



WATERSHED TALK NEWSLETTER

Produced by the Fraser River Aboriginal Fisheries Secretariat

August 8, 2014 – Afternoon Edition

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Mount Polley Disaster: Sampling to be done in the Fraser.

“People are worried,” Pete said. “They’re asking: Are you testing in the Fraser?”

Following yesterday’s “promising” results for the BC Ministry of Environment’s water quality tests in Quesnel Lake, there remains deep concern in First Nations fishing communities about contamination from the Mount Polley spill.

“Many First Nations have contacted me,” said Pete Nicklin (Fisheries Biologist, FRAFS / Upper Fraser Fisheries Conservation Alliance). “They’d like to see independent testing of water, sediment and fish tissue,” he added.

Pete noted that the province began sediment sampling on August 7th. He encourages First Nations to keep an eye on the results.

The Fisheries Manager for the Northern Shuswap Tribal Council will be sending fish samples taken in 2013 as well as samples from salmon harvested the Fraser today (August 8th), to Health Canada. Results should be back early next week.

In response to this week’s events, the Upper Fraser Fisheries Conservation Alliance (UFFCA) is partnering with other organizations to take action on the sampling front.

“We’re partnering with Quesnel River Research Centre/UNBC and Watershed Watch,” Pete reported. “UFFCA will share results as we receive them.” FRAFS will distribute updates as they come in.



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FRASER SALMON UPDATE

By: Kelsey Campbell, Biologist

The Fraser sockeye and environmental update is a summary of information from the August 8th Fraser River Panel distribution, FRAFS in-season update call (Aug 7th), and August 8th Fraser River Panel teleconference.

Fraser River Conditions

The BC River Forecast Centre website (see links below) has information and links related to discharge and temperatures at various monitoring stations throughout the Fraser watershed, including snow pillow and melt updates.

Environment Canada's Water Office webpage provides access to real time hydrometric data at many locations throughout the Fraser watershed (see links below).

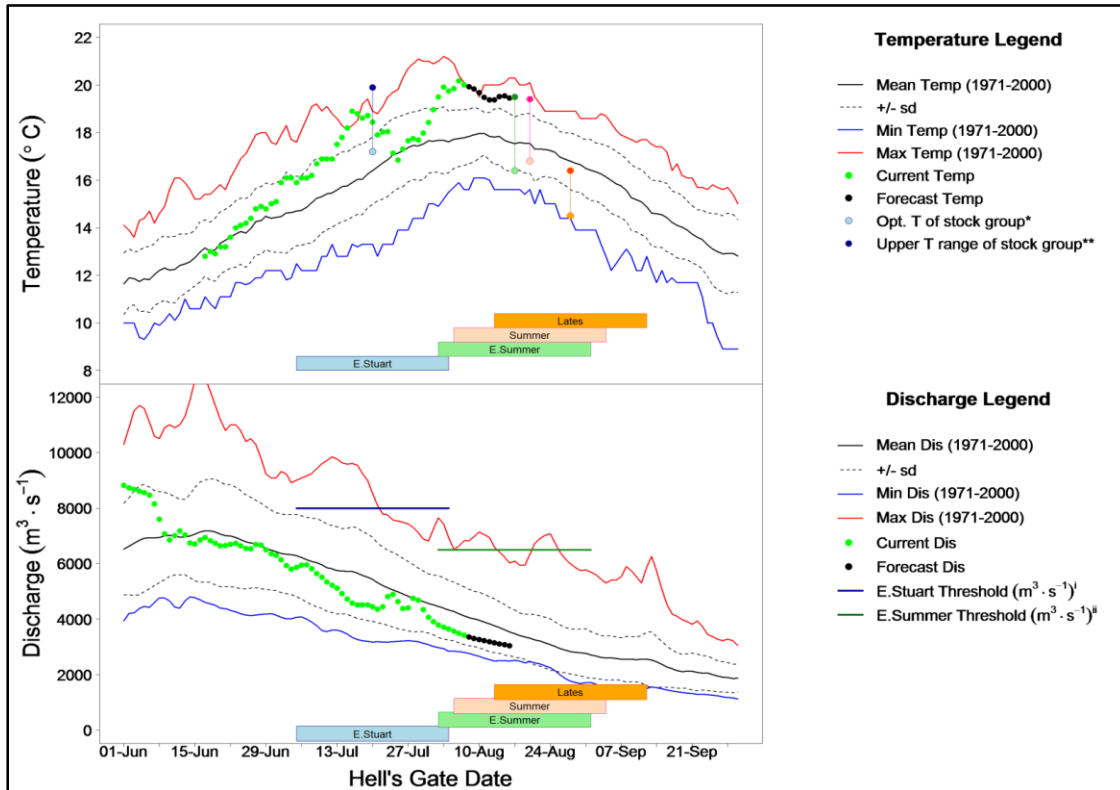
The Fraser River water temperature has increased to 20.0 degrees Celsius (2.2 degrees Celsius above average for this time of year), but is forecast to decline to 19.4 degrees Celsius by the 13th of August. The Fraser River discharge continues to be below average for this time of year with a flow of 3,425 m³/sec at the Qualark water station on August 7th. The discharge is predicted to remain below average, reaching a discharge as low as 3,148 m³/sec by August 13th.

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Fraser River Conditions

Fraser Discharge and temperatures at Hope and Qualark Creek (near Hope) respectively look like this (graphs from the Fraser River Panel Distribution August 8th, 2014):



Fraser Chinook and Sockeye First Nations FSC Catch

Fraser First Nations Fisheries information can be found on the DFO website at:

<http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/fraser/index-eng.html>

The Mid and Upper Fraser Harvest reports are posted to the DFO website (accessed through the link above). The Mid and Upper Fraser First Nations catch estimate to July 27th is 528 Chinook (DFO) and 13,400 sockeye (PSC August 8th distribution).

The Lower Fraser First Nations Chinook catch estimate to August 3rd is 14,501 (DFO), and the sockeye catch is estimated at 132,400 (PSC August 8th distribution).

The Marine First Nations catch is estimated at 110,000 Sockeye.



Fraser Sockeye

The Pacific Salmon Commission (PSC) distributes the Fraser River Panel agenda and technical information for Panel members and observers to the process. The following information is a summary of key information from that document (August 8th).

Early Stuart sockeye migration is complete through the marine area and has completed migration past Mission. The Early Stuarts appear to have fallen just short of the in-season adopted run size of 240,000 with 227,900 counted past Mission and total catch of about 6,000 (total of 233,000 fish). According to DFO, the Early Stuarts have been observed in good condition on the spawning grounds and are nearing peak spawn.

Test Fishing catches in the Johnstone Strait route (Areas 12&13) continue to be strong, while the Area 20 test fishery continues to be low as a result of the high diversion rate through the north (83%), however it did show an increase in catch on August 7th. The Area 20 test catches are comprised of mostly the Summer run aggregate (59%) with an increasing proportion Chilko/Quesnel and decreasing proportion of Harrison. The stock ID in Area 12 is 68% Summers dominated by the Chilko/Quesnel stock grouping with a lesser but steady proportion of Late Stuart/Stellako. While both marine test fisheries are dominated by summer run sockeye, the Early Summer proportion in the test fisheries is mostly comprised of the Early Thompson. As expected, the Late run stock ID is almost primarily Late Shuswap/Portage as it is forecast to make up 11.8M fish of the 12.7M Late run at the p50.

The Early Summers continue to track less than the p50 forecast (4.2M fish) mainly as a result of the Early Thompson component of the Early Summer aggregate which is currently tracking around the p25 pre-season forecast of around 1.5 M fish. The Early Summers, excluding the Early Thompson component, are currently tracking somewhere between p25 and p50 levels (graph below). A recommendation on the Early Summer run size estimate cannot be made until 50% of the run has been observed in the marine area test fisheries. It is also too early to develop a management adjustment for Early Summers and an in-season estimate and timing for the Early Thompson component. Until more information is available, the PSC has recommended using an estimated run size of 1.8 M for the Summer run aggregate as a precautionary approach.

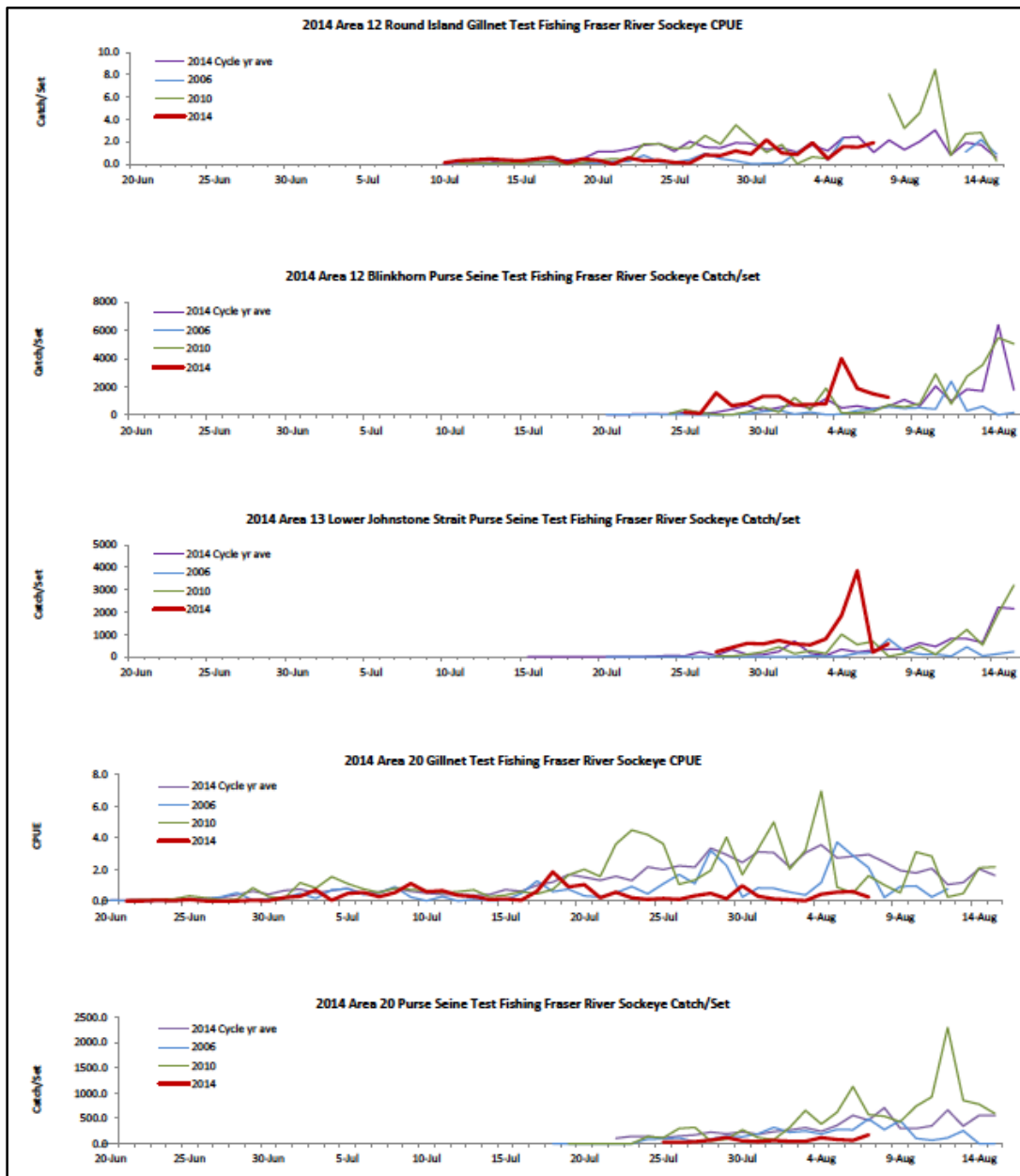
Approximately 227,900 Early Stuart, 428,400 Early Summer, 514,700 Summer sockeye and 44,200 Lates are estimated past the Mission hydro-acoustics station, for a total sockeye passage of 1,215,200 to date and another 865,700 fish projected en route to Mission over the next week. Reminder: the updated *expected Area 20 50% date for Early Summers is August 7th* (from Aug 4th). Note: Early Summer Area 20 50% date in 2010 was Aug 11th. *Summer aggregate Area 20 50% date is August 15th* (from Aug 10th), so it's important to keep in mind - other than Early Stuarts - the remainder of the Fraser sockeye return is very much in the early stages, with half of the forecasted total run being the Late run aggregate.

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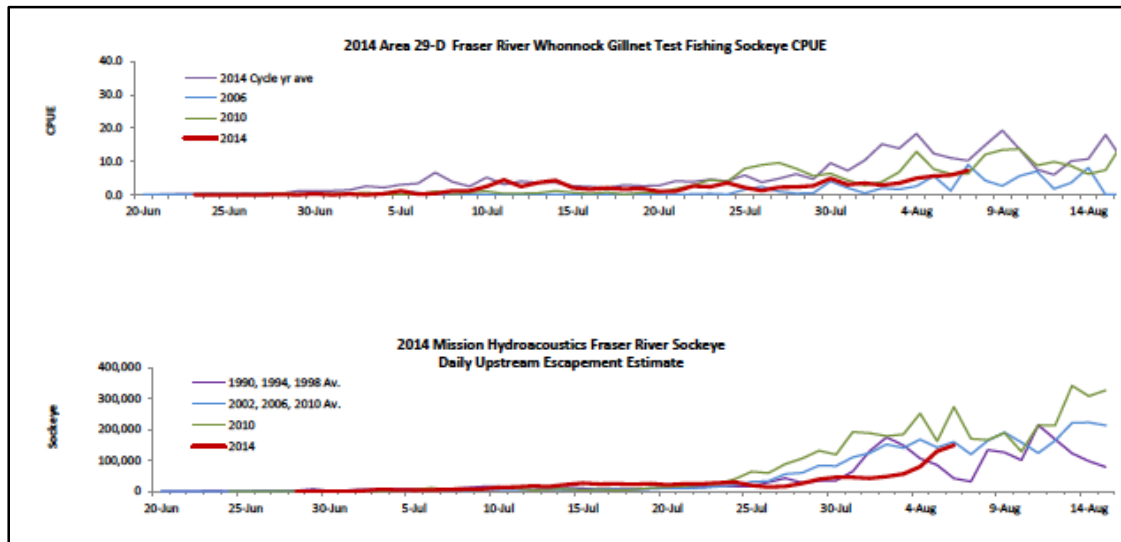


Fraser Sockeye

Test fishing graphs and Mission hydro-acoustics information from the distribution package look like this:



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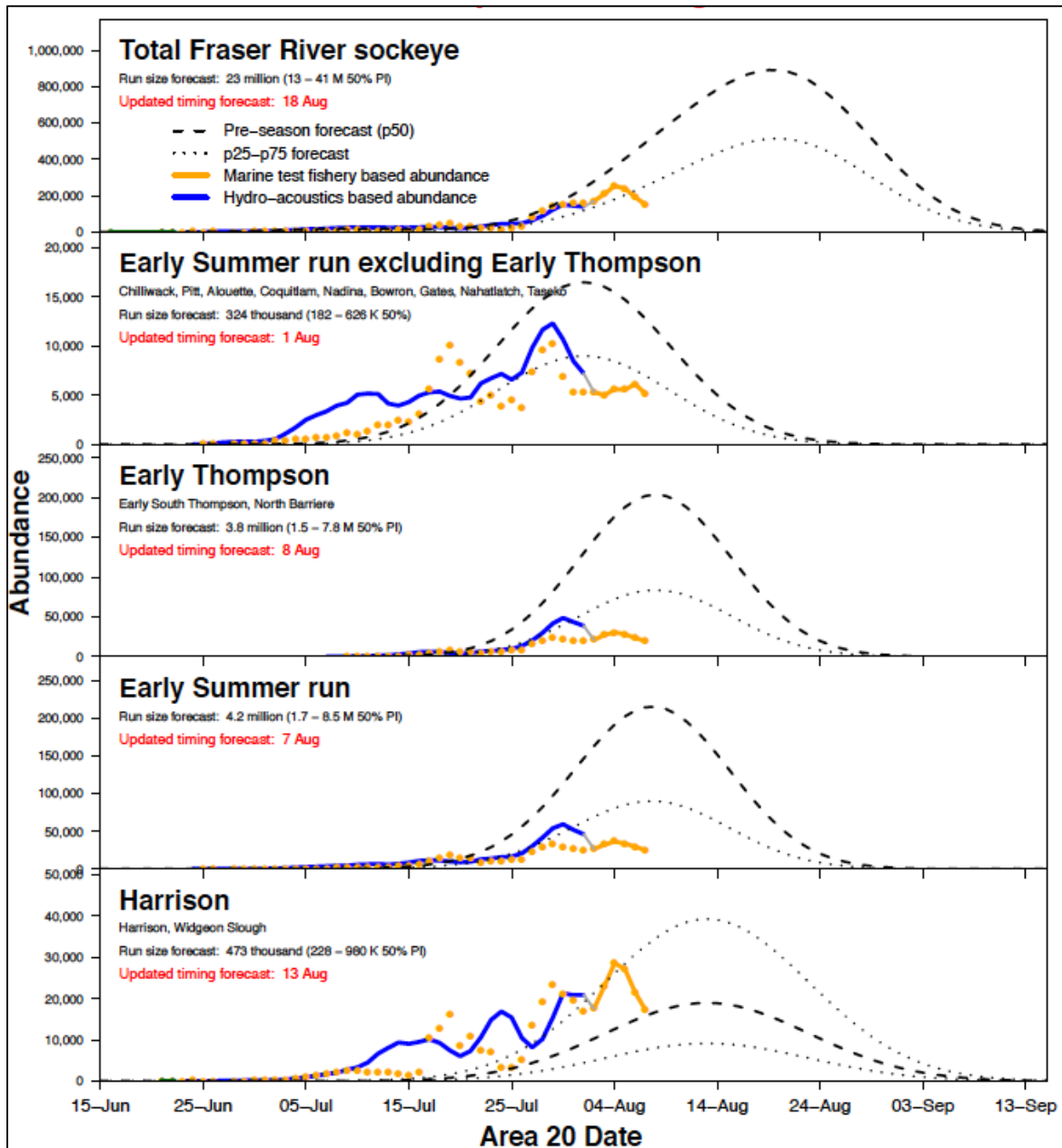
Estimated Abundance and In-Season Updated Timing

The following graphs show the 2014 estimated abundance and updated in-season timing based on Marine and in-river test fisheries and Mission hydro-acoustics compared to forecast. With the exception of Early Stuart, all other return information is still very early in the season.

See next two pages

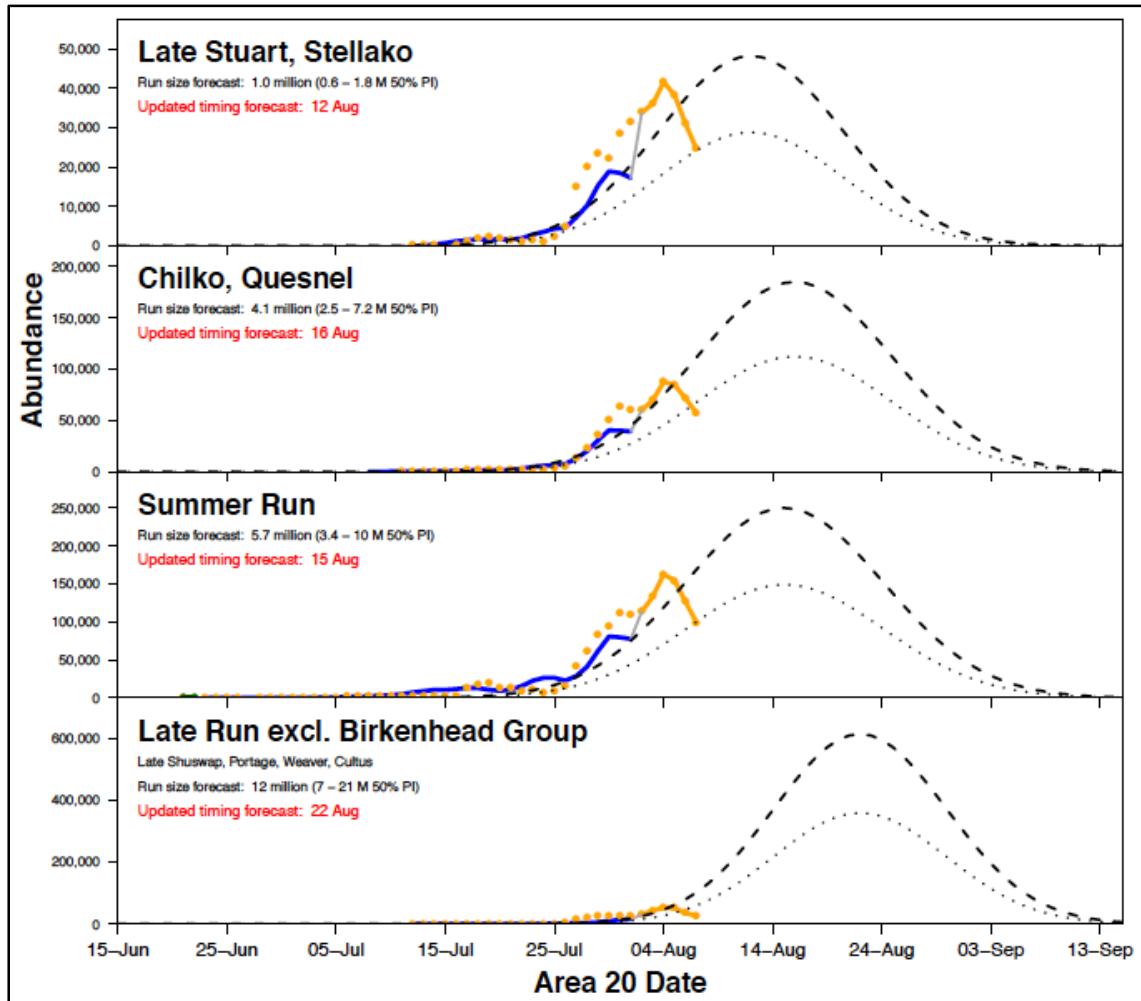


Estimated Abundance and In-Season Updated Timing





Estimated Abundance and In-Season Updated Timing



- The next Fraser Panel meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 12th.



Links

With Chinook and sockeye approaching and in the Fraser, these links may be of interest:

BC River Forecast Centre Website: <http://bcRFC.env.gov.bc.ca>

Environment Canada's Water Office Website: http://www.wateroffice.ec.gc.ca/index_e.html

Pacific Salmon Commission Website: www.psc.org

Pacific Salmon Commission Test Fisheries: http://www.psc.org/info_testfishing.htm

Pacific Salmon Commission News and Regulatory announcements: http://www.psc.org/news_frpnews.htm

Fraser River Mission Escapement Reports: http://www.psc.org/info_inseasonfraserescapement.htm

Fraser River Environmental Watch Reports: <http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/science/habitat/frw-rfo/index-eng.html>

The Albion Test Fishery information can be found at:

<http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/fraser/docs/commercial/albionchinook-quinnat-eng.html>

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