



Sockeye Salmon: Designatable Unit 7 (Francois-Fraser-S Population)

Consultations on listing under the Species at Risk Act

Information summary and [survey](#) for engagement related to potentially adding sockeye salmon designatable unit 7 (Francois-Fraser-S Population) to the List of Species at Risk as Special Concern – **Please provide input by March 25, 2024.**

Engagement

Let your opinion be heard

Canada's *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) provides legal protection for wildlife species at risk to conserve biological diversity. It also acknowledges that all Canadians have a role to play in the conservation of wildlife species. Before deciding whether to add sockeye salmon (*Oncorhynchus nerka*) Summer designatable unit (DU) 7 (Francois-Fraser-S population; hereafter Francois-Fraser sockeye) to the List of Species at Risk as Special Concern, we would like to hear your opinion, comments, and suggestions regarding the possible ecological, cultural, social, and economic impacts of listing or not listing this species under SARA.

Adding a species to the List of Species at Risk

The process of listing a species under SARA consists of several steps. It begins with a status assessment by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) and ends with Governor in Council decision on whether or not to add the species to the List of Species at Risk. Public engagement is conducted to gather the opinions of Canadians, and is an important step in this process.

Facts about Francois-Fraser sockeye

- Francois-Fraser sockeye are managed, together with additional sockeye populations, as part of the Fraser River Summer population aggregate, or stock management unit (SMU), of sockeye salmon which exhibit similar return timing in the Fraser River in British Columbia (BC).
- Adults begin to migrate up the Fraser River to their spawning grounds in late July and spawn in September and October in three locations west of Prince George, BC: the Stellako River, Uncha Creek, and Ormonde Creek (Figure 2).

- Eggs incubate in gravel over the winter before emerging as alevins (newly hatched salmon still attached to the yolk sac) in the spring and rear for two winters in either Fraser or Francois Lake, after which juveniles smoltify and migrate to the Strait of Georgia between April and June.
- Francois-Fraser sockeye travel north to the open ocean via Johnstone Strait, migrating northward along the coast to reach their wintering grounds in the Gulf of Alaska. They then leave the continental shelf to feed and mature in the high seas before migrating back to their natal streams as four or five year old fish.



Figure 1. Adult sockeye returning to spawn (credit: Shane Kalyn)

Francois-Fraser sockeye are of the lake-type ecotype, meaning they spawn in lake tributaries or outflows or along lake foreshores, and juveniles grow in a rearing lake before migrating downstream. Sockeye salmon is highly significant to Indigenous peoples, both for cultural and subsistence purposes, and a target species for commercial and recreational fisheries.

Who assigned the Special Concern status to Francois-Fraser sockeye?



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COSEWIC is an independent committee of experts that assesses the status of each wildlife species it considers to be in some danger of disappearing from Canada and identifies existing and potential threats to the species. It conducts its assessments based on the best available information including scientific data, community knowledge, and Indigenous Knowledge. COSEWIC assessed Francois-Fraser sockeye as Special Concern in 2017, which initiated the current SARA listing process. It is not currently listed under SARA. Under SARA, a Special Concern species is defined as one that "may become a threatened or an endangered species because of a combination of biological characteristics and identified threats".

Why are Francois-Fraser sockeye at risk?

Francois-Fraser sockeye are threatened by declines in habitat quality in both marine and freshwater areas. COSEWIC concluded that the number of mature individuals in the three generations prior to their 2017 assessment had decreased, though the estimates were still among the highest on record and the number of mature individuals in the DU increased considerably during the period between 1970 to 2000.



Figure 2. Francois-Fraser sockeye freshwater extent of occurrence in the Francois Lake watershed

If a species is listed under the *Species at Risk Act*

If this DU is listed as Special Concern, the SARA prohibitions (for example, prohibitions against killing, harming, and capturing) would not apply. However, listing would result in the development of a SARA management plan for the DU and its habitat that would include appropriate conservation measures. Regardless of the SARA listing decision, Francois-Fraser sockeye will continue to receive protection under the *Fisheries Act*.

We would like to receive your comments on the potential impacts of adding or not adding Francois-Fraser sockeye to the List of Species at Risk under SARA, designated as Special Concern.

Please fill out the [survey](#) by March 25, 2024: we want to hear from you.

Before completing this survey, you may wish to review the following background information found at the links below:

- [COSEWIC Assessment and Status Report \(2017\)](#)
- [Southern Salmon Integrated Fisheries Management Plan 2023/2024](#)
- Other information can be found on the [Species at Risk Public Registry](#).

Thank you for completing this [survey](#)

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