



Fisheries
and Oceans

Pêches
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Your file Votre référence
Our file Notre référence

JUN 25 2007

Mr. Craig Orr, Mr. Ken Wilson, Mr. Jeffery Young,
Ms. Nicola Temple, Mr. Jim Culp
Pacific Marine Conservation Caucus, Salmon Committee
1037 Madore Avenue
Coquitlam, BC
V3K 3B7

Dear Mr. Orr, Mr. Wilson, Mr. Young, Ms. Temple and Mr. Culp:

INTEGRATED FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PLANS

Thank you for your letter of May 23, 2007 outlining the concerns that you have with the Department of Fisheries and Ocean's management plan for Fraser River sockeye. I understand that you listed specific concerns in your letter of February 28, 2007 that were addressed by Mr. Paul Ryall, Lead, Salmon Team. I have attached a copy of Mr. Ryall's reply of March 5th for your reference.

We believe that the 2007 plan for Fraser River sockeye, which was developed after extensive consultation, is prudent and precautionary. The escapement targets developed for 2007 were developed with the goal of avoiding lower benchmarks with a high degree of confidence. As you have pointed out in both your February 28th and May 23rd letters, there is concern with an environment that appears to be changing. We believe our actions take that into account.

Given concerns about the high level of productivity estimated by the spawner/recruit models, we have capped the maximum total allowable mortality at levels below the estimated exploitation (mortality) rate that would realize S_{msy} . Alternate options to address this uncertainty will be explored in the future.

In 2007, the Department incorporated the management adjustments into the total allowable mortality to account for discrepancies between Mission hydro-acoustic measurements and in-river catch and spawning escapement estimates and en-route mortalities (i.e. more fish are needed to pass by Mission than spawning ground requirements in order to account for measurement errors and en-route losses) in an effort to increase the likelihood of attaining the escapement targets for the various management groups. Setting appropriate management adjustments is a major component of pre-season and in-season decision making by the Fraser River Panel (FRP).

Management Adjustment Models consider observed biases as well as impacts from water discharge, temperature levels and timing of river entry to assist in this determination. Management adjustments have been agreed to by the FRP and made in the past for the Early Stuart, Early Summer, Summer and Late Run stock aggregates. Regardless of the

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causes, management adjustments for all management groups will be made as required to increase the probability that spawning targets will be met.

Measures are incorporated into the 2007 plan to protect Cultus and Sakinaw sockeye. Sakinaw sockeye will be protected by delaying the commencement of fishing activity until the majority of the Sakinaw sockeye have passed through Johnstone Strait. For Cultus Lake sockeye, an exploitation rate ceiling will be implemented in 2007. Managing salmon to stay within set ceiling limits is a difficult task for fishery managers with information constantly changing in-season and also between the in-season estimate to the final post-season estimate. The 2006 season reflects this challenge.

In 2006, the Cultus ceiling was set at 30% by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans in order to protect Cultus Lake sockeye. During the season when the major fisheries had concluded, the Cultus impact was estimated to be about 29%. Re-assessment of the run size information resulted in a significant Late run size decrease and as a result the Cultus impact was estimated to be significantly over the prescribed ceiling. However, as a result of just completed post-season analysis conducted by the Pacific Salmon Commission, it was found that the Mission counting facility was significantly under-estimating fish passage in 2006. As a result, the run size for Late runs has increased to 7.9 million and the Cultus impact is now estimated to be 35%.

Recovery planning efforts to ensure rebuilding of this stock will continue to be supported. In addition to harvest related measures, there will be continued improvements made to the habitat (e.g. debris removal from spawning areas), investigations into the impacts of predation (seals, otters and lamprey, pikeminnow removal), and enhancement work. Eggs are incubated in nearby hatchery facilities and the resulting fry/smolts are returned to the lake. The captive brood program will continue as a form of insurance to reduce the possibility of extirpation.

Thank you for taking the time to bring your concerns to my attention.

Yours sincerely,



for
Paul Sprout
Regional Director General
Pacific Region

enclosure

cc: The Honourable Loyola Hearn
L. Murray, Deputy Minister
D. Radford, A/Regional Director, Fisheries and Aquaculture Management
P. Ryall, Lead, Salmon Team
R. Brahniuk, Co-Chair, Fraser River Panel
L. Jantz, Co-Chair, Fraser River Panel Technical Committee