

A weekly Aboriginal fisheries newsletter for
fisheries representatives and their organizations

Fraser Salmon Update

— BY NEIL L. TODD, FRAFS OPERATIONS MANAGER

Editor's Note: Pete Nicklin is not able to provide his customary excellent and thorough review of the latest information on Fraser sockeye and pink salmon this week. The following brief summary is from information provided through Mike Staley's Thursday afternoon update teleconference call yesterday, and from listening in to a large part of the Fraser River Panel Friday morning teleconference call today.

Sockeye

Sockeye continue to arrive through the test fishing areas, primarily through Johnstone Straits (Areas 12 and 13). While it seems to be small numbers coming each day over the last one to two week period, they continue to persist. The Salmon Commission states that in a normal year these small numbers would mean the tail end of the run; but this year, with the catastrophic collapse of Fraser sockeye, they will continue to monitor returns for as long as they are able.

Of interest to note, a measurable proportion of the sockeye that are still returning is classified as "Early Thompson". PSC staff feel that most of these are sockeye returning to the North Thompson River area. The fact that they are returning this late in the season will be a subject for discussion regarding which of the four main stock groupings they should belong in. At the very least it appears that their migration timing might be more appropriately linked with that of the Summer Run stock group.

The Mission hydroacoustic facility is no longer being used to estimate passage of sockeye in the lower river. Large numbers of pink salmon are now "overwhelming" the counter and making it impossible to pick out the relatively small number of sockeye that are mixed in with the pinks.

Update on In-season Run Size estimates:

Early Summer Run group: In-season run size estimate remains at 175,000.

Summer Run group: A week ago this group was up-graded to an estimate of 700,000 fish. This, in

combination with a reduced Management Adjustment, provided a very small "harvestable surplus". However, earlier this week the test fishing information provided over the intervening week-end prompted the in-season run estimate to be reduced to 600,000. A re-assessment over the last two or three days now results in an in-season run size estimate of 630-650,000. This range does not provide for any harvestable surplus.

Late Run group: The PSC is recommending that the in-season run size estimate for this group be downgraded from 450,000 to 400,000. The PSC is indicating that these fish will be roughly half Harrison sockeye (returning as three year olds) and half true Late Run stocks that primarily consist of Weaver Creek and Shuswap stocks.

Good News! There is some good news in relation to the Late Run group this year. There is good evidence that a portion of the group, perhaps approximately 120,000, is exhibiting "delaying" behaviour by holding in the Gulf of Georgia off the mouth of the Fraser. This is the historical migration behaviour (which has been altered over the last 12+ years) that has caused these stocks to be characterized as Late Run stocks. Delaying their entry into the Fraser River historically enabled these stocks to enter the Fraser at a time that was more appropriate to maximizing survival to spawning, as opposed to the massive enroute and pre-spawning mortality levels we have seen in recent times when no delaying behaviour has occurred.

Pink Salmon

Large numbers of pink salmon appear to be arriving through both Area 12 and Area 20. These are comprised of three different general areas of origin: Fraser River; Puget Sound tributaries; and BC South Coast (non-Fraser). While it is still too soon for the PSC to give an in-season run size assessment for the Fraser pinks, their information and models are suggesting that the returns will be equal to or maybe more than the 50p pre-season forecast of 17 million fish.

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MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

Tier 1 (First Nations only) Meeting

9:00am, Wednesday Sept 2/09

BRIDGE RIVER, LILLOOET

Purpose: Update and discussion among First Nations concerning re-negotiation of the Fraser River Panel Chapter of Annex IV of the Pacific Salmon Treaty. This is the follow-up Tier 1 meeting that was discussed and agreed to at the last such meeting in June in Kamloops.

Place: Bridge River Band Community Hall, Lillooet, BC. (See map)

DRAFT AGENDA:

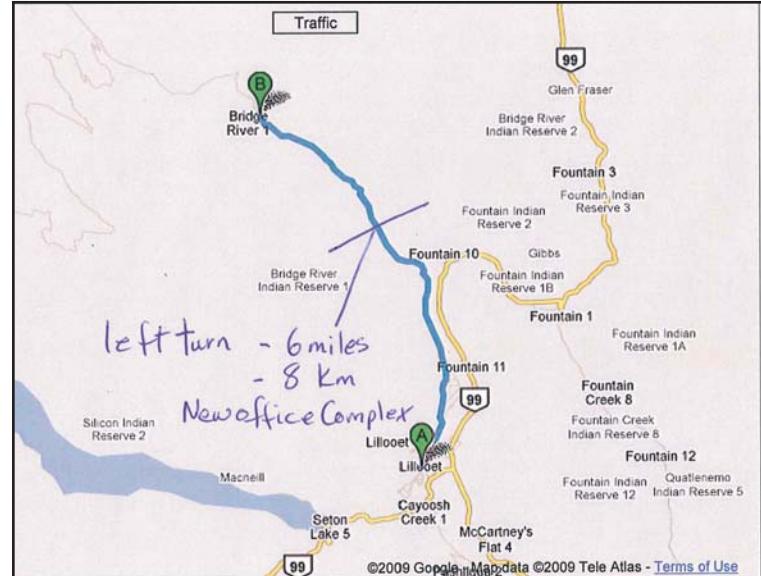
1. Fraser Panel Chapter:

- New developments (since June 23) on state of negotiations between Canada and U.S. (M. Shepert)
- Analysis/discussion of the status of negotiations on each of the six main issues.
- Development of a communication to DFO regarding First Nations' positions on the issues.

2. Inter-tribal Treaty (Grand Chief Saul Terry):

- Progress update
- Relationship to current Fraser sockeye salmon crisis
- Future progress and potential effects of DFO's Forum process

Note: Inquiries are being made as to the feasibility of visiting the St'a:imc fishery in the area on Sept. 3. It is hoped that this can be worked out, but no guarantees at this time.



**Driving Directions to the Bridge River Band Community Hall
(from Lillooet)**

Leave downtown Lillooet, heading north, following the signs for Bralorne and Goldbridge. This will turn into Bridge River Road. Note the junction of Bridge River Road and Moha Road, but don't turn - stay on Bridge River for approximately 8km from that junction. Turn left on Joseph Road and follow it to the Bridge River Community Complex (cedar sided bulding with red roof).

Thanks to Gerald Michel for providing this map.

Wednesday Mornings **NORTHERN VANCOUVER ISLAND CONFERENCE CALLS**

10:00 AM – 11:00 AM

The Northern Vancouver Island Conference calls are of particular interest to anyone who wants the earliest information available about test fishery results, and when and where the various First Nations fisheries are catching fish.

Call in number: 1-866-646-2080 • Access Code: 2865880#

Thursdays at 4:00pm (unless otherwise noted) **FIRST NATIONS IN-SEASON TECHNICAL CONFERENCE CALLS**

Hosted by FRAFS Biologist Mike Staley

Dial in numbers:

Local Vancouver Area: 604-899-2339 • Toll-free: 1-877-385-4099 • Access Code: 3196930#

FRASER PANEL MEETINGS

This is your opportunity to listen to the in-season management decision-making process for Fraser sockeye. Call in times and numbers will be distributed by FRAFS via email prior to the calls.