

A weekly Aboriginal fisheries newsletter for
fisheries representatives and their organizations

SOCKEYE UPDATE - Press Release from the Pacific Salmon Commission - www.psc.org

The Fraser River Panel met today to review stock assessment data on the Fraser River sockeye runs, plan fisheries, and discuss sockeye migration conditions in the Fraser River watershed. Purse seine test fishing catches of sockeye have been extremely strong in Johnstone Strait over the past several days, while catches in the Area 20 purse seine test fishery have been much lower but steady. These large catches and data from other marine and in-river assessment programs have resulted in further increases in run size estimates for Fraser River sockeye runs migrating through marine areas. The current total run size estimate for Fraser River sockeye this season of 30,046,000 fish is the highest since 1913, when it was estimated to be almost 39,000,000 fish. The very large return of Fraser sockeye this season is mainly a result of generally good sockeye escapements to the spawning grounds in the Fraser River watershed in the brood year (2006) for the four year old sockeye returning this season as well as high marine survival rates for most of the juvenile sockeye from the 2006 brood year that entered the ocean in 2008. Additionally, a large return of Late Shuswap sockeye (including the Adams River run) typically occurs every four years, with the most recent large return of these sockeye occurring in 2006. High marine survival rates of juvenile salmon are often associated with a good food supply, favorable marine temperatures, and low predation during their ocean residency.

DNA analyses indicate that the stock composition of Fraser sockeye in the Areas 12 and 20 marine approach routes to the Fraser River are averaging about 5% Summer-run and 95% Late-run sockeye. The diversion rate of Fraser sockeye through Johnstone Strait has increased to approximately 94%. The migration of sockeye past Mission and Hells Gate over the past several days continues to be strong. The estimated total commercial catch of Fraser sockeye to-date is 4,933,000 fish, while non-commercial catches (from test, First Nations FSC, Charter, and recreational fisheries) total 790,000 fish.

The marine migration of Early Summer-run sockeye is virtually complete. At the meeting on August 24 the run size estimate of 2,900,000 Early Summer-run sockeye was increased to 3,200,000 fish. At the meeting today, the Panel increased the run size estimate for Early Summer-run sockeye to 3,700,000 fish, with 50% marine migration timing through Area 20 of August 9. The estimated escapement of Early Summer-run sockeye past Mission through August 26 is 2,473,000 fish.

At the meeting on August 24 the run size estimate of 4,000,000 Summer-run sockeye was increased to 4,500,000 fish. At the meeting today, the Panel increased the run size estimate for Summer-run sockeye to 4,800,000 fish, with 50% marine migration timing through Area 20 of August 15. The estimated escapement of Summer-run sockeye past Mission through August 26 is 2,471,000 fish.

DNA analyses indicate that Late Shuswap sockeye are contributing over 90% of the total Laterun sockeye abundance presently migrating through the marine approach routes. Test fishing catches of Late-run sockeye in the gulf troll test fishery

indicate that a relatively high proportion of these fish are delaying in the lower Strait of Georgia prior to entering the Fraser River. It is projected that approximately 8,900,000 Late-run sockeye are presently delaying. At the meeting on August 24 the run size estimate for Harrison sockeye was increased from 900,000 fish to 1,000,000 fish and at the meeting today the run size estimate was increased to 1,200,000 fish. The 50% marine migration timing of Harrison sockeye through Area 20 is currently estimated to be August 11. At the meeting on August 24, the Panel approved an increase in the run size estimate for Late Shuswap/Weaver sockeye from 11,000,000 fish to 16,000,000 fish and at the meeting today, the run size estimate was increased to 20,000,000 fish. The 50% marine migration timing of Late Shuswap/Weaver sockeye is currently estimated to be August 20. The Panel is continuing to use the forecast run size for the Birkenhead stock-group of 241,000 fish, for fisheries planning purposes. The total run size estimate for Late-run sockeye is now 21,441,000 fish. The estimated escapement of Late-run sockeye past Mission through August 26 is 1,839,000 fish.

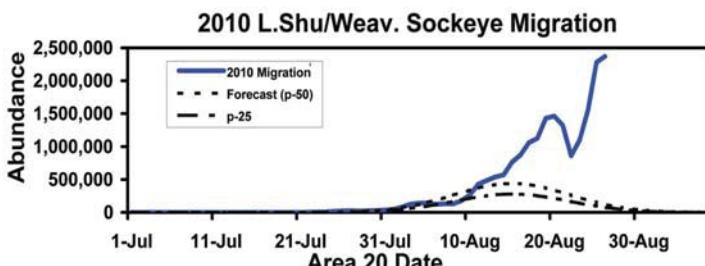
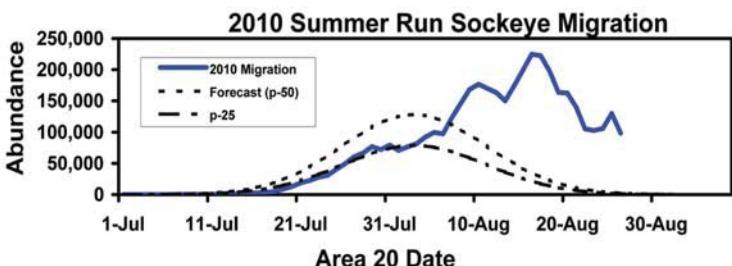
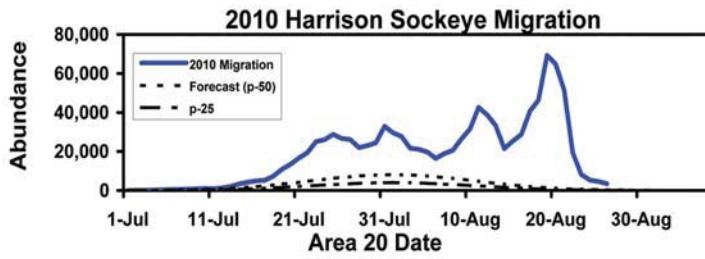
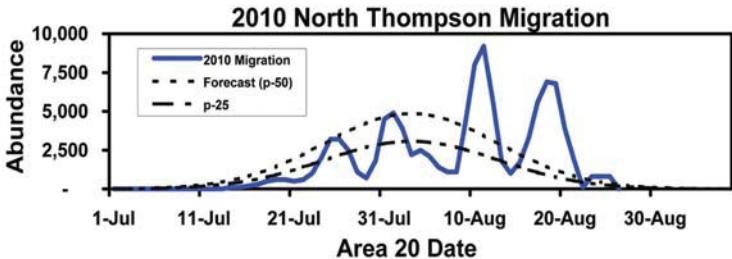
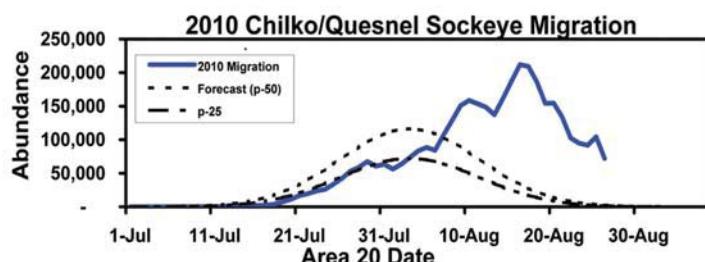
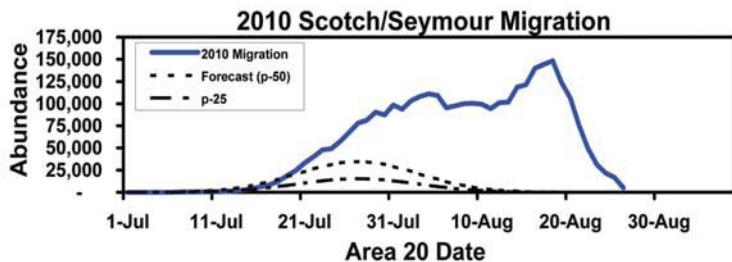
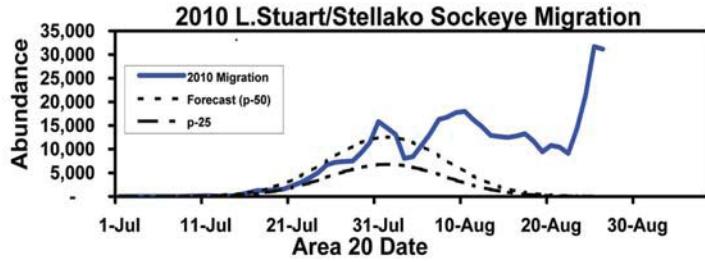
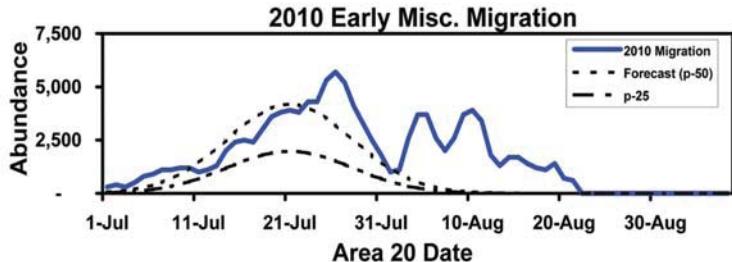
Migration conditions for sockeye in the Fraser River are currently satisfactory. On August 26 the discharge of the Fraser River at Hope was 2,070 cms, which is 32% below average for this date. The temperature of the Fraser River at Qualark Creek on August 26 was 17.8 0C, which is 1.0 0C above average for this date. Fraser River water temperatures at Qualark Creek are forecast to decrease to 16.8 degrees C by September 4. At the meeting on August 24, after reviewing environmental and stock assessment information, the Panel decreased the management adjustment factors for Early Summer-run sockeye from 0.39 to 0.38 and for Summer-run sockeye from 0.22 to 0.15. At the meeting today, the management adjustment for Early Summer-run sockeye was decreased to 0.36. Management adjustments are employed to help achieve spawning escapement targets for Fraser River sockeye.

The DFO spawning escapement update for Fraser sockeye on August 26 reported that sockeye arriving on their spawning grounds throughout the watershed are generally in good condition, with the exception of some pre-spawning mortality in the Nadina River and spawning channel. The escapement enumeration program on Scotch Creek has counted approximately 302,000 sockeye past the fence through August 25. Visual surveys of North and South Thompson streams noted spawning activity in most streams and a record count of sockeye in the Eagle River. Approximately 5,000 sockeye are currently in the Nadina River spawning channel. The Gates Creek spawning channel had about 6,900 sockeye counted into it through August 25, while approximately 1,800 sockeye have passed into spawning areas in the creek. A mark-recapture program for sockeye is underway on the Seymour River. DIDSON hydro-acoustic units are enumerating the migration of Chilko and Horsefly sockeye. The Stellako River enumeration fence became operational on August 25. A total of 473 Cultus Lake sockeye have passed the Sweltzer Creek enumeration fence through August 25 and an additional 120 fish have been retained for broodstock.

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FRASER SOCKEYE - IN-SEASON UPDATE (GRAPHS)

Provided by the Pacific Salmon Commission Fraser River Panel



**In-Season Technical Update
Conference Calls
Thursdays at 4:00pm**

Hosted by FRAFS Biologist Mike Staley
Open to all interested First Nations
Call in number and access code are distributed
weekly via the FRAFS email distribution list

The Watershed Talk is also available for
download at www.frafs.ca

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Visions Conference 2010

October 13 & 14, 2010 @ Seabird Island Band

FRAFS will be holding the annual Visions Conference on October 13 & 14, 2010. The hosts for this year will be the Seabird Island Band in Agassiz, BC.

In March 2010, the Fraser Watershed Joint Technical Forum held a meeting which focused on major sockeye stock assessment projects in the Fraser Watershed. This meeting provided an excellent opportunity to learn about the big picture assessment projects underway (PSC Mission hydroacoustics, Qualark DIDSON, etc.) as well as highlight potential opportunities for collaboration on technical fisheries initiatives between First Nations and DFO. This year, the Visions planning committee wishes to continue exploring the challenges surrounding some components of stock assessment, (e.g. monitoring harvests in a wide variety of fisheries), and examine ways to help

First Nations and DFO find common ground on the technical side of fisheries management. The proposed theme for the 2010 Visions Conference is "Fisheries Data: Bridging gaps and building trust".

Visions participants are encouraged to bring displays of fisheries projects to share. Please contact us if you would like to reserve a display table. We are also accepting door prize donations, so if you have anything to contribute please let us know!

More information about Visions registration, accommodations, and the conference program will be distributed over the coming weeks, and will also be posted on our website at www.frafs.ca.

Thank you and we look forward to seeing everyone in October!



First Nations Fisheries Council Fall 2010 Assembly

November 2, 3 & 4, 2010

at the Nisga'a Hall, Prince Rupert BC

Visit www.infisheriescouncil.ca for more information
or to register

VISIONS WORKSHOP

October 13 & 14, 2010

at Seabird Island Band
Agassiz, BC

Visit www.frafs.ca for more information