



# FRASER RIVER ACTION PLAN

## Fact Sheet

### The Fraser Fishery: A Valuable Resource

The Fraser River produces more salmon than any other single river system in the world. Its vast network of lakes and tributaries provide rearing and spawning habitat to many millions of salmon from six different species and hundreds of genetically unique stocks. The river also supports another 29 fish species and 87 more in the estuary, many of which are important to recreational and Native interests. As well as a large commercial fishery, sport and Aboriginal fisheries depend on Fraser fish, contributing both to the economic and social life of the province.

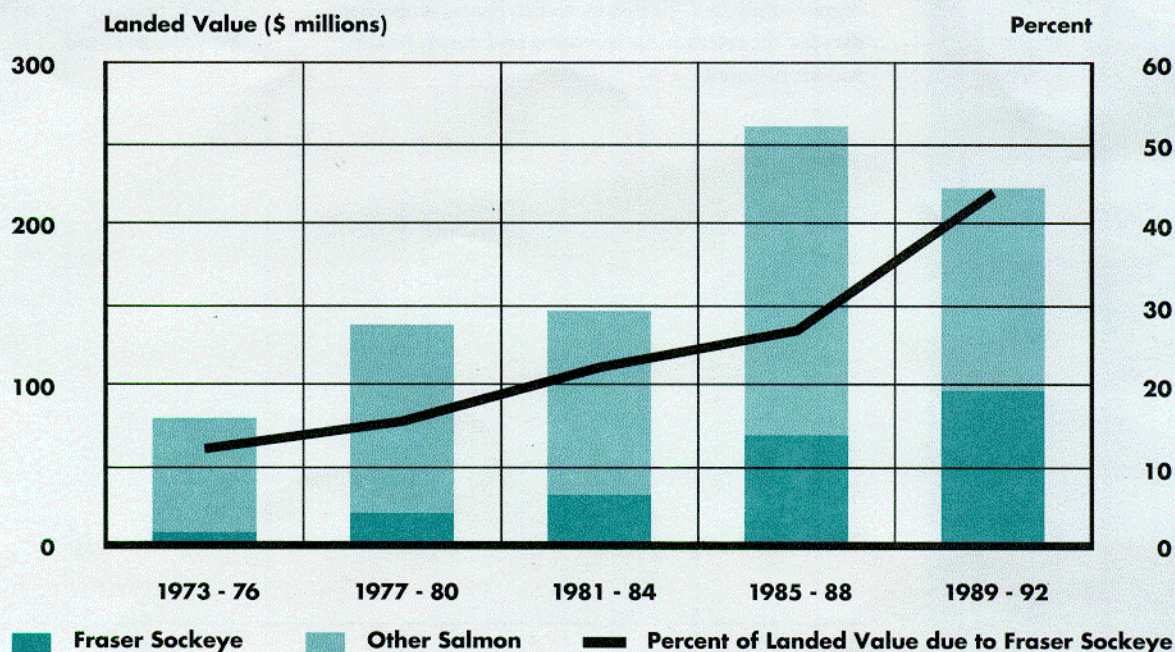
#### The economic value of Fraser salmon

Fraser River salmon, especially sockeye, form the backbone of B.C.'s fishing industry. In 1989 to 1992, the commercial fishery landed an average of \$115 million worth of Fraser salmon each year, accounting for more

than 50% of the value of all commercially caught salmon in B.C. By the time the catch is processed, the wholesale value of Fraser salmon doubles to about \$230 million a year. The commercial fishery means jobs for British Columbians, and about half the 25,000 employed in the harvesting and processing sector can thank Fraser salmon for their pay cheques.

#### The sockeye bonanza

Today, sockeye is by far the most commercially important of the six salmon species found in B.C. This is especially true for the Fraser: sockeye accounts for 85% of the Fraser salmon harvest value. And Fraser sockeye has steadily increased its contribution to the total landed value for the coast, from 12% in the early 1970s to 44% in recent years. Fraser sockeye, too, are highly prized by the Aboriginal food fishery, accounting for over half of the catch of Native-caught salmon.



*Fraser River sockeye has steadily increased in importance to B.C.'s commercial fishery.*



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## Fishing for recreation

Although difficult to determine exactly, the recreational fishery on the Fraser makes important contributions to B.C.'s economy through jobs in support industries (about half of the 15,000 provincial total). Sport-fishing as a whole generates \$180 million a year in direct revenues and indirect value as part of the province's \$5 billion-a-year tourism industry — it is estimated that one-third of every tourism dollar spent is directed toward some aspect of recreational fishing. Fraser chinook and coho form an important part of the sportfishing catch, causing almost half of happy smiles on anglers' faces.

All this bounty is great for B.C.'s economy. But not to be overlooked are the many social and cultural benefits the Fraser's fisheries provide through recreation, tourism and enhancement of our way of life. Many of the benefits derived from recreational fishing and from the Native fishery are non-economic: family outings to catch crab in the estuary, children fishing for trout in the creek, First Nations' ceremonial use of eulachon, and much more. These provide value to people's lives that cannot be measured with dollars and cents.

## Threats to the Fraser fishery

Even with present abundant levels of salmon production in the Fraser, all is not well. Fraser fish are under intense pressure: the main problems are degraded water quality and habitat losses from urban and industrial development, logging impacts, water use conflicts and overfishing of some stocks. For many species, fish numbers are lower than they were in the past, and studies suggest that the Fraser could produce much higher numbers — if threats to fish from competing uses for the river can be managed and damaged fish habitat restored.

## Action to sustain fish stocks

As one of its three main goals, the Fraser River Action Plan aims to restore and enhance productivity and quality of Fraser River ecosystems, including the rebuilding of salmon stocks. To do this the program is active in a myriad of conservation and restoration efforts to improve habitat for rearing and spawning fish. It also joins forces with provincial and local government agencies, industry and the academic community to conduct critical scientific projects that seek information on fish stocks, their habitats and the environmental and fisheries impacts on them, so that sound management decisions can be made.

## A salmon management plan for the long-term

Perhaps the prime initiative on fisheries taken by FRAP is the development of a comprehensive plan to manage Fraser River salmon and rebuilding efforts over the next decade or longer. This plan takes a past, present and future look at the state of each salmon species, the various fisheries that harvest them and the habitats that nurture and sustain them. Other fish species are included in the plan, in partnership with the provincial Ministry of Environment, Lands, and Parks.

At the core of the plan is a process to bring this wealth of information to governments, First Nations, harvesters and non-harvesters — all who have a stake in the health of the river and its fish. Through this partnership process, a long-term direction for management of this valuable resource will be developed. With over 50% of B.C. salmon coming from the Fraser, the plan will be the cornerstone of the fishery for years to come.



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