

MARINE CONSERVATION CAUCUS  
1037 Madore Avenue, Coquitlam, BC V3K 3B7  
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July 27, 2007

Re: Fisheries for early summer Fraser sockeye 2007

Paul Ryall  
Fisheries and Aquaculture Management  
Suite 200 - 401 Burrard Street  
Vancouver, B.C.  
V6C 3S4

Dear Paul Ryall,

It has come to our attention that DFO has licensed 24 hours of drift net fishing and 48 hours of set gill-net fishing between Sawmill Creek and the Fraser River mouth for lower Fraser First Nations for the weekend of July 27-29, and are planning food fisheries in the upper Fraser as well. These fisheries will primarily harvest Early Summer sockeye. We have reviewed the available data provided to the Fraser River Panel as of July 27, and we have been in contact with the responsible DFO biologists and managers (July 26, 2007).

It is our understanding that Fraser sockeye have failed to arrive in the river in sufficient numbers to support even reduced food fisheries for First Nations, and there is no reliable indication of fish building in offshore areas. In fact, many sockeye runs along the coast this year (Skeena, Barclay Sound, Lake Washington, Early Stuart) appear to be returning below expectation but on time. Given the data in hand, and assuming the Early Summer runs are on time (and there is no reason to assume otherwise, except unbridled optimism) the in season run size estimates for Early Summers (based on several alternative models presented by the Pacific Salmon commission using test fishing data) suggest an Early Summer sockeye run to the Fraser of less than 100 K (less than 15% of the pre season forecast of 690K). While we are all hopeful that this situation will improve, there is no evidence of sufficient sockeye to meet minimum escapement objectives, much less support fisheries.

Conservation must come first. We urge you to postpone all fishing, including first Nations food fishing for Fraser sockeye unless and until sufficient Fraser sockeye return to meet escapement needs. Opening sockeye fisheries now will not only contribute to a possible conservation crisis for Early Summer Fraser sockeye, but may also infringe on the Rights of First Nations fishing in the upper Fraser.

Regards,



Ken Wilson  
Marine Conservation Caucus, Salmon Committee

cc Paul Sprout  
Don Radford  
Mel Kotyk  
Hon. Loyola Hearn