



July 23, 2020

To: Distribution

Re: Status Update for Interior Fraser Steelhead

Preliminary spawning population estimates for the 2019/20 run of Interior Fraser Steelhead were recently completed. Results indicate that these populations remain in a state of **Extreme Conservation Concern**.

The status assessment is based on population abundance in the Thompson and Chilcotin watersheds which combined comprise the majority of Interior Fraser Steelhead. Other watersheds that also support populations of Interior Fraser Steelhead include the Bridge, Seton, Stein and Nahatlatch River watersheds.

For the Thompson watershed, spring-time spawning population estimate for 2020 is higher than test-fishery-based forecasts reported last October and November. For the Chilcotin watershed, the 2020 spring-time spawning population estimate is lower than forecasted, however this difference may be the result of some change to field methods relating to COVID-19 restrictions.

Estimates of Thompson River Steelhead, spawning in the spring of 2020, sum to a total of 257. This is the fourth lowest spawning population estimate of Thompson River Steelhead since monitoring began in 1978. The lowest spawner abundance is 150, estimated in the spring of 2018. The Thompson River Steelhead population aggregate is classified as an Extreme Conservation Concern if the spawning population fails to exceed

430. The stock is classified as a Conservation Concern if the spawning population is between 430 and 1200 (Figure 1). Estimates by tributary watersheds are as follows: Deadman 21, Bonaparte 60, Coldwater 88, Spius 33, and Lower Nicola (including tributary creeks) 55.

The population estimate for Steelhead spawning in the Chilcotin watershed in spring 2020 is 38 but this estimate is potentially biased low due to some modification to field methods relating to COVID-19 restrictions. The majority is expected to have spawned in the Chilko River (~80%) and a minority in the Taseko watershed. Depending on the amount of negative bias, spawner abundance of Chilcotin River Steelhead may be the lowest observed since monitoring began in 1972. Before 2020, the lowest spawner abundance is 77, estimated in the spring of 2018. The Chilcotin River Steelhead population aggregate is classified as an Extreme Conservation Concern if the spawning population fails to exceed 300. The stock is classified as a Conservation Concern if the spawning population is between 300 and 760 (Figure 2).

This update concludes a series of status monitoring reports, beginning in October 2019, for the 2019/20 Interior Fraser Steelhead run.

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The following data are attached:

List of Figures:

Figure 1. The estimated spawning abundances of Thompson River steelhead in relation to conservation reference points.

Figure 2. The estimated spawning abundances of Chilcotin River steelhead in relation to conservation reference points.

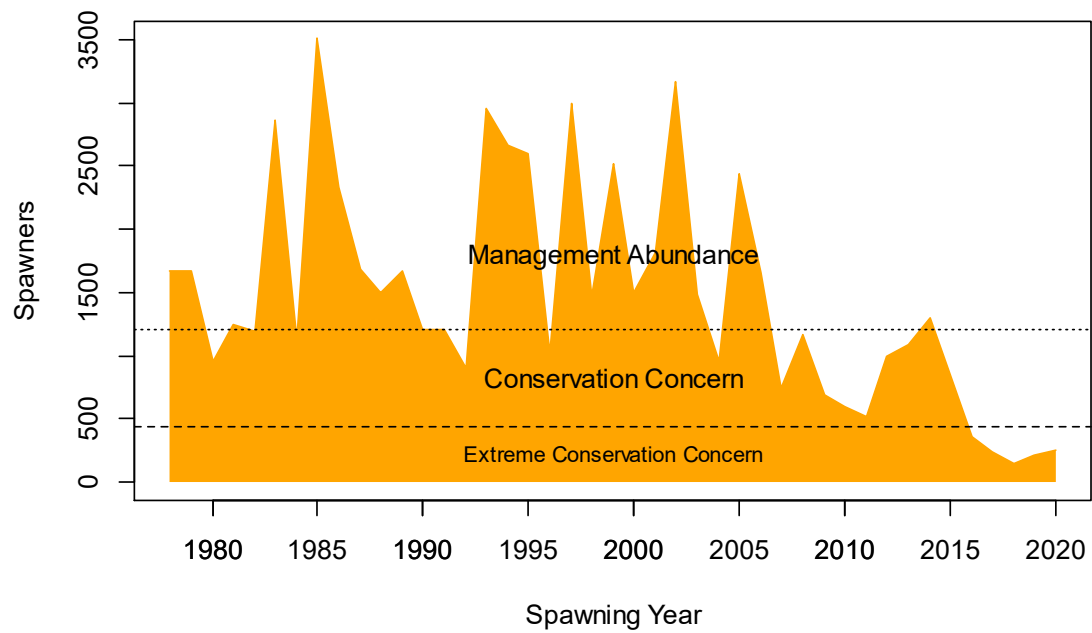


Figure 1. The estimated spawning abundances of Thompson River steelhead in relation to conservation reference points.

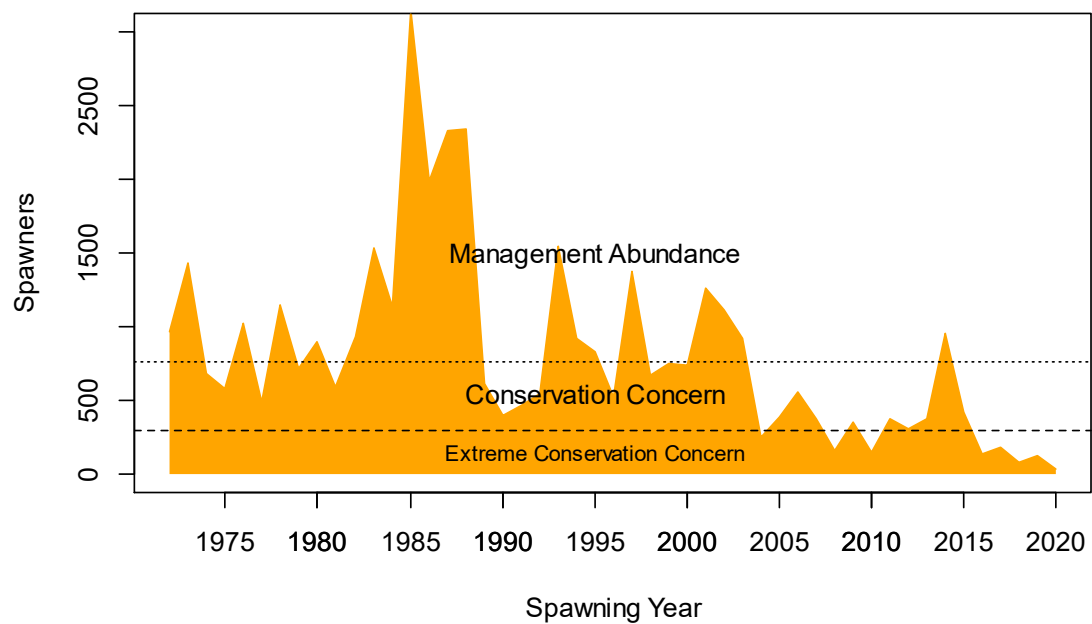


Figure 2. The estimated spawning abundances of Chilcotin River steelhead in relation to conservation reference points.