



Emergency Salmon Task Force Situation Report – September 9, 2024

A major landslide occurred on the Chilcotin River the night of July 30, 2024, which continues to dramatically impact this year's returning sockeye and Chinook populations. In response to the slide, TNG rapidly formed a technical tripartite Emergency Salmon Task Force to assess the impacts on Tsilhqot'in-bound salmon populations.

The task force is sharing regular situation reports to share key developments and milestones. All situation reports and landslide updates are posted on the TNG website at www.tsilhqotin.ca/our-territory/fisheries/communications and on the TNG Facebook page at www.facebook.com/Tsilhqotin. For questions please email tngsalmontaskforce@tsilhqotin.ca.

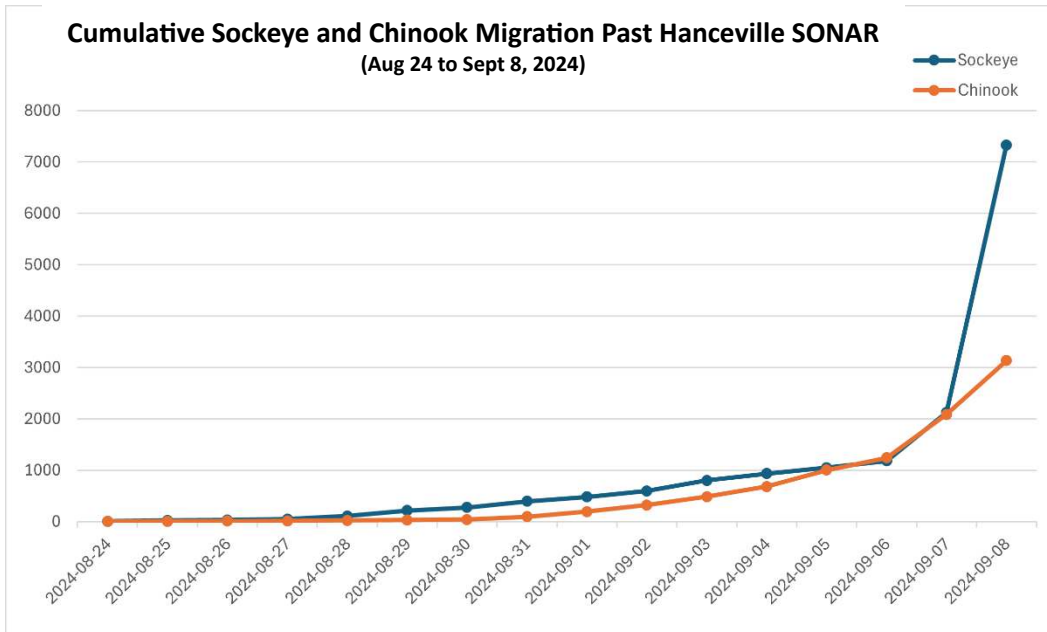
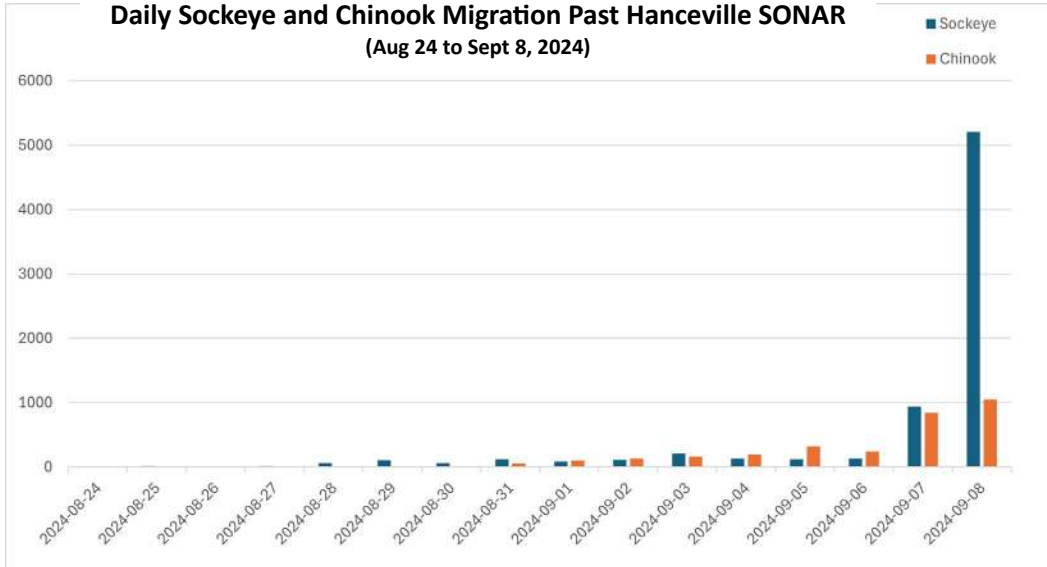
DRAMATIC INCREASE IN CHILKO SOCKEYE SEEN PAST THE SLIDE THIS WEEKEND

- The TNG-led Emergency Salmon Task Force has seen a dramatic increase in sockeye passage past the slide over the weekend, from near-real time data counts at the Hanceville Sonar.
- On Saturday, Sept 7th, 940 sockeye were counted past the slide — approximately seven times higher than the average daily passage we'd seen in the previous week.
- Sunday, Sept 8th saw another dramatic increase in passage rate — **with total sockeye passage of 5211 sockeye), 40 times higher than average daily passage** the previous week ([see graphs on page 2](#)).
- Since we detected passage on Aug 24th, our **total sockeye passage is now 7352** (as of Sept 8th, 2024).
- This is very positive news — the task force had predicted that passage would increase based on anticipated environmental conditions and monitoring data. **This current dramatic increase is strong positive confirmation that overall passage is improving.** [See photos below showing sockeye visibly migrating along the shore \(Sept 9th\).](#)
- Environmental conditions are anticipated to be stable in coming weeks, during what would be Chilko sockeye's typical peak spawning period (in recent 20 years, approx. Sept 19th – Oct 3rd).



Photos: Sockeye migrating up the Chilcotin River near Yunesit'in/Hanceville Bridge (Sept 9). Source: Task Force.







MITIGATIONS

Enhancement Programs in the Chilcotin Watershed:

Prior to the slide, TNG and the DFO Salmon Enhancement Program (SEP) had planned to enhance 4 stocks in the watershed to address conservation and assessment objectives. In fact, 4 of the 5 Chinook and Sockeye CUs in the watershed have some level of existing enhancement programming. While not their original or intended objective, we expect these enhancement programs will also help mitigate impacts to survival from the landslide in some cases. Existing enhancement programs are as follows:

- Upper Chilcotin Chinook Conservation Enhancement, not likely affected by the slide, egg target max 15,000, program complete for 2024;
- Lower Chilcotin Assessment Program (CWT indicator 1.3 Spring), likely affected by the slide, egg target max 50,000, program complete for 2024;
- Chilko Chinook Assessment Program (CWT indicator 1.3 Summer), likely affected by the slide, egg target max 200,000, 2024 program in progress;
- Taseko Sockeye Conservation Enhancement, affected by the slide, egg target max 65,000, 2024 program in progress.

Chilko Sockeye:

The TNG Emergency Salmon Task Force has evaluated the need to implement mitigations to reduce the risk to migrating Chilko Sockeye and concluded that no intervention is warranted for the 2024 Chilko Sockeye run. The Task Force has considered the following sources of information in their assessment:

- TNG Core Principles for limiting interference with natural migration and spawning (maintain biodiversity, reduce genetic risk, limit fish stress, advocate for fisheries management actions);
- Existing fish passage conditions in the Chilcotin and Fraser rivers;
- Alternative fish passage scenarios, including potential for another “worst case” no passage scenario during the 2024 migration period;
- Run size and timing;
- Recovery potential across cycle lines;
- Lessons learned from response to the Big Bar Landslide (2019 to 2022).

While feasibility was not a determining factor in the assessment, it was considered when evaluating the risk of harm to fish from implementing any mitigation action (enhancement, trap and transport, etc.). While mitigation is technically feasible, it is the Task Force’s opinion that the implementation of any action at this time would likely cause more harm to migrating salmon than nonaction. A number of trade-offs were considered, including: fish condition vs resilience to handling stress, operational complexity vs reliability, enhancement effectiveness vs wild salmon resilience, and mitigation effectiveness vs mortality to non-target stocks. Cost was not considered in our evaluation and financial feasibility did not influence the assessment by the Task Force. This opinion was unanimous across the members of the Task Force and supports the precautionary approach that has been promoted by TNG.





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Taseko/Elkin Chinook:

Similar to Chilko Sockeye, concerns for Taseko and Elkin Chinook prompted an intensive assessment by the Task Force to evaluate whether enhancement was warranted on these stocks. The information that was considered was similar to Chilko Sockeye, described above. Overflight counts and sonar information indicate that the 2024 run size will be similar to the brood year despite any effects from the slide, and the Task Force has concluded that no intervention is warranted for the 2024 Taseko/Elkin Chinook run.

