

Watershed Talk

A weekly Aboriginal fisheries newsletter for
fisheries representatives and their organizations

FRASER SOCKEYE IN-SEASON UPDATE - By Neil Todd, FRAFS

Mike Staley convened his fifth 2010 sockeye in-season update at 4 pm on Thursday August 5 2010 via teleconference call.

TEST FISHERY OVERVIEW

Test fishing catches have been fluctuating daily, and between Area 20 and Area 12, but generally are showing increases in numbers of sockeye. It now appears that diversion of fish down the inside (through Areas 12 and 13 in Johnstone Straits area) is not as great as thought last week and the majority of fish (estimated 63%) are still coming in through Area 20 (Strait of Juan de Fuca). Mission is reporting daily passage of approximately 150-160,000 fish per day during the last three days.

EARLY STUART SOCKEYE

Early Stuart sockeye have been arriving at the spawning grounds, reportedly in good condition. Spawning is now underway. Unfortunately, it appears that a comprehensive spawning ground count cannot be undertaken this year; however, there will be some estimate of spawner numbers available later in the year.

EARLY SUMMER RUN SOCKEYE

The Fraser River Panel has confirmed that the Early Summer Run stock group is returning in numbers much greater than the pre-season forecast (783,000). At the time of writing this (Friday August 6) the Pacific Salmon Commission has recommended to the Fraser Panel to set an in-season run size estimate of 1,600,000 fish for this group.

This season the Department has heard the serious concerns about population levels for the "Early Miscellaneous" stocks of Early Summer Run sockeye. These stocks include the Bowron, Nadina, and Taseko sockeye. The Department is trying to actively manage these stocks to avoid exceeding an Exploitation Rate (ER) limit of 25%. It remains to be seen if they will be successful; current estimates put the ER at or very close to the 25% ER limit now. The rather aggressive fishery openings that have been and will be occurring may end up exceeding the 25% ER level as some fish from these stocks are still showing in marine areas as commercial fisheries get underway.

Also, predictions continue to be made that in-river temperatures may exceed 20C over the next little while. If this occurs, the Management Adjustment (MA) for the entire Early Summer Run aggregate would be significantly increased, meaning that available harvestable surplus (Total Allowable Catch, or TAC) may be reduced significantly to allow for high en route and pre-spawning mortality as well as sufficient fish for the spawning grounds. Because of multiple uncertainties (temperature/flow conditions, and run timing) managers are being warned that the MA may be as high as 0.9, meaning that almost half of the numbers entering the Fraser could die before spawning. If this does indeed happen it is conceivable that spawning escapement targets for Early Summer Run stocks might not be met despite the increased abundance of these fish – given that fisheries have been opened in an optimistic manner despite the weather and water temperature outlooks.

SUMMER RUN SOCKEYE

Cautiously good news – Summer Run sockeye are beginning to show in numbers that indicate that the pre-season 50p forecast (2.6 million) might be met. It is still too soon for the Fraser River Panel to determine an in-season run size estimate. However, on the Fraser River Panel meeting call this morning it was indicated by the Pacific Salmon Commission that overnight information suggests it is possible

that the Summer Runs will return at less than the forecast abundance. Additionally, there is normally a very low or no MA for these fish. However, because of persisting low flows and high temperatures in the Fraser, the PSC is warning that managers should be aware that there may be a significant MA in effect this year for this group.

LATE RUN SOCKEYE

Late Run sockeye (Adams/Weaver) are beginning to show in the marine test fisheries. Test fisheries in-river are indicating that these fish are not yet holding off the mouth of the Fraser as they historically did. Instead, these first few fish are moving rapidly into the Fraser. It is too soon to ring the alarm bells on this stock group but the Fraser R. Panel Technical Committee will be watching this closely to see if the trend continues as the Late Run abundance begins to build. Early entry causes high en route mortality.

Harrison River sockeye in-season run size estimate remains at 400,000.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

Fraser River flow continues to be lower than average. The low flows mean it continues to be sensitive to warm weather conditions. Continuing warm/hot summer weather in the Thompson River basin is influencing Thompson River temperatures which in turn are influencing the mid-lower Fraser temperatures. (See discussion in the Early Summer Run section above).

While there are fears of rising in-river temperatures to very high stress levels, it is hoped that the environmental conditions will moderate just enough to avoid the high en route/pre-spawn mortalities discussed as being possible for the Early Summer Run stocks. Night time temperatures seem to be fairly cool in the Interior at this time, and days are slowly getting shorter (not good news for people on holidays, but good news for the fish).

FIRST NATIONS FISHERIES COUNCIL FALL 2010 ASSEMBLY

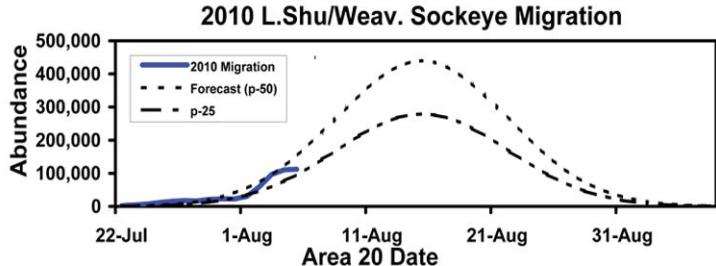
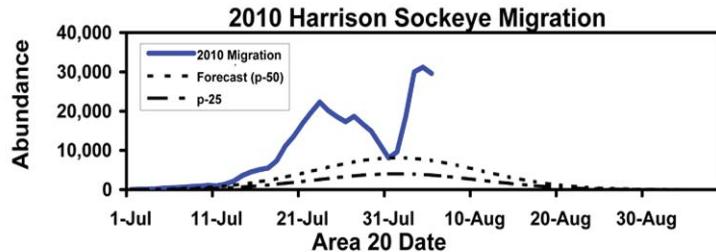
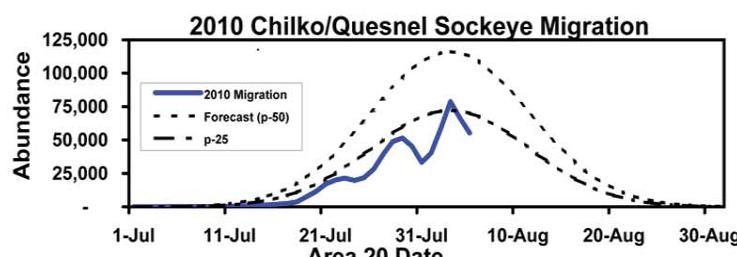
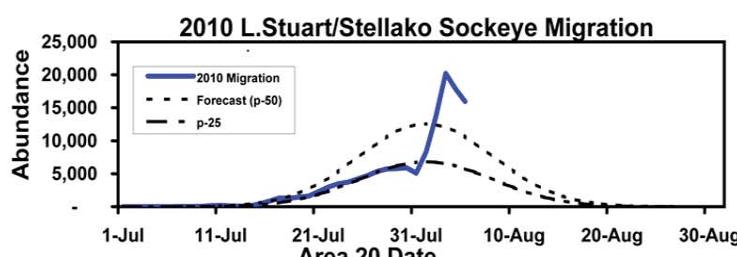
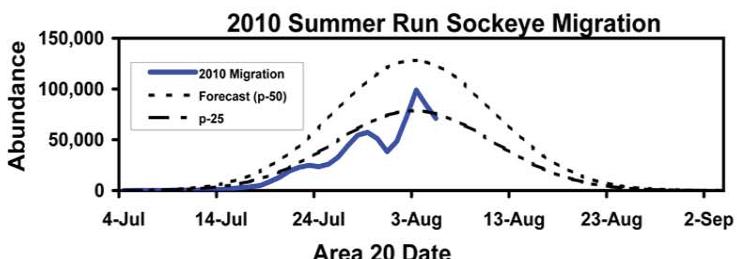
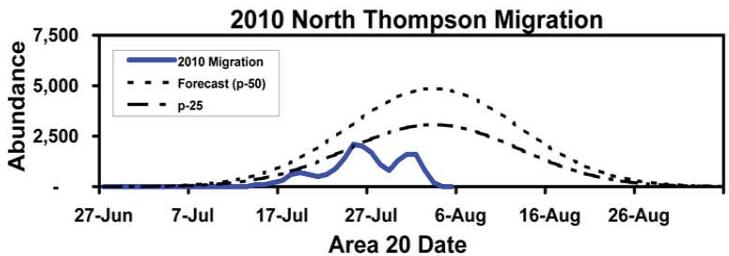
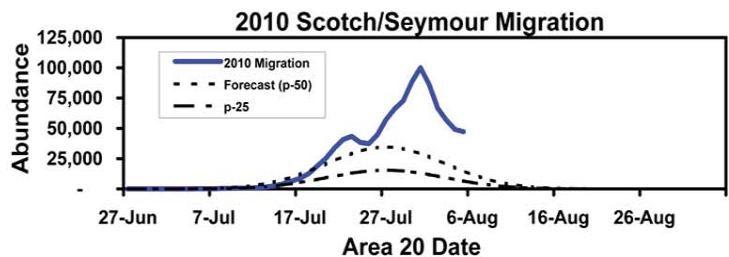
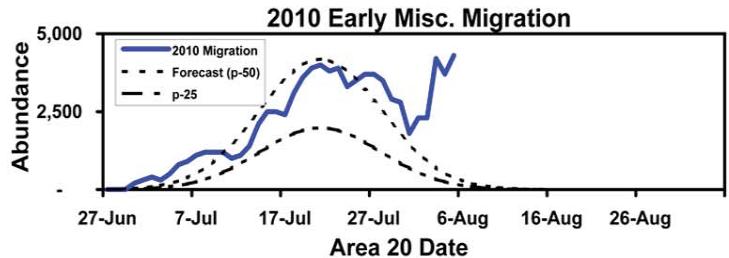
November 2, 3 & 4, 2010
at the Nisga'a Hall, Prince Rupert BC
For more information visit www.fnfisheriescouncil.ca

VISIONS WORKSHOP
October 13 & 14, 2010
at Seabird Island Band, Agassiz, BC
For more information visit www.frafs.ca

IN-SEASON TECHNICAL UPDATE CONFERENCE CALLS
Thursdays at 4:00pm
Hosted by FRAFS Biologist Mike Staley
Open to all interested First Nations
Call in number and access code are distributed weekly
via the FRAFS email distribution list

A weekly Aboriginal fisheries newsletter for
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Fraser Sockeye - In-season Update (graphs)



Cohen Commission announces Public Forums and Evidentiary Hearing Dates for Sockeye Inquiry

The Cohen Commission of Inquiry into the Decline of Sockeye Salmon in the Fraser River will hold a series of public forums to provide an opportunity for community members to share information that they believe to be relevant to the mandate of the commission.

Lillooet: Aug 18 - Lillooet District Rec Centre (Gym) - 2:00pm

Campbell River: Aug 25 - Coast Discovery Inn & Marina - 6:30pm

Richmond: Sept 13 - Steveston-London Secondary School - 6:30pm

Victoria: Sept 16 - Hotel Grand Pacific - 6:30pm

New Westminster: Sept 20 - Inn at the Quay - 6:30pm

Prince George: Sept 23 - Ramada Inn - 6:30pm

Chilliwack: Sept 29 - Coast Chilliwack Hotel - 6:30pm

Kamloops: Oct 21 - Coast Canadian Hotel - 6:30pm

Further details on location and time are available on the website at: cohencommission.ca/en/PublicForums/PublicForumsSchedule.php.

All forums are open to the public; however, **participants must apply through the Commission website in order to make a presentation at these sessions.**

The Commission has also released its schedule and topics for 2010 evidentiary hearings, which will take place October 25 through mid-December (continuing in the new year). Hearings will run Mondays through Fridays 9:30am - 12:30pm and 2:00 - 4:00 pm each day. Hearings are open to the public and will be held at the Federal Court at 701 West Georgia Street, 8th floor.

Fraser sockeye life cycle: Oct 25

Conservation, sustainability and stewardship: Oct 26-27

Perspectives on Aboriginal law: Oct 28-29

DFO organizational structure: Nov 1-5

Pacific Salmon Commission: Nov 8-9

Wild Salmon Policy: Nov 10, Nov 15-18

DFO habitat management and conservation: Nov 19, Nov 22-24

Harvesting: Nov 25-Dec 16

For more information visit www.cohencommission.ca