



October 14, 2009

To: Distribution

Test fishing results for Interior Fraser Steelhead in the Albion chum test fishery are illustrated below in Figure 1. Nine (9) steelhead have been captured since test fishing began on September 1. There are 16 years of test fishing records for the month of September. In comparison to these other years, this year currently ranks 11<sup>th</sup> (Table 1).

Peak of abundance at the test fishery location is expected to occur on October 10 and the majority of the run (95%) is expected to pass from September 7 to November 11 (Figure 2).

The predominant brood year for this season's return is year 2005. In that year, the spawning population estimate of Thompson steelhead was 2300 which is relative high for recent years. The 15 year average escapement to the Thompson is 1660 steelhead. The relatively high escapement in 2005 was not apparent in the 2004 test fishing data (Figure 1). This is because of unusually high water conditions in the Fraser River in 2004 that resulted in much lower than average catch efficiency.

The predominant smolt year for this season's return is year 2007. Returns to date of other Fraser salmon stocks indicate that marine survival of smolts emigrating to sea in 2007 was low. The test fishing catches to date of Interior

Fraser Steelhead are consistent with the low return rates observed in these other stocks.

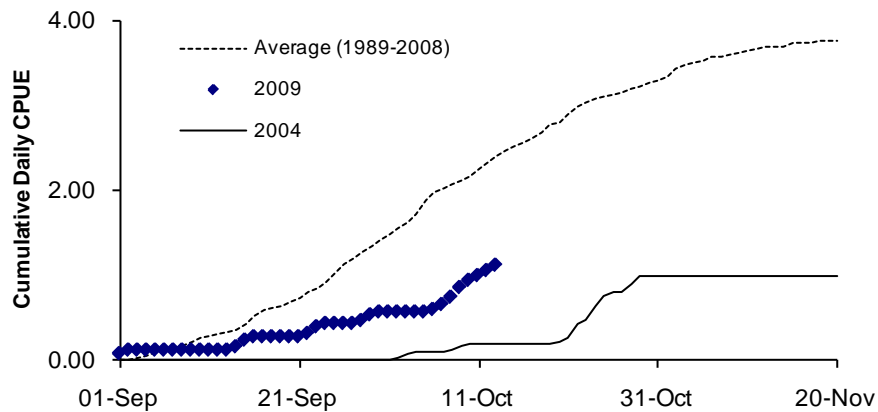
In general, steelhead abundance has declined in recent years while fishing mortality has remained relatively stable since 2002 (Figures 3A and 3B). In addition to fishing mortality caused by catch and release sport fishing, fishing mortality has largely been the result of bycatch in salmon fisheries, particularly fisheries directed at chum salmon. The low fishing mortality rate in 2008 was largely the result of earlier-than-average run timing resulting in a greater proportion of the run passing before chum fisheries began. It was also the result of the closure of the sport fishery and a limit on the number of Fraser River commercial gillnet fisheries to a single 10 hour opening on October 29, 2008.

Salmon fisheries that have coincided or will coincide with the timing steelhead in 2009 include purse seine fisheries for pink salmon that took place in Johnstone Strait from August 30 to September 11, a pink salmon purse seine fishery that took place at the mouth of the Fraser River from September 13 to 19, and chum salmon fisheries scheduled to occur in or about the month of October in Johnstone Strait and Juan de Fuca Strait as well as chum salmon fisheries scheduled to occur in October and in the former part of November in north Puget Sound, and Fraser River. Gillnet fishing for chum salmon in Johnstone Strait began on September 30. Three two-night openings have been scheduled in the period between September 30 and October 24. The first of two schedule purse seine fisheries in Johnstone Strait occurred on October 5. The second is scheduled for October 19. Non-commercial gillnet fishing for chum salmon in the Fraser River by some First Nations began on October 10 and are generally scheduled during weekends.

Sport fisheries on Interior Fraser steelhead were closed on October 1 and may open later in the month if the abundance forecast exceeds conservation limits.

Further updates will be provided as the season progresses. A forecast of the number of Thompson River steelhead spawners for this season's return is expected to be available in latter October.

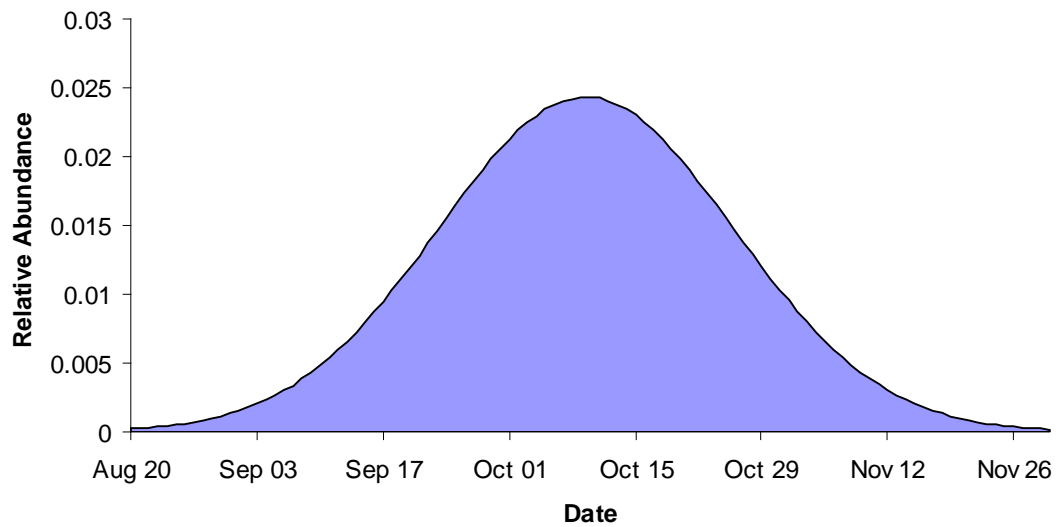
Robert Bison  
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Thompson Nicola Region



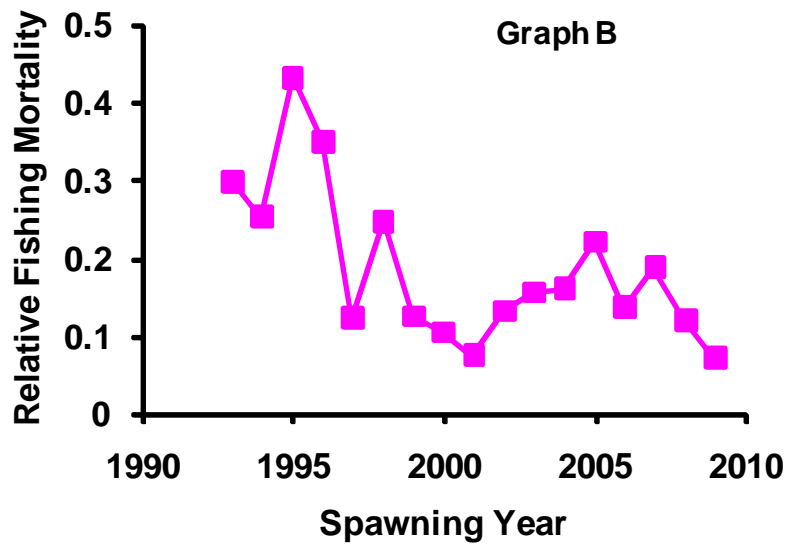
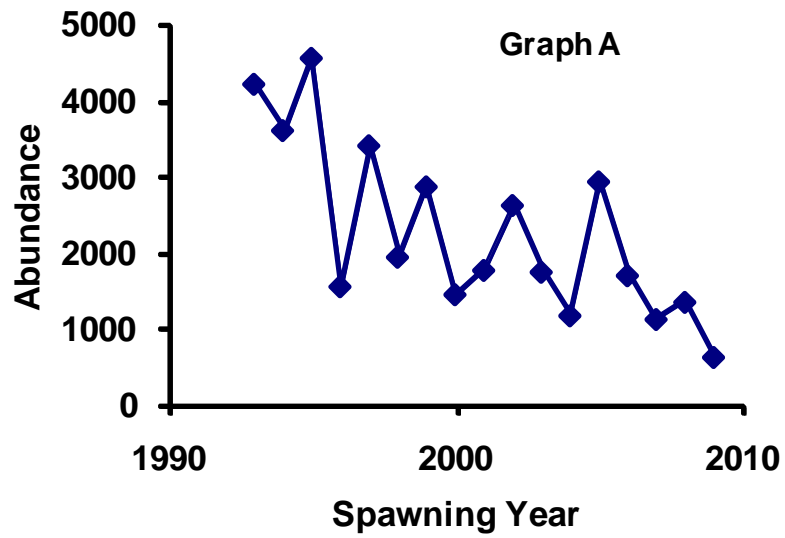
**Figure 1. Cumulative daily CPUE for steelhead captured in the Albion chum test fishery relative to the recent average (dotted line) and relative to the predominant brood year (solid line). Updated to October 13, 2009.**

**Table 1. Cumulative daily test indices for steelhead for the period Sept. 1-Oct 13.**

Test Fishing Year	Cumulative Index	Rank
2000	7.17	1
1996	4.81	2
2001	3.56	3
1998	3.37	4
2005	3.32	5
1995	2.40	6
2002	2.10	7
2007	1.94	8
1999	1.70	9
1989	1.68	10
<b>2009</b>	<b>1.124</b>	<b>11</b>
2003	1.122	12
2008	1.119	13
2006	0.70	14
1997	0.33	15
2004	0.20	16



**Figure 2. Average run timing of Interior Fraser Steelhead at the Albion test fishery in the lower Fraser River near Fort Langley.**



**Figure 3. Trends in estimated pre-fishery abundance and fishing mortality of Thompson River steelhead.**