BRITISH COLUMBIA

October 16, 2024

To: Distribution

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

Fraser River late-run summer steelhead is a group of 10 spatially discrete spawning stocks distributed in the Fraser watershed upstream of Hell's Gate. Four of these stocks spawn in the Thompson watershed, two spawn in the Chilcotin watershed, and the remaining four spawn in other watersheds that are tributaries to the middle reaches of the Fraser River.

The current spawning population forecast for the **Thompson** watershed is **687** (95% credible interval 351-1902). Currently, the probability that Thompson steelhead will be classified as an **Extreme Conservation Concern** is **7%**, the probability that they will be classified as a **Conservation Concern** is **78%**, and the probability that they will be classified as **Routine Management** abundance is **14%**. Reference points for the Thompson watershed that define conservation classifications are the Limit Reference Point of 431 and the Conservation Concern Threshold of 1187. Below 431, Thompson steelhead are classified as an Extreme Conservation Concern. Between 431 and 1187, Thompson steelhead are classified as a Conservation Concern.

The current spawning population forecast for the **Chilcotin** watershed is **295** (95% credible interval 138-957). This abundance forecast is very close to the abundance that delineates Extreme Conservation Concern status from Conservation Concern which might suggest that the probability of either outcome is about 50%. However, the

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Water, Fisheries and Coast Division

Telephone: (778) 698-3290

Mailing Address:
PO BOX 9365 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9M3

probability distribution of abundance forecasts is asymetical, as implied by the credible interval. Because of this asymetry, the current probability that Chilcotin steelhead will be classified as an **Extreme Conservation Concern** is **40%**, the probability that they will be classified as a **Conservation Concern** is **54%**, and the probability that they will be classified as **Routine Management** abundance is **7%**. Reference points for the Chilcotin steelhead that define conservation classifications are the Limit Reference Point of 296 and the Conservation Concern Threshold of 763. Below 296, the Chilcotin steelhead are classified as an Extreme Conservation Concern. Between 296 and 763, the Chilcotin steelhead are classified as a Conservation Concern.

Conservation classifications are described further in the Provincial Framework for Steelhead Management in BC (2016) and supporting technical documents.

The current forecasted spawner abundance for the Thompson ranks 37th over a 48-year monitoring time frame. The current forecast for the Chilcotin ranks 42nd over a 54-year monitoring time frame.

The run of Thompson, Chilcotin, and other Fraser River late-run summer steelhead stocks occurs over about a 12-week period and normally peaks in the Johnstone Straits and in Juan de Fuca Strait in late September. In the lower Fraser test fishing areas near Fort Langley, the run normally begins in late August and continues into the latter half of November, peaking in early-to-mid October. Stocks that spawn furthest inland (i.e. Chilcotin watershed) tend to arrive earliest while stocks that spawn furthest downstream (i.e. Nahatlatch) tend to arrive latest. The remaining stocks which include those that spawn in the Bridge, Seton, Stein, and in the tributaries of the Thompson watershed (i.e. Deadman, Bonaparte and Nicola watersheds), tend to be intermediate in their arrival timing to the Fraser River.

Further updates on abundance status will be provided as the season progresses.

Robert Bison
Biologist

The following figures are attached:

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 2025.

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 2025.

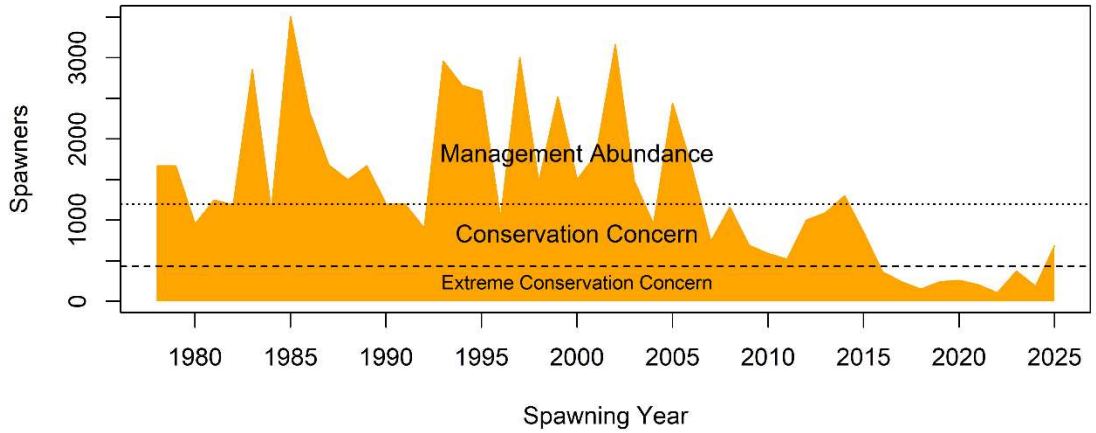

Figure 1. The estimated spawning abundances of Thompson River steelhead in relation to conservation reference points. The last data point illustrates the expected spawner abundance for this season's return which will spawn in the spring of 2025.

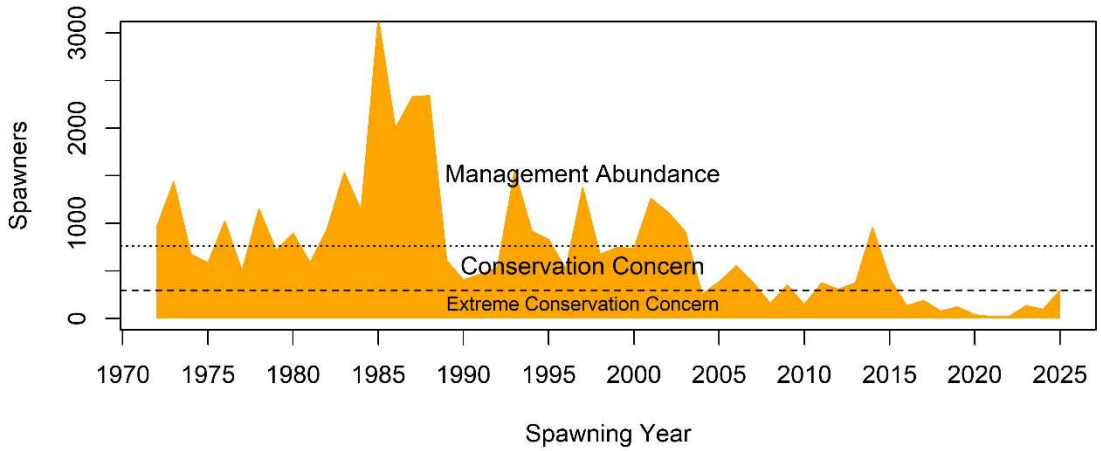

Figure 2. The estimated spawning abundances of Chilcotin River steelhead in relation to conservation reference points. The last data point illustrates the expected spawner abundance for this season's return which will spawn in the spring of 2025.