

# Community Bulletin

December 5, 2018



## Okanagan Nation *sc'win* (Okanagan sockeye salmon) 2019 Return Forecast & Estimates

One of the lowest returns in the past 10 years of *sc'win* is expected in 2019. ONA biologists have analyzed a number of data sets\*, and are currently forecasting lower than average returns of adult *sc'win* for the 2019 fishing season.

In comparison to the previous 10-year avg., our predictions suggest there will be 50% fewer *sc'win* coming back in 2019. Projections currently estimate between 30,000 to 70,000 *sc'win* to return to the Columbia River Basin, with approx. 17,000 sockeye making it to the spawning grounds in the Okanagan.

Salmon return every four years so this decline is directly related to the poor return of *sc'win* in 2015. The lack of fish in 2015 was due to higher than normal water temperatures that prevented *sc'win* to come back to their breeding grounds in the Okanagan, which subsequently led to increased mortality rates. In addition, US harvest rates in 2015 also contributed to these low returns.

During a year of limited abundance it has been common practice to decrease our community harvest. If our predictions are correct, opportunities for food fishing available to community will be highly limited, with no coordinated harvest by the ONA taking place.

In the face of these challenges, we are excited that this year will see the return of the Okanagan Lake hatchery fry. Of the 770,000 fry released in Okanagan Lake in 2015, we estimate 250-750 adults making their way back to the Okanagan Dam this summer. Expect to see these fish at the dam in July, or end of September to early October. Such returns will begin to illustrate the benefits and outcomes of our efforts to rejuvenate salmon in our territory.

The ONA is contributes to food sovereignty throughout the Nation. We sustain efforts at diversifying our food fishery, incorporating a wide range of traditional species including bull trout, sturgeon, and rainbow trout. In addition, we are committed to fostering education and awareness about the need for protection and rejuvenation of all aquatic life and their habitats. This includes Nation events, public signage initiatives, and education programs like Fish in Schools (FinS). We plan to hold a Nation-specific Fisheries Forum in the first quarter of 2019 focused on the current and expanding operations of our fishery and stewardship responsibilities. More details will be distributed once confirmed. We are also available to engage community in regards to wide range of these efforts upon request.

\*ONA's data sets are collected with the support of ONA's CEC, CCT, PUDs, BPA and DFO, since 1995 using juvenile and adult biological traits such as abundance, age structure and survival estimates. It is one of the top ten richest data sets in the Columbia & BC for sockeye management. *Official estimates of returns and harvest projections will be released by June 26, 2019.*

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