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Wet'suwet'en Food Fish

The current forecast for sockeye to the Skeena ranges from 1.1 million (90% Probability), to a 6.8 million (10% Probability), with a median of 3.2 Million. The run may be slightly larger than last year. Although the return run for the Wedzin kwah /Nanika return was very poor.

Given the relatively large return to Babine, commercial fishers from the gillnet fleet would like to renew the Nanika Deal.

Nanika Deal: that the Wet'suwet'en refrain from food harvest for the season. As implemented in 2002, when the Community agreed to stop harvest to help rebuild the run.

In summary, the deal allows the fleet to fish early when the Wedzin Kwah/Nanika sockeye are in the mouth of the Skeena, in return the commercial fisherman will provide 8,000 Sockeye to the Wet'suwet'en for Food Fish.

The projected impact to the Wedzin Kwah is unknown, but considering the very small number of returning Sockeye the impact is expected to be minimal.

This type of agreement has been made in the past, specifically in 2009. We did not see a huge impact in our returning Sockeye. There are multiple concerns around our Wedzin Kwah/Nanika returns, Sport fisherman and indigenous food harvest nets downstream, warming of the water and commercial fisherman instream.

For the last few years of Food Fish Harvests, Wet'suwet'en Fisheries has harvested around 2,000 Sockeye per season and have struggled to meet the Food, Social, and Ceremonial needs of the Wet'suwet'en. With returning numbers projected to be poor this summer, we cannot guarantee that fisheries will be capable of harvesting that amount again this year without a devastating impact on the spawning salmon.

Conditions that need to be in place if the nation agrees:

1. Processors must gather the sockeye for us to pick up.
2. Processors must store the salmon properly.
3. There will be two deliveries of 4,000 Sockeye.
4. The run must be rebuilt to the historical numbers.

Regarding item 4, the commercial fishermen expect that we will curtail the sockeye harvest for the year of 2023.

As this directly affects our Food, Social, and Ceremonial rights we must agree to the trade.

Walter Joseph

Fisheries Manager