



TNG Weekly Salmon Fisheries Season Update – Week of July 20, 2020

Providing the latest information important to Tsilhqot'in fish and fishing activities

Introduction

- The 2020 fishing season faces some key challenges:
 - i. The **lowest anticipated return** of Jaš (Chinook) and Ts'eman (sockeye) in the Fraser River on record;
 - ii. the **Big Bar landslide**; and
 - iii. **extreme and unusual environmental conditions** (e.g. very high water levels on the Fraser), broadly related to climate change and impacts to the landscape.
- Available information and environmental conditions are constantly changing – the TNG Fisheries Department is monitoring Ts'eman & Jaš data nearly daily and is providing up-to-date information to support awareness of key issues.
- The protection of every salmon stock is critical to the health of the Tsilhqot'in fishery (bio-diversity and eco-system health).

Jaš (Chinook)

- Due to extremely high water levels in the Fraser River, few Jaš (Chinook) have been able to travel past the Big Bar site to-date.
- Current water levels are impacting early-timed Chinook that have already entered the Fraser, including Little Chilcotin Chinook (Upper and Lower).
 - In the Chilcotin watershed, 2 Chinook have been detected by DFO sonar in the lower portion of the Upper Chilcotin to-date.
 - The TNG roving sonar program near Farewell Bridge has not detected Chinook to-date.
- To reduce the risk of loss of Little Chilcotin Chinook populations (Upper and Lower), TNG is working with the Upper Fraser Fisheries Conservation Alliance (UFFCA) and DFO to implement emergency enhancement activities for these at-risk stocks.
 - Enhancement refers to activities that increase the number of offspring produced from returning spawners. In this case, collecting brood stock (eggs/sperm) from spawners, incubating fertilized eggs, rearing fry in a hatchery and releasing back to the natal streams when the fry are ready.
 - Early efforts have been positive. Upper Chilcotin Chinook have been successfully caught below Big Bar for enhancement activities to support the population.
- In 2019, 87% of Little Chilcotin Chinook (both Upper and Lower) could not pass. For this reason, enhancement activities are considered necessary in 2020.



Ts'eman (sockeye)

- Early-timed Ts'eman (sockeye salmon) have recently started entering the Fraser River, and have not been able to reach Big Bar to-date, likely due to very high water that has impeded passage at pinch points downstream of Big Bar (e.g. Hellsgate).
- Sockeye that return to the Chilcotin Watershed (Taseko and Chilko) typically enter the Fraser from early to late July, so it is not anticipated that current high waters are impacting these stocks to-date.
- In 2019 due to Big Bar, Chilko sockeye were delayed in returning to the Chilcotin Watershed by approximately 2-3 weeks, but some were able to pass the slide when water levels dropped.

TNG Fisheries Department In-season Activities

TNG Fisheries activities this season are focused on:

1. **Stock assessment and information analysis** to inform decision making: catch monitoring, aerial counts, sonar (Taseko and roving), and partnership with DFO annual programs.
2. **Emergency enhancement activities to support at-risk stocks** impacted by Big Bar passage (new and critical work for TNG)
3. On-going water monitoring to inform **hatchery feasibility work** at the old Hanceville Hatchery site (see photo below).



Above Left: preparing the **Taseko sonar site for field program** – Fisheries Coordinator Leonard English, and TNG Rangers (Jimmy Harry, Shawn Harry, Corbett Johnny, Wacey Alphonse, Mason Seaward);

Above Right: Leonard taking **flow measurement at the old Hanceville Hatchery site**, as part of on-going water monitoring to support hatchery feasibility work (July 22, 2020).



Pics left and right:
Leonard English out with TNG fisheries technicians Gerald William and Winston Brambrick at the Old Gang Ranch site (above Farewell), conducting **roving sonar to monitor presence/absence of Chinook in the Chilcotin Watershed.**

Fishing Activities Update:

- Due to extremely high water levels in the Fraser River, few Jaś (Chinook) have been able to travel past the Big Bar site to-date. Only two Chinook have been recorded in the Chilcotin Watershed to-date.
- DFO has not issued a communal fishing licence for the Chilcotin watershed to-date, due to conservation concerns and current Big Bar passage issues at this time.
- TNG fisheries staff and DFO are meeting weekly to exchange information.
- If/when water levels drop and fish are able to pass naturally, TNG and DFO will discuss fishing opportunities, as part of the government-to-government relationship in fisheries management.

TNG fisheries is providing weekly fisheries updates that are available on the TNG website, <http://www.tsilhqotin.ca/Lands-Resources/Fisheries> and Facebook. If you have any questions, please contact the TNG Fisheries Manager, Randy Billyboy, at 250 392 3918.



The **July 17 2020 TNG Fisheries Update** (below) has been posted at key fishing sites to provide fishers with current fishing information.



TNG Fisheries Update – July 17, 2020

- Due to extremely high water levels on the Fraser River, little to no Jaš (chinook salmon) have been able to travel past the Big Bar site to-date and none have been detected in the Chilcotin Watershed. Early Stuart Ts'emman (sockeye salmon) have recently started entering the Fraser River, and are currently not able to pass the Big Bar site at current water levels.
- DFO has not issued a communal fishing licence for this area to-date, due to conservation concerns based on record-low abundance and current Big Bar passage issues at this time.
- TNG fisheries staff and DFO are meeting weekly to exchange information. If/when water levels drop and fish are able to pass naturally, DFO and TNG will discuss fishing opportunities, as part of the government-to-government relationship in fisheries management.
- TNG fisheries is providing weekly fisheries updates on the TNG website (<http://www.tsilhqotin.ca/Lands-Resources/Fisheries>).
- If you have any questions, please contact the TNG Fisheries Manager, Randy Billyboy, at 250-392-3918.

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Posting sites included:

Toosey Gas Bar, Farewell, Toosey Mailbox, Stone Bridge, Tl'etingox Gas Bar, Alexis Creek Bridge, the Junction, Little Chilcotin River, Gwetsilh.