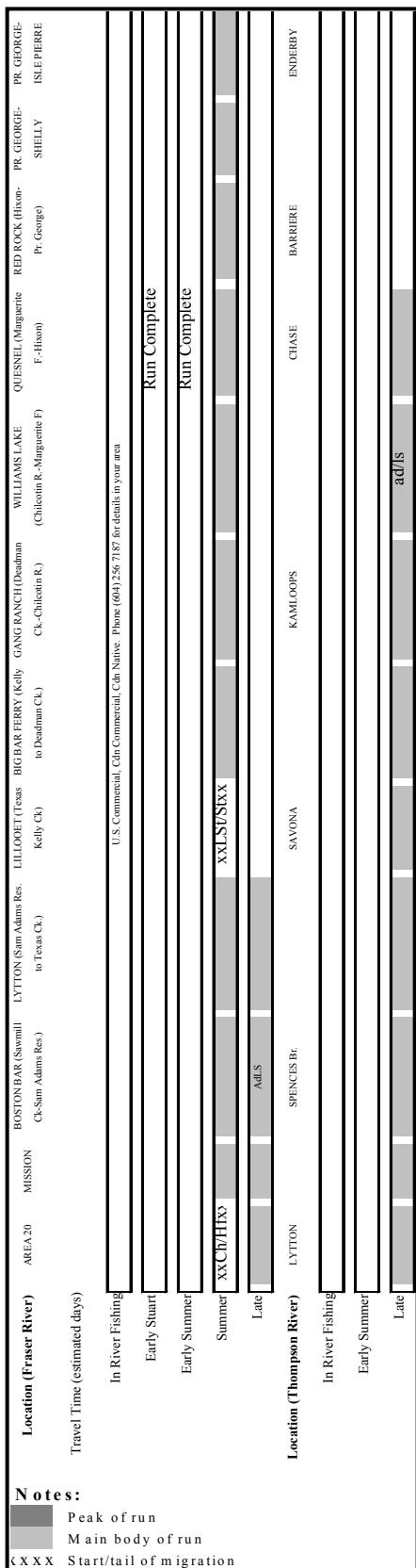


Watershed Talk

A weekly Aboriginal fisheries newsletter for
fisheries representatives and their organizations



Quesnel System 2003 Sockeye Sports Fishery

The Quesnel system sockeye sports fishery first occurred in 2002 as a trial fishery. 2002 was the sub-dominant run year for the Horsefly stock with a substantial return of sockeye returning. The fishery was designated in two locations: Horsefly Bay in Quesnel Lake and a kilometre of the Quesnel River at Quesnel Forks. DFO resource staff carried out the creel of the fishery. Very few anglers participated in the fishery owing to short notice of the opening and subsequent inaccessibility to fishable water at Quesnel Forks because of an unseen impassable side channel. Success was documented in Horsefly Bay, in Quesnel Lake, with eight sockeye caught.

No fishery was originally planned for 2003 as it was an "off" year for the run and environmental conditions pointed towards a potentially high enroute mortality. However, the Quesnel stock was eventually estimated to be returning at between 624,000 and 1.2 million sockeye; and the water temperatures cooled a bit and the fishery ensued, again on short notice. The fishery location changed for 2003. Horsefly Bay remained the same but the river location was moved to the area at Quesnel, B.C. This was determined to be better angling water and the access closer for creel purposes. Creel was again carried out by DFO staff with assistance by Red Bluff First Nation in Quesnel.

The fishery opened from August 23 to Sept 01, 2003, from 0600 hrs to 2100 hrs daily. Anglers were allowed to retain two sockeye per day with a two-day possession. Creel was carried out on seven of the ten days, with one day on Horsefly Bay and six days on the river. 87 angler checks were initiated in the creel (no anglers observed at Horsefly Bay). Several of the anglers were encountered on more than one occasion. Angler effort averaged at 1.7 hrs per angler. In total four sockeye

were caught with one being released; along with a Bull Trout and a Pike Minnow both of which were released.

Response from the angling public was very positive. With regards to next year (2004), the fishery will be in the "to be announced (TBA)" category until run size can be determined, as it is the second "off year" for the Horsefly run. If it is feasible a fishery will be considered. Plans are in preparation for 2005 when the dominant run is expected to return.

For more information, contact Al Charbonneau at Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Quesnel, at (250) 992-8157

The Road to Co-Management

"It seems this game is simply never ending." – The Strokes

The Cariboo Tribal Council came very close to walking away from an Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy agreement this past spring. Faced with budget cuts and seemingly unbridgeable differences in Fisheries Management priorities, CTC leadership refused to enter an agreement with DFO without a process of good faith negotiations. The decision to negotiate hard in order to attempt to reach a palatable deal was not an easy one. Both sides spent significant amounts of time and effort on gathering background information to prepare for battle, and more importantly, the possibility of piecing together a consensus-type agreement in the aftermath.

Before I tell you the outcome of the story, let me rewind to the beginning of April. CTC's multi-year agreement closed out, but instead of rolling over a new agreement or walking away and letting me go, CTC leaders opted to pay my salary through to the end of the negotiation process. My directive was to put a document together addressing fisheries management issues from a community perspective, unencumbered by the constraints of the previous AFS agreements. I was barely scratching



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the surface of that document before I realized that fisheries issues could not travel alone, and quickly sought advice from the CTC Director of Natural Resources and members of the Treaty Team. What was once a fisheries recommendations document quickly evolved into the outline of a Natural Resources Strategic Management Plan. This plan was the foundation of CTC's negotiating position.

CTC leadership and DFO found some common ground to work with, and the AFS agreement got signed at the eleventh hour (much to my relief, because my job was on the line!). Although both sides made significant concessions, this is the nature of negotiation, and the alternative would have been worse...of that I am absolutely sure.

For lack of a better term, the rubber has hit the road, and CTC Natural Resources is committed to the process of implementing the plan and using AFS funding to bridge the gap towards cooperative fisheries management. There have been a few bumps already, but nobody expected the Autobahn, and I'm just happy we all seem to be heading in the same direction. **For more information contact Pete Nicklin, Fisheries Program Director for the Cariboo Tribal Council, at (250)392-7361 or e-mail at ctcfish3@wlake.com**

**Draft News Release
No. 10
September 12, 2003**

The Fraser River Panel met on September 12 to review the status of the Fraser River pink salmon migration and receive updates on assessments of Fraser sockeye abundance. The migration of Fraser River sockeye salmon through the marine assessment areas is almost complete. The total catch of Fraser River sockeye this season is currently estimated at 2,224,000 fish.

The in-season estimates of Summer-run sockeye (3,300,000), Birkenhead sockeye (322,000), and Late-run sockeye (1,319,000, excluding Birkenhead) were unchanged at the Panel meeting today. Final estimates for each timing-group will be provided at a later Panel meeting. Most Late-run sockeye remaining in the southern Strait of Georgia are expected to migrate into the Fraser River over the next week. Late-run sockeye that are now migrating into the Fraser River have a much higher probability of successfully spawning than those that entered the Fraser River in August. The escapement of Late-run sockeye (excluding Birkenhead sockeye) past Mission is estimated at 662,000 fish.

The provisional run-size estimate of 25,000,000 Fraser River pink salmon was unchanged at the Panel meeting today. Current assessments of the 50% arrival timing of Fraser pinks in Area 20 are variable, however, they suggest that it is earlier than the forecast of August 31. The exceptionally large run of Fraser River pink salmon this year (highest since at least 1959) is mainly attributable to the large number of fry (approximately 680,000,000) that were produced in their brood year (2001) when Fraser pinks reached record escapement levels (approximately 19,800,000 fish) as well as favorable marine survival conditions during their ocean residence from spring 2002 to summer 2003.

Fisheries directed at Fraser River pink salmon are continuing as a result of the large return and catch opportunities available to Canadian and United States fishers. Low catches of Fraser River pinks occurred during the peak of their migration through the marine approach areas (late August to early September) due to commercial fishery closures that constrained the harvest of Late-run sockeye salmon to address conservation priorities. As a result of these low catches and the generally weak market demand for pink salmon, both Canada and the United States will

harvest only a small proportion of their available catch allocation this season. Consequently, the escapement of pink salmon into the Fraser River in 2003 will again greatly exceed the number of spawners required to fully utilize pink salmon spawning grounds in the watershed. Catches of Fraser River pink salmon in all fisheries total 1,267,000 fish to date. Canadian commercial catches total 627,000 fish, while commercial catches in the United States are estimated at 566,000 fish.

Migratory conditions in the Fraser River for sockeye and pink salmon remain satisfactory. The water temperature of the Fraser River (measured at Qualark Creek) was 16.6 °C yesterday. Due to a defective flow recorder at Hope, discharge estimates reported from approximately mid-August to early September were erroneous. The discharge of the Fraser River at Hope yesterday, was approximately 1,820 cms, which is almost 30% lower than normal for this date. It is forecast that water temperatures and discharge levels in the Fraser River will continue to decline over the next week. DFO is continuing spawning ground enumerations of several Early Summer-run, Summer-run, and Late-run stocks. In the lower Fraser River watershed, 213 Cultus Lake sockeye have been enumerated at the Sweltzer Creek counting fence to September 10. **For further information, contact Mike Staley at (604) 889-7465 or mstaley@mstaley.com**

**UPCOMING MEETINGS &
TELECONFERENCES**

Sept. 29/03: 9:00 AM – Ad Hoc Technical Group Meeting. The meeting will be at DFO, 985 McGill Place, Kamloops. Agenda to follow. **If you have any agenda item, please contact Ken Wilson at (604) 301-0418. Please confirm your attendance with Denise at (250) 828-2178.**