

News Release

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PARTIAL NATURAL FISH PASSAGE ACHIEVED AT THE BIG BAR LANDSLIDE

LILLOOET, BC – The Unified Command (UC) for the Big Bar Landslide is officially confirming that the first stage of its number one priority of the Government to Government to Government response to the total obstruction on the Fraser River has been reached. Fish counting data is showing that some limited natural passage through the slide obstruction on the Fraser River has been established for salmon migrating northwards.

This is a significant and hopeful step forward; however, a tremendous amount of work still needs to be done before all fish can transit above the slide. Successful passage is highly dependent on water levels, and lower flows improve our ability to make additional progress. While operations to create stable, long-term natural passage move forward, the successful helicopter transfer work continues. First Nations' technical knowledge in fish capture—from beach seining crews to a second fish wheel—underpins the operation that, to date, has led to the helicopter transport of over 39,000 salmon past the slide.

From the very beginning of the operation, the re-establishment of natural passage for migrating stocks was identified as the best way to ensure the maximum number of salmon are able to reach their spawning grounds, and as the priority objective for the Unified Federal, Provincial and First Nations response.

Unified Command now has scientifically verified evidence that some Chinook have been able to swim past the Big Bar landslide using the channels created by large rock manipulation and blasting. As of August 20, 2019, a rough estimate of 6,700 salmon have passed through the slide on their own. Estimates will continue to be updated as more data is gathered and analyzed.

Project staff will be on site until long-term, stable natural fish passage has been achieved. Work on the passageway is proceeding as quickly as is safely possible; additional personnel and equipment are arriving as required to aid in the response as needs arise, and operations and conditions are progressing.

The landslide could directly or indirectly affect the ecosystem and other species dependent on the salmon's survival. The inability of Chinook, Sockeye, Coho and Pink salmon to migrate above the landslide area this year, and in future years, could result in significant negative ecological, economic, and cultural impacts to all British Columbians and people throughout the region. Salmon are critical to Indigenous communities for food, social and ceremonial needs, and the slide has the potential to impact most Indigenous communities in BC. That is why the Government of Canada, the Province of British Columbia and First Nations are working together to explore and address every avenue possible to enable passage for salmon above the landslide and are committed to conducting operations until this is achieved for this year, and for future years.

Associated Links:

[Incident Website](#) | [FRAFS](#) | [DFO Twitter](#)

For more information:

Joint Information Centre

Big Bar Landslide incident – Unified Command Incident Management Team

Located at the Lillooet Fire Zone

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