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NEWS RELEASE

B.C. sockeye added to red list of threatened species

International group says tough measures needed to protect salmon

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VANCOUVER – The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has placed Pacific sockeye salmon on its Red List of Threatened Species, indicating that certain sockeye subpopulations are at serious risk of extinction. The IUCN report on which the listings are based show recent precipitous declines in sockeye salmon, especially in B.C., and underscore the need for stronger conservation measures, according to the David Suzuki Foundation and the Watershed Watch Salmon Society.

The report, which assessed sockeye across the Pacific Rim, notes that “the greatest concentration of threatened subpopulations is found in British Columbia, a region that also harbors the greatest biodiversity for this species.” The scientific report contains a number of recommendations to reduce the threats and reverse the loss of sockeye biodiversity.

“This report demonstrates how critical Canada’s role is in protecting salmon diversity,” said David Suzuki Foundation aquatic biologist Jeffery Young. “Stronger habitat enforcement and full implementation of the federal Wild Salmon Policy are necessary to reverse these declines.”

The study found that of the 33 B.C. subpopulations assessed, 6 were data deficient and 12 were threatened. Most of these threatened subpopulations are from B.C.’s two main salmon rivers with five from the Fraser River and three from the Skeena River. The report cites a combination of impacts leading to these declines including climate change, habitat loss, overfishing, and the use of hatcheries and spawning channels.

“Clearly this report highlights the urgent need for Canada to do much more to conserve wild salmon, including reducing fishing pressure on threatened stocks,” said Craig Orr, executive director of the Watershed Watch Salmon Society.

The report is the first global assessment for a migratory Pacific salmon conducted by the IUCN, and represents the first of several assessments that are planned by the IUCN Salmonid Specialist Group. The results are based on the largest collection of data to date on the status of salmon from universities and federal, state, provincial, and indigenous groups from the United States, Canada, and Russia.

The report can be found at <http://www.stateofthesalmon.org/IUCN/>. For further details on the IUCN red list see: <http://www.iucnredlist.org/>

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