



Gitksan Watershed Authorities

Project Updates

NOVEMBER 2016

NOVEMBER REPORT FROM GWA COORDINATOR

Charlie Muldon

Forward to 2017

In 2013 the Gitksan faced a difficult time with low sockeye returns and the need to take conservation measures by closing our Food Fishery for a few weeks.

The Gitksan, in 2013, were the first in the Skeena to take a conservative approach and apply the precautionary principle to managing our fishery. The decision to close the Food Fishery was made by the Gitksan community.

In 2017, the majority of sockeye returning will be from the 2013 brood year. The pre-season forecast of returning sockeye for 2017 should be available no later than December of 2016. Our initial thoughts, as the number of 4-year-old and 3-year-old (jack) sockeye returning in 2016 were low, is that we can anticipate that the 2017 sockeye forecast will not be promising. Once we have the 2017 Pre-season Forecast available to us we will distribute it and begin planning for community meetings in the New Year to discuss the 2017 season.

Reviewing the Fisheries Act & Environmental Assessment Processes

By Christine Scotnicki

In the summer of 2016, the federal government announced that it would be engaging Canadians in reviews of some key pieces of federal legislation, including the **Fisheries Act** & the **Canadian Environmental Assessment Act**. Reviews of the **National Energy Board Act** and the **Navigation Protection Act** are also underway.

In an effort to hear from as many people as possible, websites have been created to provide information and also to give you an easy way to let the government hear what you have to say about the **Fisheries Act** as well as how environmental assessment in Canada is managed.

Fisheries Act review:

www.letstalkfishhabitat.ca contains e-workbooks, available only until November 25th, that take just a short time to complete. Also, check out the Ideas Forum to see what others are saying about what the review should focus on. This Review is being conducted by the Standing Committee on Fisheries & Oceans, and the Committee will submit its Report to Parliament by February 28th, 2017. Once there are proposals for legislative changes, more consultation can be expected.

Environmental Assessment processes review:

www.EAreview.ca contains a choicebook that provides information while also allowing you to submit your views on the current state of environmental assessment in Canada. This Review is being conducted by an Expert Panel that will report to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change by January 31, 2017. The Expert Panel will be in Prince Rupert on December 8th, and 9th. December 8th is for public presentations and a public workshop. December 9th has been set aside for Indigenous people and groups. Indigenous groups can make presentations to the panel from 9am until 5pm (sign up ahead of time using the website links), and then an Indigenous Dialogue Session will be held from 6:30 to 8:30 pm (pre-registration not required).

With GWA's support, Skeena Fisheries Commission is engaged in these reviews and has staff available to hear from you if you would prefer to have your say in that fashion. Please contact either Kyla Warren or Davide Latremouille at the GWA /SFC office at 250 842 2213 for this reason or if you have any questions about the reviews.

These reviews all have very short timelines so if you have something to say, do it soon!

Gitksan Watershed Ranger and Monitor
Activity Report for September, October & November

By Rod Harris

The Crews have been busy surveying streams in various areas; we started our sockeye counts in the McDonnell Lake area in the third week of August, the Swan Lake area with our first walk September 2nd, and Nangeese River in the first week of September. GWA surveys about 20 streams in the Kispix watershed for mostly Coho and a few that have sockeye returning to them. All streams are surveyed a minimum of 3 times. Data on escapements are currently being analyzed for estimates of fish returning to each stream. We will post escapement estimates of streams surveyed in our next news letter. As the field season comes to an end, we will spend more time in finalizing the reports for all the projects that we participated in throughout the season.

2016 Slamgeesh Salmon Project Update

By Alicia Fernando

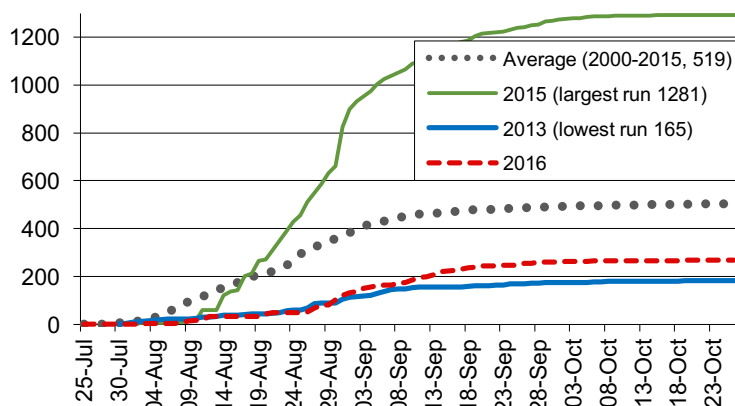
The Slamgeesh Salmon Project has been ongoing since the year 2000 in the Slamgeesh Watershed, Gitksan traditional territory of Gwininitxw in the Upper Skeena watershed. Our work site is located on Damshilgwet Creek, below the outlet of Slamgeesh Lake. The main spawning grounds are on Upper Damshilgwet Creek between Slamgeesh and Damshilgwet Lake. The data represented in this update is preliminary.

The adult fence program count to the night of October 30th is:

- 267 sockeye**
- 1460 coho**
- 59 bull trout**

The initial sockeye arrived later than average timing at the fence (2006-2015).

Cumulative sockeye weir count *including jacks:



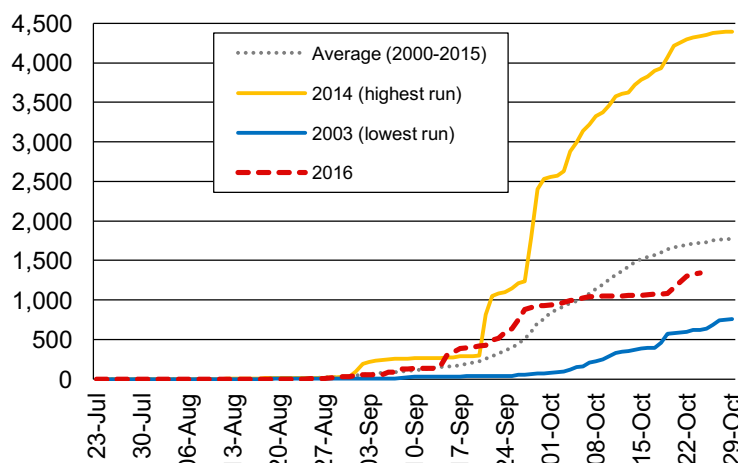
Slamgeesh Report Cont.

The 2016 Slamgeesh sockeye count is roughly only half of the forecasted average return. The average large sockeye fence count since 2006 (all based on weir counts) is 519. The 2016 sockeye return is derived from brood years 2011 and 2012, which had 689 and 940 large sockeye spawners respectively.

High temperatures, low water and low abundance observations on the spawning grounds add to concerns with spawning success.

A small late late pulse of coho has occurred just prior to the scheduled program wrap up at the end of October. The fence Coho escapements were also much lower than expected

Cumulative coho abundance:



Habitat work

By Tim Wilson

Work continued with the Nangeese River instream flow study. The study has 16 representative sites which will give us an intricate understanding of the flow, stream depth, substrate relationship within the stream. In turn this data will be used to identify restoration opportunities within the Kispix watershed. Hydrometric stations were also visited capturing different water levels, collecting water discharge measurements.

Adult escapement

Coho escapement walks began at the beginning of October. A selection of high value coho spawning areas are visited on an annual basis and compared year to year. Final numbers will be reported at the end of the season once all data is collected. A minimum of 3 walks are required for a good spawner.