



Gitanyow *Fisheries* Authority



August 1, 2018

2018 Kitwanga River Salmon Enumeration Facility Update #2

The Gitanyow Fisheries Authority (GFA) is pleased to announce that the Kitwanga River Adult Salmon Enumeration Facility (KSEF) is operational for 2018. Like in other years GFA will be providing weekly updates on salmon escapement to the Kitwanga River (middle Skeena index) from July through to October. This year marks the 16th consecutive year that GFA has implemented the program, which collects important in-season pacific salmon stock assessment and biological information. GFA would like to thank their 2018 funders and supporters, specifically the Gitanyow Chiefs (Gitanyow Huwlp Sustainability Fund), the Pacific Salmon Commission and Fisheries and Oceans Canada. As in other years, weekly updates will be distributed and posted on our website: www.gitanyowfisheries.com

GFA staff installed the in-river KSEF components from July 4-9, under lower than normal water levels. The fence was rendered fish tight during the evening of July 9 and operational (diverting fish through sample boxes) on the afternoon of July 10, which is the usual starting date for the project. The water level at the KSEF is currently at 0.67m, approximately 8% below the long-term average (see KSEF water stage graph below for more detail). Upper daily water temperatures in the Kitwanga River are higher (~5°C) than normal for this time of year and are currently fluctuating between 12-19°C. Total salmon counts to the end of **July 31, 2018** are as follows:

Sockeye = 172 Chinook = 233 Pink = 4 Chum = 0 Coho = 0

Annually GFA operates both the KSEF to enumerate adult salmon (July to October) and the Kitwanga River Smolt Facility (KsF) to enumerate juvenile salmon (April to June). The KSEF is located approximately 4km from the confluence of the Skeena and Kitwanga Rivers, while the KsF is located at the outlet of Gitanyow Lake approximately 30km upstream from the Kitwanga confluence. Usually, GFA operates the KsF till the end of June and dismantles it in early July. However, this year adult sockeye started showing up at the KsF before it was decommissioned and before the KSEF was set-up in the lower river. In response, GFA kept the KsF operational and counted adult sockeye through the facility until July 19, 10 days after the KSEF was rendered fish tight.

In total 69 sockeye were counted through the KsF between July 3-19, and another 35 were counted holding below the site on July 19, during a 6km stream walk downstream of the KsF. All 35 sockeye were observed holding within a few hundred meters of the KsF with no other salmon observed during the stream walk. Therefore, GFA estimates that the total number of sockeye that had pasted the KSEF prior to its installation on July 9 was 104. Also, between July 9-31, we have counted an additional 68 sockeye through the KSEF for a total return to date of **172 sockeye**. This year's sockeye escapement compares to a previous

maximum observed to the day of 822 in 2010, which resulted in an overall escapement of 20,804 and the **minimum** observed to the day of 0 in 2012 and 2017, which resulted in overall escapements of 5,476 and 375 respectively. Based on average run timing for Kitwanga sockeye to the day (2003-2017) it is predicted that approximately **3%** of the run should have passed the KSEF. For more information on cumulative Kitwanga sockeye salmon abundance by day, refer to the sockeye salmon graph below.

To date we have counted **233 Chinook** through the KSEF. This year's Chinook escapement compares to a **maximum** observed to the day of 1,092 in 2006, which resulted in an overall escapement of 3,014 and the **minimum** observed to the day of 16 in 2017, which resulted in an overall escapement of 585 for the year. Based on average run timing for Kitwanga Chinook to the day (2003-2017) it is predicted that approximately **18%** of the run should have passed the KSEF. For more information on cumulative Kitwanga Chinook salmon abundance by date, refer to the Chinook graph below.

To date we have counted **4 pink salmon** through the KSEF. Based on average run timing for pink salmon to the day (2003-2017) it is predicted that **less than 1%** of the run should now have passed the KSEF. For more information on cumulative Kitwanga odd year pink salmon abundance by date, refer to the pink salmon graph below.

We have not counted any chum or coho salmon through the KSEF to date. We expect to see these salmon species in the next few weeks.





