

Appendix 1: Regulation of the recreational Fraser River sockeye fishery

1. Allocation Policy

An Allocation Policy for Pacific Salmon was released in October 1999. This paper was part of the New Direction series of papers produced by the Department. The Allocation Policy paper presented a series of principles for sharing harvestable surpluses of Pacific salmon among First Nations, recreational and commercial users.

Allocation Principle 4 from an Allocation Policy for Pacific Salmon, October 1999 states that after conservation needs are met, and priority access for First Nations is met, recreational anglers will be provided with predictable and stable fishing opportunities for sockeye, pink and chum salmon.

This principle also states that the coast-wide recreational harvest of sockeye is limited to a maximum average of 5% of the combined coast-wide recreational and commercial harvest over the period 1999-2005. Commercial harvest includes commercial fisheries, assessment fisheries, First Nations Economic Opportunity fisheries and selective fishing experimental fisheries. Commercial harvest does not include ESSR fisheries or test fisheries. Recreational harvest includes harvest in both tidal and non-tidal waters.

2. Recreational Fisheries - South Coast Tidal Waters

In recent years, this fishery has been constrained due to concern for Early Stuart, Cultus Lake and Late run sockeye. When the main portion of the Early Stuart run has passed and if the expectation that conservation and FN FSC requirements will be met, this fishery is opened. The fishery generally closes when maximum impacts on late run sockeye are being approached.

In 2005, the South Coast sockeye fishery opened on July 30 in most Areas and then was closed on August 27. This fishery re-opened on September 3 and remained open until the end of the year.

3. Recreational Fisheries – Tidal Fraser River (downstream of Mission Bridge) and mouth of the Fraser River

The Area off the mouth of the Fraser River did not open in 2005 due to limitations being placed on local FN FSC fisheries and due to concerns for holding late-run sockeye. The tidal waters of the Fraser River opened for 3 days in 2005 from September 2 to September 5. This fishery is assumed to be a low impact fishery, however, there is no creel data available for the tidal Fraser River.

4. Recreational Fisheries - Fraser River non-tidal waters (upstream of Mission Bridge)

The Fraser River recreational fishery has opened when the in-season run size provided by the Pacific Salmon Commission staff is large enough to allow for a commercial harvest. This has meant that the opening date for the non-tidal Fraser River recreational fishery has varied from as early as July 24 in 2004 to as late as September 1 in 2005. The 2005 non-tidal recreational sockeye fishery took place from September 1 to September 7, 2005.

The sockeye fishery in the Fraser River has expanded greatly since first opening in 1996. At the same time there is no stability or predictability in this fishery because opening times vary greatly from year to year based on in-season information. This can lead to a “gold-rush” mentality and therefore, an unorderly fishery.

This lack of predictability regarding the recreational sockeye opening dates has adversely affected many local businesses that rely on the sockeye fishery as a major source of their income. According to the Chilliwack Progress, the potential economic spin-offs for the community of Chilliwack during sockeye season are about \$30,000 per day. (Chilliwack Progress, August 23, 2005)

The Sport Fishing Advisory Board passed a motion in 2003 requesting that consideration be given to establishing a minimum pre-determined annual sockeye retention fishery window on the Fraser River that could be extended at either end, in-season, based on abundance.

5. Communication

Subject to unforeseen conservation requirements, the Department has committed to providing recreational anglers with a minimum of 48 hours notice prior to closing any recreational fisheries. The Department has also committed to not closing recreational fisheries over a weekend (i.e. on a Saturday). These commitments were made to ensure that adequate time exists to ensure that recreational anglers are informed of management actions. For commercial and First Nations fisheries it is possible to broadcast information much more rapidly because these communities are smaller and have more established communication networks.

Openings can be communicated much more rapidly. The SFAB sockeye/pink working group is informed of any openings prior to time of the opening. This can be accomplished by telephone and is therefore a rapid process.

All information regarding openings and closings is broadcast to the fishing public via the Fishery Notice system.

Table 1: Percentage of recreational sockeye catch to combined commercial and recreational catch.

Year	Recreational Coastwide ¹	Recreational Region 2 ²	Commercial Coastwide ³	Economic Ops.	Total	Percentage (Rec/Total)
1999	102 527	1 913	580 000			15%
2000	56 293	24 075	3 473 000			1.6%
2001	112 211	41 773	2 437 457			4.4%
2002	182 910	125 040	3 713 289			4.7%
2003	119 145	73 393	2 242 881			5.0%
2004	134 741	50 364	1 807 426	67 818 ⁴	2,009,985	6.7%
2005		42 630	307 770	7803 ⁵		

1 – taken from the 1999-2004 Summary Comparisons – Excel spreadsheet provided by Andrea Petersen.

2 – taken from the Fraser River Recreation Creel Reports provided by Lower Fraser Stock Assessment

3 - taken from the 1999-2004 Summary Comparisons – excel spreadsheet provided by Andrea Petersen.

4 - taken from the 1999-2004 Summary Comparisons – excel spreadsheet provided by Andrea Petersen.

5 –taken from the Fishery Operations System and represents catch in the Fraser River only.