Food Fishery Update

Sockeye:

→ Gitksan Catch Update:

As of last week, the Gitksan have jointly caught 34,217 Sockeye in the Drift net and Set net FSC fisheries. This amount is a result of a total effort of 2,425 sets to date. The number of nets on the river has now began to decrease and it is expected that our fishery will now start to slow down as the season progresses.

→ Updated Forecast:

As of August 21, the estimated Total Return to Canada (TRTC) for Skeena Sockeye according to the Tyee Test fishery, has decreased to 1,367,016 adult Sockeye. By this time historically, approximately 95% of the run has passed the test fishery. Observations from the Tyee continue to suggest that the trend is towards a majority of age 4 adults, which will be confirmed via scale sample analysis.

The Babine Fence has been in operation since July 12 and is used to help calculate Tyee estimates. Approximately 922,150 large Sockeye were recorded at the fence as of August 21, with an additional 9,167 jack Sockeye observed. At the Kitwanga Weir 14,239 Sockeye have been recorded, with water temperatures recorded here as above normal (~4 °C).

The Nass Sockeye TRTC is lower than expected at 275,000 (range 260k-300k) 95% of the run past with normal timing.

Chinook:

To date, The Gitksan have caught 5,135 Skeena Chinook, and 1,916 Skeena jack Chinook in the set net FSC fishery alone.

Overall, Skeena Chinook numbers have been depressed in recent years, however Tyee values suggest Chinook numbers are higher than in 2017.

Nass River Chinook TRTC is at 13,000 (range 13k-14k) 98% of the run past with normal timing.
Fishery Updates

In Area 4, there have been 16 gillnet openings and 15 days of seine fishing targeting Sockeye and Pink salmon with the mandatory release of steelhead, Chinook, Coho and Chum salmon. August gillnet fisheries have been done with half-length nets and 20-minute set times. To date, 126,449 Sockeye have been caught or allocated throughout commercial fisheries.

Throughout the four openings for the Gitksan Skeena inland demonstration fishery, we exceeded our allocation of 8,683 Sockeye by 308, totalling a catch of 8,991 Sockeye. Tsimshian and Gitksan demonstration fisheries are complete as of August 23, and Lake Babine Nation has a final opportunity anticipated to take place from August 24 – 30.

Our continued pressure on regional managers for improved assessment tools, policies and allocation plans are strengthened by what we saw this season.

Water temperatures continued to be of concern this year, with observations ranging from 15.5 to 24 °C recorded in the Skeena watershed. Water temperatures can have harmful impacts on fish especially with added stressors. GWA continues to increase our capacity to monitor stream water quality and quantity on the territory for better informed management.

Slamgeesh Update

The GWA had the Slamgeesh weir in full operation on July 18th. The first fish was passed through on August 1st. As of August 20th, 172 Sockeye have been counted at the weir. Based on data from recent years, about 36% of the sockeye are through the weir by this date. Water temperatures at the trapping facility have risen from 17.6 °C on July 19th to 25.4 °C on July 29th and back down to 18.1 °C on August 20th.

Due to the multiple fires in the proximity of the Slamgeesh field station, the GWA has opened the weir and evacuated the camp until further notice.

Wildfire photo taken from Slamgeesh Lake, August 20th (photo by: Angus Gawa).