



November 20, 2016

To: Distribution

**Re: Status Update for Fraser River Late-Run Summer Steelhead**

The in-season test fishing period for monitoring the status of the 2016/17 run Interior Fraser Steelhead run is complete as of November 20. Catches this season suggest that Fraser River late-run summer steelhead stocks are at extremely low levels of abundance and in a state of **Extreme Conservation Concern**.

There is a **71%** chance that the status will be classified as an Extreme Conservation Concern and there is presently a **98%** chance that the status will be classed as either Extreme Conservation Concern or Conservation Concern. Conservation classifications are described in the Provincial Framework for Steelhead Management in BC (2016) and supporting technical documents. A final conservation classification will be determined following estimation of spawning population abundance in the spring of 2017.

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 7 of these 10 spawning stocks, referred to collectively and **Thompson and Chilcotin steelhead, is 520**. This level of abundance is about 49% of what is expected based on pre-season estimation. The inseason forecast for the 4 stocks that make up **Thompson steelhead is 380** at the present time and the inseason forecast for the 3 stocks that make up **Chilcotin steelhead is 140** at the present time. These forecasts represent a record low abundance for Thompson steelhead and near record low abundance for Chilcotin steelhead over

monitoring time frames of 40 and 45 years, respectively. For Thompson stocks, the previous record low is last season's run in which 430 steelhead are estimated to have spawned in spring of 2016. For Chilcotin stocks, the record low is last season's run in which 130 steelhead are estimated to have spawned.

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 normally occurs on October 10 and the run normally extends through the month of October and into mid-November at that location. Further updates will be provided following estimation of spawning population abundances in the spring of 2017.

Robert Bison  
Fisheries Stock Assessment Biologist  
Fish & Wildlife Branch

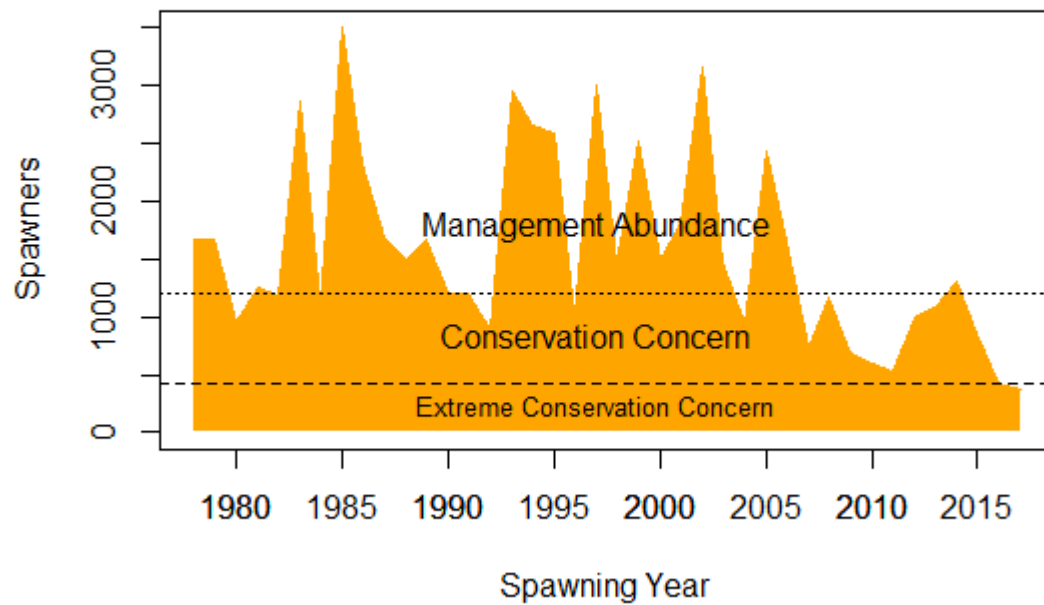
For your information, the following data are attached:

**List of Figures:**

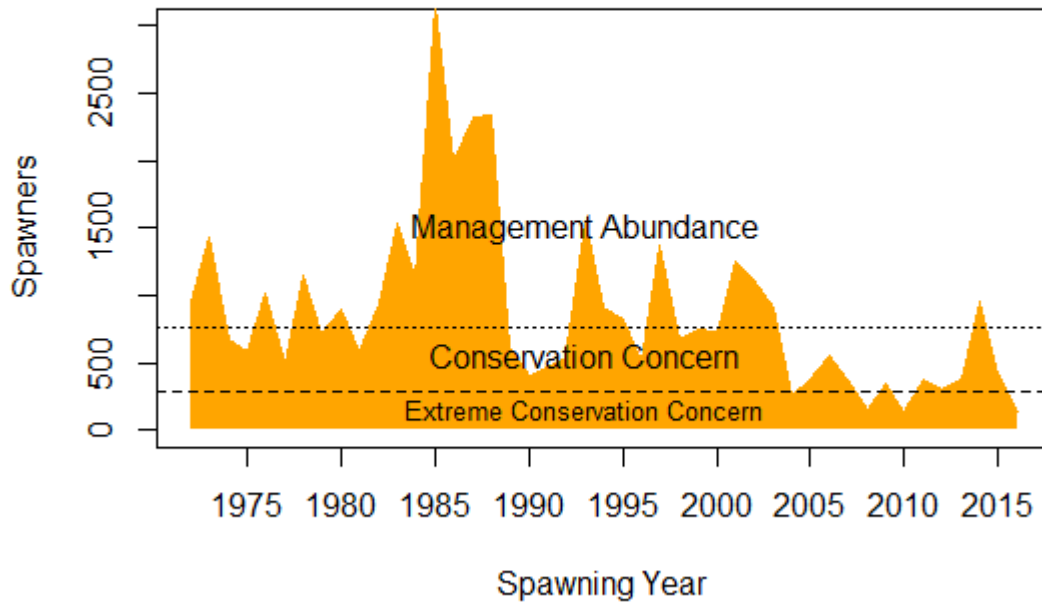
Figure 1. The estimated spawning abundances of Thompson River steelhead in relation to conservation reference points. The last data point illustrates the expected spawner abundance for this season's return which will spawn in the spring of 2017.

Figure 2. The estimated spawning abundances of Chilcotin River steelhead in relation to conservation reference points. The last data point illustrates the expected spawner abundance for this season's return which will spawn in the spring of 2017.

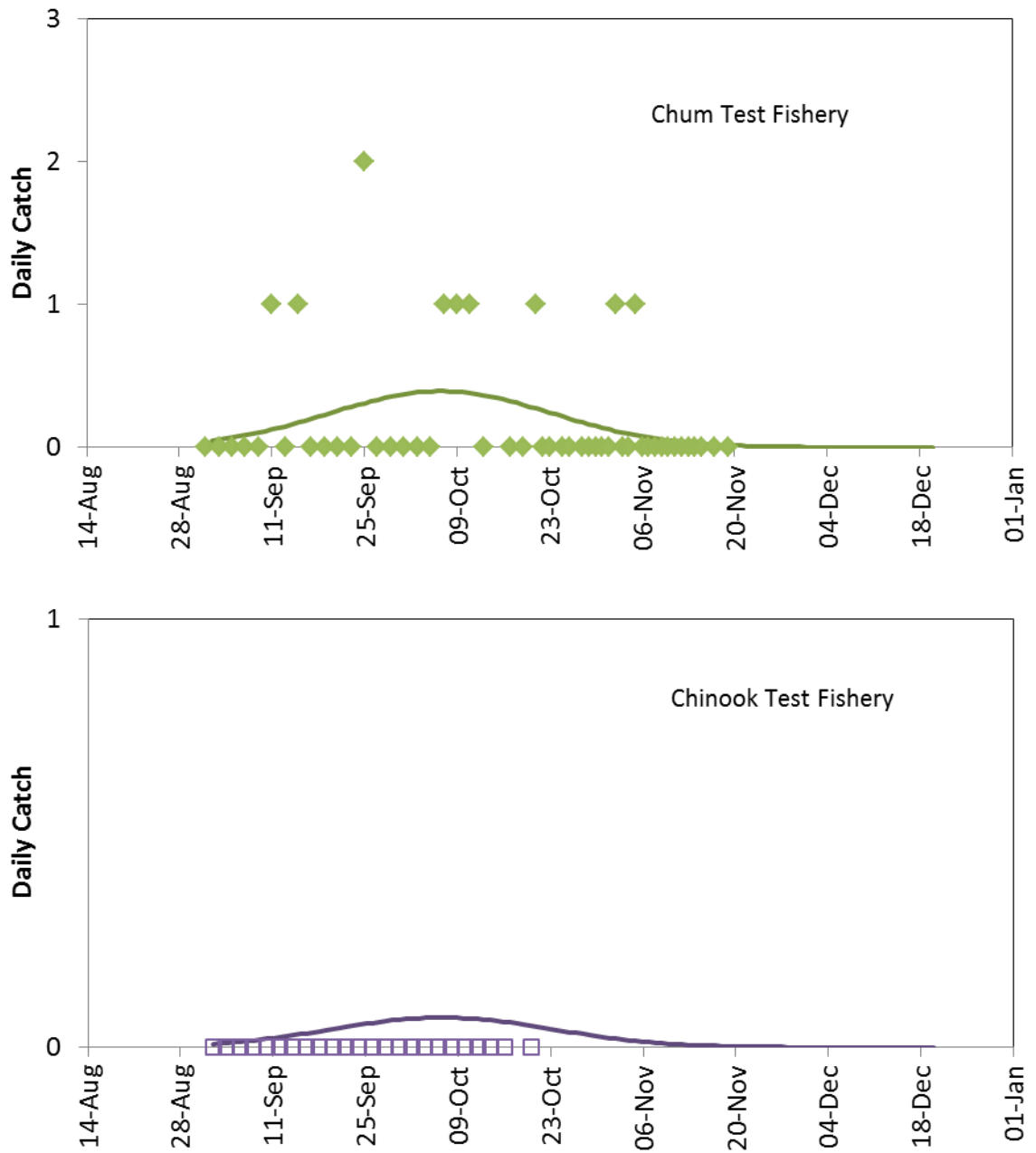
Figure 3. Observed catches of steelhead in the Albion chum and chinook test fisheries to date, illustrated by the diamonds and squares, respectively. The lines illustrate the "average" pattern expected for the balance of the season, given the observed catches to date, the historical data on run timing and the historical data on the steelhead catching efficiency of the two gillnets.



**Figure 1. The estimated spawning abundances of Thompson River steelhead in relation to conservation reference points. The last data point illustrates the expected spawner abundance for this season's return which will spawn in the spring of 2017.**



**Figure 2. The estimated spawning abundances of Chilcotin River steelhead in relation to conservation reference points. The last data point illustrates the expected spawner abundance for this season's return which will spawn in the spring of 2017.**



**Figure 3. 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 steelhead catching efficiency of the two gillnets.**