

BRIEFING NOTE FOR THE DEPUTY MINISTER

FRASER RIVER RECREATION FISHERIES FOR SOCKEYE

(Information Only)

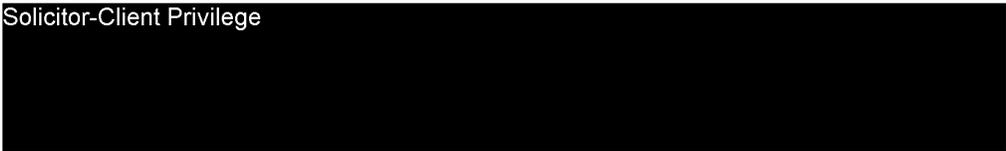
SUMMARY

- Returns of Fraser River sockeye are currently estimated at approximately 1.6 million fish, compared to a pre-season forecast of 6.3 million. No directed commercial or recreational harvests of Fraser River sockeye have occurred. Only limited opportunities have been provided for First Nations food, social and ceremonial (FSC) harvest.
- In appropriate encounters of sockeye by the recreational anglers on the Fraser River are deemed to be too high in relation to meeting First Nations priority access requirement. Various measures to reduce encounters have not worked.
- The Department is implementing a recreational fishery area closure for salmon fishing on the Fraser River, starting 0001 hours, Monday August 20, 2007.

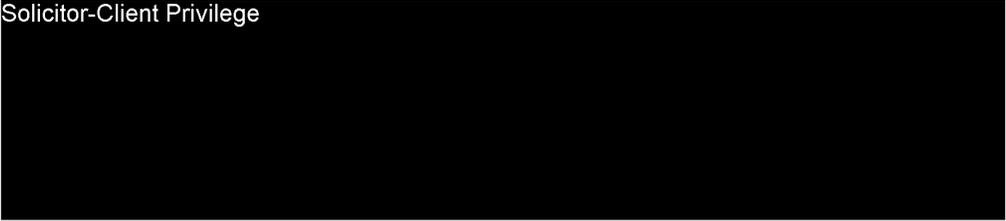
Background

- The return of Fraser River sockeye is estimated at 1.6 million fish, or 25% of the pre-season forecast of 6.3 million.
- At the current run-size, there is no allowable catch of sockeye for commercial or recreational harvests of Fraser River sockeye. A limited TAC of Summer run sockeye will be available for First Nations' food, social and ceremonial (FSC) harvests where Late run sockeye are not prevalent. Historically the First Nations' FSC harvests are approximately 1 million sockeye, however only 178K are available for 2007.
- First Nations have advised that, as their FSC needs will not be met by sockeye alone and allowing the recreational fishery to encounter sockeye will be viewed as an infringement of their rights.

• Solicitor-Client Privilege



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- Estimates indicate that 12,000 sockeye have been caught and released by the recreational fishery between Sumas and Hope to August 13th, with an estimated mortality of approximately 1200 sockeye.
- At this time, the sockeye encounters in the mainstem Fraser River recreational fishery between the Mission Bridge and Hope, BC are increasing quickly. Further, there has been little to no co-operation from the recreational community at large to utilize selective methods of fishing designed to avoid sockeye.
- The Department has been actively engaged in consulting with the recreational community through weekly conference calls, one community meeting, sending three fishery notices, and through enforcement staff providing information on the water.
- Media lines are being prepared.

Options considered

1. Close recreational fishing for salmon on the Fraser River between the Mission Bridge and the Highway No. 1 Bridge at Hope, starting 0001 hours, Monday, August 20, 2007. This measure would close the area where sockeye encounters have been high and allows for continued salmon fishing opportunities in other areas of the Fraser River and tributaries. The fishing techniques used by the recreational sector that encounters sockeye are not used below Mission.
2. Close recreational fishing for salmon on a smaller section of the Fraser River between the Agassiz/Rosedale Bridge and Hope, starting 0001 hours, Monday, August 20, 2007. This measure would close a smaller area where sockeye encounters have been high and should reduce the number of encounters with sockeye. However a number of First Nations between Mission and Agassiz would view this as a nominal effort to address the issue and may also just move the problem from one portion of the river to another. In addition, the RCMP are concerned about potential conflict should one area continue to remain open when First Nations will not be provided fishing opportunities, therefore are not supportive of this option.

3. Status Quo – continue to provide chinook salmon opportunities with a no fishing for sockeye regulation in effect

Decision

- Proceed with Option 1.

Next Steps

- The Province of BC has been advised of our decision and rationale.
- The SFAB Fraser River Pink/Sockeye working group have been informed of action.
- Appropriate monitoring and enforcement will be put in place as follow-up.

Attachment 1
Description of Consultations

Attachment 2
Recreational Catch and Release Estimates 2005 – 2007

M Kotyk / P. Sprout/ D Bevan/ cb

Appendix 1

Consultations

- The Department has issued three fishery notices indicating that there is no fishing for sockeye on the non-tidal portions of the Fraser River and requesting that anglers use every means possible to avoid catching non-target species (sockeye). The bi-weekly Fraser River Panel updates also indicated that there is no fishing for sockeye. The issue also gets discussed every Tuesday night on the Sport Fishing Advisory Board (SFAB) Fraser River salmon calls.
- Enforcement staff have been active on the water educating anglers with fishing bar meetings, handing out education pamphlets and having individual conversations about the concerns. With the limited tools in the tool box and the fact that anglers are not doing anything illegal these methods are not working to the degree necessary.
- Staff met with the local Upper and Lower Fraser Valley Sport Fishing Advisory Committees (SFAC) on Monday August 13, 2007 to discuss the issue. The meeting ended with the SFAC members agreeing to reinforce the no fishing for sockeye and to take all measures possible to avoid sockeye encounters. Enforcement continued their work on educating the anglers, handing out joint DFO/SFAC brochures, meeting with anglers on various fishing bars and having a large presence on the water. On an enforcement patrol and over flight conducted on August 15 and 16, 2007 - 95% of anglers between the Aggasiz/Rosedale and Hope bridges were still using non-selective fishing measures.

Data

- Recreational fishing information from three data sources (over flights, enforcement and charter patrols) on the Fraser River between the Aggasiz and Hope indicate for the month of August that the number of anglers using fishing methods that catch more sockeye than Chinook ranges between 85-99%. Preliminary on ground creel information indicate that for every Chinook caught there are 10 sockeye released. Enforcement officers on the grounds are receiving similar estimates ~10-15 sockeye caught and released for each Chinook retained by anglers targeting Chinook. The number of anglers seen during the data collections times varies from 102-255.

Appendix 2 – Recreational Catch & Release Estimate 2005 - 2007

	2005			2006			2007				
	August 1-15	August 16-31	Total	July 1-31	August 1-31	Total	July 1-15	July 16-31	August * 1-15	Projections Aug 16 - Sept 3	Total
Number of Interviews	1,263	860	2,123	2,741	4,702	7,443	498	574	390		1,462
Interview Hours	6,912	4,560	11,472	12,960	22,036	34,996	2,442	2,990	2,087		7,519
Number of Overflights	5	5	10	9	8	17	4	3	5		12
ANGLER EFFORT											
Estimated Effort (hours)	85,580	82,405	167,985	143,265	460,566	603,831	18,647	26,677	48,582	70,844	164,750
ESTIMATED HARVEST											
Chinook Adult	2,459	5,017	7,476	4,491	7,701	12,192	571	647	1,254	3,889	6,361
Sockeye	6		6	0	117,468	117,468	0	0	0	0	0
ESTIMATED RELEASE											
Chinook Adult	32	143	175	71	147	218	0	0	0		
Sockeye	17,071	31,012	48,083	5,374	13,117	18,491	97	592	11,275	31,009	42,876

* August 1 - 15th information is very preliminary and is dependent on # of anglers, expansion of catch and release reports from August 6 - 15th and sockeye abundance in the river. The number of interviews from Aug 1 – 15/07 is actually from Aug 1 – 6th.

The projected chinook catch, in the study area, if the recreational chinook retention fishery continues through to the end of August is a total of 6468.

The Fraser River creel program estimates recreational catch from the mouth of the Sumas upstream generally to Hope. There are impacts on both sockeye and chinook in areas outside this study area that are not included.

In 2006, the sockeye directed recreational retention fishery began in the Fraser River on August 3.

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