



LAKE BABINE NATION

PERIODIC RECREATIONAL FISH CLOSURES COMING TO BABINE RIVER

Extreme water temperatures are threatening migrating salmon

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Effective August 23rd the Babine River recreational salmon fishery will be subject to periodic closures when the mean weekly maximum water temperature exceeds 15.5°C, or the daily maximum water temperature exceeds 17.5 °C, as recorded at the Tse Tesli counting fence.

Fisheries staff report that thermal stress and pressure from the recreational fishery is increasing the amount of time fish “hold” in the warm water section below the fish fence. These conditions prevent *talok* (salmon) from moving through to their natal streams or the cold water refugia in Babine Lake.

“The cumulative effects of high water temperatures and intensive recreational fisheries along this stretch of the River have serious adverse impacts on the migrating talok. The recreational fishery contributes to the stress experienced by the fish and their holding in one of the more dangerous sections of their migration route” said Fisheries Director Donna MacIntyre “We need to give the fish a chance to reach the lake and their natal streams so that they can spawn.”

The longer *talok* are exposed to elevated water temperatures the more likely they are to die without spawning or experience a lower reproductive success rate.

The closure area spans along the Babine River from the Tse Tesli counting fence to the Nilkitkwa confluence. Signage will be posted along the Nilkitkwa and Nilchyeska Forest Service Roads to communicate closures to recreational harvesters.

The periodic closures will be sustained throughout the 2021 season and updates will be posted on the Lake Babine Nation website.

Talok are a foundational part of LBN food security, culture and society. The health and abundance of Babine salmon populations is essential to the physical, emotional and spiritual well-being of Lake Babine people.

“We recognize this may not be a popular decision, but Lake Babine Nation have cared for the talok since time-immemorial and will continue to protect and preserve this fishery not only for Lake Babine Nation but also for our neighbour’s enjoyment” said Murphy Abraham, Chief Councillor Lake Babine Nation. “These fish are so severely threatened if we don’t do something soon we might lose this heritage resource altogether.”

Quick Facts:

- Over 93% of Skeena River sockeye salmon originate from and return to the Babine Lake and its tributaries. Many wild Babine salmon stocks are critically depressed and may be on the brink of collapse.
- Thermal stress during adult migration of sockeye salmon to natal streams can result in cascading negative effects that include catastrophic levels of pre-spawn mortality and can lead to long-term negative impacts to fish stocks.
- Thermal stress can result in increased mortality to migrating sockeye salmon due to a combination of impacts directly related to increased water temperatures, including, physiological stress, decreased mobility and disease.
- Warm temperatures increase energy use in sockeye salmon and can result in exhaustion of energy reserves prior to completion of spawning.

For more information please read the Lake Babine Nation Recreational Sockeye Fishery Management Plan, which is posted on www.lakebabine.com.

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