



Gitksan Watershed Authorities

In-Season Update:
July 18, 2018

Food Fishery Update

Sockeye:

→ Gitksan Catch Update:

To date, Gitksan food fishers have caught an estimated **1,181 Sockeye**, from our set net and drift net fisheries. By this time last year (week 29) under conservative fishing regulations we had caught 1,071 Sockeye; and 13,597 in 2016 when we were not actively conserving.

→ Updated Forecast:

By this date historically, approximately 30% of the Total Sockeye Return to Canada has swam by the Tye Test Fishery. In the past few days decent numbers have swam passed the Tye Test Fishery, yielding the current point-estimate **forecast of 993,758 Sockeye**. There is still a **large amount of uncertainty around this estimate** until approximately 50% of the run have passed the test fishery by next week. However, at this point First Nations on the Skeena are **confident that the minimum required sockeye escapement to the Skeena of 600,000 Sockeye will be achieved**.

Test Fishery data shows very few 5-year-olds from the 2013 brood year with the majority of the Sockeye returning as 4-year-olds from the 2014 brood year. Size at age is also a concern this year with many of the fish returning much smaller than average. There is still some level of uncertainty at this time as to what the estimated returns to the Skeena will be. We will have more confidence in estimating the run size by July 26, 2018.

Next week's update of the sockeye returns will be important to watch for. What we are seeing this year is very unusual and there is concern for run patterns following that of 2013.

Chinook:

→ Gitksan Catch Update:

From our catch monitoring data of the Gitksan fishery, so far this year the *Gitksan have harvested an estimated **2,875 Chinook*** and 853 Jack Chinook. Decreases in size at age for adult Chinook has also been evident, with an uncertainty between identifying adults and jacks in-river. Historically, adult Chinook are listed as greater than 65cm (25.5 inches).

Compared to 2017 at this time (week 28) Gitksan had caught 2,613 adults and 2,202 in 2016.

From the Tye Test Fishery, the index for Chinook to date is showing higher numbers than last year; however abundance is still well below the average and depressed in recent years. Similarly, the Wet'suwet'en have maintained concern over depressed Chinook and Sockeye stocks, especially for the low numbers of Chinook seen in the Bulkley River to date.

Fishery Recommendations

Although this most recent returns past the Tye Test Fishery appears optimistic for the Sockeye, **we recommend maintaining the use of larger mesh sizes until Friday, July 20**. By this date, we are hoping to avoid the early run sockeye which appear very poor. We should also expect to see increased numbers of sockeye within in our fisheries around the July 20 date. It is crucial to the future of wild Skeena Sockeye, to ensure that the early-run stocks can swim past our fishery to allow them to recover.

