

WATERSHED NEWS

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Your coffee break update on regional fisheries issues!

Spawning Updates

As of last count on Saturday, there were just over 11,000 sockeye in Okanagan River we are nearing peak. We expect the total numbers of spawners to be in the range of 12-16,000. Since we have almost reached the peak of the run make sure to stop by the Oliver area to see the sockeye spawning.

A small number of chinook have been spotted again this year spawning in the Okanagan River. When possible, ge-

netic samples are being collected from the chinook to help identify what runs they may be related to.

As of last update from the province Kokanee shorespawners have not yet arrived, while the stream spawners are pretty much finished for this year.

Watch for provincial, federal and Okanagan Nation staff out on our lakes and streams conducting sockeye and kokanee research.

Low Water in Regional Streams

Recent rain is helping to recharge soil moisture and streams, but it is going to take much more rain and snow to get water levels back to the norm in the region.

With drought conditions affecting many areas this summer we have had a taste of the long term potential concerns with many users of our water in the dry interior. Towns and regional districts are starting to grapple with the issues of water and the environment in their areas.

If you live in Summerland and are concerned about their water and fisheries management, check out

www.summerland.ca. The district is looking at new ways to ensure an adequate water supply. Although there are no specific questions about fisheries issues on their surveys it certainly is a key concern that must be incorporated into water planning.

Several organisations in the South Okanagan and Similkameen are organising information sessions about water and desert related habitats in relation to the Osoyoos Community Plan. Check out the upcoming events list on the last page for more information.

Pacific Salmon Treaty Commission

The joint U.S.-Canadian Pacific Salmon Commission has averted a budgetary meltdown that threatened to put it out of business after a U.S. Senate panel agreed to fund the U.S. share of operating expenses. The Commission imple-

ments bilateral agreements over harvesting salmon that migrate between the two countries and had been operating entirely on Canadian contributions after the U.S. failed to provide money due in April.

BC Water Standards Questioned

BC's water quality standards are painted as the worst in Canada in a study by Sierra Legal Defence Fund.

"I think it's just a matter of time, unless we do more to protect our water systems, until we do have a death or deaths from waterborne disease contamination," said Randy Christensen of the Sierra Legal Defence Fund.

The B.C. government says it is doing its job.

"The boil water advisories are one of the reasons that people are safe from waterborne diseases," said B.C. Minister of Land, Water and Parks Joyce Murray.

Find the report at www.sierralegal.org

Fire Retardent and Water

Excerpts from "GEORGIA STRAIGHT" (October 9-16): Millions Of Litres Of Fire Retardant Fell On B.C. Forests in 2003. Is Fire Really The Greater Risk By Ben Parfitt

In the summer of 1992, during what was then one of the worst forest-fire seasons in memory, a ground crew was draining a large container filled with chemical fire retardant when they learned they'd made a horrible mistake. Instead of running a hose from the container to an uphill ditch, the workers placed it downhill. Minutes later, the waters of Stone Creek south of Prince George ran red with a lethal mixture of cyanide and ammonia that killed just about every living thing in its path.

Eleven years later, a Straight investigation shows that far from pursuing an end to Firetrol's use, the ministry is buying record amounts of the product under an exclusive eight-year purchase agreement between the B.C. government and Firetrol. This year alone, more than 45 million litres of Firetrol have been dropped by planes and helicopters during the most costly and dangerous forest-fire season in B.C.

history. At the same time, the U.S. government is phasing out all use of the retardant, beginning in 2005. Meanwhile, the Straight has learned that a Canadian investigation of Firetrol's health and environmental impacts is under way. In addition to B.C., Firetrol is used to fight forest fires in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, New Brunswick, the Yukon, and Northwest Territories.

"As with any compound, if it gets in the wrong place at the wrong time, it can be hazardous," Robert Chenier, chief of the assessment division at Environment Canada's existing-substances branch, said of Firetrol. Chenier went on to say that federal investigators want to know how Firetrol's use fits into broader questions about the dangers posed by forest fires. "What is the greater risk for a forest habitat? Is it the...fire retardant? Or is it the actual fire that this is being used to combat?"

Jeff Berry, manager of the Ministry of Forests' provincial air-tanker centre in Kamloops said that properly conducted aerial drops pose a "very, very limited risk".

Upcoming Events 2003

Oct 21 - Species at Risk Act Information Session 6:30-9:00 pm Salmon Arm Community Centre

Oct 22 - Species at Risk Act Information Session 6:30-9:00 pm Kamloops North Shore Community Conference Centre http://www-comm.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/pages/consultations/sara/default_e.htm Or Telephone: (604) 713-9503

Oct 21 & 25 - Osoyoos Official Community Plan Presentations on water and desert/grasslands. Osoyoos Secondary School Theatre to RDOS Rural Area "A" Official Community Plan (OCP). Oct 21 7-9pm Oct 25 10am-12pm Contact event organiser Wendy Schebel from Ducks Unlimited Canada at w_schebel@ducks.ca or call (250) 490-8246.

Oct 23 - Water Utilities in British Columbia: Industry Challenges and P3 Experiences. BCWWA. Delta Airport Hotel, Vancouver. <http://www.bcwwa.org/courses/index.php>

Oct 23-25 Riparian Toolbox - Society for Range Management, Pacific Northwest Section Fall 2003 Meeting and Tour. Ritzville, Wash. Bob Gillaspay bob.gillaspay@wa.usda.gov 1-509-685-0937 ext. 109

Oct 29 - RDOS public meeting for input the Draft Osoyoos OCP 7 pm, Royal Canadian Legion at 8310 - 78th Avenue, Osoyoos

Nov 4-7 - The 4th Annual Northwest Salmonid Recovery Conference. Mountaineers' Conference Center, 300 3rd Ave West in Seattle, Washington. http://www.nwetc.org/FILES/salmon_conf_03.pdf, or e-mail <mailto:info@nwetc.org>.

Nov 23-26 - Banff Mountain Summit - Mountains As Water Towers. <http://www.banffmountainfestivals.ca/festivals/>

March 2-6, 2004 - Species at Risk 2004: Pathways to Recovery Conference Victoria. For more info: www.speciesatrisk2004.ca. e-mail distribution update list, please contact Clare.Rumball@gems1.gov.bc.ca

May 2-6, 2004 - 4th World Fisheries Congress, Vancouver. Reconciling Fisheries with Conservation: The Challenge of Managing Aquatic Ecosystems. <http://www.worldfisheries2004.org>.

May 13-15, 2004 - Land Summit 2004 Conference. University of British Columbia.

June 6-10, 2004 - North American Benthological Society 52nd Annual Meeting. University of British Columbia. <http://faculty.forestry.ubc.ca/richardson/NABS2004.htm>

Resource Best Bet:

World Water Conflict Chronology
<http://www.worldwater.org/conflict.htm>

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