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Link to Executive Summary of IUCN Sockeye Assessment:

<http://www.stateofthesalmon.org/iucn/>

<http://www.ecotrust.org/press/>

<http://wildsalmoncenter.org/programs/sos.php>

Link to Sockeye Red Listing on IUCN Website:

<http://www.iucnredlist.org/search/details.php/135301/all>

One-Quarter of World's Sockeye Salmon Face Extinction

International Union for the Conservation of Nature Adds Pacific Sockeye to Global Red List of Threatened Species. Most endangered runs in British Columbia.

Vancouver, B.C./ Portland, OR, USA—The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) today placed Pacific sockeye salmon on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. The Red List is the international standard for measuring species' risk of extinction.

The listing is based on IUCN's first global assessment of the commercially and recreationally valuable sockeye, whose native range covers the Pacific Rim from southern Russia to Oregon. Most of the critically endangered sockeye runs are in British Columbia, where dramatic declines have occurred in stretches of the Fraser and Skeena Rivers.

"Placing Pacific sockeye salmon on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species should be a wakeup call to all the nations and peoples of the Pacific Rim," said Guido Rahr, President of the Wild Salmon Center, which works to conserve a network of wild salmon ecosystems in Japan, Russia, Canada and the United States. "While many runs of sockeye in Alaska and Russia remain strong, certain runs in British Columbia and the U.S. Pacific Northwest are at high risk of extinction."

B.C. runs listed as threatened or endangered.

The majority of threatened subpopulations are in British Columbia, according to the Salmonid Specialist Group (SSG), which prepared the IUCN Assessment. Subpopulations at risk include those in sections of the Fraser and Skeena Rivers, as well as smaller rivers in the southern coast of the province. Many have experienced steep declines, with runs in some areas declining by more than 80 percent in the last three generations (or twelve years). Several of the runs were listed as critically endangered.

“Not since the devastating landslide at Hell’s Gate in the Fraser River in the early 1900’s have B.C.’s sockeye salmon been at this level of risk,” said Dr. Pete Rand, the lead assessor on the IUCN report. “And the risk is not limited to the Fraser, but includes many populations along coastal waters and larger interior watersheds, particularly the famed Skeena River.”

Although many factors have contributed to the sockeye’s decline, current threats include: mixed-stock fishing, poor ocean survival rates that may be linked to global climate change, habitat deterioration, and effects from hatcheries and artificial spawning channels.

“The deteriorating situation for western Canada’s sockeye has been suspected for some time,” said Dr. Mart Gross of the University of Toronto. “The IUCN assessment provides the evidence that some populations are rapidly approaching extinction.”

While sockeye as a species does not face global extinction, the decline and potential loss of so many subpopulations diminishes its genetic diversity and resilience in the face of environmental threats. Regionally, the loss or decline of sockeye subpopulations could hurt salmon-dependent economies and ecosystems.

What the assessment found.

In their assessment, the IUCN Salmonid Specialist Group found that a total of 80 subpopulations of sockeye species existed in recent history. The report documents that five have gone extinct. A total of 17 sockeye subpopulations are characterized as threatened, representing 23% of existing subpopulations. Additionally, two subpopulations in the Columbia River (one in Washington State, and the other a transboundary subpopulation between the U.S. and Canada) were listed as Near Threatened based on a relatively small area of suitable spawning grounds and the degraded quality of their migratory habitat due to an extensive network of dams.

The sockeye’s remaining strongholds are mainly in Alaska, including a thriving sockeye subpopulation in the Bristol Bay region. Data for assessment were lacking for 26 subpopulations, mostly in the Russian and Western Alaskan portions of the species’ range. These subpopulations were characterized as Data Deficient in the IUCN Red List.

To conserve threatened Canadian sockeye runs, the report recommends the following:

- Fully implement and fund Canada’s Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) Wild Salmon Policy immediately.
- Shift fishing from coastal and lower river reaches to upriver reaches. This will avoid capturing too many individuals originating from small, wild populations during the times and places they are mixing with individuals from larger, dominant runs.
- Address the impacts of hatcheries and artificial spawning channels on wild salmon, including how hatchery fish contribute to declines in neighboring,

wild populations through mixed stock fishing, loss of fitness through interbreeding, and the spread of diseases to wild salmon.

- Increase investment in state-of-the-art monitoring of fish catch composition.
- Expand current monitoring to measure population abundance on local spawning grounds and geographic areas that are not currently monitored.
- Direct research on the causes of mortality, particularly during the important early ocean period in sockeye's life history.

Largest and most detailed collection of salmon data ever assembled.

The IUCN assessment was prepared by the IUCN Salmonid Specialist Group and is based on the largest collection of data ever assembled on salmon abundance, coming from 243 spawning locations across the Pacific Rim. Data were obtained from universities, and federal, state, provincial, and indigenous groups in Canada, Russia, and the United States.

The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species classifies species according to their extinction risk. Its primary goal is to identify and document species most in need of conservation and provide an index on the state of global biodiversity.

About [IUCN](#)

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature is the world's oldest and largest global environmental network - a democratic membership union with more than 1,000 government and NGO member organizations, and almost 11,000 volunteer scientists in more than 160 countries.

About [State of the Salmon](#)

Established in 2003 as a joint effort of Wild Salmon Center and Ecotrust, State of the Salmon is the only non-governmental program dedicated to evaluating and conserving wild Pacific salmon across their entire range — from headwaters to the open ocean, across seven Pacific Rim nations.

About [Wild Salmon Center](#)

The Wild Salmon Center is the only international conservation organization working to protect wild Pacific salmon throughout their entire range. We partner with governments, local communities, and businesses to create a network of healthy salmon ecosystems across the North Pacific. Our work is based on the best available science and our conservation solutions support sustainable economies, regional cultures, and the great rivers of the Pacific Rim.

About [Ecotrust](#)

For nearly 20 years, Ecotrust has pioneered ways for economies, communities and nature to thrive together, not apart. We take our inspiration from nature and believe that our fundamental challenge is a broader understanding of the intimate relationship between the human condition and the health of all living systems. We've acted on that inspiration by turning \$60 million in grants, gifts and investments into \$310 million in capital that's improved life in its many forms from Alaska to California, and beyond. More on the Web at www.ecotrust.org.

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