



WATERSHED TALK

NEWSLETTER

Produced by the Fraser River Aboriginal Fisheries Secretariat

2016 FRASER SALMON UPDATE: SPECIAL EDITION

By: Pete Nicklin, Fraser Fisheries Biologist

This edition of the Fraser Salmon update is a special edition to inform Fraser First Nations of the lower-than-forecast Fraser sockeye return and impacts to fisheries. **At yesterday's Fraser River Panel meeting, both Early Summers and the Summers in-season run size estimates were downgraded, continuing with the trend seen throughout the season.** The Early Stuart run size is unchanged at 18,000, and this run is now spawning in natal streams in the Upper Fraser. **The Early Summer in-season run size estimate is now at 250,000 (compared to a pre-season forecast of 447,000, and downgraded from the in-season estimate of 300,000),** but today's story is mainly about the Summers.

To recap: at last Friday's (August 5th) Panel meeting, the Summers were downgraded to the P25 forecast level of 992,000 (from a P50 abundance of 1,677,000), which was starting to signal that this management group was not going to achieve the mid-point pre-season forecast. Unfortunately, the trend has not reversed since Friday's meeting, with test fisheries showing flat catches and low abundance. **Therefore, at Tuesday's (August 9th) Panel meeting the Summers were downgraded to 700,000. This means that there is no Total Allowable Catch – international or domestic – on either the Early Summers or the Summers. First Nations Fraser sockeye fisheries have been closed or will be closing to directed sockeye fishing.**

The table on page 2 has been updated, and this week's information includes updated information related to Early Summers and Summers from the Aug 9th Fraser River Panel meeting. The table compares the in-season adopted run sizes to the pre-season forecast. **An overall Fraser sockeye return of this magnitude would be a record low.**

The Early Summers and the Summers are in a Low Abundance Exploitation Rate (LAER) scenario, which means fisheries are being managed to limit impacts to 10% for the respective management groups. The LAER is in place to allow for incidental mortality and by-catch from fisheries directed at more abundant stocks or species, but may also include limited harvest (refer to page 290 of the South Coast IFMP). Current catch estimates (including projections for fisheries yet to close) exceed the LAER for both Early Summer and Summer groups.

Continued next page

Fraser Salmon Update Table

Sockeye Management Group	Pre-Season Planning Forecast (P50)	In-Season Adopted Run Size	Area 20 Timing (for 50% of run)
Early Stuart	36,000	18,000	July 3
Early Summer	447,000	250,000	July 21
Summer	1,677,000	700,000	Aug 3
Lates	111,000	N/A (too early for run size update)	Aug 12
TOTAL	2,271,000	N/A (too early for run size update)	

Early Stuarts

Early Stuarts are spawning in the creeks in the Stuart system. Sockeye are reported to be in generally good condition. The Early Stuart run size is unchanged at 18,000. Escapement enumeration programs in the Stuart system are underway.

Early Summers

Early Summers are now estimated at 250,000 which compares to a pre-season forecast of 447,000. The 250,000 in-season run size estimate is a downgrade from the previous in-season estimate of 300,000. At this run size and Management Adjustment (MA), the Early Summers have no harvestable surplus and are being managed at the Low Abundance Exploitation Rate (LAER).

Summer Run

The pre-season forecast of Summers is 1,677,000 (P50). Unfortunately, test fishery catches, stock component proportions and age class data are all pointing towards a much lower than forecast return. **Therefore, the Panel adopted a reduced in-season abundance estimate of 700,000 at Tuesday's Panel meeting**, which followed last Friday's downgrade. Data available at the time indicated a lower number, setting the stage for further reductions. At this run size, the Summers have no harvestable surplus and are being managed at the Low Abundance Exploitation Rate (LAER).

Late Sockeye

Lates are forecasted at 111,000 (P50). It is still too early for an in-season run size estimate for this management group, but stock identification analysis of test fisheries continues to show the presence of the Birkenhead and Late Shuswap components of this management group. The LAER for Lates is 20% or approximately 22,000 at the current run sizes.

Sockeye Closures

Fraser First Nations directed sockeye fisheries have been closed, or will be closing due to the Early Summer and Summer run sizes. ***It is important to note: Fisheries restrictions on sockeye don't all happen at once in these situations. In the same manner that the openings following the Early Stuart closure begin in the marine approach areas and move up the river, it is***

anticipated fisheries will close in a step-wise manner, dependent on a combination of discussions between First Nations and DFO, timing, catch-to-date, access and opportunity for harvest.

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 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>

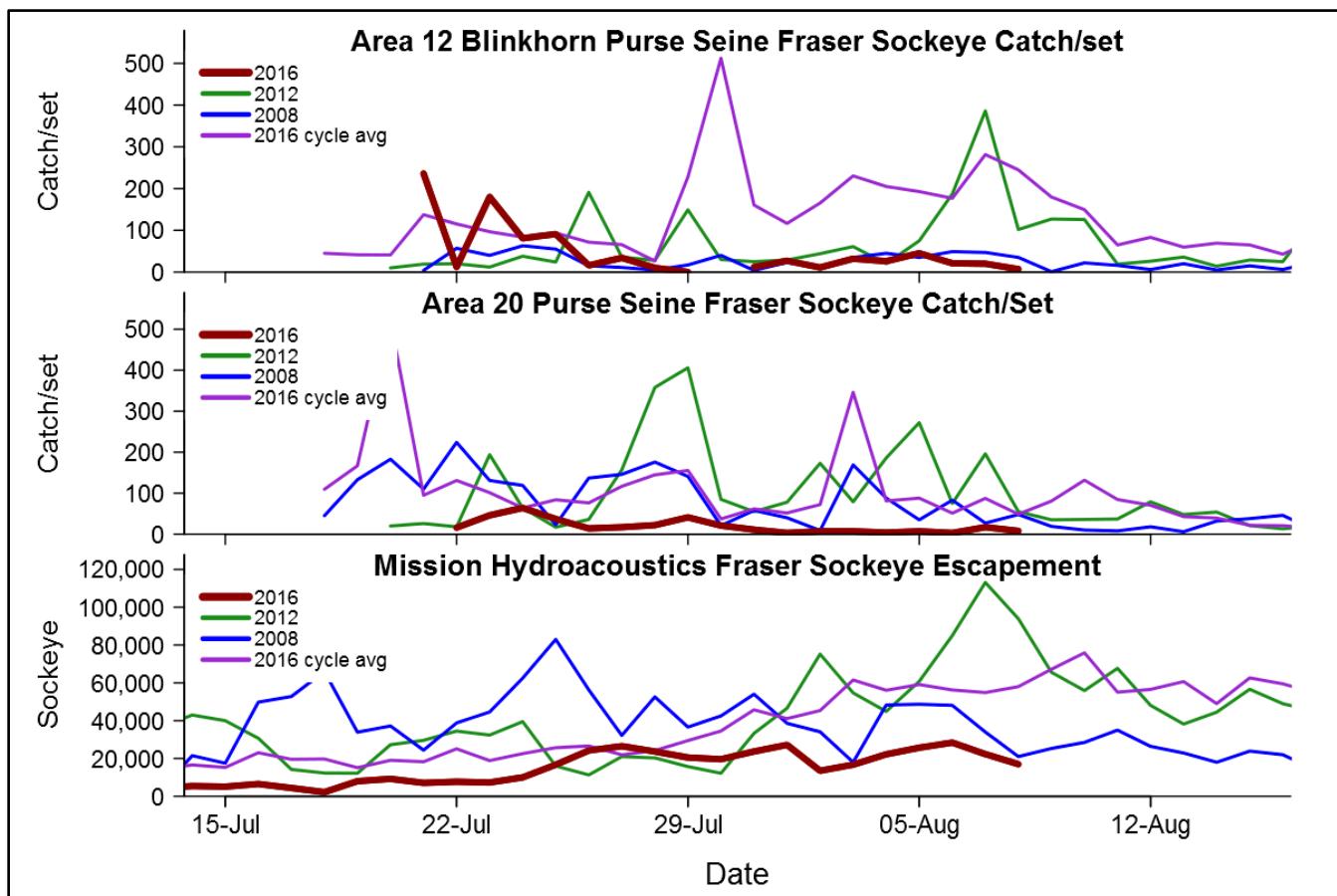
Fraser Sockeye

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 9th, 2016) and the Fraser River Panel meeting from the same day.

Test fisheries are in place in the Fraser River (gill net) and both marine-approach areas (Strait of Juan de Fuca and Johnstone Strait – purse seine and gillnet). Hydroacoustics programs are in operation at Mission and Qualark (Yale). A total of 566,900 Fraser sockeye have been accounted-to-date, comprised of 18,000 Early Stuart sockeye, 222,600 Early Summer run sockeye, 306,300 Summers and 20,000 Lates.

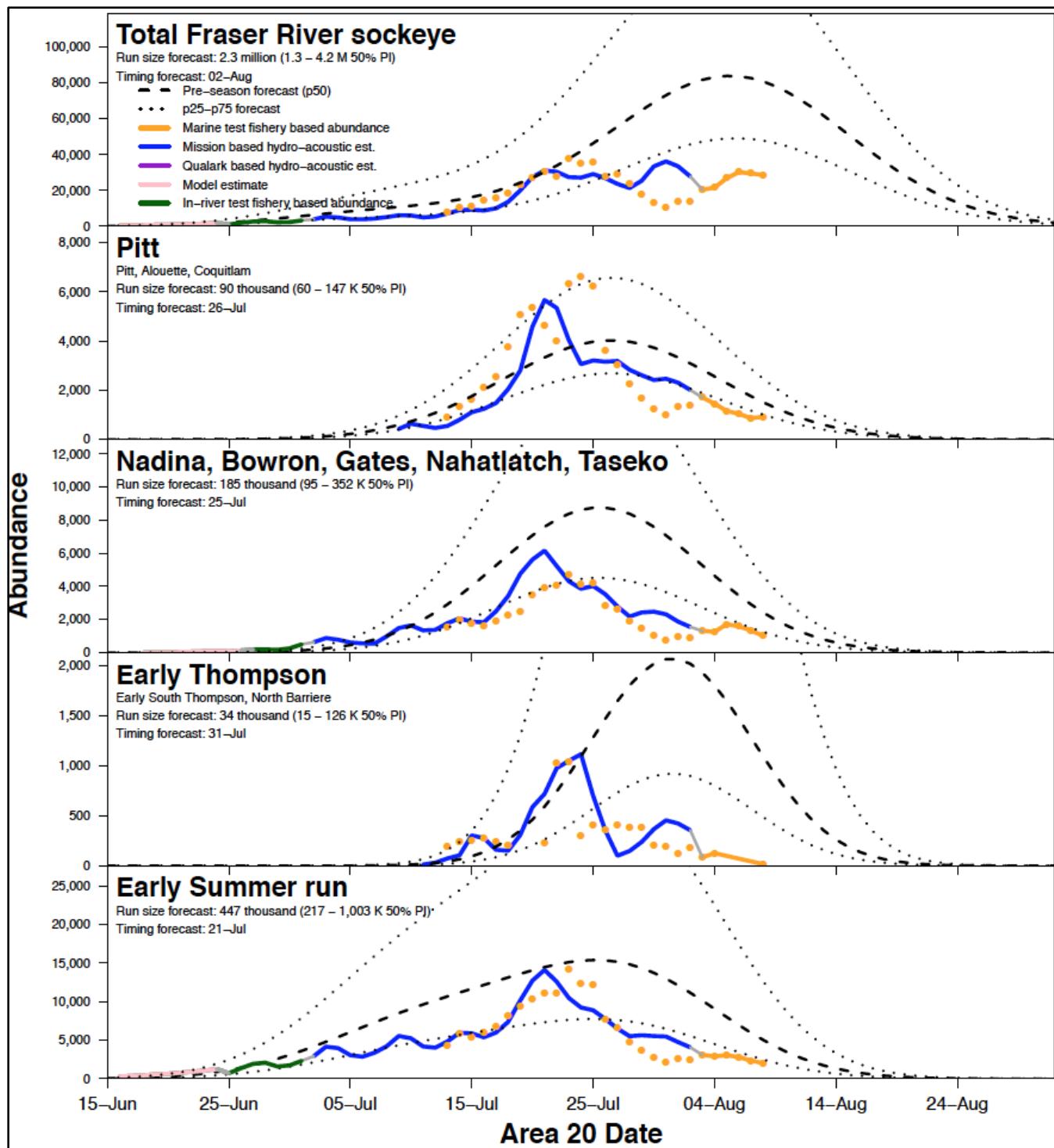
Test fishing graphs and Mission hydro-acoustics information from the PSC distribution package look like this:

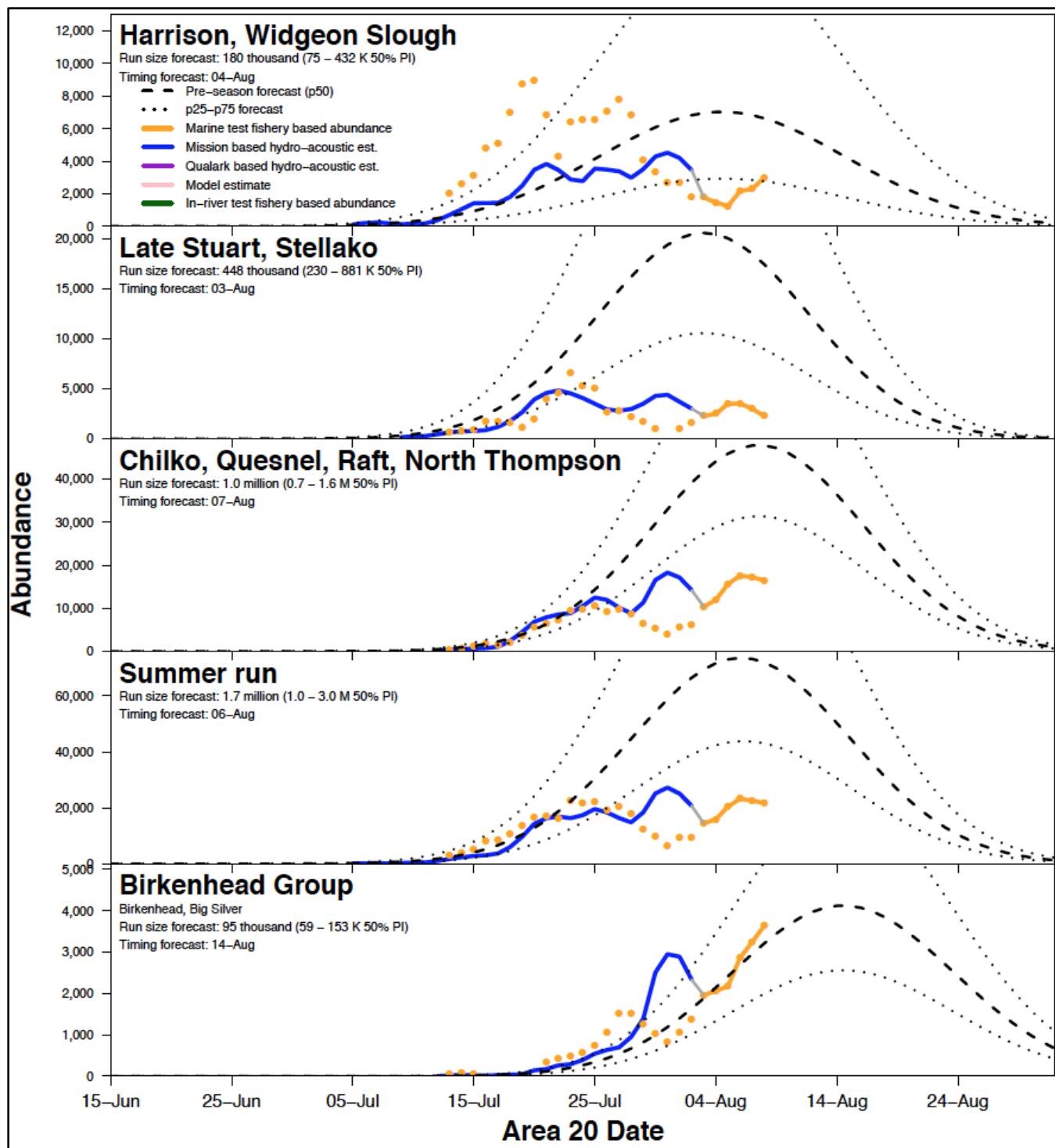
Continued next page



Continued next page

Estimated Abundance and In-Season Timing Compared to Forecast





- The next Fraser River Panel meeting is scheduled for 11 AM Friday August 12th.

Continued next page

Links

With Chinook and sockeye approaching and in the Fraser, these links may be of interest:

Fraser River Fisheries Information: <http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/fraser/index-eng.html>

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

Pacific Salmon Commission Website: www.psc.org

Pacific Salmon Commission Test Fisheries: http://www.psc.org/info_testfishing.htm

Pacific Salmon Commission News and Regulatory announcements: http://www.psc.org/news_frpnews.htm

Fraser River Mission Escapement Reports: 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>

For more information contact Pete Nicklin by email: pnicklin@telus.net