

The District Supervisor of Fisheries,
Prince Rupert, B.C.

Annual Narrative Report for 1958
Babine Area - District # 2, B.C.

A. Trend of the several Fisheries.

1 Commercial Fishery;

None at present but several applications have been made for whitefish and lake trout licences.

2 X Indian Fishery;

During the past season the native fishing effort returned a much larger total catch than in recent years. The relatively large sockeye escapement to the Babine Area and good distribution throughout the system made large numbers of fish available to natives at all the usual fishing sites. The hot dry summer weather was ideal for both fishing and the dry-smoke cure of the catches. Un-employment reached a very high peak for the natives this year so that most families were represented on the fishing grounds. Added to the above was an in-flux of Natives from both the Fraser and Bulkley River watersheds who reported salmon runs in their home streams inadequate to supply their needs. X

3 Sport Fishery;

The warm dry summer weather this season was ideal for camping and boating. Roads were also in good condition. The Babine Area was continuously sport fished throughout the season. Rainbow trout were abundant and some excellent fish taken. Char fishing was good in the early season but was poor in the fall. Steelhead fishing in the Babine River was good in the late fall. As the roads into Babine improve more larger boats are seen on the lake. More summer camps were built at various points. Fishing parties using aircraft are now very common and are now reaching lakes considered inaccessible in the past.

B. Fishing Vessels;

The native boats are the flat bottom lake type powered by outboard motors, over the past few years one notes that they are better built and have larger motors.

The sport fishermen generally have small light transportable cruisers that can be moved on trailers. Most are powered by outboard motors and some use several motors to obtain speeds required.

C. Development and Changes;

- 1 Still foremost of all changes in the Northern watersheds is the slow but steady spread of the beaver population. Each year brings added numbers of dams to most streams. During this season the low water levels at the start of the salmon spawning resulted in some large dams holding up fish runs.

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Report by L. J. Gelly, District Supervisor

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3. B.C. Forestry Service

Extended the Access road from Houston to Merice Lake, in dry weather a four wheel drive vehicle can now reach the Merice River Spawning Grounds.

Timber cuts in the area is estimated to be the same as last year however where previously lumber was shipped rough and green they now plane, size and grade, and ship dry.

4. Beaver continue to be a problem.

5. Inspector W.K. Elliott was transferred to Whitehorse, Yukon Territories this fall and at present post is vacant. Insp. Elliott has the Departmental truck on loan for use in that Area.

D. Abusers.

None to my knowledge.

E. Close Seasons.

None required this year.

F. Steps taken for prevention of illegal fishing;

A Guardian at Mericetown Canyon to prevent sale of salmon, regulate fishing and to obtain catch figures.

G. Protection of waters frequented by fish;

A check of sawmills and mines and the survey of logging operations.

H. Condition of fishways;

The Mericetown Canyon Fishway appeared to be in good condition.

I. Spawning Conditions;

Water levels were low during the summer months until the rains in September. Fall and winter levels to date have been normal.

Seckoye;

Seckoye escapment to the Sustut drainage area was very light again this year. In the Johannsen Creek beaver dams held up the migrating salmon. Asaklets Creek had a light run. The lake spawning seckoye in that area are estimated to have free light to medium.

In the Bulkley River watershed the seckoye spawners observed on the Kanika spawning grounds were so few that the escapment might be termed a failure.

The Mc Donnell Lake Area was estimated to have a medium escapment comparative to the cycle year.

Spring;

The Merice River had a normal escapment and compares with the cycle year. Jacks estimated at from 8 % to 10 %

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Springs continued;

The Upper Bulkley River was very poor. Migrations were hindered by the many beaver dams.

The Bear River escapement was slightly lighter than last year, jacks from 8 to 10 %.

Pinks;

Escapement to the Bulkley system very light in all areas.

This year is an off year in the Bear River and none were observed.

Compare with cycle year.

Coho;

Escapement to Bulkley system better than average.

Bear lake surveys to early for coho runs but estimated from reports to be average.

Steelhead;

Escapement to the Merice was very good.

Escapement to the Sustut moderate

Escapement to the Suskwa fair.

Summary;

Water levels low in summer to normal in fall.

Seckeye poor in all areas.

Spring Medium runs to all areas except the Upper Bulkley.

Pink very poor in all areas.

Coho medium runs in all areas inspected.

L.J. Golley

for W.K. Elliott.

The District Supervisor of Fisheries,
Prince Rupert, B.C.

Annual Narrative Report for 1958
Babine-Morice Area, Dist. # 8, B.C.

A. Trend of the several Fisheries.

1. Commercial Fishery;

None at present.

2. Indian Fishery;

The natives of Moricetown had a very small sockeye catch again this year. Feed requirements were made up by a good spring catch. High fall water levels protected the cone runs and numbers taken were small.

At Reer Lake only a few natives moved in from Takla Landing to fish or approx. half the usual number. The catch results were similar to Moricetown.

3. Sport Fishery;

The ideal summer weather and good road conditions resulted in large numbers of fishermen to all accessible lakes and streams. During the summer months the main catch is the rainbow trout and very excellent fish have been taken from the larger streams however the small lakes contain large numbers but most are on the small side. In the fall interest turns to the steelhead and the Morice River was intensively fished until stopped by ice floes. By the use of aircraft the steelhead streams of the Sustut River had a heavy fishing and proved very productive in medium sized fish. Definite trend to a larger sport fishing population every year.

B. Fishing Vessels;

The only boats used in this area are small and powered by outboard motors. The trend is for better maintenance boats and larger motors.

C. Development and Changes;

1. Fish Culture and Development Branch.

Some preparatory surveys and work was carried out at Hagwilget Canyon for the removal and correction of several rocks that at times form a salmon block.

With Technician Jeffers in charge some repair work was done on the Moricetown Fishways.

2. Skeena River Salmon Investigation.

With Biologist J. McDonald in charge a survey was made of the sockeye and pink spawning areas. Escapment was checked and tag recovery made.

A tagging program was carried out at the mouth of the Skeena River.

3. B.C. Forestry Service;

Opened and improved the Babine Slide Road.

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3. B.C. Forestry Service

Extended the Access road from Houston to Merice Lake, in dry weather a four wheel drive vehicle can now reach the Merice River Spawning Grounds.

Timber cuts in the area is estimated to be the same as last year however where previously lumber was shipped rough and green they now plane, size and grade, and ship dry.

4. Beaver continue to be a problem.

5. Inspector W.K. Elliott was transferred to Whitehorse, Yukon Territories this fall and at present post is vacant. Insp. Elliott has the Departmental truck on loan for use in that Area.

D. Abusments.
None to my knowledge.

E. Close Seasons.
None required this year.

F. Steps taken for prevention of illegal fishing;
A Guardian at Mericetown Canyon to prevent sale of salmon, regulate fishing and to obtain catch figures.

G. Protection of waters frequented by fish;
A check of sawmills and mines and the survey of logging operations.

H. Condition of fishways;
The Mericetown Canyon Fishway appeared to be in good condition.

I. Spawning Conditions;
Water levels were low during the summer months until the rains in September. Fall and winter levels to date have been normal.

Seckeye;
Seckeye escapement to the Sustut drainage area was very light again this year. In the Jehannsen Creek beaver dams held up the migrating salmon. Anaklets Creek had a light run. The lake spawning seckeye in that area are estimated to have been light to medium.

In the Bulkley River watershed the seckeye spawners observed on the Nasika spawning grounds were so few that the escapement might be termed a failure.

The Mc Donnell Lake Area was estimated to have a medium escapement comparative to the cycle year.

Spring;
The Merice River had a normal escapement and compares with the cycle year. Jacks estimated at from 8 % to 10 %

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Spring continued;

The Upper Bulkley River was very poor. Migrations were hindered by the many beaver dams.

The Bear River escapement was slightly lighter than last year, jacks from 8 to 10 %.

Pinks;

Escapement to the Bulkley system very light in all areas.

This year is an off year in the Bear River and none were observed.

Compares with cycle year.

Coho;

Escapement to Bulkley system better than average.

Bear lake surveys to early for coho runs but estimated from reports to be average.

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Escapement to the Morice was very good.

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Water levels low in summer to normal in fall.

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Coho medium runs in all areas inspected.

L.J. Colley

for W.K. Elliott.

WEATHER CONDITIONS

The winter was very mild with the lowest temperature recorded only 18 degrees above zero. This is the first winter since I have been in Terrace that it did not go to at least zero.

Snowfall was light on the lower ground but about normal on the mountain ridges.

Spring run-off was normal with just average high water. Water levels dropped sharply in June due to very dry weather and remained low until after the Pink run started in August. Quite a few small streams, that usually carry a few links, were so low that fish did not enter them. There was adequate water in the larger river systems and all glacier fed streams. Water levels came up sharply by the first of September due to rains and remained up until the middle of October when they dropped to normal and have remained at this stage until the end of the year. There was only one flash flood this fall and it was not as severe as in some years.

RAINING REPORTSockeye

The Sockeye run on the whole was heavier than in the cycle year. Very good seedings were found on the Allistair lake and the Kispiox River systems. The run to Lakelse lake was a little better than it has been for the last few years, but still light. The Mitsumgalum system was about average.

Spring

The spring run can be considered to be about average. There was a slight increase on Kispiox River over the cycle year. Mitsumgalum, Mitwanga and Zymoetz Rivers were about average.

Coho

The Coho escapement was one of the best in years and showed a definite increase over the cycle year. Small streams did not carry many early run fish due to low water but the main rivers were very well seeded.

Link

A final check on link figures would indicate a slight increase on the cycle year. While Kispiox River was lighter than the cycle year, Mitwanga and Lakelse Rivers more than made up this loss. Many of the small Pink streams did not carry any fish this year due to low water. While this run does show a slight increase over the 1956 cycle, it must be considered light in comparison with the 1955 and 1957 years.

Chum

Terrace-Lakelse is not a big Chum area. The run this year, that came in on time and on which observations could be made, appeared to be about average. A few Chums came in very late to Kispiox River and Kleanza Creek. This was during the high water period and no accurate estimate of numbers could be made. This late run is unusual for the area.

Steelhead

Steelhead catches by sportfishermen on the major steelhead rivers in the area have been much better than last year when a very light run was observed. This run would be about equal to the 1956 run. Fish were of a good size with several weighing at the 30 pound mark.

SPORTFISHING

Steelhead catches have been good in the Copper, Kitwanga and Kispiox Rivers. Good catches were made in Lakelse River this Spring.

Spring salmon catches were down a little from last year especially in the Kitsumgalum River. This was due mostly to a very silty conditions of the River while the run was on. Hot weather kept the glaciers that feed this watershed running.

Coho catches throughout the area were very good. Sportfishermen took more Coho from the mouth of Kispiox River this year than they have for some time. Better than average catches were taken from all Coho rivers as well as the main Skeena.

Catches of Cutthroat and Dolly Varden were average.

The number of sportfishermen is increasing every year.

INDIAN FISHERY

The following is the Indian catch as compared to 1956 and 1957:

	<u>1956</u>	<u>1957</u>	<u>1958</u>
Jockeye	10,750	34,000	31,000
Springs	2,000	3,170	2,400
Coho	3,100	8,750	8,750
Steelhead	1,350	980	1,330
Pinks	1,200	17,500	11,400
Chums	220	600	900
Totals	18,620	65,000	55,780

One hundred and eighty two permits were issued this year as compared to one hundred and ninety eight in 1957 and one hundred and fifty seven in 1956. There were actually 204 families that benefited from this fishery as in several cases people who were unable to fish for themselves received fish from a relative that held a permit. Indians in this area that have work in logging camps, etc., do little fishing as they would sooner buy meat if they have the money. This makes the Indian Fishery heavier in years that jobs are not plentiful as in this year and 1957. The Pink catch was down considerably from 1957 as the run upriver was much lighter than in 1957 and most Pinks are taken incidently in jockeye nets.

VIOLATIONS

No charges were laid under the British Columbia Fisheries Regulations or the Fisheries Act.

VIOLATIONS (cont'd)

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There were a few instances where logging companies left slash in streams but these were cleaned up at once by the companies concerned and no legal action was necessary.

The Columbia Cellulose Company caused some damage in two instances on Kitsumgalum River when they did some dredging when eggs and fry were still in the gravel. No visual evidence of dead eggs or fry could be found so no charges could be made. The Manager of the Company has again given his word that no more dredging will be done on the River without first giving the Department notice.

Spot checks were made on cars and trucks on the highway for illegal fish from time to time. No illegal fish were found.

The area was patrolled as often as possible by Guardian and Inspector to see that there were no violations. Posters were put up in fishing spots. Regulations were discussed with fishermen in the course of these patrols.

LOGGING

Columbia Cellulose Company and two other of the larger operators were active in the area throughout the year. Small operators only worked part time and some have folded up altogether.

Cedar pole making was slow as compared to last year. Prices have dropped on poles causing this general slow-up.

Columbia Cellulose continued to drive the Kitsumgalum this year. They did some more stream improvement work other than that mentioned in the previous paragraph. This work was done with the knowledge of the local Officer when fry were out of the gravel. No damage was done to salmon runs.

The Company also towed logs in the Skeena River from Shames to tide water. They were limited in this operation in mid-summer by low water levels in the River but were able to work later in the Fall when rains brought levels up.

Columbia Cellulose are building a road along the west side of the Copper River as an access to their block of timber in the area. They have completed their west Kitsumgalum road as far as the Nass River and have a rough grade up the Nass as far as the Kiteen River.

GUARDIANS

Mr. R. L. Bennett was employed again this year as Guardian in the Hazelton vicinity. His duties were general patrols in the area, the Indian Fishery and some spawning ground surveys. His services were satisfactory.

WATER RIGHTS

Four applications for Water Rights were checked through this office. None of these were on salmon streams and would not affect salmon runs.

PREDATORS

The annual Skeena River Seal Hunt was carried out again this year during the month of June. Ninety-six seals were killed on this hunt. Five more were killed by the local Officer during patrols.

The number of seals killed on these hunts has been steadily going down. This year's kill is only half of what it was when the hunt started, in 1948, and some of these were killed outside the Skeena on DeHorsay Island. There has been a definite decrease in numbers of seals found in the Skeena River. Five seal noses were turned in to the Terrace office for bounty.

Grizzly bear are doing considerable damage to the Sockeye run on the Kispiox River system. Sockeye streams in this area are small and fish have little chance to escape from bear. These bear are killed whenever they are seen but they usually move off when the aircraft comes in and the few destroyed during these short spawning ground inspections does not decrease the number to any extent. It may be worth while to spend a week in the area during the peak of the Sockeye run to try and cut down the number. These bear are not hunted at all by sportsmen or trappers.

STREAM CLEARING

Five days were spent on Williams Creek clearing two log jams and digging out about 2,000 feet of silted area in the stream bed. A cat was hired for this work at a cost of \$780.00. A power saw was rented at a cost of \$20.00. Explosives used cost \$40.15. Total cost of the job was \$840.15. The labour was done by the local Officer.

Fish Culture and Development Branch have completed an access road to the obstruction in Hagwilget Canyon so as to start work on it this winter.

EQUIPMENT.

All equipment in the Terrace-Lakelse area operated well this year. The panel truck has about 20,000 miles on it and appears to be standing up well.

AIRCRAFT

B. C. Airlines aircraft were used to transport men and equipment to isolated spawning areas. Services were satisfactory.

GENERAL

The Fisheries Research Board took about 350,000 Pink eggs from Kleanza Creek for their Hatchery there. Another 1,250,000 Pink eggs were taken from Lakelse River to the Kleanza Hatchery.

Fisheries Research Board personnel made fry counts on Lakelse, Kitwanga and Kispiox Rivers again this year. Pink & fry escapement was heavier than in 1957 and 1956.

This summer, due to the very hot and dry weather, was one of the worst for forest fires on record. There were only two major fires in the Terrace-Lakelse area - one that burned along the west bank of the Kitsumgalum River and the other

GENERAL - cont'd

burned a large area between the Kispiox and Skeena rivers. These actually did not burn right along the river banks so probably did not cause too much damage although spring run-offs may be speeded up a little on these river systems.

Terrace municipality has started work on a sewer system for the Village which will eventually discharge to the Skeena River at Little's Island. Large cement septic tanks are being installed on Little's Island so it does not look like raw sewage will get into the River there.

The Hazelton Chamber of Commerce, with volunteer labour and equipment donated at cost, has pushed a rough road up the Kispiox River as far as Sweetin Creek. The end of this road is about ten miles from Kitwanguk Canyon where an obstruction exists that requires a survey.

Mining is at a standstill in the area with the closing down of the Silver Standard Mine at Hazelton which was the last mine operating.

The Terrace-Kimtimat highway was paved for twenty miles from Lakelse Lake to Kimtimat. The road from Terrace to the airport was paved as was about 10 miles from Skeena Crossing to Sealy Lake in the Hazelton area.

Terrace, B. C.
Jan. 19, 1959.

V. H. Giraud
Fisheries Inspector

Department of Fisheries

Annual review of the Babine - Merice Area

1. Sockeye;

- A. Babine watershed - The protective measures implemented by the Skeena Salmon Management Committee returned a better than average escapement. Migration water levels were good and fish arrived in fine condition. When various runs started to fin at stream mouths they encountered low water levels and high temperatures. Very small streams could not be entered therefore they moved to the moderate sized streams that were seen overcrowded and some losses occurred in dead unspawned and impaired spawning. Until controlled flows are established such losses must be expected. Possible use of fences during low water levels have been considered. Rains arrived in September and cooled stream and raised levels to normal. In general a good heavy seeding was made in the Babine spawning streams. A large lake spawning population gave a supplementary lake seeding that was hard to estimate. Late fall and winter water levels normal with most of the egg disposition in main channels now protected by heavy snow cover.
- B. Upper Bulkley watershed; - Nanika in 1953 had an estimated 35,000 sockeye, excellent spawning conditions. 1954 had high water and no estimate but all other areas report better than average escapements attributed to the fishermen's strike. This year no run is reported except the odd pair seen that indicated that passage was open. The Mericetown Indian Fishery had a small catch of sockeye also. It may well be that Hagwilget has been responsible in the past but the present corrective work should rectify adverse conditions there. The follow up surveys made should include a re-survey of the Mericetown Fishways, Topley Falls and the Nanika gravel flats.
- C. Sustut River watershed; - Throughout that system the cycle years were considered normal in escapements and conditions therefore we have no explanation for the reduced escapement of the past season.
- D. Mc Donell Lake; - Average escapement or comparable to the cycle year.
2. Pinks - As expected very light to all areas.
3. Springs - Runs average in all areas.
4. Coho - Better than average in all areas inspected.
5. Steelhead - Average or better in all the main steelhead streams.
6. Indian Fishery -
- A. Babine watershed; - The native fishing effort during the season returned the largest sockeye catch taken for over ten years. Some of the contributing factors were,
Availability of fish in all fishing grounds throughout the season.
Ideal weather for fishing and dry smoke cure of catch.
Unemployment amongst natives.
Influx of non-resident natives from Fraser and Bulkley watersheds.

Annual review of the Babine - Merice Area

- B. Mericetown; - Sockeye catch was only 165 and 10 less than last year. However as usual fish requirements were made up by the heavy spring catch of 2,874 so that no hardship should result.
- C. Bear Lake; - Only four families fished this area and the catch was Sockeye 395 Spring 335 Cohe 225. The catch appears to be of normal proportions although most years the catch is heavy to springs and light on cohe.
7. Sport Fishery; - A steady increase of sport fishermen to all areas continues with the greatest increase noted to be the steelhead fishermen in the late fall. All sport fishing was good throughout the season except deep treling for char that was only fair for a short period in the early summer.
8. Stream correction work; - Our program of long term benefits from stream correction work has now changed to an effort to provide immediate passage to migrating salmon past numerous beaver dams. In spite of our last years efforts some salmon were delayed and *thus* resulted in impaired spawning. For next year a beaver survey should be made of the Klauay, Klutantan and Slangeesh.
9. Developments; - From the Fisheries point of view next to the commercial fishery only one development can be seen that may effect fish propagation and that is the gradual opening of the country by logging and forest fires. There appears to have been a gradual change over the years in stream water levels and that spring runoff requires a shorter period than formerly. The low water levels at time spawners arrive in many streams can not be attributed to climatic conditions alone. Since these developments have resulted in apprehensions that may require investigation some figures on cut rate are attached.

Babine working circle; - Average timber 10 M. per acre.

1953	--	14	million
1954	--	18	"
1955	0-	26	"
1956	--	56	"
1957	--	37 $\frac{1}{2}$	"
1958	--	23 $\frac{1}{2}$	"

The above does not include cuts on the upper drainage areas such as Taltapin, Pinkut, Fulten and Chapman. Last year some ten forest fires burned over the above area the worst being the Van fire that covered an estimated 16,800 acres. However it is felt that the Babine Area may be able to replace by growth the present cutting rate. This may not hold in the Upper Bulkley and Merice Areas due to better accessibility.

L. J. Colley
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Fisheries Inspector.