

## **INTERIOR FRASER RIVER STEELHEAD MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR THE 2020/21 FISHING SEASON**

Spawning escapement of Interior Fraser River (IFR) Steelhead has been on a downward trend for many years, with recent years' escapements reaching the lowest on record. Threats to IFR Steelhead include changes in the marine environment, fishing mortality (both targeted and incidental), degradation of freshwater and marine habitats, predation, and competition. In February 2018, COSEWIC assessed the Thompson and Chilcotin Designatable Units (DUs) as *Endangered*. The subsequent SARA Listing Process was concluded on July 11, 2019, when the Minister of Fisheries announced that Cabinet had decided not to list these populations under the Species at Risk Act, opting instead to implement measures to recover these stocks through existing regulatory mechanisms under the Fisheries Act. In conjunction with the Province of British Columbia, the Minister announced the development of a conservation action plan for Thompson and Chilcotin Steelhead Trout to:

- reduce mortality and increase survival of Thompson and Chilcotin Steelhead returning to rivers to spawn;
- improve freshwater conditions through habitat protection and restoration; and,
- increase science and monitoring activities.

Returns of Interior Fraser River Steelhead continued to be poor in 2019. Post-season spawning escapement estimates for the 2019 return (which spawned in the spring of 2020) were provided to DFO in a letter from the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (FLNRORD) on June 19, 2020. Spawning escapement estimates were 134 for the Thompson River population, and 62 for the Chilcotin River population. This represents the lowest escapement in the time series, despite the extremely limited salmon fisheries that occurred in 2019 (no commercial Sockeye, Pink, or Chum fisheries in the Fraser River or marine areas, closures to Fraser River recreational, and very restricted Food, Social and Ceremonial (FSC) fisheries in the Fraser River). Recommended recovery targets for these populations are 938 for Thompson River population and from 562 to 744 for the Chilcotin River population. The time series of spawning escapement for Interior Fraser steelhead from 1971 to 2020 (return migration years 1970 to 2019) is shown below.

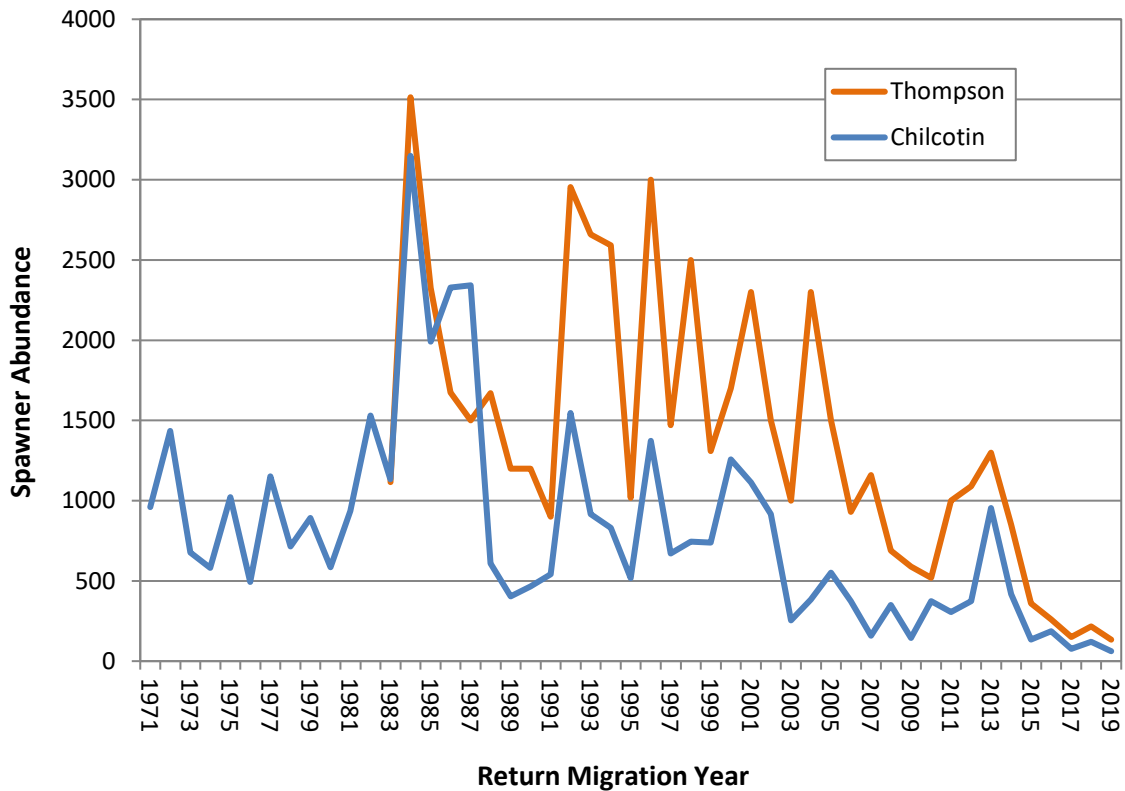


Figure 1. Historic trend of Interior Fraser Steelhead spawner abundance\*

\*Note that IFR Steelhead spawn in the spring following the year of their return migration. For example, Steelhead that migrated in 2019 did not spawn until the spring of 2020. Field programs that estimate the number of spawners are completed in early summer in the year following return migration.

### 2020/21 Fisheries Management Measures to Support Recovery of IFR Steelhead

In the coming year, DFO will protect Interior Fraser River Steelhead from incidental fishing mortality occurring in salmon fisheries using the window closure approach implemented in 2019, with addition restrictions applied to set gillnet fisheries in the Fraser River. Moving window closures will continue for all commercial salmon fisheries located along the migratory route of Thompson and Chilcotin River Steelhead, including Southern BC marine waters and the Fraser River and tributaries downstream of Thompson and Chilcotin River Steelhead spawning areas.

- The closure window for all commercial gillnet and seine fisheries (including purse seine, beach seine, and shallow seine gear) is 42 days, while troll fisheries will be closed for 27 days. First Nations commercial fisheries are also included in these measures (e.g. Economic Opportunity, Demonstration, and Harvest Agreement fisheries). Following the closure window (and new for 2020), set gillnet gear operating within the Fraser River

will be further restricted to operate during daylight hours only, while attended by a harvester at all times.

- Recreational salmon fisheries within the Fraser River (including areas immediately off the Fraser River mouth) and Fraser River tributaries downstream of Thompson and Chilcotin River Steelhead spawning areas are closed for a moving window period of 42 days.
- First Nations' Food, Social, and Ceremonial (FSC) salmon fisheries occurring within the Fraser River and tributaries downstream of Thompson and Chilcotin River Steelhead spawning areas are closed for a 27-day moving window. Following the closure window (and new for 2020), set gillnet gear operating within the Fraser River will be further restricted to operate during daylight hours only, while attended by a harvester at all times.
- Marine recreational, marine FSC salmon fisheries, and the Five Nations' right-based sale fishery remain open with Steelhead release.
- Salmon fisheries occurring in terminal areas that are not considered to overlap with the migratory pathway of Thompson and Chilcotin Steelhead (either in marine areas or in Fraser River tributaries that are NOT downstream of Thompson and Chilcotin River Steelhead spawning areas) will not be subject to these closures.

Details of closure dates and areas that will be implemented in 2020 are outlined in Appendix 9 of the IFMP, and are shown below. Appendix 9 also contains a list of marine terminal fishing areas that are proposed to be exempted from the moving window closures in 2020, as they are not considered to be within the probable migratory route for returning Interior Fraser River Steelhead.

The responsibility for conservation and recovery of Interior Fraser River Steelhead is shared with the Province of British Columbia. The Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia are committed to working collaboratively to address threats, reduce fish mortality, and promote growth for these populations. In 2020, the Province of British Columbia will continue to implement measures to limit impacts of provincially managed recreational trout fisheries on Thompson and Chilcotin Steelhead. Additional actions to be taken by the Province to support recovery of these populations are being developed in conjunction with DFO, as part of the Joint Steelhead Action Plan.

## Interior Fraser River Steelhead Window Closure Dates by Area

This table outlines IFR Steelhead window closure dates by area. These are generalized dates that apply to the entire fishing area unless otherwise stated in the species specific fishing plans contained in Section 13 of the IFMP. Fishing plans outlined in Section 13 may include slight modifications to these dates that result from applying the closure window to more specific fishing areas. Note that the duration of the closure window will not be shortened in applying these adjustments.

Window closures are INCLUSIVE of both the START and END dates shown in the table below. For any given area, the first day fishing may occur following a closure is the day following the END date in the table.

Also note that all sub-Areas listed in this table under the “Fraser River” section will be included as part of “Fraser River fisheries”. For additional clarity, all fisheries occurring in Areas 29-6, 29-7, 29-9, and 29-10 are included within the Fraser River measures.

Finally, please note the term “commercial” in the following tables includes all communally licenced First Nations fisheries that permit sales, such as Economic Opportunity, Harvest Agreement, and Demonstration fisheries, as well as non-First Nations commercial openings.

Fishery Location		27-day window closure (commercial troll fisheries and FSC fisheries occurring in the Fraser River)		42-day window closure (commercial drift and set gillnet, purse seine, beach seine, and shallow seine fisheries and recreational fisheries occurring in the Fraser River)	
		Start	End	Start	End
Fraser River	Area 29: 29-6, 29-7, 29-9 and 29-10	28-Sep	24-Oct	21-Sep	1-Nov
	Mouth to Mission	28-Sep	24-Oct	21-Sep	1-Nov
	Mission to Hope	29-Sep	25-Oct	22-Sep	2-Nov
	Hope to Sawmill Creek	3-Oct	29-Oct	26-Sep	6-Nov
	Sawmill Creek to Lytton (Thompson Confluence)	5-Oct	31-Oct	28-Sep	8-Nov
	Lytton to Texas Creek	8-Oct	3-Nov	1-Oct	11-Nov
	Texas Creek to Kelly Creek	10-Oct	5-Nov	3-Oct	13-Nov
	Kelly Creek to Deadman Creek	13-Oct	8-Nov	6-Oct	16-Nov
	Deadman Creek to Chilcotin River	16-Oct	11-Nov	9-Oct	19-Nov
	Chilcotin River	19-Oct	14-Nov	12-Oct	22-Nov
	Thompson River – Thompson Confluence to Bonaparte	8-Oct	3-Nov	1-Oct	11-Nov
	Thompson River – Bonaparte River to Kamloops Lake	12-Oct	7-Nov	5-Oct	15-Nov

Fishery Location		27-day window closure (commercial troll fisheries and FSC fisheries occurring in the Fraser River)		42-day window closure (commercial drift and set gillnet, purse seine, beach seine, and shallow seine fisheries and recreational fisheries occurring in the Fraser River)	
		Start	End	Start	End
Strait of Georgia	Area 29: 29-8	28-Sep	24-Oct	21-Sep	1-Nov
	Area 29: 29-1 to 29-5	23-Sep	19-Oct	16-Sep	27-Oct
	Area 28	23-Sep	19-Oct	16-Sep	27-Oct
	Area 18	24-Sep	20-Oct	17-Sep	28-Oct
	Area 17	23-Sep	19-Oct	16-Sep	27-Oct
	Area 16	22-Sep	18-Oct	15-Sep	26-Oct
	Area 15	21-Sep	17-Oct	14-Sep	25-Oct
	Area 14	21-Sep	17-Oct	14-Sep	25-Oct
Johnstone Strait	Area 13	17-Sep	13-Oct	11-Sep	22-Oct
	Area 12	12-Sep	8-Oct	6-Sep	17-Oct
	Area 11	11-Sep	7-Oct	5-Sep	16-Oct
	Area 111	10-Sep	6-Oct	4-Sep	15-Oct
West Coast Vancouver Island	Area 19	22-Sep	18-Oct	15-Sep	26-Oct
	Area 20	19-Sep	15-Oct	12-Sep	23-Oct
	Area 21	18-Sep	14-Oct	11-Sep	22-Oct
	Area 121	18-Sep	14-Oct	11-Sep	22-Oct
	Area 123	16-Sep	12-Oct	9-Sep	20-Oct
	Area 124	13-Sep	9-Oct	6-Sep	17-Oct
	Area 125	11-Sep	7-Oct	4-Sep	15-Oct
	Area 26	8-Sep	4-Oct	1-Sep	12-Oct
	Area 126	8-Sep	4-Oct	1-Sep	12-Oct
	Area 27	6-Sep	2-Oct	30-Aug	10-Oct
	Area 127	6-Sep	2-Oct	30-Aug	10-Oct

## Terminal Fishery Areas Excluded from IFR Steelhead Window Closures

This table outlines Pacific Fishery Management Areas that are understood to fall outside of the migratory path of Interior Fraser River Steelhead and will not be subject to window closures implemented for IFR Steelhead conservation. Additional details for portions of areas listed below will be contained in the species specific fishing plans in Section 13 of the IFMP.

Please note that tributaries of the Fraser River that are NOT downstream of Thompson and Chilcotin River Steelhead spawning areas are also excluded from IFR Steelhead window closures, but are not listed in this table.

Area	Sub Area Description
11	11-3 to 11-10
12	12-22, 12-23, 12-25 to 12-48
13	13-20, 13-21, 13-22, 13-24, 13-37, 13-38, 13-42, 13-43 portions of 13-3, 13-5, 13-19
14	14-1, 14-8, 14-10, 14-11, 14-14, 14-15 portions of 14-4, 14-5, 14-7 and 14-9
15	15-4, 15-6 portions of 15-1, 15-2, 15-5
16	16-3 to 16-16
17	17-2 to 17-9, 17-13 to 17-21 portions of 17-12
18	18-7 and 18-8 portions of 18-6
19	19-7 to 19-12
20	20-2, 20-6, 20-7
22	Entire Area
23	All Sub Areas
24	All Sub Areas
25	All Sub Areas
26	26-1 to 26-10
27	27-3, 27-7 to 27-11 portions of 27-2
28	28-3 to 28-5, 28-11 to 28-14 portions of 28-2