



PACIFIC SALMON COMMISSION

FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION

DATE:

TO:

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Donald Sampson, Jev Shelton, Richard Lincoln, Dave Cantillon, Robert Kehoe,
Lorraine Loomis, Ronald Charles, John Giard, Patrick Pattillo,
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Donna Petrachenko, Ron Fowler, Hubert Haldane, Gerry Kristianson,
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FROM:

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Pacific Salmon Commission

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MESSAGE:



PACIFIC SALMON COMMISSION

ESTABLISHED BY TREATY BETWEEN CANADA
AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
MARCH 18, 1985

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August 26, 2002

Mr. Larry Rutter
Chair, Pacific Salmon Commission
National Marine Fisheries Service
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Ms. Donna Petrachenko
Vice-Chair, Pacific Salmon Commission
Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services
Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Station 1508, 200 Kent Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0E6

Dear Chair and Vice-Chair;

On behalf of the Fraser Panel we are writing you to express concerns that have been raised by the Panel regarding the delay, diminishment and planned elimination of several essential sockeye spawning escapement assessment programs in 2002. We understand this is in part due to apparent budget problems within Fisheries and Oceans Canada (FOC). Our concerns are based upon information shared with the Panel during the course of this season; most recently this included a report provided to the Panel on its Friday, August 23, 2002 conference call and subsequent, routine updates provided by staff responsible for these activities (for example, see Attachment).

Catch and escapement by stock are corner stones for management of Fraser River sockeye. Escapement estimates by river system have been made since 1938. The Pacific Salmon Treaty recognized the importance of these data and Canada was committed to continue to carry out essential stock assessment activities such as the escapement enumeration programs when the management of Fraser River sockeye and pink salmon was repatriated to Canada.

Although additional expenditures apparently have been authorized within FOC to conduct a number of assessment activities that were initially not funded, the Panel notes that other key activities will either not be implemented or otherwise likely will not provide adequate assessment data for the Panel to use in future management decision making.

The Panel's most urgent and immediate request is for the reinstatement of critical assessment programs on the Quesnel River system for summer run sockeye, specifically the Horsefly River mark-recapture study and the Quesnel Lake visual surveys. The escapement on this cycle has been increasing markedly in the recent past and will likely comprise most of the summer run return. The 2002 Horsefly spawning escapement conceivably could be in excess of two million sockeye given reduced harvest rates. This is over twice the recent record high for this cycle. Of equal importance is the need for Birkenhead system spawning information regarding late-run salmon.

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The up-stream assessments provide vital information for three key management requirements. First, escapement data are essential for providing post-season estimates of total return used in calculations of Total Allowable Catch. Second, spawner-recruit data are critical for pre-season forecasts of total return (i.e. 2006) and the assessment of stock productivity over time to validate management strategies (e.g. escapement policy). Finally, without these escapement estimates for 2002, for example, the Staff and Technical Committee will be unable to reconstruct abundances to evaluate the accuracy of Mission echo sounding estimates of abundance and Panel and FOC management actions in 2002.

In addition to the immediate concerns that have been raised regarding the current year programs there is a need for the Commission to discuss future year intentions by Canada to meet its Treaty obligations. While a number of questions may need more extensive discussion post-season, we wish to reiterate the urgent need for FOC to meet its most basic obligations under the PST in 2002 by immediately implementing the additional Quesnel and Birkenhead programs referenced above.

Sincerely,

Rich Lincoln, Chair
U.S. Section, Fraser River Panel

Wayne Saito, Chair
Canadian Section, Fraser River Panel

Attachment

cc: Commissioners & Alternate Commissioners
National Correspondents
Don Kowal, PSC
Fraser River Panel Members and Fraser River Panel Technical Committee Members



Attachment - excerpts from e-mail distributed by Timber Whitehouse on August 21, 2002:

**“Summary Update #2
Information Collected August 12-18, 2001
2002 BCI FRASER RIVER SOCKEYE ESCAPEMENT
Inseason Update**

EARLY SUMMER RUN

Changes to the standard Fraser River sockeye enumeration protocol for Early Summer Runs are as follows:

Eagle River mark-recapture has been dropped and visual estimates have been implemented as a substitution;

The extent of coverage and methodology of enumeration for all remaining Early Summer run stocks in BCIA will satisfy Fraser River sockeye enumeration protocol.

SUMMER RUN

Horsefly River mark-recapture will not be implemented, no substitute to be implemented;

Quesnel Lake Visual surveys (80+ populations) will not be implemented, no substitute to be implemented;

Stellako River mark-recapture will not be implemented - a fence enumeration will be substituted;

Middle River mark-recapture will not be implemented visual surveys will be substituted.

Extent of coverage and method of enumeration for the following Summer run stocks in BCIA will satisfy Fraser River sockeye enumeration protocol: Chilko River and Lake, Mitchell River (Quesnel system), Tachie River.

LATE RUN

Extent of coverage and method of enumeration for all Late run stocks in BCIA will satisfy the Fraser River sockeye enumeration protocol.”