



Gitksan Watershed Authorities

In-Season Update:
July 12, 2018

Food Fishery Update

Chinook:

So far the *Gitksan* have harvested **1,561 Chinook** this year, as compared to 2017 at this time (week 27) *Gitksan* had caught 1,761 and 1,776 in 2016. Despite the forecast predicting very low numbers returning this year, according to our catch data we are on track for an average harvest as compared to previous years. The compliance with 7" mesh net restrictions has yielded positive results in terms of our food fishery's impact on conservation, allowing Sockeye to swim through while also ensuring sufficient numbers of Chinook for food fish.

Sockeye:

To date, *Gitksan* food fishers have caught **435 Sockeye**. By this time last year (week 27) and again under conservative fishing regulations we had caught 188 Sockeye. Compared to 2016 when the *Gitksan* were not actively conserving Sockeye, we had caught 7,683 Sockeye by this date. *Gitksan* efforts to conserve Sockeye have been recognized through this catch data, by way of compliance with mesh net regulations and deliberate preservation of our Sockeye stocks for future generations. The positive impacts of this continued effort will be felt for many years to come.

It is still early in the season to report an in-season update on run size with any more confidence than the pre-season estimate of 645,000 Sockeye returning to Canada. By this date historically, only about 13% of the Sockeye run has swam past the Tye test fishery, meaning that it is still too early for an in-season estimate at this time. **Stay tuned in the weeks to come for a full Sockeye update** including an in-season point estimate for Total Return to Canada (TRTC) as well as updated *Gitksan* catch effort.

Kitwanga Area Fishery Closure Notice

Due to the concerns for **Kitwanga Sockeye**, the GWA at the request of the *Gitwangak Simgiigyet* are releasing this notice to re-affirm the closure to **all fishers** in and around the confluence of the Kitwanga River. **The closure boundary lies between the Kitwanga Bridge (37 North) and Mill Creek** and applies to all *Gitksan* FSC fishers who have historically fished this section. Non-fishing boundaries were placed when this closure was first enacted in 2003, at the mouth of the Kitwanga River where it meets the Skeena, and can be recognized as white triangles places on the right banks above and below the rivers confluence.

Through studies completed by the *Gitanyow Fisheries Authority (GFA)* and the GWA, it has been determined that **Kitwanga River Sockeye salmon stocks are extremely depressed and are currently at risk of extinction**. It has been determined that Sockeye enter the Kitwanga River from mid-July to mid-November. At these times they are extremely susceptible to over-fishing because they may be holding at the mouth for extended periods of time before entering the Kitwanga River.

The GFA have implemented and sustained rebuilding efforts for these fish, as have all *Gitksan* fishers actively contributing to the conservation of Sockeye through deliberate avoidance in our food fishery. You can be a part of the current efforts to rebuild Kitwanga Sockeye stocks this year by complying with the fishing area closure. In doing so, you are helping Kitwanga Sockeye reach their natal streams and ensuring their survival for years to come.

The GWA would like to emphasize the importance of the catch data received from fishers to date, as this plays a central role in our efforts to plan management and conservation. These data continue to remain confidential - Thank you to all contributing.