



November 2, 2015

To: Distribution

Catches to date of steelhead in the Albion chinook and chum test fisheries continue to suggest that Fraser River late-run summer steelhead stocks are in extremely low abundance. Presently, the spawner abundance forecast of Thompson steelhead is slightly less than the abundance distinguishes Extreme Conservation Concern status from Conservation Concern status. However, the abundance of the Chilcotin remains well within the abundance range associated with the classification of Extreme Conservation Concern.

Fraser River late-run summer steelhead is a group of stocks that is mainly comprised of 10 spatially discrete spawning stocks distributed in the Fraser watershed upstream of Hell's Gate. At the present time, the inseason spawner abundance forecast for the 7 spawning stocks that make up Thompson and Chilcotin steelhead is 550. This level of abundance is about 50% of what was expected pre-season. The inseason forecast for the 4 stocks that make up Thompson steelhead is 400 at the present time. The inseason forecast for the 3 stocks that make up Chilcotin steelhead is 140 at the present time. The Thompson forecast represents a record low abundance over a 33 year monitoring time frame (Figure 2). The Chilcotin forecast represents an abundance that is equal to the previous record low of 140 which occurred in 2010 (Figure 3). This previous low is also the predominant brood year for this season's return of Chilcotin steelhead. The previous record low for Thompson steelhead is also the predominant brood year for this seasons' return of Thompson steelhead which is 2011. In that year, 520 steelhead are estimated to have spawned in the steelhead bearing reaches of the Thompson watershed.

Forecasts of spawning population abundance are conditional on the assumption that fishing patterns and intensity in the Fraser and Thompson rivers will be similar to those since the 1998 fishing season (Figure 4).

The aggregate run of Thompson, Chilcotin and other Fraser River late-run summer steelhead stocks normally peaks in Johnston Straits and Juan de Fuca Strait in late September. The peak of the run in the lower Fraser test fishing area near Fort Langley is expected to be October 10 and the run normally extends through the month of October and into mid-November at that location.

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For your information, the following data are attached:

List of Figures:

Figure 1. . Observed catches of steelhead in the Albion chum and chinook test fisheries to date, illustrated by the diamonds and squares, respectively. The lines illustrate the “average” pattern expected for the balance of the season, given the observed catches to date, the historical data on run timing and the historical data on the efficiency of the two gillnets.

Figure 2. Trends in the estimated pre-fishery abundance (squares) and spawning abundance (diamonds) of Thompson River Steelhead. The last data point in the spawning abundance series illustrates the expected spawner abundance for this season’s return.

Figure 3. Trends in the estimated pre-fishery abundance (squares) and spawning abundance (diamonds) of Chilcotin River Steelhead. The last data point in the spawning abundance series illustrates the expected spawner abundance for this season’s return.

Figure 4. Trends in fishing mortality of Interior Fraser Steelhead updated to last season’s return.

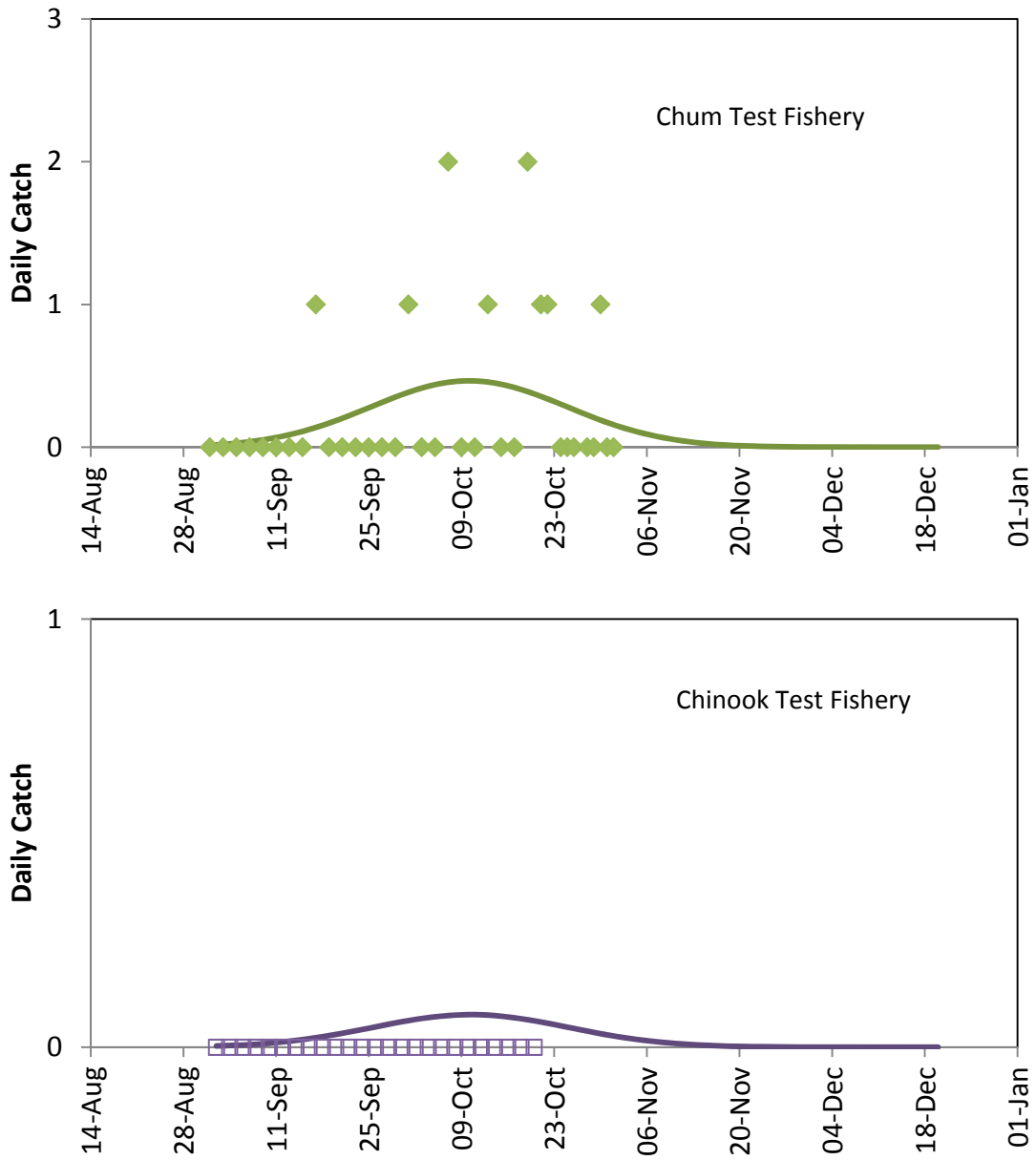


Figure 1. Observed catches of steelhead in the Albion chum and chinook test fisheries to date, illustrated by the diamonds and squares, respectively. The lines illustrate the “average” pattern expected for the balance of the season, given the observed catches to date, the historical data on run timing and the historical data on the efficiency of the two gillnets.

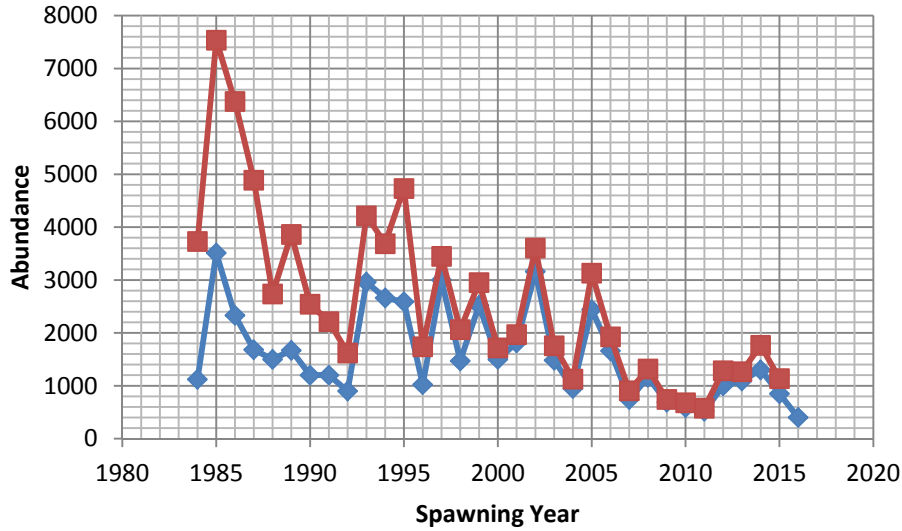


Figure 2. Trends in the estimated pre-fishery abundance (squares) and spawning abundance (diamonds) of Thompson River Steelhead. The last data point in the spawning abundance series illustrates the expected spawner abundance for this season’s return which will spawn in the spring of 2016.

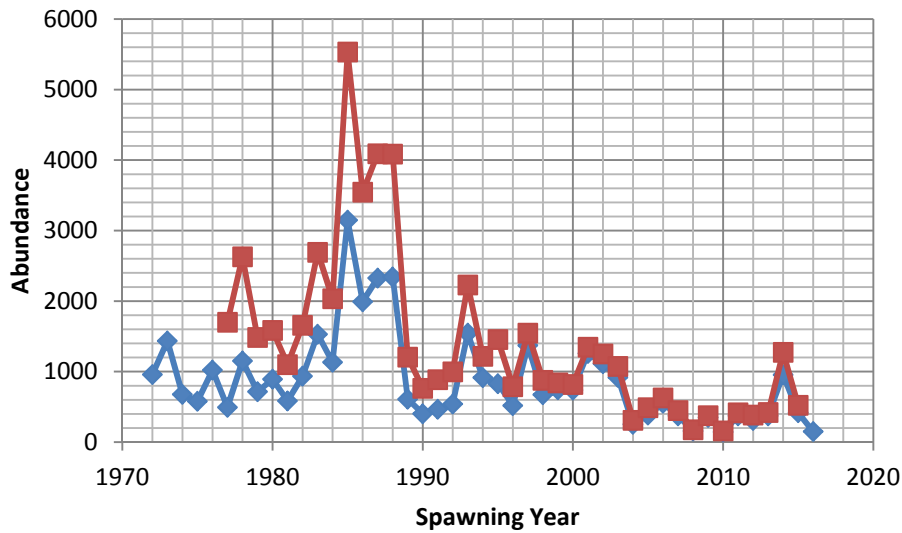


Figure 3. Trends in the estimated pre-fishery abundance (squares) and spawning abundance (diamonds) of Chilcotin River Steelhead. The last data point in the spawning abundance series illustrates the expected spawner abundance for this season’s return which will spawn in the spring of 2016.

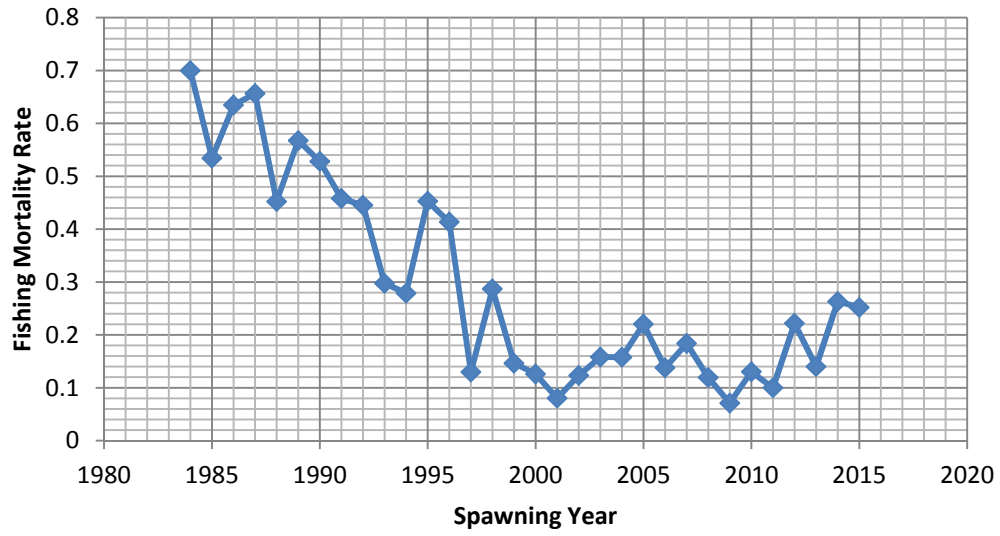


Figure 4. Trends in fishing mortality of Interior Fraser Steelhead updated to last season's return, 2014-15.