


BIG BAR LANDSLIDE UPDATE

JULY 31 2020

 Response Webpage

 BC River Forecast



ONGOING ONSITE OPERATIONS

This past week, the higher capacity Whooshh™ system transported hundreds of salmon as increasing numbers of fish arrived at the slide site. All six lanes of the Whooshh Passage Portal™ system are now operational, with over 921 salmon successfully transported past the slide as of July 30. An additional 114 were transported by truck from the fish wheel and released back to the Fraser River at French Bar.

The BC River Forecast Centre is predicting the river levels to trend moderately downward in the upcoming days. However, there is another possible rise in water level toward the end of the first week of August. The team is monitoring the situation closely and will adjust its work accordingly. The steady drop in Fraser River flows has resulted in a marked improvement in salmon migration. This week has seen a significant increase in fish near the site.



TOP: Crews collecting salmon from holding tubs at French Bar, in preparation for transport to Vanderhoof
BOTTOM: Big Bar site panorama

MONITORING UPDATE

Sockeye are finally moving up the Fraser. On July 25, the first five sockeye were radio tagged near Lillooet. On that same day, the first sockeye was observed in the fish ladder at Big Bar.

Daily salmon count numbers at the Big Bar landslide site can now be found on the [DFO website here](#).

ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM UPDATE

Over the past week, technicians operating the fish wheel and concrete fish ladder have captured and transported more than 100 salmon to the French Bar adult holding site.


The results of DNA testing conducted at the Pacific Biological Station in Nanaimo have led to 28 of the captured chinook being transferred to the Nechako White Sturgeon Conservation Centre in Vanderhoof. All fish at French Bar and the hatchery in Vanderhoof are doing well. There have been four successful transports in specialized tanks, the most recent on July 30.

The first delivery of approximately 100 Early Stuart sockeye will be transferred to the Cultus Lake Research Lab near Chilliwack on Friday, July 31.

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PICTURED: Fish Ladder from the top down.

CHINOOK - BIG BAR LANDSLIDE'S FIRST VISITORS

As the largest Pacific salmon species, chinook salmon are making headway on their 1,200 km voyage up the Fraser River towards their natal streams. These salmon begin their migration entering the Fraser River system between early April and early September. They often “hold” in their natal river for one to two months prior to spawning between mid-August and early October.


Fraser chinook salmon remain as eggs for one winter, embedded in gravel on the river bed before developing into alevins and then juvenile fry. After spending a year in freshwater, the juvenile smolts will begin the spring season by migrating towards the ocean. Here, they develop and grow for three to four years, reaching lengths of 40 to 120 cm. Between the ages of four or five years, Fraser chinook begin their final journey to spawn. They have only one opportunity to spawn before they die.

The Big Bar landslide has introduced an additional challenge for the chinook whose natal streams are above the slide. Some fish that are unable to cross the slide site may attempt to redistribute to tributaries downstream for spawning. However, prospects for those offspring are challenging, due to the warmer river temperatures relative to the rivers where they were born and to which they are genetically adapted.

Following a prolonged holding time in the river, also known as milling behaviour, chinook that pass the slide site may be more vulnerable to disease and physical damage. Therefore, it is critical for this year's chinook to move past the slide as easily as possible. Big Bar landslide response operations, such as the winter blasting program and the alternative fish passage systems, are making this rapid movement possible.

The Committee on Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) has assessed many of the Fraser chinook populations and has designated the stocks upstream of the slide as either endangered or threatened. The Big Bar Landslide Response team remains committed to restoring natural fish passage for chinook and all species that migrate north.

BIG BAR SALMON COUNTS

	SALMON RADIO TAGGED BELOW BIG BAR LANDSLIDE	SALMON ACHIEVING NATURAL PASSAGE	SALMON USING ALTERNATIVE FISH PASSAGE		SALMON 40 KM UPSTREAM OF BIG BAR LANDSLIDE
			WHOOSH PASSAGE PORTAL™	TRUCK AND TRANSPORT	
TOTAL TO DATE	307	176	921	114	176

[Daily updated counts online](#)

