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No. 6

WEEKLY REPORT

August 18, 2023

The Fraser River Panel (Panel) met today to review assessment data on Fraser River sockeye salmon.

Test fishing and stock identification information

The majority of the sockeye have been caught in Area 12 resulting currently in a northern diversion rate of 65%. DNA analysis of a fish sample recently collected from the Area 12 purse seine test fishery indicated Fraser River sockeye contributions of 8% Early Summer, 60% Summer and 32% Late run. Pink salmon catches have decreased in marine test fisheries; however, the proportion of Fraser River pink salmon has increased with the most recent sample from Area 20 indicating 51% Fraser pink. Observations in reef net test gear in the San Juan Islands area indicate that sockeye salmon accounted for 21% of the observations from August 14-16.

Assessment results

Fraser River Sockeye Salmon

As of August 17, 292,200 Early Summer-run sockeye have passed Mission. Most Early Summer run have passed through the marine and in-river test fisheries. On Friday, the Panel adopted an updated Early Summer-run run size of 310,000 sockeye with an associated Area 20 timing of July 24.

Summer-run sockeye continue to dominate the proportions of observed sockeye in the marine test fisheries with most of these fish being Chilko sockeye. The Summer run escapement past Mission, as of August 17, is 335,200 sockeye. Based on in-season observations, Summer run seems to be smaller than preseason expectations (median preseason forecast of 1,167,000). At the median preseason forecast, this group is managed under a Low Abundance Exploitation Rate, indicating there is no available harvestable surplus. On Friday, the Panel adopted a reduced run-size estimate for the Summer run of 800,000 and an associated Area 20 run timing of August 13.

Late-run sockeye abundances have increased in the marine test fisheries, but observations in river test fisheries have been limited as some of the Late run may be delaying their entry into the Fraser River. The accounted run to date past Mission as of August 17 is 21,000.

Fraser River Pink Salmon

Substantial pink salmon have been caught in marine test fisheries, and there is evidence that Fraser pink salmon abundances are greater than the pre-season forecast of 6.1 million. At Tuesday's meeting, the panel adopted an increased pink salmon run size of 8,575,000 with an associated Area 20 timing of August 18. The early timing of pink salmon this year is in line with the trend in recent years toward earlier migration timing, increasing the overlap between sockeye and pink salmon migration. This increases the difficulty to access international TAC for pink salmon while minimizing the impacts on sockeye salmon. Pink salmon catches in test fisheries in the river are increasing and some pink salmon have been observed migrating past Hells Gate. To date, 31,500 pink salmon have been observed migrating past Mission.

On Friday, the PSC staff presented analyses to the Panel indicating that the Fraser River pink salmon run size was larger than the 8,575,000 adopted earlier in the week. The Panel adopted an updated run size of 17,000,000 Fraser pink salmon, with an associated Area 20 timing of August 13.

Migration conditions in the Fraser River

The extreme low discharge and high temperatures are expected to negatively impact migration conditions for Fraser River sockeye. As of August 17, the Fraser River water discharge at Hope was 2,188 cms, which is 29% lower than average for this date and below the historical minimum. The temperature of the Fraser River at Qualark was 20.8°C, which is 2.2°C higher than average for this date. DFO's Environmental Watch program projects that river temperature will remain high, and discharge is forecast to decrease to 1,971 cms over the next 10 days.

Escapement Update

Visual surveys for the Early Stuart spawning escapement assessment program began July 23 and most sockeye are past peak of spawn and in many tributaries are past peak die off. Low water conditions are still present throughout the system but water temperatures in all creeks have remained favourable for spawning. Sockeye continue to appear vigorous and healthy.

The counting fence at Scotch Creek has been operational since August 11 but no sockeye have passed through. As there is an evacuation alert in the area due to wildfires, the fence has been left open after August 16 to allow for fish passage until crews are able to access the site. Visual surveys in the North/South Thompson system began August 17 but data is not available at this time. In the lower Fraser, visual surveys on the Upper Chilliwack River started August 1 and water levels are characterized as being very low for this time of year. An aerial survey on August 14 and a concurrent ground survey indicated sockeye are primarily holding in the upper Chilliwack River. In the first survey of Nahatlatch River and Lake no sockeye were observed. The Nadina River hydroacoustic site was operational as of July 27 and as of August 14 an estimated 21,562 sockeye have migrated past the Nadina hydroacoustic site.

The Chilko River and Quesnel River hydroacoustic sites have been operational since August 2. As of August 15, 1,025 sockeye have migrated past the Chilko hydroacoustic site and 1,416 sockeye have migrated past the Quesnel hydroacoustic site. Visual surveys started on the Nechako River tributaries August 1, but no surveys were conducted within this reporting period. The Stellako River hydroacoustic site has been operational since July 26 and as of August 15, an estimated 43,058 sockeye have migrated past the site, the majority migrating to the Nadina River this early in the migration. The counting fence at Sweltzer Creek (Cultus Lake) has been fish tight since July 25 and night video recording started July 27. No sockeye have passed to date. The water temperature is 26.0°C.

Regulatory Announcements & Resources

The Panel announced the following regulations for commercial salmon fisheries in Panel Area waters:

CANADIAN FRASER RIVER PANEL AREA WATERS:

Remain closed to commercial salmon fishing.

UNITED STATES FRASER RIVER PANEL AREA WATERS:

TREATY TRIBAL FISHERY:

Areas 4B, 5, and 6C: Open for drift gillnet fishing from 12 p.m. (noon), Saturday, August 19, 2023, through 12 p.m. (noon), Tuesday, August 22, 2023.

Areas 6, 7, and 7A: Open for net fishing from 5 a.m. through 9 p.m., Sunday, August 20, 2023.

Canada did not approve of either of the proposed US fisheries due to conservation concerns for Fraser River sockeye.

The next in-season meeting of the Panel is scheduled to occur on August 22. Weekly reports in this series will be provided by the Panel through the Commission every Friday during the in-season management period to inform those interested in the progress of the Fraser River sockeye salmon run. Weekly reports and regulatory announcements can be obtained via [Fraser Panel In-Season Information - Pacific Salmon Commission \(psc.org\)](https://psc.org) or by subscribing to our eNews [Pacific Salmon Commission \(list-manage.com\)](https://list-manage.com). Resources and contacts for fishing schedules, regulations, test fishing catch and DFO’s environmental watch program can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Regulations & Resources

Fishing Schedule Contacts/Resources	Phone Number/ Website Links
United States fishing schedules (Treaty Indian)	1-800-562-6142
United States fishing schedules (Non-Indian)	1-800-662-9825
Canadian commercial fishing regulations (from the lower B.C. mainland)	604-666-2828
Canadian commercial fishing regulations (from outside the lower B.C. mainland)	1-866-431-3474
PSC Daily Test Fishing Catch (recorded message)	604-666-8200 Test Fishing Results - Pacific Salmon Commission (psc.org)
DFO’s Environmental Watch program	Fraser River environmental watch Pacific Region Fisheries and Oceans Canada (dfo-mpo.gc.ca)

Note: For species other than sockeye salmon consult the appropriate regulatory agency regarding fisheries regulations in the Fraser River Panel Management Area.

Contacts

Canada: Adam Keizer, Chair, Fraser River Panel

United States: Jason Gobin, Vice-Chair, Fraser River Panel

2023 Run status of Fraser sockeye salmon

Date: Aug. 18, 2023

Week of: Aug. 13 - Aug. 19, 2023	Sockeye				Total Fraser
	Management Group				
	E.Stuart	E.Summer	Summer	Late	
Mission passage (includes Pitt, Alouette, Coquitlam) ¹	40,900	292,200	335,200	21,000	689,300
Catch downstream of Mission	200	3,800	6,300	1,000	11,300
Accounted run-to-date	41,100	296,000	341,500	22,000	700,600
Run size adopted in-season ¹	41,000	290,000	na	na	na
Run size forecasted pre-season	23,000	186,000	1,167,000	188,000	1,564,000
Area 20 timing adopted in-season	2/Jul	23/Jul	na	na	
Area 20 timing expected pre-season	7/Jul	6/Aug	17/Aug	24/Aug	

¹ Run sizes are usually not adopted until after the peak of the run has passed through marine test fishery areas in Juan de Fuca and Johnstone straits.

2023 Catch-to-date by fishery

Date: Aug. 18, 2023

Week of: Aug. 13 - Aug. 19, 2023		Sockeye	
		Total	Fraser
Canada		5,019	5,019
	Commercial	0	0
	B Purse Seine	0	0
	D Gillnet	0	0
	E Gillnet	0	0
	F Troll	0	0
	G Troll	0	0
	H Troll	0	0
	First Nations	0	0
	Food, Social & Ceremonial (FSC)	0	0
	Marine	0	0
	Fraser R.	0	0
	Economic Opportunity (EO) & Demonstration (Demo)	0	0
	Marine	0	0
	Fraser R.	0	0
	Recreational	0	0
	Marine	0	0
	Fraser R.	0	0
	Charter (Albion gillnet test fishery)	472	472
	Other**	4,421	4,421
United States		0	0
	Commercial	0	0
	Treaty Tribes (TRB)	0	0
	All Citizen (AC)	0	0
	Treaty Tribes Ceremonial & Subsistence (C&S)	0	0
	Other**	0	0
	All Citizen Recreational	0	0
	Alaska *	na	na
Panel-approved Test Fisheries		11,617	11,091
	Panel Waters	8,294	8,004
	Non-Panel Waters	3,323	3,087
Total		16,636	16,110

* Alaska catch is processed post-season and so is unavailable in-season.

** May include unauthorized directed retention or unauthorized bycatch retention in fisheries directed at other species