



Gitksan Watershed Authorities

In-Season Update

JULY 24, 2018

Food Fishery Update

Sockeye:

→**Gitksan Catch Update:**

As of this week, the Gitksan have jointly caught 3,610 Sockeye in the Drift net and Set net fisheries. We have observed that a majority of the fishers have now switched their mesh nets to Sockeye webbing, with few still using Coho or Chinook webbing.

→**Updated Forecast:**

Recent catches in the Tye Test Fishery have shown healthy numbers of Sockeye passing through to the river, recording an escapement of over 144,000 in the last two days alone. Based on average run timing, 45% of the fish have come through the Tye and the forecast for Total Return to Canada (TRTC) is now listed as **1.26 million Sockeye** based on recent average timing (+/- approximately 350K to account for uncertainty in the estimate). This increase in the TRTC of course now prompts DFO to consider opening both the Recreational and Commercial sectors, which are typically triggered to open at 800,000 and 1.05 million Sockeye, respectively. Should the forecast remain consistent in the coming weeks, according to the Integrated Fisheries Management Plan (IFMP), we can expect an opening for both sectors, which will be discussed amongst DFO and Skeena First Nations this week.

We have calculated record low returns per-spawner for the 2013 brood year. These are smolts that went to sea during poor ocean condition since 2014; a consideration for a precautionary approach.

Chinook:

→**Gitksan Catch Update:**

To date, The Gitksan have caught 3,900 Chinook, and 1,063 Jack Chinook in the Set net fishery alone. Recall from last week, that size at age for Chinook has changed over time as we are observing smaller adults, thus we have to consider the possibility that a number of Jack Chinook recorded may actually be small adult Chinook.

There is still a lack of information on Chinook numbers, which is still very concerning, especially considering the declines since 2012. The GWA is currently working to increase efforts to assess Upper Skeena Chinook stocks.

Fishery Recommendations / Notice

The DFO has opted to open the Marine Commercial Fishery today for 16.5 hours. GWA did not support the opening at this point. This is due to lack of timely integrated management with DFO and uncertainty of the forecast.

Fortunately, food fishing opportunities for Sockeye overall look good. We will continue to update on the estimate as well as discussions with DFO and Gitksan Commercial Fishers. Fishing the peak of the run and maintaining monitoring remains key. Up-river technical staff are pushing for a conservative approach this week, which the Skeena First Nations have led with. We want to be sure we don't face these difficult decisions again in 2022-23. Conservative efforts early in the season considering the forecast should be applauded and will be beneficial for early wild stocks that are still of concern.