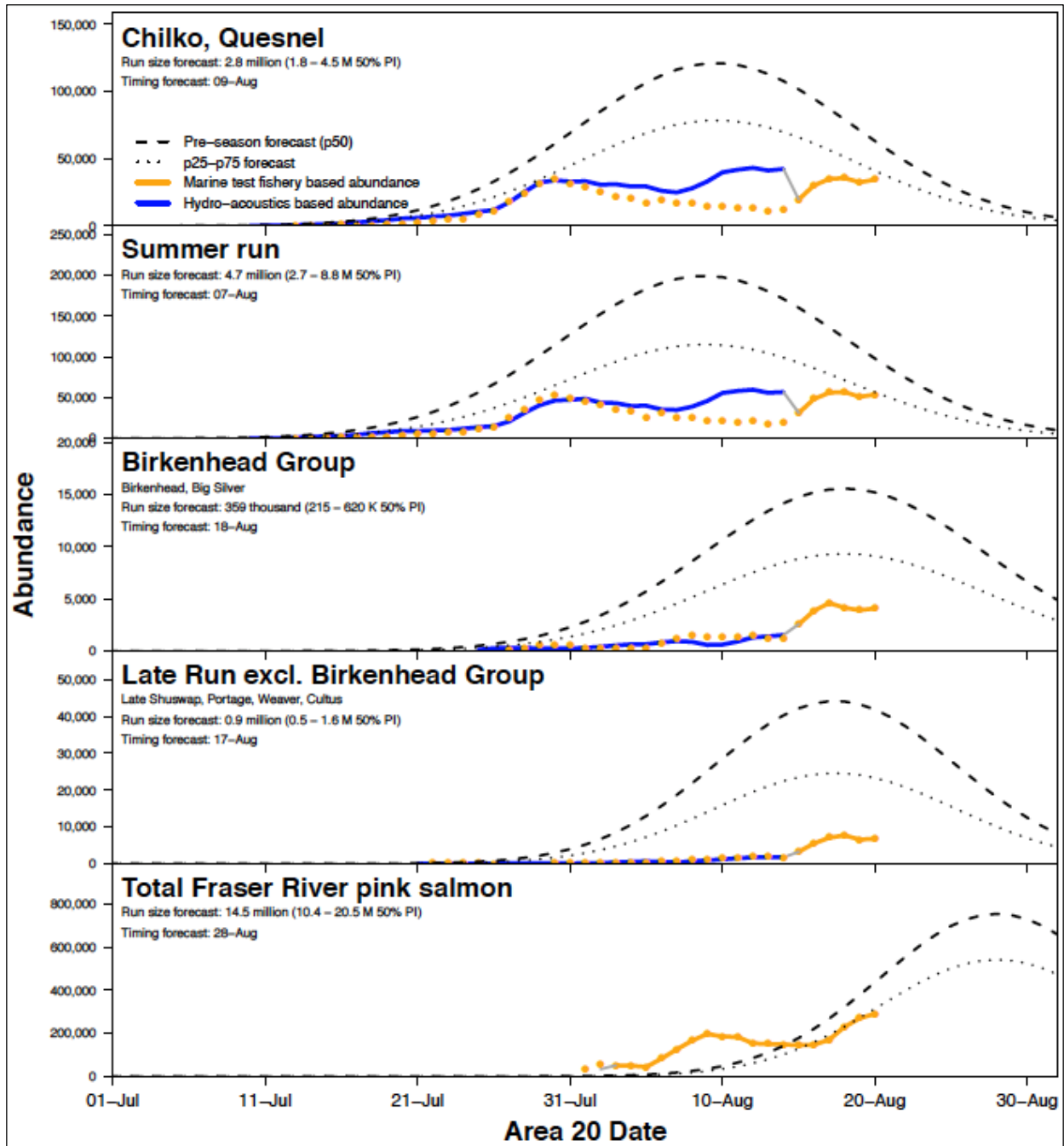
Test fishing graphs and Mission hydro-acoustics information from the PSC distribution package look like this:



Estimated Abundance and In-Season Timing Compared to Forecast



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The next Fraser River Panel meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 25th.

Links

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/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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Volume 12, Issue 11

August 21, 2015