



# WATERSHED TALK

## NEWSLETTER

Produced by the Fraser River Aboriginal Fisheries Secretariat

August 7, 2015

Volume XII, Issue 8

### *Early Stuart Spawning Beds*

We finally have some fish on the spawning beds. There's not a lot of fish, but it's better than four years ago. Water temperatures are staying at near normal levels. Creek and lake levels were up for a couple of days, but they're dropping now.

The sockeye that just showed up look like a new batch of fish. They're looking very healthy: no sores or beaten up heads. Only one person has gone out for FSC fishing, he caught 27 and only one was soft.

Kyle Pierre and Eugene Duncan Joseph (Tl'azt'en Nation fisheries technicians) walked the streams and carried out Live Fish Counts. The boys are noticing the presence of five-year-old fish ("big fish!") in some of the streams. It looks like a bump of fish came in over the weekend. We're hoping for another bump of fish on the spawning beds.

Good news, not great but good. Please see the table on the next page compiled by Keri Benner from DFO. These data are not escapement estimates and shouldn't be interpreted as such.

I'll keep you posted.

Darren Haskell,  
Tl'azt'en Fisheries Manager



*There was some rain in the Upper Fraser this week.  
Here's the view from Sheep's Creek Bridge.*

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### Forum Dates and Locations

As confirmed by the FRAFS Executive Committee:

- January 26<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> in Richmond.
- March 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> in Nanaimo.
- April 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> in Kamloops.

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*In today's paper:*

***Pg. 1 - 2 ... Early Stuart Spawning Beds.***

***P. 3 - 9 ... Fraser Salmon Update***

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## Early Stuart Spawning Beds (continued)

This table is taken from a Fraser Sockeye In-season Update written by Keri Benner, Program Head, Fraser Sockeye Stock Assessment at DFO Kamloops.

Table 1. Live counts and number of Sockeye carcasses recovered on streams surveyed during the current reporting period ('-' indicates no survey conducted). **Note: These data are not escapement estimates and should not be interpreted as such.**

SYSTEM	Survey Date	Survey #	Water Temp. (°C)	Live Count	Carcasses Recovered	Survey Date	Survey #	Water Temp. (°C)	Live Count	Carcasses Recovered
<b>EARLY STUART</b>										
<b><u>Takla Lake - Northwest Arm</u></b>										
Crow Creek	02-Aug	3	9.5	0	0	-	-	-	-	-
Dust Creek	02-Aug	3	13.5	176	4	-	-	-	-	-
Hooker Creek	02-Aug	3	9.0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-
McDougall Creek	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Point Creek	02-Aug	3	12.0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-
Sinta Creek	02-Aug	3	12.0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-
<b><u>Takla Lake - Northeast Arm</u></b>										
Blanchet Creek	02-Aug	3	10.5	0	0	-	-	-	-	-
Blanchet North Creek	02-Aug	3	10.0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-
Frypan Creek	01-Aug	3	11.0	34	1	05-Aug	4	10.0	59	3
Hudson's Bay Creek	01-Aug	3	11.0	0	0	05-Aug	4	10.0	0	0
Lovell Creek (Forsythe Creek)	01-Aug	3	11.0	0	0	05-Aug	4	10.0	0	0
MacIsaac Creek (5 Mile Creek)	01-Aug	3	12.0	0	0	05-Aug	4	11.0	0	0
Shale Creek	02-Aug	3	11.0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-
Tilti Creek (10 Mile Creek)	01-Aug	3	12.0	0	0	05-Aug	4	9.5	0	0
15 Mile Creek	02-Aug	3	10.0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-
25 Mile Creek	02-Aug	3	10.5	0	0	-	-	-	-	-
<b><u>Takla Lake - Main Arm</u></b>										
Bivouac Creek	30-Jul	2	10.0	0	0	03-Aug	3	10.5	0	0
Gluske Creek	31-Jul	2	10.0	7	0	04-Aug	3	10.0	187	8
Leo Creek	04-Aug	2	13.5	0	0	-	-	-	-	-
Narrow's Creek	01-Aug	3	11.5	9	0	05-Aug	4	12.0	112	0
Sakeniche River	02-Aug	3	17.5	0	0	05-Aug	4	14.0	1	0
Sandpoint Creek	01-Aug	3	11.5	0	0	05-Aug	4	9.5	0	0
<b><u>Middle River</u></b>										
Forfar Creek	30-Jul	2	11.0	360	4	03-Aug	3	10.5	691	34
Kazchek Creek	30-Jul	1	15.0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-
Middle River	30-Jul	2	17.0	0	0	04-Aug	3	16.5	0	0
O'Ne-El Creek (Kynoch Creek)	03-Aug	3	11.0	412	6	-	-	-	-	-
Van Decar Creek (Rossette Creek)	03-Aug	3	11.5	167	23	-	-	-	-	-
<b><u>Trembleur Lake</u></b>										
Paula Creek	31-Jul	2	12.0	0	0	04-Aug	3	10.5	0	0
Sidney Creek (Felix Creek)	31-Jul	2	10.5	75	4	04-Aug	3	9.5	305	33



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## 2015 Fraser Salmon Update

*By: Pete Nicklin, FRAFS Biologist*

During the 2015 sockeye and pink return, Watershed Talk will be distributed weekly - mainly on Friday afternoons - but occasionally other days depending on how the season rolls out.

In general, the Early Summer sockeye continue to track well below the P50 forecast level. The Early Thompson component of the Early Summers appears to be returning significantly lower than P50 forecast levels and this component was expected to be a major contributor to the overall Early Summer abundance. Summer sockeye are also tracking lower than P50 forecast levels, and are currently in abundance suggesting P25 forecast levels. Sockeye migration into the Fraser River has increased over the past few days, with Mission sockeye abundances estimated at over 50,000 per day for August 4, 5 and 6.

US fisheries targeting Fraser sockeye have been in place for a week, with more fisheries approved for the August 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> weekend and into next week. First Nations FSC Fraser sockeye retention fisheries are underway at reduced harvest rates. Canadian commercial and recreational sockeye retention fisheries have not started at this time, given current sockeye abundance and timing.

The Fraser environmental and sockeye update is a summary of information from the August 6<sup>th</sup> Fraser River Panel Technical Committee distribution, FRAFS in-season update call (August 6<sup>th</sup>), and August 7<sup>th</sup> Fraser River Panel teleconference.

### **Fraser River Conditions**

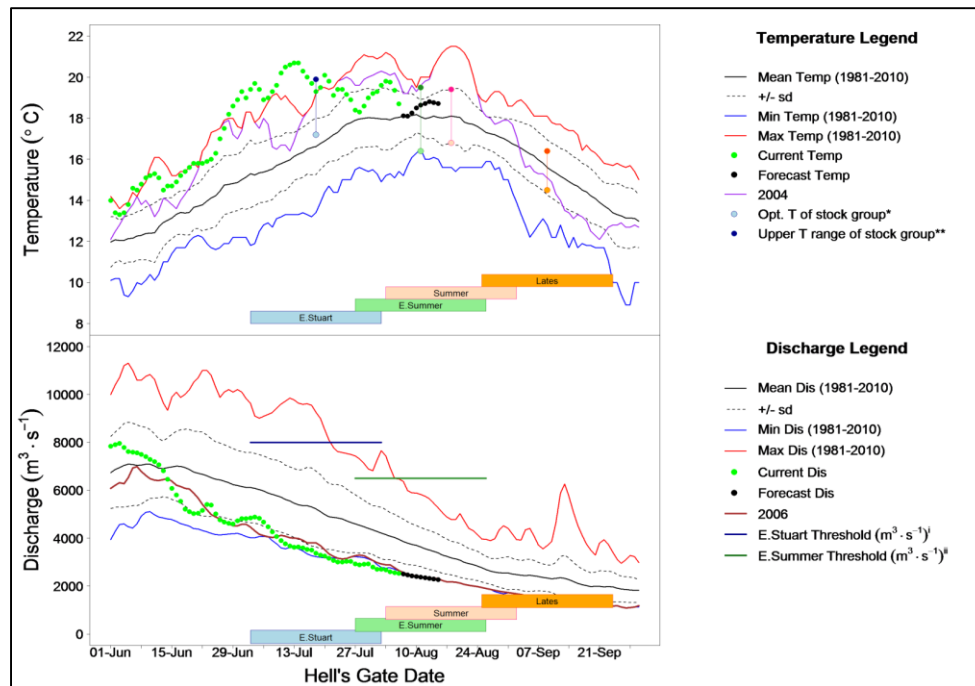
The main source of information for Temperature and Discharge data and forecasts is DFO's Environmental Watch Program (see link below).

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 7<sup>th</sup>, 2015):

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The Fraser River water temperature is currently 18.7 degrees Celsius (0.7 degrees Celsius above average for this time of year), and is forecast to increase over the next couple of days and then return to a temperature of 18.7 degrees Celsius by August 12<sup>th</sup>. The Fraser River discharge continues to track at record low levels for this time of year with a flow of 2,530  $\text{m}^3/\text{sec}$  at the Qualark water station on August 6<sup>th</sup> (36% below average for this time of year). The discharge is predicted to continue tracking at the minimum observed values, with a forecast discharge of 2,339  $\text{m}^3/\text{sec}$  by August 12<sup>th</sup>.

### **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**

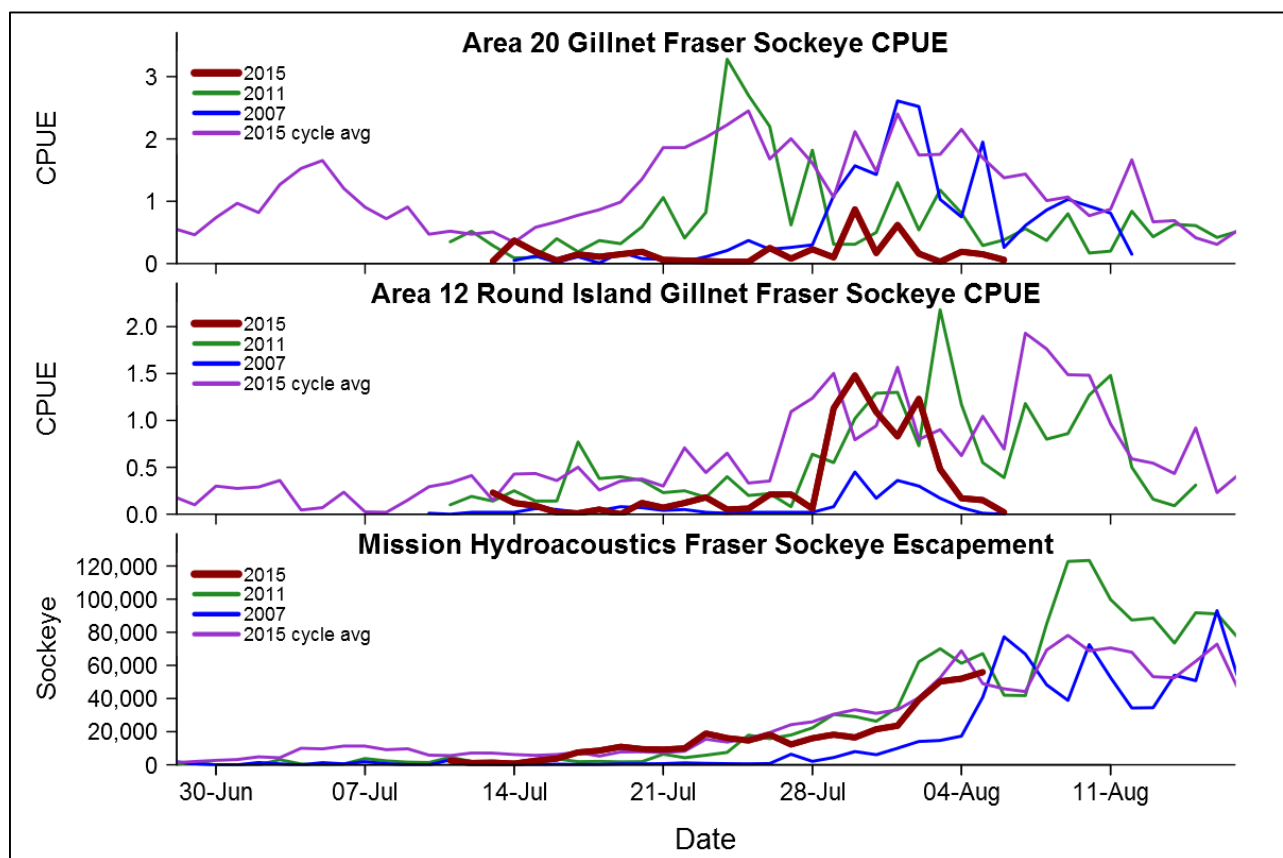
The Pacific Salmon Commission (PSC) distributes the Fraser River Panel meeting agenda and technical information for Panel members and observers to the process. The following information is a summary of key information from that document (August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2015) and the Fraser River Panel meeting from the same day.

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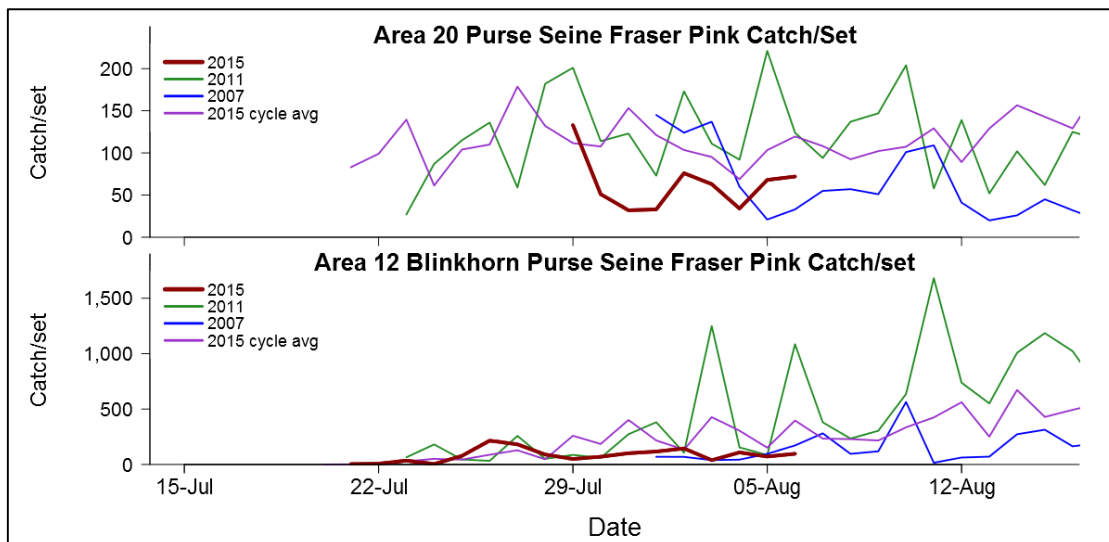
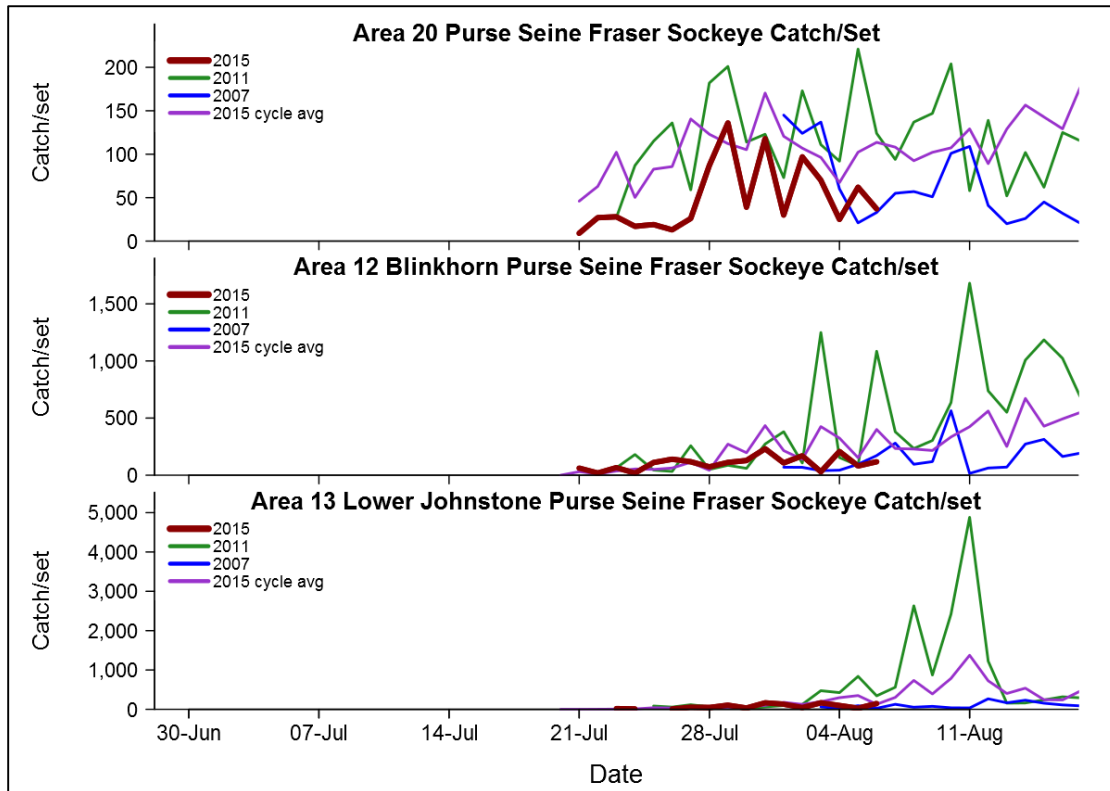


Full test fisheries (gillnet and purse seine) are in place in the Fraser River and both marine-approach areas (Strait of Juan de Fuca and Johnstone Strait). Hydroacoustics programs are in operation at Mission and Qualark (Yale). A total of 552,500 Fraser sockeye have been accounted-to-date, comprised of almost 32,400 Early Stuart sockeye, 212,700 Early Summer run sockeye, 304,800 Summers and 2,600 Lates. Pink salmon have been caught in the Fraser test fisheries (Cottonwood and Whonnock), so the Fraser Pink migration has officially started.

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



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### *Early Stuart Sockeye*

Early Stuart sockeye are in “accounting” mode, with lower Fraser migration virtually complete according to test fisheries and Mission hydroacoustics.

Visual escapement surveys started on July 24<sup>th</sup>, and sockeye were first seen in the terminal areas on July 22<sup>nd</sup>. Early Stuart sockeye have been enumerated in Takla Lake and Trembleur Lake tributaries as well as Middle River and tributaries. Sockeye are reported to be generally in good condition with very few pre-spawn mortalities, and in the early stages of spawning in some areas. Water temperatures in the Stuart system are ranging from 9 to 16.5 degrees.

### *Early Summer Sockeye*

All components of the Early Summer aggregate have shown up in test fisheries. The Early Thompson component of the Early Summers continues to show indications of late and/or weaker abundance than expected from pre-season information and is currently tracking below P25 forecast abundance. Early Summers in aggregate are currently tracking at roughly the P25 forecast level, due to the remainder of the Early Summer management group tracking near P50 forecast levels. However, because the Early Thompson component was forecast to comprise over 50% of the aggregate abundance, and is not building as expected, the Fraser River Panel adopted an in-season run size estimate of 424,000 (P25 forecast abundance) at the August 7<sup>th</sup> Panel meeting.

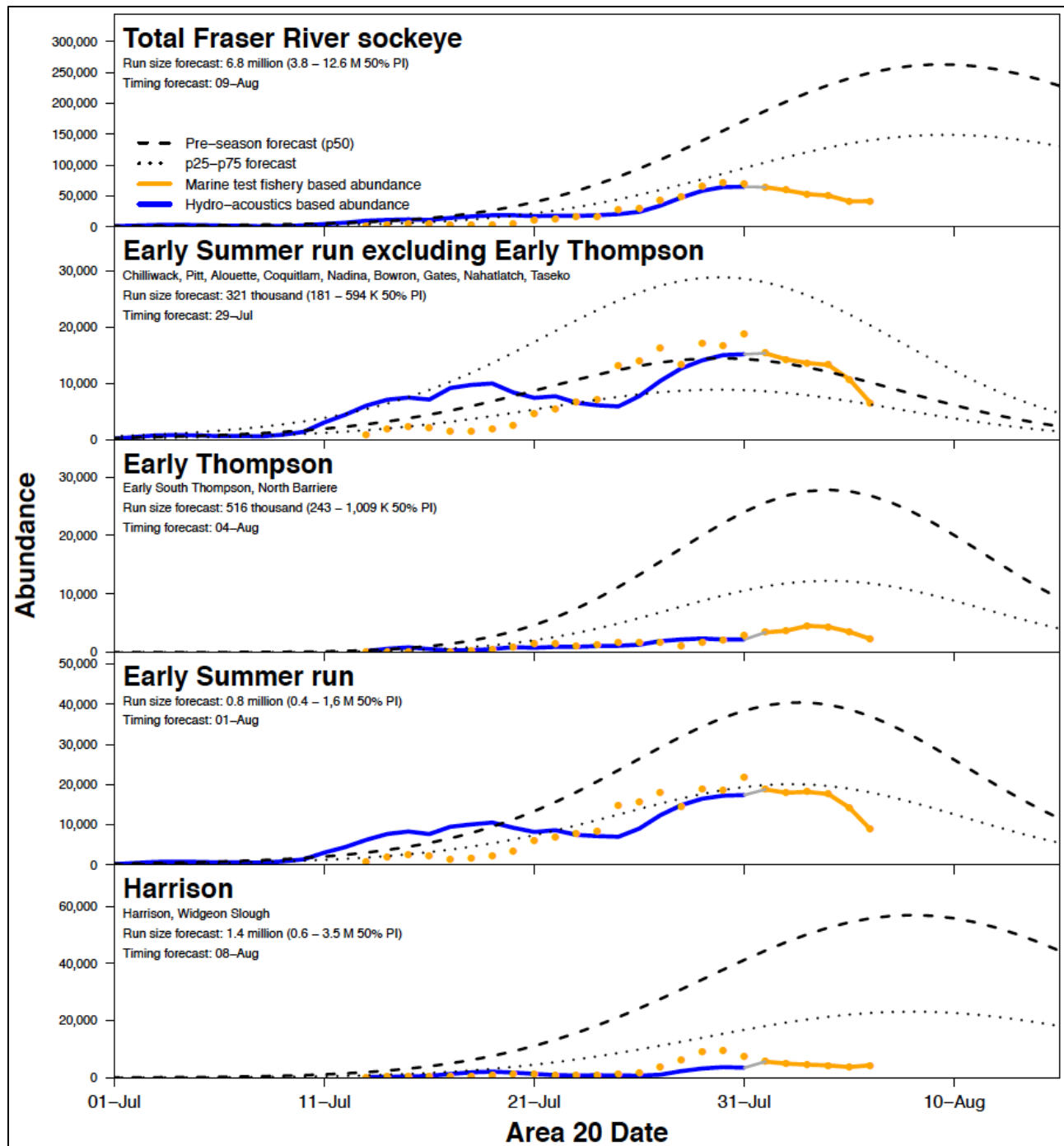
### *Summers*

All components of the Summer run have been detected in both marine approach areas. Harrison sockeye continue to track at estimated abundances less than the P25 forecast, and the Stellako/Late Stuart/Chilko/Quesnel are also tracking less than P25 levels. There is still time for Summer abundances to build, meaning the run would return later than expectations. The picture should be a little clearer next week if this is the case. The Fraser River Panel did not change the estimated run size abundance for Summers at the August 7<sup>th</sup> meeting, and continues to use the pre-season forecast for planning purposes.

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## Estimated Abundance and In-Season Timing Compared to Forecast

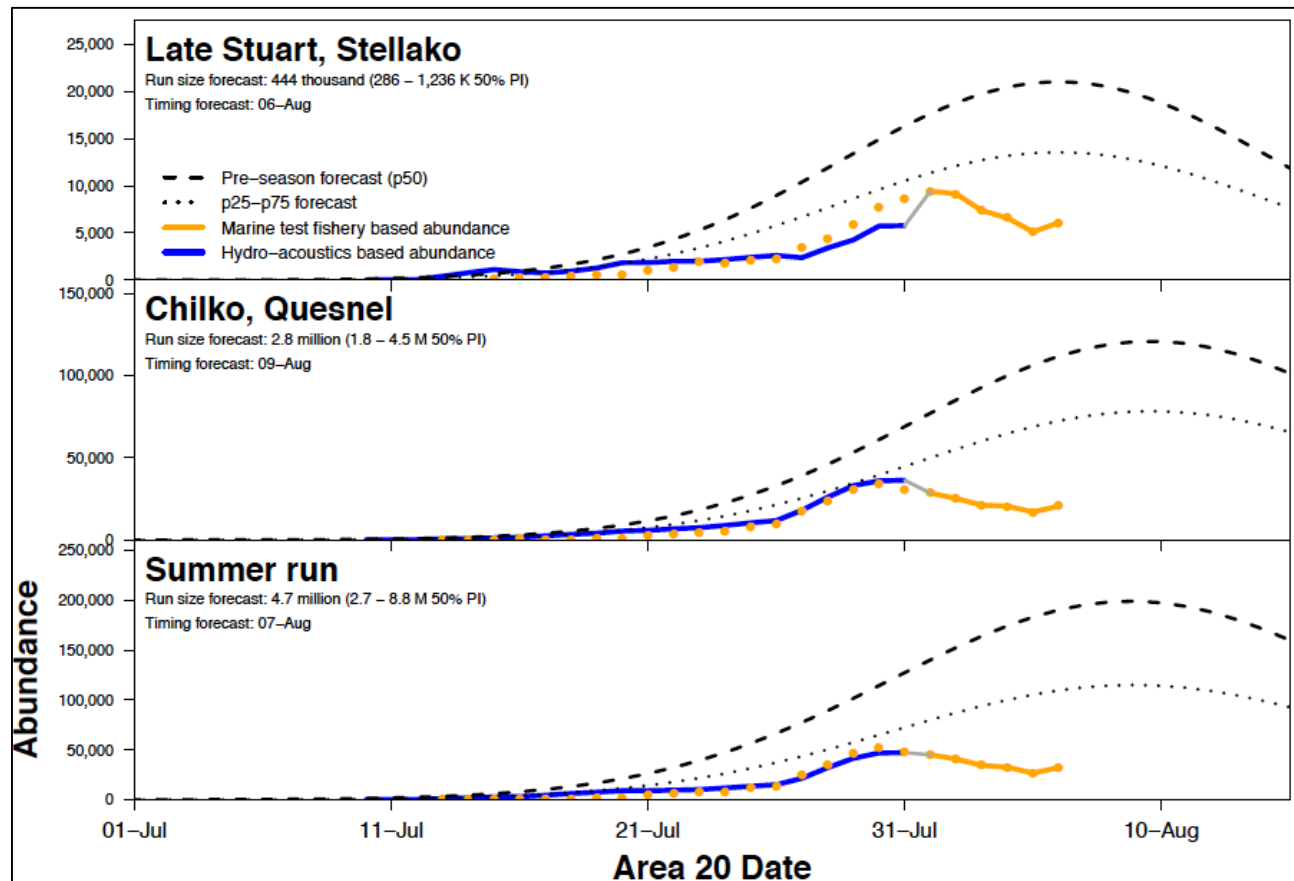


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## Estimated Abundance and In-Season Timing Compared to Forecast



The next Fraser River Panel meeting is scheduled for Tuesday August 11<sup>th</sup>.

## Links

- 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](http://www.wateroffice.ec.gc.ca/index_e.html)
- Pacific Salmon Commission Website: [www.psc.org](http://www.psc.org)
- Pacific Salmon Commission Test Fisheries: [http://www.psc.org/info\\_testfishing.htm](http://www.psc.org/info_testfishing.htm)
- Pacific Salmon Commission News and Regulatory announcements: [http://www.psc.org/news\\_frpnnews.htm](http://www.psc.org/news_frpnnews.htm)
- Fraser River Mission Escapement Reports: [http://www.psc.org/info\\_inseasonfraserescapement.htm](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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