



August 28, 2023

To: Distribution

Re: Status Update for Interior Fraser Steelhead

Preliminary spawning population estimates for the 2022/23 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 abundances in the Thompson and Chilcotin watersheds which combined have comprised the majority of Interior Fraser Steelhead since monitoring began in the 1970's. Other watersheds that also support populations of Interior Fraser Steelhead include the Bridge, Seton, Stein and Nahatlatch River watersheds, however there are no continuous annual estimates of spawner abundance from the Seton, Stein and Nahatlatch and estimates from the Bridge River are intermittent and limited to more recent years.

A preliminary estimate of Thompson River Steelhead spawning in the spring of 2023 is 371, based largely on an estimate of spawners in the Nicola watershed. This is the eighth lowest spawning population estimate in 46 years, since monitoring began in 1978. The 2023 estimate is slightly higher than the test-fishery-based forecast of 339 reported last fall on November 25, 2022. Thompson River Steelhead is classified as an Extreme Conservation Concern if the spawning population estimate fails to exceed 430. It is classified as a Conservation Concern if the spawning population is between 430 and 1200 (Figure 1).

The population estimate for Steelhead spawning in the Chilcotin watershed in spring 2023 is 134. This is the sixth lowest estimate in 52 years, since monitoring began in 1972. The 2023 estimate is lower than the test-fishery-based forecast of 166 reported last fall on November 25, 2022. Chilcotin River Steelhead is classified as an Extreme Conservation Concern if the spawning population fails to exceed 300. It is classified as a Conservation Concern if the spawning population is between 300 and 760 (Figure 2).

This update concludes a series of monitoring reports since October 2022 on the status of the 2022/23 run of Interior Fraser Steelhead.

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Fisheries Stock Assessment Biologist

The following figures 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.

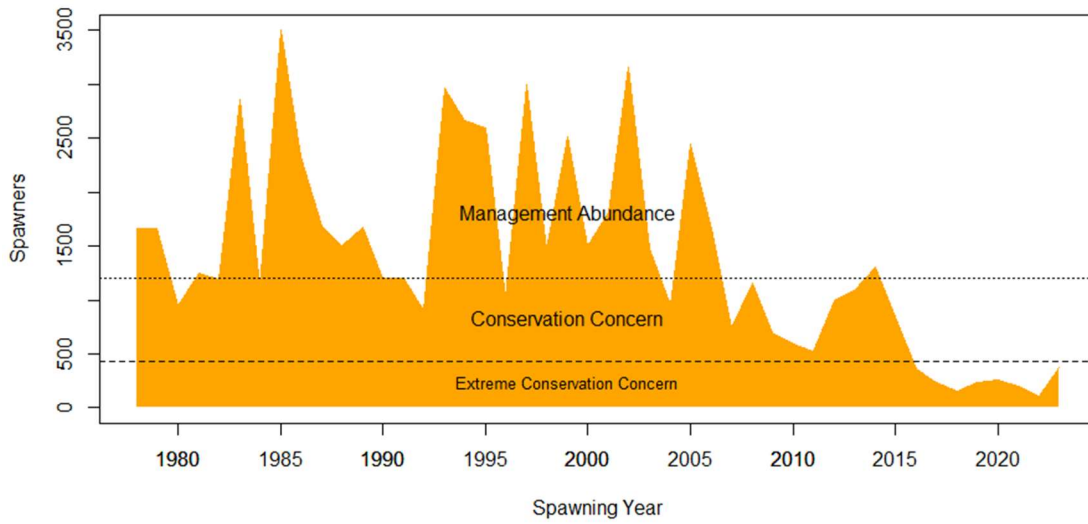


Figure 1. The estimated spawning abundances of Thompson River steelhead in relation to conservation reference points.

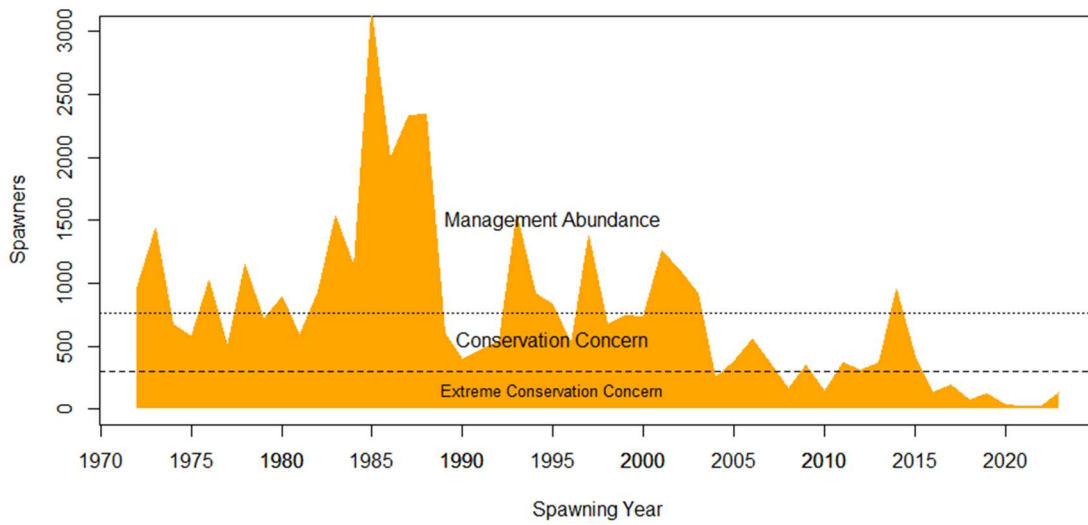


Figure 2. The estimated spawning abundances of Chilcotin River steelhead in relation to conservation reference points.