

# Watershed Talk

A weekly Aboriginal fisheries newsletter for  
fisheries representatives and their organizations

## Fraser Sockeye Update

By Pete Nicklin, FRAFS/UFFCA

### Sockeye

2005 will go down in history as the summer that wouldn't end. And by that I am talking about the late arrival of all Fraser sockeye, with the exception of the Harrison stock. Not just late arrival, but record late arrival for the Early Stuarts, Early Summers and the Summers.

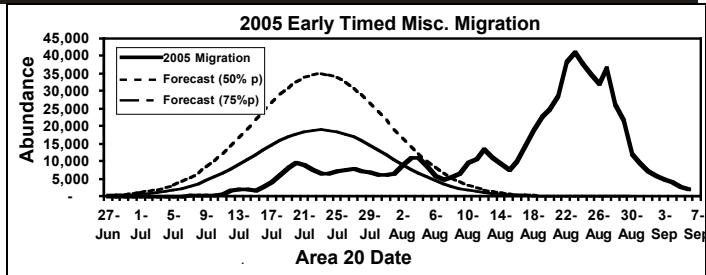
2005 also marks a year that DFO stood firm with a precautionary management process that did not permit a commercial opening on the Summer run sockeye despite available TAC and tremendous pressure to allow an opening. The Minister is on record stating that exploitation targets for the Late Summers and the Cultus sockeye would stay at 15% and 10-12% respectively, and the way the fishery unfolded this year, there was simply no room to allow a commercial harvest on the Summers without putting the Late Summer exploitation targets at risk. I know that this decision really hurt the commercial fishery, but the decision was a necessary management change under the Wild Salmon Policy.

### Early Stuarts

The field portion of the enumeration program for the Early Stuarts is complete, and preliminary estimates of escapement will be issued in the couple of months. The field program data are a portion of the total Early Stuart run, and the field data are expanded to give an estimate of the total spawning population in the Stuart system. It takes a bit of time to run the expansion calculations, and that is why it takes some time to come up with a total estimate.

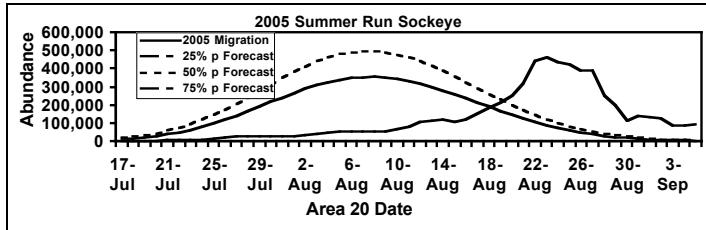
### Early Summers

The Early Summer sockeye exhibited not only later timing behaviour, but also a very protracted (spread out) run. The later run timing, about two weeks later than the latest timing on record, resulted in steady increases to the in-season estimate from a low of 250,000 on August 5<sup>th</sup> to 650,000 on September 2<sup>nd</sup>. The PSC has stated that DNA analyses suggest a strong return for the Raft component of the Early Summers, which would be very good news indeed.



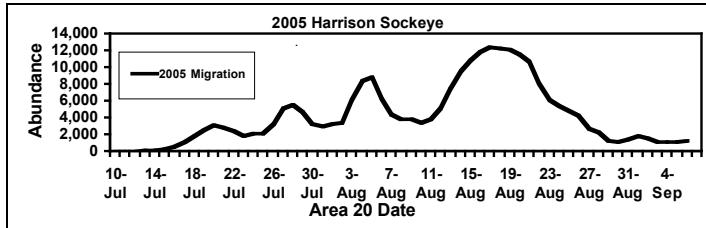
### Summers

At the risk of sounding repetitive, the Summer run sockeye were also late. The 50% timing for the aggregate at Area 20 is thought to be August 24<sup>th</sup>, setting the record for late arrival by 8 days. The current run size estimate is 6.5 million, unchanged from last week. The summer run is really starting to look like a "normal" run with substantially later timing, and tracking about 1 million fish lower than the 75% P forecast.



### Late Summers

The Harrison component of the Late Summers came back early and strong. The in-season estimate for the Harrisons increased from 180,000 to 260,000. The in-season estimate for the entire Late component is now 693,000, which includes a 416,000 estimate for the Late-Late component of that aggregate and 277,000 for the Birkenhead sockeye. This in-season estimate exceeds the 50% P forecast for the aggregate (524,000).



For more information contact Pete Nicklin at (250) 392-5888 or by email at [indiseaent@shaw.ca](mailto:indiseaent@shaw.ca).