Alouette Project Water Use Plan

Alouette River Smolt Enumeration

Implementation Year 5

Reference: ALUMON-1

Alouette River Salmonid Smolt Migration Enumeration: 2012 Data Report

Study Period: March to June 2012

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Executive Summary

The South Alouette River salmonid smolt enumeration program is an outcome of both the 1996 and the subsequent 2006 BC Hydro Water Use Planning (WUP) process and is a water licence ordered monitoring program of the Alouette Dam WUP. This report presents the results of the fifteenth year of the salmonid smolt and fry out-migration enumeration program (1998-2012).

In total, 1,458,763 wild reared fish were captured during sampling in the mainstem South Alouette River from 1 March to 14 June 2012. Previously (1998 – 2011), the annual catch ranged from 253,761 (2007) to 2,702,981 (2003).

The 2012 chum fry out-migrant estimate was 8.6 million (95% C.I. 7.8 – 9.6 million). While there has been no significant increase in chum fry production over the duration of the study, chum fry production has averaged 1,119,927 smolts/km (range 311,594 to 3,934,782 smolts/km) or 58.2 smolts/m^2 (range 16 – 205 smolts/m^2). These chum-fry yields are comparable to that expected from successful fish habitat restoration projects, and in some years, approaches the estimated production benefits expected from highly productive off-channel habitat.

The 2012 pink fry out-migrant estimate was 289,844 smolts (95% C.I. 233,040 to 370,736). Pink salmon egg-to-fry survival appears to experience density dependent mortality due to very high chum spawner escapements. As a result, there has been no significant increase in pink fry production over the duration of the study. Pink smolt production has averaged 21,356 fry/km (range 3,986 to 80,435 smolts/km) or 110 fry/100m^2 (range 20 – 420).

The 2012 Chinook fry out-migrant catch represented the highest annual capture to date. The resulting under-yearling out-migrant estimate was 29,370 smolts (95% C.I. 25,560 to 34,117 fish). This estimate is biased low due to the end of trapping operations before the completion of chinook out-migration. Reliable population estimates would require continued trapping to at least the end of June to document the majority of the out-migration distribution. Based on the increasing trend in chinook salmon out-migrants during the past three years, Chinook salmon appear to be responding to stocking efforts.

The 2012 coho smolt out-migration estimate was the second highest on record at 39,046 smolts (95% C.I. 35,824 to 40,484). Since 2009, the annual coho smolt estimate has averaged 29,332 fish compared to 15,000 previously. Based on the last four years, the average coho smolt yield was 2,126 smolts/km (range 1,394 – 2,910) or 11.0 smolts/100m^2 (range 7.2 – 15.1); which is higher than the average yield predicted for Pacific Northwest streams of similar latitude (1,664 smolts/km).

The 2012 steelhead smolt out-migration estimate was 5,778 smolts (95% C.I. 5,110 to 6,457). Since 2008 (excluding 2010 anomaly), the average steelhead smolt yield was 421 smolts/km (range 368 – 450) or 2.2 smolts/100m^2 (range 1.9 – 2.3). Although steelhead smolt yields meet Provincial bio standards, they are lower than other regional steelhead populations that are also being monitored using similar enumeration methodology.

In 2012, it was clear from both independent trapping programs in the South Alouette River that very few sockeye smolts emigrated out of Alouette Lake during the 2012 out-migration field trials. Mathews *et al.* (2013) estimate that between 348 and 1,108 sockeye smolts migrated out of Alouette Lake and past the upper watershed trapping site (Mud Creek). Since 2005, the average sockeye smolt enroute mortality has been 47.6% (range 24.1-88.4%) which is consistent with downstream (within river) smolt migration mortality documented for acoustic tagged pacific salmon smolts in Southern British Columbia.

Moving the rotary screw trapping location upstream to the 224th St. location and incorporating flow deflection panels has been successful in restoring smolt catch success. Results since 2008 clearly demonstrate the declines in coho and steelhead smolt out-migration in 2006 and 2007, and perhaps, the more subtle declines since 2003, were not accurate but an artifact of trapping bias. This was due to the increasing effect of tidal backwatering from the Pitt River at the 216th St. location. Continued trapping at the current location is recommended to document inter-annual variability in smolt yields.

Acknowledgements

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The following Katzie First Nation Fisheries Enumeration Crew are gratefully acknowledged for their contribution in field operations during this study; Harry Pierre (Crew Leader, Senior Fisheries Technician), Crystal Pierre (Fisheries Technician), Lawrence Orban (Fisheries Technician), William Pierre (Fisheries Technician), and George Moody (Fisheries technician).

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

1. Introduction

The South Alouette River salmonid smolt enumeration program is an outcome of both the 1996 and the subsequent 2006 BC Hydro Water Use Planning (WUP) process and is a water licence ordered monitoring program of the Alouette Dam Water Use Plan. As part of the Alouette River Water Use Plan, the Alouette Management Committee (AMC) was established as an oversight body for all water licence related monitoring programs. The committee consists of representatives from BC Hydro, British Columbia Ministry of Environment (MOE), Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), Katzie First Nation, the District of Maple Ridge, Alouette River Management Society (ARMS) and one public representative.

The smolt enumeration program is a component of a water licence requirement monitoring program to determine the effect of increased flow releases from the BC Hydro Alouette Dam into the South Alouette River on trout and salmon populations and habitat. This report presents results from the 15th consecutive year (1998-2012) of the salmonid smolt out-migration enumeration program on the South Alouette River.

1.1. Objectives

The goal of this project was to determine out-migration numbers of salmon and trout fry and smolts in the South Alouette River using downstream trapping methods and mark-recapture analysis.

Specific objectives include:

- Obtain abundance estimates of emigrant fry and smolts (by species).
- Determine the migration timing and biological characteristics of emigrant fry and smolts, and document general environmental conditions throughout the migration period.
- Examine assumptions inherent within the mark-recapture procedure to determine possible sampling bias of incline-plane traps, rotary screw traps, and marking methodology.

1.2. Study Area

The South Alouette River is located in the lower Fraser Valley 40 km east of Vancouver. The river extends approximately 24 km from the BC Hydro dam at Alouette Lake to its confluence with the Pitt River (Figure 1.1). Incline-plane trap placement was replicated from the previous years (1998-2011). Two incline-plane traps were installed directly upstream of the 224th St. bridge. In 2008, the rotary screw trap was moved to the current location, 100 m upstream of the incline-plane traps. In previous years (1999-2007), the rotary screw trap was located approximately 1.5 km downstream at the 216th St. Bridge. Relocation of the rotary screw trap

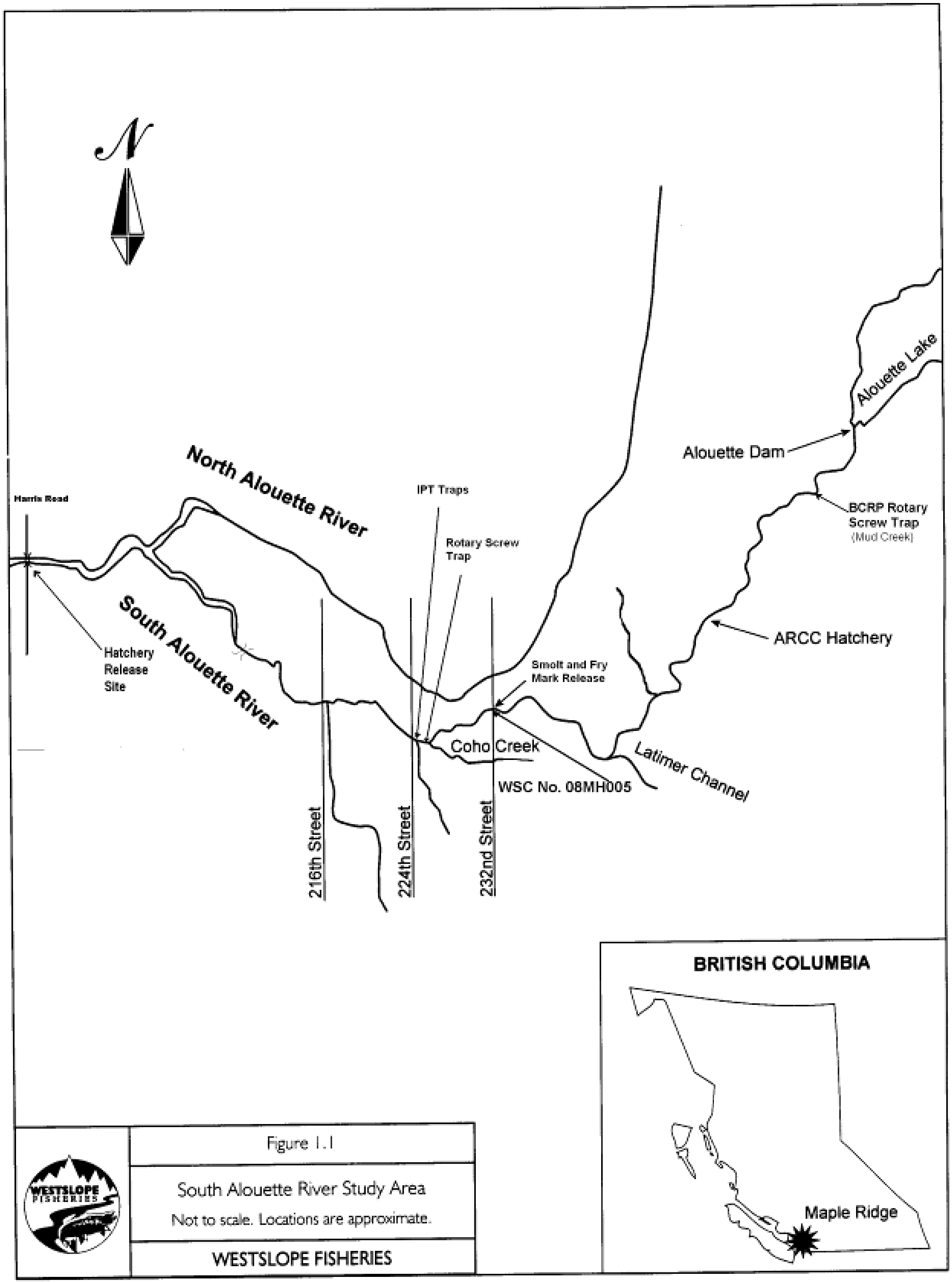

Figure 1.1. South Alouette River Study Area.

was necessary due to the effect of physical site changes and backwatering by the Pitt River. This problem had been getting progressively worse over the previous three years (2005-2007).

All marked fry and smolts were released at the 232nd St. Bridge. All Fraser Regional Corrections Centre-Alouette River Management Society (FRCC-ARMS) hatchery and MOE hatchery reared fry and smolts were released several kilometers downstream of the enumeration reach at the Harris Road Bridge (Figure 1.1).

Transport and release of hatchery reared fish downstream of trapping sites was implemented in 2001 to eliminate hatchery reared fry and smolts from the enumeration catch. Consequently, all production estimates are for wild reared salmon within the South Alouette River. The only exceptions are chum, chinook and coho fry. During the previous three years (2009-2011), in an effort to improve chinook stocking results, hatchery reared chinook fry were released upstream at ALLCO Park (April–June) to facilitate imprinting (G. Clayton, ARMS, Maple Ridge, B.C., *pers. comm*.). There has also been very limited numbers of chum, chinook and coho fry released by school children as part of the ARMS-FRCC Hatchery Community Education and Stewardship Program.

1.3. Background

The South Alouette River historically supported all five species of salmon plus populations of sea-run cutthroat trout, steelhead, sea run bull trout, dolly varden and resident rainbow trout. The decline of salmonids in the South Alouette River watershed was due, in part, to extensive development beginning in the late 1800s. The watershed was previously logged and land use has been dominated by agricultural development (including diking and draining of the tidal estuary), gravel mining, and currently, urban development. In 1924-1926 the Burrard Power and Light Co., a wholly owned subsidiary of the BC Electric Railway Co., built a low-head earth fill dam at the outlet of Alouette Lake. This dam has had two major persistent effects on salmon populations in the South Alouette River. Because no provision for fish passage was called for in construction of the dam, all fish species that historically ranged above the dam location were excluded from the upper South Alouette River, Alouette Lake and tributaries. In particular, documented spawning populations of sockeye, chinook, coho, and chum salmon, were prevented from entering historical spawning grounds in Alouette Lake and tributaries. The second lasting impact has been the severe reduction of flows in the South Alouette River resulting from construction of the dam at the outlet of Alouette Lake and diversion of water from Alouette Lake into the Stave River system (Griffith and Russell 1980). As a result of these impacts, Elson (1985) reported that Alouette River populations of chinook, sockeye, and pink salmon were extirpated.

While the original water license did not require releases through the dam to augment low flows (August to October), in 1971 BC Hydro, at the request of SPEC, the local MLA George Musselium, and DFO implemented a minimum flow of 0.06 m^3/s at the low-level outlet, or a minium of .7 cms at the WSC station at 232nd street bridge. In 1983, summer mean average flows in the South Alouette River represented 11.5% of the pre-dam construction period (1916-1925). Although the agreement of a minium flow of .7 cms at the 232 street bridge, from the period of 1971 to 1985 was rarely met in low flow summer conditions. Minimum base flows were gradually increased by BC Hydro and, in 1993, minimum flows through the low-level outlet were set at 0.56 m^3/s. In September of 1995, after a interm agree with ARMS, Katzie First Nation and the District of Maple Ridge and BC Hydro, minimum flows were increased to 2.0 m^3/s and subsequently, the Alouette River Water Use Plan (WUP) was implemented (BC Hydro 1996). The South Alouette River WUP required BC Hydro to release full pipe at the dam's low-level outlet. Full pipe release at the low-level outlet varies between 1.98 and 2.97 m^3/s depending on lake elevation (C. Lamont, BC Hydro, Power Facilities, Burnaby, B.C., *pers. comm*.).

Fisheries agencies have also implemented rehabilitation measures. In 1938, the British Columbia Fish & Wildlife Branch began to stock the Alouette River with eyed steelhead eggs. Since 1979, MOE has annually stocked the South Alouette River with steelhead smolts and anadromous cutthroat smolts (Hamilton 1993). The DFO Salmonid Enhancement Program (SEP) has funded the Alouette River Hatchery Project since 1979 and is operated by the staff of the FRCC and ARMS. Currently, the FRCC-ARMS Community hatchery annually stocks chinook fry as well as coho fry and smolts and steelhead smolts and cutthrout trout (*see* Section 2.6 Hatchery Stocking Program).

The North Alouette, a tributary of the Alouette is also stocked with Chum as well from the ALLCO ARMS Community hatchery.

2. Methods

2.1. Trapping Methods

Trapping methods follow those outlined in Conlin and Tutty (1979), Hickey and Smith (1991) and Smith (1994). Emigrating fry were captured at the 224th St. Bridge location using two 0.6 m x 0.9 m x 2.75 m incline-plane traps (Figures 2.1 and 2.2). In addition, emigrating fry were also captured using a 1.8 m diameter rotary screw trap immediately upstream of the incline plane traps (Figure 2.3).

From 1998 to 2001, emigrating smolts were captured using a single 1.5 m dia. rotary screw trap located at the 216th St. bridge location. From 2002 to 2005, during the steelhead out-migration period (approximately 15 April to 1 June), a 1.8 m dia. rotary screw trap was added and both traps were operated simultaneously. In 2004 and 2005, these traps were operated in an adjacent alignment designed to maximize trapping efficiencies. Due to public safety concerns associated with entrapment risk, this practice was ended in 2006. In 2007, the protocol was to utilize the 1.5 m rotary screw trap from project start (27 February) to 14 April. After 14 April the 1.5 m rotary screw trap was replaced with the 1.8 m trap. This change in trapping operation was

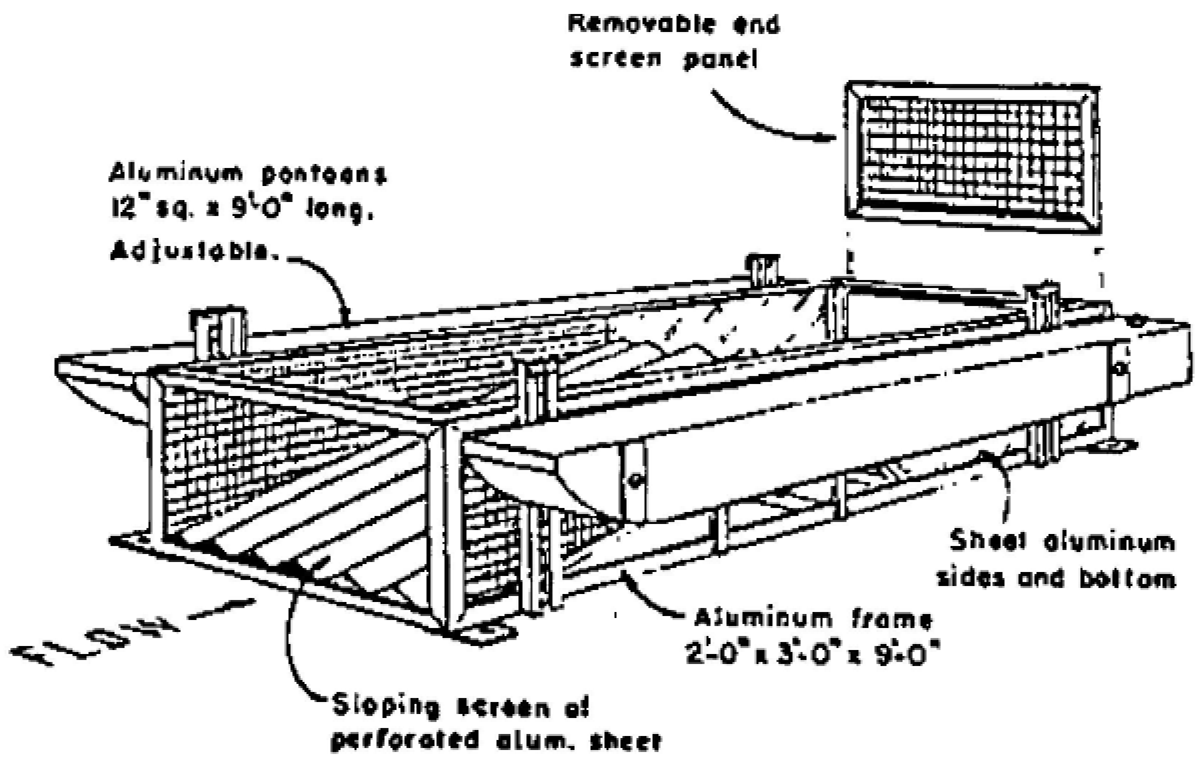

Figure 2.1. Diagram of floating incline-plane trap used to capture migrating fry (IPSFC drawing no. 53-55).

Figure 2.2. Photograph illustrating placement of the incline-plane traps. Note 1.8 m rotary screw trap in the foreground.

Figure 2.3. Typical rotary screw trap placement 27 February to 14 April at the 224th St. location.

implemented to maximize trapping efficiencies with a single trap, while minimizing the risk of entrapment to members of the public that may disregard the warning signage and attempt to navigate through the trapping site. Since 2008, the protocol has been to utilize the 1.8 m trap exclusively from 27 February to 15 June.

Since 2008, temporary flow deflection “panels” have been utilized in junction with the 1.8 m rotary screw trap. These temporary panels are used to enhance trap efficiencies during smolt out-migration, particularly steelhead and sockeye smolts (Figure 2.4). Fence panels were 1.2 m long and 0.9 m high wood frames with ¾” vexar plastic screen. Panel screens overlap with adjoining panels and the streambed to produce a tight seal. Eighty burlap sandbags and ½” rebar was used to support the panels and ensure a tight seal; thus directing increased volumes of water at the rotary screw trap. Between 32 to 40 linear feet of fence panel was maintained from 15 April to 14 June. During this time panels concentrate flows and direct these flows at the drum of the rotary screw trap. Higher drum velocities result and fence panels and trap position are manipulated daily to maintain a drum velocity of between 5 and 7 revolutions per minute (RPM). This range appears to provide the optimum trap efficiency while minimizing potential mortalities due to live box turbulence.

Figure 2.4. Typical rotary screw trap placement 14 April – 14 June. Note the use of screen panels and sandbags to concentrate flows and enhance trap efficiency.

Periodically throughout the 24-hour trapping period the traps are monitored, cleaned and/or adjusted. Frequency of trap maintenance is determined by flow and debris conditions to maintain trap efficiency and minimize live box turbulence and potential trap induced mortality. At all times, an effort is made to keep fishing conditions as consistent as possible. However, slight alterations to the traps on a daily basis are anticipated to adjust to the variable flow levels. The objective is to keep the trap fishing with strong enough flows to maintain trapping efficiency while limiting trap-induced mortality caused by live box turbulence. Whenever possible, adjustments are to be made to the trap pontoons rather than the position of the trap.

If site conditions (i.e. flow and/or debris conditions) are assessed as compromising worker safety or fish survival (e.g. 224th St. Staff gauge > 0.8 and debris accumulating in traps, or jamming drum considered imminent) then the traps are disabled and trapping operations suspended until debris risk is reduced. Disabling traps and safely securing them to shore when debris risk is high is more effective in protecting fish (and worker safety) and non-fishing days can be quantitatively estimated (Music *et al.* 2010). In light of our detailed knowledge gained over the past 15 years in regard to the relationship between river discharge (i.e. stage), debris load, trapping mortality and worker safety, we have modified our trapping protocols to include the suspension of trapping efforts at times when increases in river discharge and debris load approach known limits to worker safety and logistical capabilities. Typically, suspension of operations need only occur for a matter of hours before the river stabilizes and debris loads decrease to manageable levels. An RV trailer is maintained on-site to facilitate the safe monitoring of traps on a 24-hour, seven days a week schedule. Real-time awareness of conditions, increased trap maintenance and knowledge on when to cease trapping are the key to preventing fry and smolt mortalities and ensuring worker safety. These conclusions and protocols have been independently derived for similar long-term downstream trapping projects in other jurisdictions (Music *et al.* 2010).

Upon capture, fry and smolts were transferred to 20 liter plastic buckets for streamside processing. Catches were enumerated as expediently as possible to minimize stress. During enumeration, all marked fish were separated and subtracted from the total catch. The remaining fry and smolts were separated from any debris and counted individually.

On those occasions where trap catches exceeded the ability to count all individuals, a known sub-sample (minimum 10% of catch) was weighed using a digital analytic scale. The fry-pergram calculation was used to determine the number of fry captured from the weight of the remaining catch. In extreme cases where the logistical capabilities of the crew and/or the live box capacity of the traps are exceeded a portion of the catch is released using a sieve calibrated to a known sample size (1,000 chum fry by weight).

2.2. Gear Efficiency

Gear-testing objectives were to release known numbers of marked fry at least weekly and smolts as captured, for recoveries of 1% or greater. For the purposes of this report, fry were defined as age group 0^+ or under yearling fish recently emerged from the gravel (< 70 mm fork length). Smolts were defined as juveniles that had over-wintered for at least one season within their natal streams (>70 mm fork length).

Fry were marked by immersion in Bismark Brown Y dye (concentration 1:100,000) for 1 hour (Figure 2.5). After marking, fry were transported in 20 liter buckets to the 232nd Street release site. Marked fry were held for a minimum of 8 hours prior to release to acclimate to stream conditions. Fry were generally released between 20:00 to 23:00 hours, coinciding with maximum darkness. Smolts were caudal-fin clipped. After marking, smolts were transported and released at the 232nd Street release site (Figure 1.1).

Figure 2.5. Chum salmon fry (2,500 per 20 l bucket) immersed in Bismark Brown “Y” Dye at a concentration of 1:100,000. Note that this procedure requires the infusion of medical grade oxygen.

2.3. Population Estimates

Trap catches are used to estimate the number of fry and smolts emigrating on a nightly basis. The total nightly migration was estimated by applying the proportion of the marked fry recaptured to the nightly unmarked catch. Assuming random mixing of marked and unmarked fish and sufficient recoveries, the adjusted Peterson estimate gives an unbiased population estimate in most cases (Ricker 1975):

$$N = \frac{(M+1) \times (C+1)}{R+1} \qquad (1.1)$$

N = daily fry estimate
C = daily catch
R = number of marks recaptured
M = number of marks released

Ricker (1975) derives the large-sample sampling variance for N in (1.1) as approximately equal to:

$$V(N^*) = \frac{N^2 \times (C - R)}{(C + 1) \times (R + 2)} \qquad (1.2)$$

N* = estimated total out-migration

However, daily out-migrant estimates are independent populations and the total population estimate is the sum of these estimates. The perceived large-sample degrees of freedom over the period of out-migration (*i.e.,* pooled Peterson estimate) are a series of estimates of independent populations. Analyses of temporal and spatial bias have demonstrated that equal catchability and complete mixing assumptions are usually violated at some point (Decker 1998, Schubert *et al.* 1994). The stratified-Peterson approach has been proposed as a model to account for heterogeneity in catchability and/or mixing (Schwarz and Taylor 1998). In this study, where possible, both the pooled Peterson estimate and the stratified-Peterson approach were compared for out-migrating juvenile salmonid estimation.

If random mixing of marked with unmarked fry is assumed, then the variance of recovered marks is binomially distributed. Therefore, it is better to obtain approximate confidence intervals from tables or equations that approximate the binomial distribution using recovered marks as the key parameter. Secondly, since the true N is unknown, it is better to have a rule based on an observed statistic, the number of recaptures (R). For large values of R (>25), Pearson's formula is approximate in estimating the confidence limits for variables distributed in a Poisson frequency distribution for confidence coefficients of 0.95 (Ricker 1975):

$$R + 1.92 \pm 1.96 \sqrt{(R + 1.0)} \qquad (1.3)$$

By substituting the upper and lower limits of R calculated (1.3) into the adjusted Peterson estimate (1.1) the confidence limits for the daily population estimates can be calculated. The resulting confidence limits more accurately represent the daily uncertainty. A cumulative summation of the confidence intervals reflects the uncertainty contained within the total population estimate and stratification by release event (*i.e.,* stratified Peterson method) is the result. In theory, this methodology allows each release stratum to have its own distinct movement pattern and hence gear efficiency rating. On nights without releases, the percentage recovery from the previous release was applied. This was necessary due to the fact that marked fish from a given release event are recaptured over a period of approximately four days.

2.4. Biological Samples

All smolts were typically weighed and fork length recorded. The exceptions were; 1) during days when the coho catch exceeded 100 smolts, only the first 100 coho smolts were measured, and 2) due to the sensitivity of sockeye smolts to handling, sockeye smolts selected for mark – re-capture trials were not typically sampled for length or weight but rather sub-samples of sockeye smolts were selected for length and weight measurements on an opportunistic basis and these fish were not used for mark – re-capture trials.

Every second day, ten chum and ten pink salmon fry (when available) were randomly selected and measured for fork length and mean weight to track length and weight throughout the out-migration period. Chinook fry were sampled when available.

2.5. Physical Conditions

Water level (staff gauge) and water temperature (hand held thermometer) were recorded daily at the 224th Street location. Prior to 15 March 2001, water temperature was also monitored over the study period (*i.e*. trapping dates) using two Timbit™ thermographs. Since 15 March 2001, the 224th Street thermograph has been maintained by BC Hydro as part of an array for year-round water temperature monitoring in the South Alouette River. Mean daily discharge was obtained from the Water Survey of Canada Station at the 232nd Street Bridge (WSC 08MH005).

2.6. Hatchery Stocking Program

The FRCC-ARMS Community hatchery (a.k.a. ALLCO Hatchery) operates in the upper reach of the South Alouette River. In early study years (1998 – 2000), the majority of FRCC-ARMS reared fry and smolts were released from this location (Figure 1.1). During the years 1998-2000, hatchery reared chum fry were held until late April when approximately 90% of the wild reared fry had emigrated. By this time, hatchery reared fry were easily differentiated by size. In 1998, hatchery reared coho smolts were differentiated by size and in 1999 were identified by a clipped adipose fin. In 2000, chum salmon fry were released five weeks earlier than usual. As a result, hatchery and wild reared fry were similar in size and the size-based separation of hatchery and wild reared chum fry was not possible (Cope 2002). Similarly, hatchery reared coho smolts were not adipose fin clipped nor was there a significant size difference between hatchery and wild reared smolts (Cope 2002). This resulted in uncertainty in the chum fry and coho smolt estimates for the 2000 out-migration.

Since 2000, the FRCC-ARMS hatchery and MOE transports and releases all fish downstream of the traps within the vicinity of the Harris Road Bridge (Figure 1.1). The only exceptions in recent years are the very limited releases of chum, chinook and coho fry by school children as part of the FRCC-ARMS Hatchery Community Education and Stewardship Program. Also, in an effort to facilitate imprinting and improve chinook-stocking results, hatchery reared chinook fry (50,000 – 349,800) were released upstream at ALLCO Park between April and June (G. Clayton, ARMS, Maple Ridge, B.C., *pers. comm*.). In 2012, chinook fry were held until the completion of the downstream enumeration program, facilitating the estimation of wild chinook out-migrant smolt estimates for the first time. Annual hatchery releases within the South Alouette River are summarized in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1. Hatchery reared salmonids released into the South Alouette River, 1998-2012. Note that due to the success of restoration efforts chum and pink salmon are no longer a target species for hatchery enhancement (data courtesy FRCC-ARMS and BC Ministry of Environment).

Species	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Chum Fry	1,200,00	1,676,075	661,126	884,593	134,979	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3,200	-
Pink Fry	8,000	-	197,487	-	126,176	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chinook Fry	182,760	213,168	149,807	84,842	138,487	148,789	98,972	350,000	259,000	325,336	406,000	349,800	329,500	127,150	49,805
Coho Fry	-	-	149,000	89,080	83,000	85,000	70,000	60,989	150,949	-	115,159	108,491	-	76,400	81,500
Coho Smolts	90,000	20,120	7,961	71,925	35,717	103,324	28,195	64,340	60,595	73,201	17,238	79,412	35,148	25,111	24,007
Steelhead Smolts	13,506	4,543	25,447	23,734	25,781	24,123	23,273	24,091	25,529	17,780	26,390	21,004	24,652	31,141	25,354
Cutthroat Trout	15,320	30,509	18,404	22,520	15,021	13,871	7,878	23,230	10,870	344	6,788	1,800	4,856	8,761	8,520

3. Results

In total, 223 trap days of effort were expended from 1 March to 14 June 2012. During the 105 consecutive days of trapping a total of 17 trap-days of effort were lost resulting in three days (2.8%) when there was no catch enumerated and the daily catch was estimated. Table 3.1 summarizes the dates traps were inundated and catch was lost or traps were not operating and the reason why catch was lost or not enumerated (i.e. safety hazard, rising river stage and debris load etc.).

Table 3.1. Dates traps were not operating are identified in the following table. Incline-plane traps operated from 1 March to 3 May 2012. The 1.8 m dia. rotary screw trap operated from 9 March to 14 June 2012.

Date/Time Traps Not Operating	IPT #1	Trap IPT #2	1.8 m Rotary	Comment
4 Mar 12:00 - 5 Mar 18:00	X	X		Flood Flows and Debris[2]
9 Mar 18:00 - 11 Mar 18:00	X	X		Flood Flows and Debris[2]
	X	X		Flood Flows and Debris[2]
15 Mar 10:00 – 16 Mar 19:00	X	X		Flood Flows and Debris[2]
31 Mar 9:00 – 1 Apr 14:00			X	Failed Gasket
			X	Trap Repairs
23-Apr 00:00 - 8:00		X		Flood Flows and Debris[1]
25 Apr 23:00- 27 Apr 19:00	X	X	X	Flood Flows and Debris[1]
	X	X	X	Flood Flows and Debris[2]
Total Days Lost	6	7	4	
Total Effort (trap days)	63	63	97	Grand Total = 223 trap days

[1] – Rising river stage and increased debris load resulting in inundated trap and lost catch.

[2] – Rising river stage and debris load. River stage exceeding safe operating range and trap inundation considered imminent. Traps disabled to prevent potential trap inundation and fish mortalities.

On those days where IPT's were not operating but the RST was operating, the daily catch was estimated from the RST catch. The catch for the three days when no traps were operating was estimated as the average of the two adjacent days.

During the late season period 29 May to 14 June, the rotary screw trap was disabled and pulled to shore during daylight when staff was not on-site (generally 13:00 – 19:30). This change in trap operation was implemented with the on-set of warm summer weather to minimize the risk of entrapment to members of the recreating public (i.e. "tubers") that may disregard the warning signage and attempt to navigate through the trapping site. Given the documented low proportion of the smolt catch during daylight, the catch for these 24-hour periods was considered representative.

Total trapping effort was consistent with the range of effort for previous years (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2. Time period (*i.e.* consecutive days), lost trap-days, and total effort (trap-days) during the South Alouette Downstream Enumeration Program (1998-2012).

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Start Date	5 Mar	27 Feb	25 Feb	27 Feb	26 Feb	27 Feb	25 Feb	2 Mar	27 Feb	27 Feb	27 Feb	27 Feb	1 Mar	3 Mar	1 Mar
Finish Date	8 Jun	28 May	2 Jun	2 Jun	27 May	2 Jun	2 Jun	25 May	25 May	24 May	5 Jun	14 Jun	14 Jun	14 Jun	14 Jun
No. Trap-Days lost	36	9	5	6	12	6	12	8	3	48	3	5	12	23	17
Total Effort (Trap-Days)	186	225	230	222	226	232	224	198	208	206	227	233	234	230	223
Consecutive Days Reported	89	91	97	96	89	96	96	72	87	n/a	99	107	106	104	105

3.1. Species Composition

Over the course of the salmonid smolt trapping program (1998-2012), 28 fish species have been confirmed; 20 species were captured in the 2012 enumeration program (Table 3.3). While this species assemblage was similar to that previously reported from the study area (Elson 1985), there were several notable exceptions.

Chinook, pink and sockeye salmon were considered extinct in 1985. Since 1998, out-migrant fry or smolts of all three species have been captured and confirmed. Returning chinook, pink and sockeye salmon (e.g. mature pre-spawners) have been confirmed at the FRCC-ARMS hatchery broodstock fence (Table 3.4).

Table 3.4. Annual FRCC-ARMS Hatchery fish fence counts, S. Alouette River (data courtesy of FRCC-ARMS).

Year	Chum	Chinook	Pink	Coho	Sockeye
2003[a]	10,727	0	2,275	51	
2005	76,191	296	2,043	451	
2006	150,734	39	N/a	146	
2007	16,502	369	103	298	28
2008	71,980	78	N/a	273	54
2009[b]	153,882	24	6,766	78	45
2010	41,312	325	n/a	339	115
2011	25,042	141	1,393	628	11
2012[c]	129,554	350	n/a	52	42

[a] Fence down 10 days.
[b] Fence down approximately 14 days.
[c] preliminary data as of Dec 7, 2012.

Fry and smolt enumeration has documented naturally spawned chinook and pink fry out-migrants. These results have documented the successful re-establishment of pink salmon with an estimated escapement of between 4,500 to 20,000 spawners. A small but consistent number of naturally spawned chinook fry are confirmed every year. Since 2005, what were assumed to be kokanee smolts from Alouette Reservoir have been genetically confirmed to represent descendants of sockeye salmon trapped within Alouette Lake at the time of dam construction in the 1920's, over 80 years ago (ARMS 2007). These smolts are annually captured 1.5 kms below the dam in a rotary screw trap exiting the Alouette Reservoir as part of field trials to assess smolt migration success (Mathews *et al.* 2013).

Table 3.3. Species of fish present or recorded from the Alouette River system (Elson 1985) and those encountered in the present study.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Elson 1985	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Chinook Salmon	*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*	X*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Coho Salmon	*O. kisutch*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Pink Salmon	*O. gorbuscha*	X	X		X		X		X		X		X		X		X
Chum Salmon	*O. keta*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sockeye Salmon	*O. nerka*	X*					X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Kokanee	*O. nerka*	X															
Steelhead	*O. mykiss*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Rainbow Trout	*O. mykiss*	X			X**					X^{+}							X
Cutthroat Trout	*O. clarki clarki*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Dolly Varden Char	*Salvelinus malma*	X		X**													
Lake Trout	*S. namaycush*	X															
Mountain Whitefish	*Prosopium williamsoni*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Stickleback	*Gasterosteus sp.*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sculpin	*Cottus sp.*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Lamprey	*Lampetra sp.*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Northern Pikeminnow	*Ptycheilus oregonensis*	X						X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Peamouth Chub	*Mylocheilus caurinus*	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Largescale Sucker	*Catostomus macrocheilus*	X	X	X**	X			X	X	X		X					
Longnose Sucker	*Catostomus catostomus*	X								X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Longnose Dace	*Rhinichthys cataractae*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Redside Shiner	*Richardsonius balteatus*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Black Crappie	*Pomoxis nigromaculatus*	X									X						
Pumpkinseed Sunfish	*Lepomis gibbosus*												X		X	X	X
Oriental Weatherfish	*Misgunus anguillicaudata*												X	X	X	X	X
Brown Catfish	*Ameiurus nebulosus*	X		X			X										
Brassy Minnow	*Hybognathus hankinsoni*	X			X	X	X	X	X	X		X					X
Eulachon	*Thaleichthys pacificus*			X			X										
Common Carp	*Cyprinus carpio*		X**	X		X								X^{++}			

X – Extinct. X* - Isolated after dam construction (1925), extinct. X** - Observed. X^{+}- Identified as hatchery stock released into Alouette Lake. ++ Ornamental aquarium goldfish.

In 2008, two non-indigenous “exotics” were captured in the S. Alouette River for the first time. Oriental weatherfish (*Misgurnus anguillicaudata*) were captured in the S. Alouette River. These captures represent the first reported occurrence for this alien species in British Columbia waters. The aquarium trade imports this species and feral populations were first reported in California in 1968. More recently, they have been reported as far north as Puget Sound and Snohomish County Washington. In 2008 through 2012 there were five, two, 22, 17 and 24 oriental weatherfish captured, respectively. Captures have ranged between 101 mm to 205 mm and there is likely more than one-year class present in the S. Alouette River. This raises the possibility that they have established a self- sustaining population (J.D. McPhail, U.B.C., Vancouver, B.C., *pers. comm.*).

In 2008 through 2012, a total of 18 pumpkinseed sunfish were captured. Although this is a new species report for the S. Alouette River, McPhail (2007) reports they occur in the lower Fraser Valley. This non-native species has been widely introduced into Western North America.

Both eulachon and carp were not previously recorded within the Alouette River. Elson (1985) records common carp within the Pitt River watershed, but not the Alouette River watershed. Eulachon are a culturally significant species and local first nation reports suggest they may have they did utilized- personaly witnessed GC the Alouette River for spawning in the past. This is supported by anecdotal reports of local residents dip-netting for eulachon in the lower South Alouette River in the 1940’s.

The 2012 catch and relative contribution of each fish species to the total catch are presented in Table 3.5. In total, 1,458,763 wild reared fish were captured. Previously (1998 – 2011), the total catch ranged from 253,761 (2007) to 2,702,981 (2003).

Moving the rotary screw trap site upstream to the 224th St. location, combined with the use of the temporary “efficiency panels” has provided the desired increase in trap efficiency for smolts (Table 3.5). Sculpin *spp.,* stickleback *spp.,* and longnose dace dominate the non-sportfish catch.

Catch results between the incline plane traps and rotary screw traps reflect program objectives for each gear type. Incline plane traps were utilized primarily to capture fry and rotary screw traps for smolts. This was due to the size selectivity of the trapping methods. For incline plane traps, the larger the juvenile fish, the lower the efficiency rating (Cope 1998). The fork-length cut-off, while dependent on the water velocities of the incline-plane, would appear to be in the order of 50 - 70 mm. The larger rotary screw is more effective at capturing juveniles in excess of 60 mm and was necessary to achieve smolt capture objectives. The incline plane traps have a higher efficiency rating for fry at lower fork lengths and this effect becomes particularly evident for pink salmon fry, the smallest of the emigrating target species.

Table 3.5. Catch composition (excluding recaptures and hatchery reared fry and smolts) of the 2012 South Alouette River downstream trapping program.

	Combined Totals	
Common Name	Catch	% Composition
Salmoniformes – Fry		
Chum	1,416,000	97.0
Pink	20,956	1.4
Coho	510	<0.1
Chinook	9,522	0.7
Total	1,446,988	99.2
Salmoniformes – Smolts		
Coho	9,740	0.7
Sockeye[a]	26	<0.1
Steelhead	720	<0.1
Cutthroat Trout	189	<0.1
Total	10,675	0.7
Non-Sportfish		
Brassy Minnow	6	<0.1
Lamprey	81	<0.1
Longnose Sucker	19	<0.1
Longnose Dace	194	<0.1
Northern Pikeminnow	63	<0.1
Oriental Weatherfish	24	<0.1
Peamouth Chub	2	<0.1
Pumpkinseed	4	<0.1
Redside Shiner	30	<0.1
Sculpin spp.	387	<0.1
Stickleback spp.	290	<0.1
Total	1,100	0.1
Grand Total	1,458,763	100.0

a – previously referred to as kokanee. DNA testing confirmed as sockeye.

3.1.1. Species at Risk

To date, capture of the SARA listed Salish sucker and Nooksack dace has not occurred. This assessment is based on visual examination only. Since 2009, 157 longnose suckers and 672 longnose dace were captured. There were zero reported mortalities for these species so any incidental misidentification would not have resulted in any impact to these species.

3.2. Chum Salmon Fry

The seasonal pattern of chum fry out-migration in the South Alouette River was characterized by first emergence in late February, peak migration mid-April, and the end of migration in early May (Figure 3.1). In 2012, the dates of 10%, 50% and 90% migration were 7 April, 19 April, and 26 April, respectively. This represents typical chum fry out-migration timing; the median date of 90% out-migration for the period 1998 to 2012 was 23 April (range 17 Apr – 10 May, n=15).

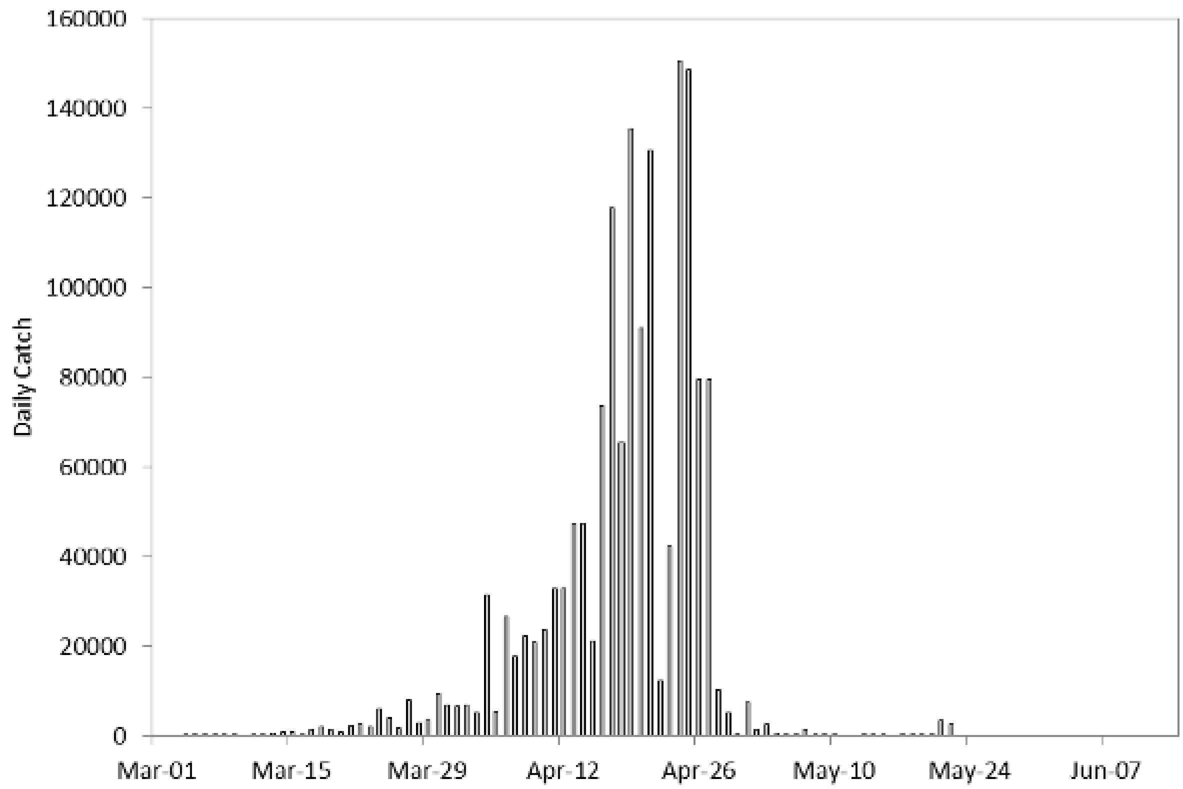

Figure 3.1. Daily chum salmon fry catch for the South Alouette River, 2012.

The total number of chum fry captured in 2012 was 1,416,000. Including estimates for those days where catch was lost or traps were disabled (n=3), the total fry captures for the 2012 out-migration was 1,574,903. This represents a 60% increase in catch for this cycle-year since 2000 (Figure 3.2).

Twelve marked fry releases were conducted and recovery data was generated from all of the releases. Mark recoveries for the rotary screw trap from the 2 May release were not representative due to the low fry catch and the high smolt catch. This resulted in virtually all fry within the live box being predated. This assessment was confirmed by the incline plane traps and as result the rotary screw trap mark-recapture was repeated on 8 May.

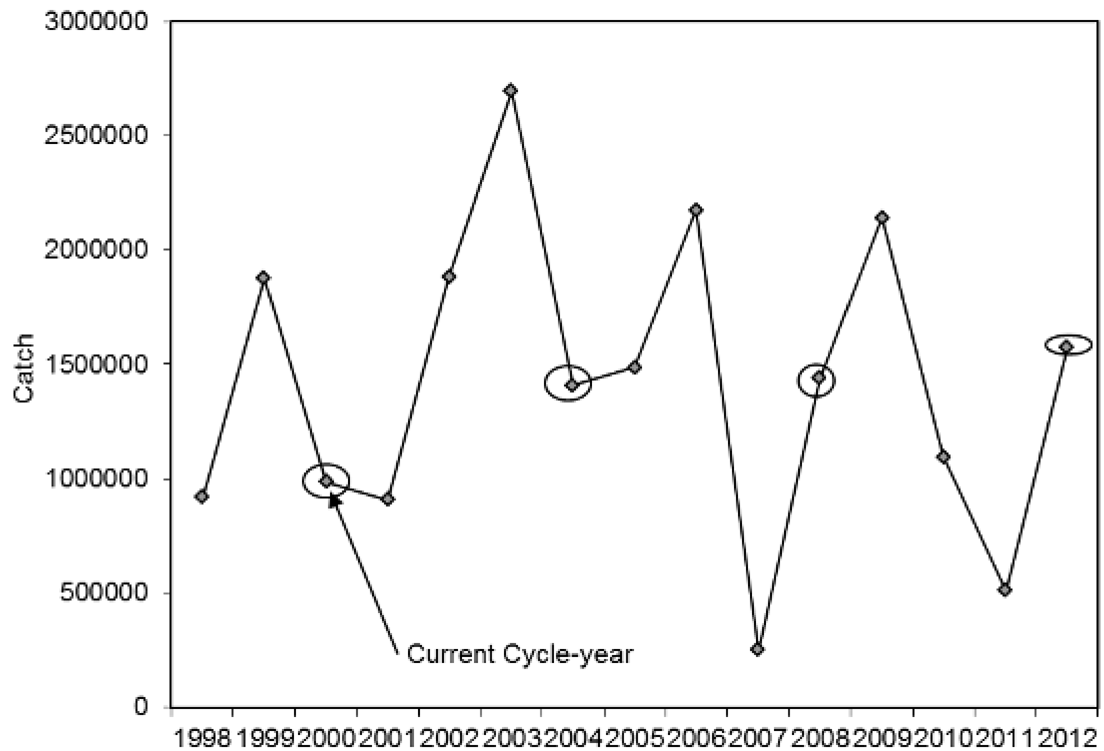

Figure 3.2. Summary of wild spawned chum fry captures within the South Alouette River, 1998 - 2012. Note regression line is based on the current cycle-year (n=4).

The total marked fry released was 34,743 (2.5% total catch) and the number recaptured was 5,581 (16.1%). Releases ranged from 604 to 4,960 marked fry. Recovery (combined) rates ranged from 7.3% to 29.4% and the mean individual trap recovery rates were 3.3%, 3.8% and 8.9% for incline plane trap 1, incline plane trap 2, and the rotary screw trap, respectively. Based on the pooled catch and recovery data (*i.e.,* pooled Peterson estimator), the chum fry out-migrant population was estimated to be 9.8 million fish (95% confidence interval: 9.5 to 10.0 million fish).

Based on the pooled daily trap catches stratified by release and recapture period (*i.e.* stratified Peterson estimator), the out-migrant estimate of chum salmon fry in 2012 was 8.6 million fish (95% confidence interval: 7.8 to 9.6 million fish). Figure 3.3 illustrates the 2012 out-migration timing in relation to the average for the years 1998 – 2011.

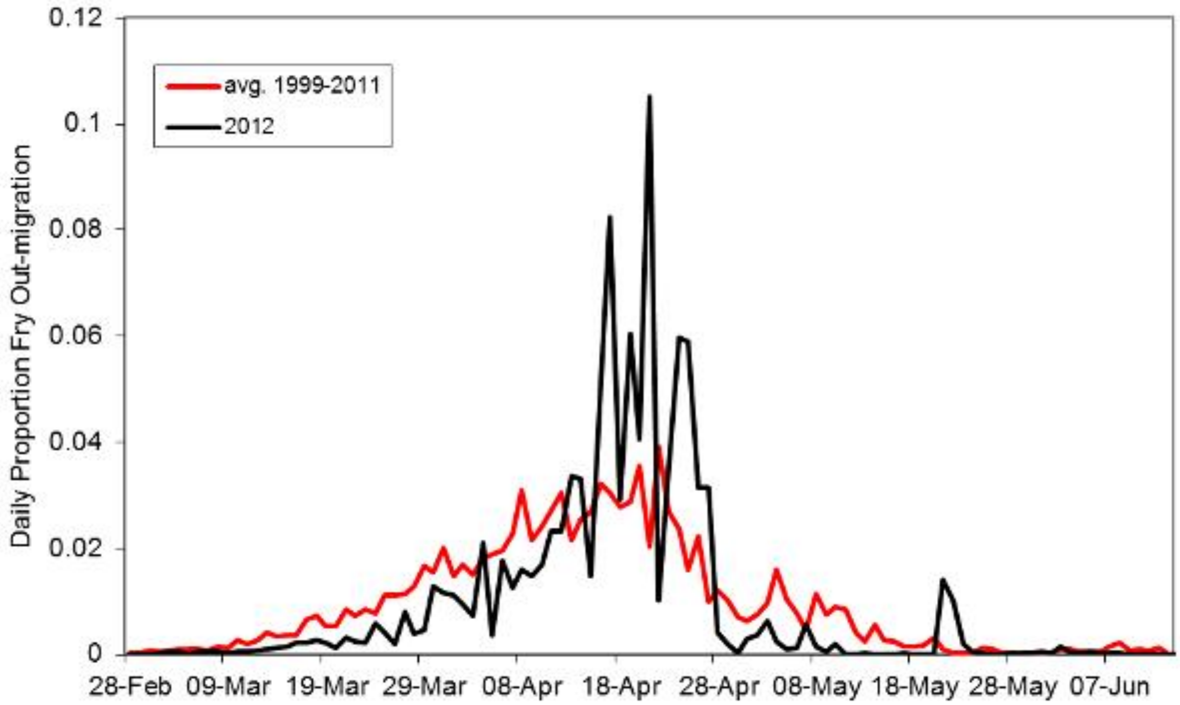

Figure 3.3. Daily chum fry out-migration estimates represented as a proportion of total annual out-migration illustrating the current year versus the 1999 to 2011 average.

Figure 3.4 illustrates the annual chum fry out-migration estimates in time series. While the 2012 estimate represents a 44.9% decrease in fry production from the previous generation for this cycle year, it represents a 26.5% increase in fry production since monitoring began for this cycle year (i.e. since 2000; Table 3.4). There has been no significant increase in chum fry production over the duration of the study (regression, p=0.55).

Unlike previous years with lower than expected production estimates, the current year was not preceded by very high spawner escapements. The low chum fry yield in both 2007 and 2010 were preceded by very high spawner escapements (i.e. ALLCO fence count >150,000, Table 3.4). Those results obtained following remarkably similar and extremely high spawner escapement years, suggests the conclusion of previous years that egg-to-fry survival is relatively constant and the South Alouette River has not yet reached the point of density-dependent mortality may not be accurate (*see* section 3.10 Hypothesis Testing).

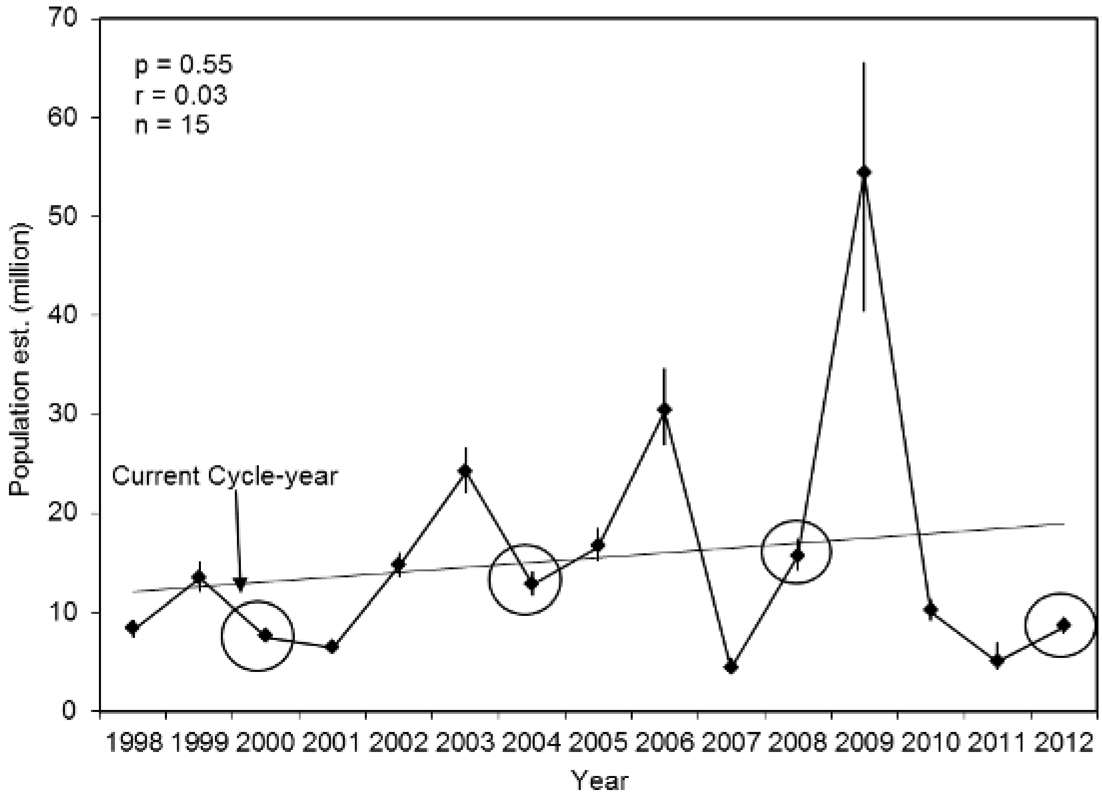

Figure 3.4. Summary of annual wild spawned chum fry out-migration estimates (+/- 95% confidence interval) for the South Alouette River, 1998 - 2012. A linear trendline has been superimposed for annual estimates.

Table 3.6. Summary of estimated chum fry production (x 10^6) between cycle-years (*i.e.* based on a dominant 4 year (0.3) cycle), South Alouette River.

Cycle-Year	1st generation Out-migration Estimate	2nd generation Out-migration Estimate	3rd generation Out-migration Estimate	4th generation Out-migration Estimate	Estimated Production Increase
1998/2002/2006/2010	8.3	14.7	30.3	10.1	1.2
1999/2003/2007/2011	13.4	24.1	4.3	4.9	-2.7
2000/2004/2008/2012	6.8	12.8	15.6	8.6	1.3
2001/2005/2009	6.4	16.6	54.3		8.5

Figure 3.5 illustrates the mean fork length of chum salmon fry out migrants through the chum salmon capture period. The consistency of the mean fork length from 2 March to 3 May illustrates the ongoing fry emergence and out-migration during this period. The mean fork length

during this period averaged 37.2 mm (range 35.8 – 38.6). Mean chum fry lengths during the out-migration period have been consistent for the last four years (range 37.0 – 38.4). After 3 May the mean fry length typically increases substantially illustrating the end of fry emergence and out-migration. The remaining small percentage of larger sized fry after 3 May represent fry that have not out-migrated immediately following emergence but rather have remained for a period of exogenous feeding and rearing within the Alouette River.

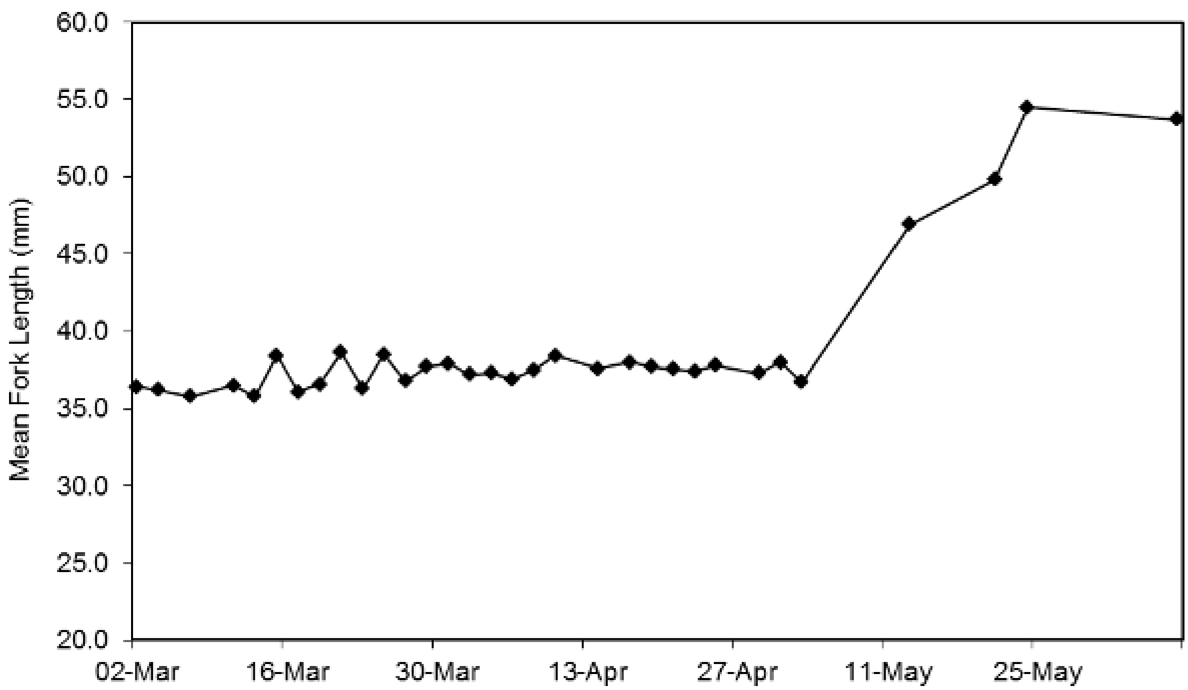

Figure 3.5. Mean fork length of out-migrant chum salmon fry, South Alouette River 2 March to 7 June, 2012.

3.3. Pink Fry

The seasonal pattern of pink fry out-migration in the South Alouette River was characterized by first emergence in early March, peak migration mid-April, and the end of migration in late April (Figure 3.6). In 2012, the dates of 10%, 50% and 90% migration were 5 April, 18 April, and 24 April, respectively. The timing of peak out-migration in 2012 was later than previous years (2004 - 2010). Dates of 50% and 90% pink fry out-migration for these years were 2-9 April and 13-19 April, respectively.

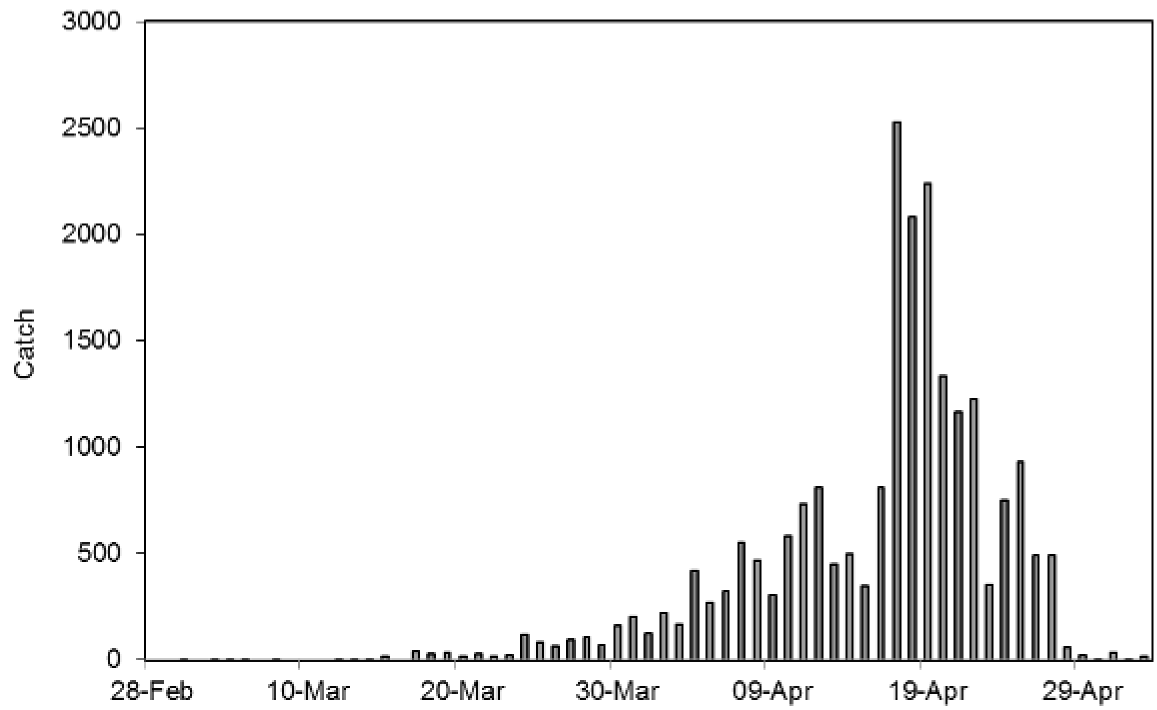

Figure 3.6. Daily pink salmon fry catch for the South Alouette River, 2012.

In total, 20,956 pink fry were captured. Including estimates for those days where catch was lost or traps were disabled (n=3), the total fry captures for the 2012 out-migration was 21,944. This represents a 133% increase in catch over the previous year (Figure 3.7). Typically, annual captures in the range of 6,000 to 30,000 fry are expected (Figure 3.7).

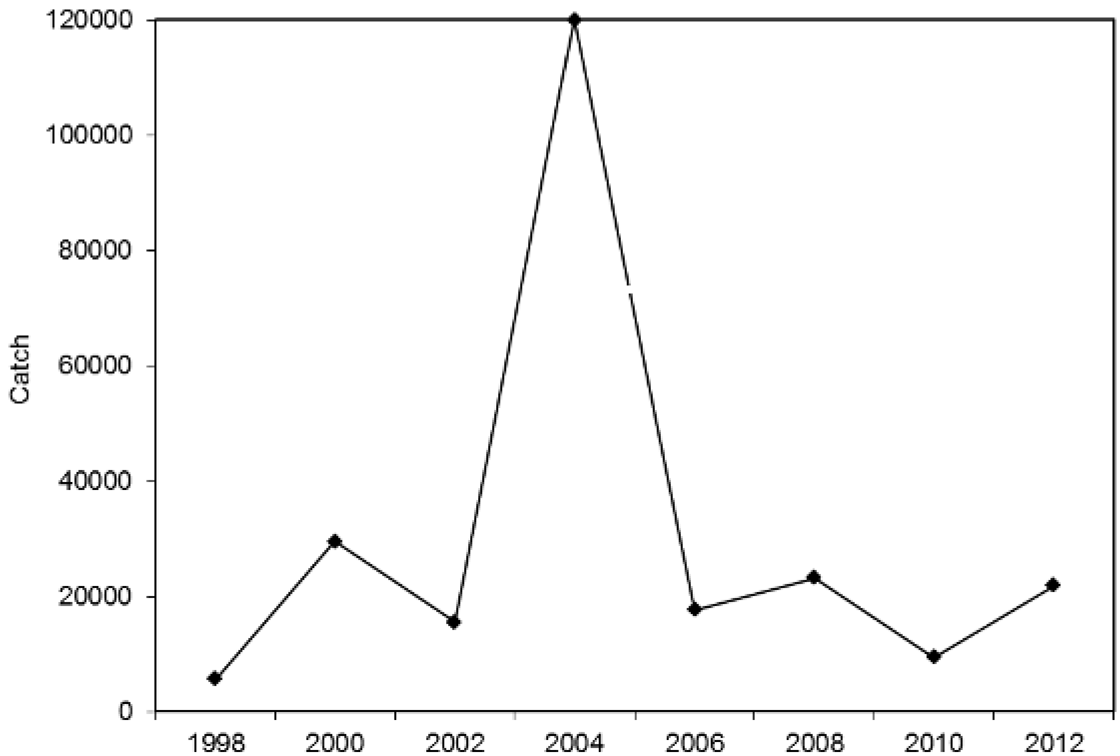

Figure 3.7. Summary of wild pink fry captures within the S. Alouette River, 1998 - 2012.

Total number of pink fry marked and released was 950 (4.3% of catch). There were 71 recaptures for all three traps combined resulting in a combined mean trap efficiency of 7.5%. Trap efficiency was identical to the previous year and as expected the rotary screw trap does not catch pink fry. The combined incline plane trap efficiency for pink fry was 7.05%, compared to 0.42% for the rotary screw trap.

Eight release events ranging from 38 to 319 marked pink fry were completed. Only one individual mark event achieved recapture targets (>25) and as a result, stratification was not possible. The pooled Peterson estimate for the 2012 pink fry out-migrant population was 289,844 fish (95% confidence interval 233,040 to 370,736 fish). Figure 3.8 illustrates the annual pink fry out-migration estimates for 1998 to 2012. While there has been no significant increase in pink fry production over the duration of the study (regression, p=0.87); the current emigrating pink fry estimate represents an increase of 145% over the last year (2010).

Figure 3.9 illustrates the 2010 out-migration timing in relation to the average for the previous study years (1998 – 2010).

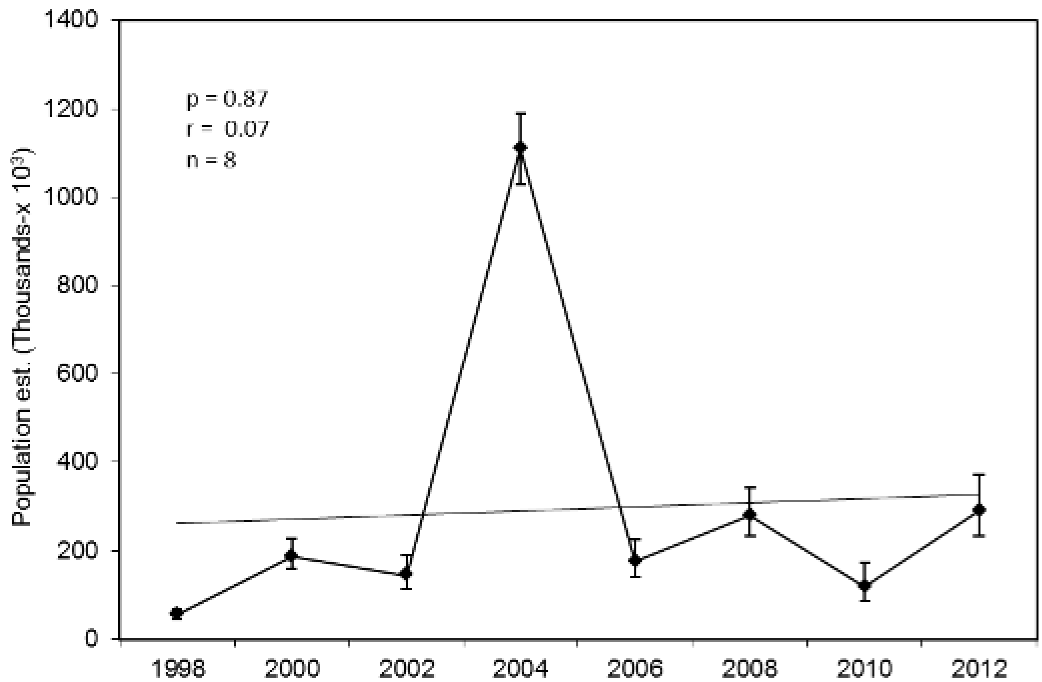

Figure 3.8. Summary of annual wild spawned pink fry out-migration estimates (+/- 95% confidence interval) for the South Alouette River, 1998 - 2012.

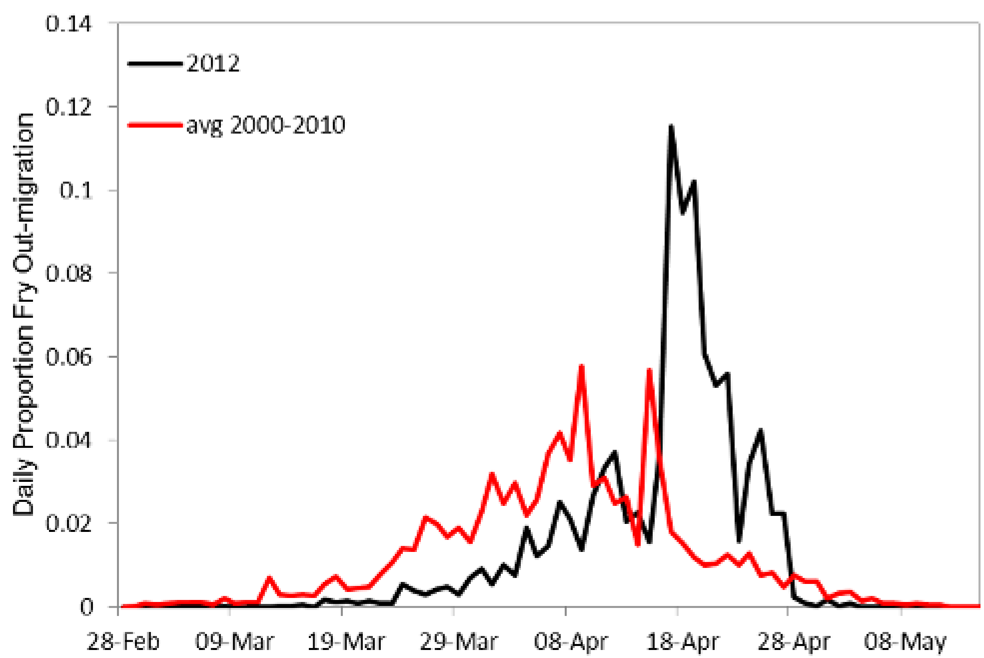

Figure 3.9. Daily pink fry out-migration catch represented as a proportion of total annual catch illustrating the timing observed in 2012.

Figure 3.10 illustrates the mean fork length of pink salmon fry out migrants through the enumeration period. The consistency of the mean fork length from 19 March to 3 May illustrates the ongoing fry emergence and out-migration during this period. The mean fork length during this period averaged 34.1 mm (range 32.4 – 35.4).

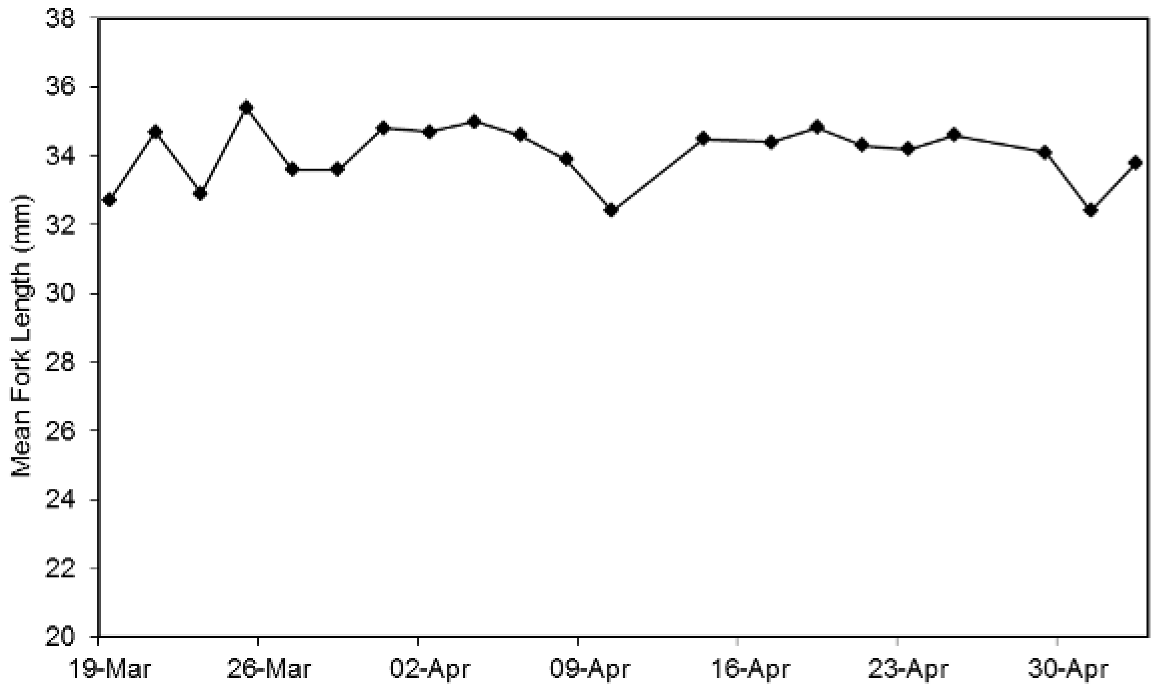

Figure 3.10. Mean fork length of out-migrant pink salmon fry, South Alouette River, 2012.

3.4. Coho Fry

A total of 510 wild coho fry were enumerated in 2012 (Table 3.7). This represents the third year in a row of above average coho fry catch. Higher fry catches of late coincide with above average coho smolt production and above average spawner escapements (Table 3.4); suggesting improved coho salmon production the last three years.

However, enumeration of coho fry is not considered reliable because coho fry captures do not represent a directed out-migration pattern, but rather incidental movements associated with storm events and increased flow. The peak catch of 20 April (Figure 3.11) was associated with a large storm event and flushing flows, particularly within South Alouette River coho rearing tributaries (*see* 3.10 Physical Conditions).

Table 3.7. Summary of coho fry captures within the South Alouette River.

Year	Catch
1998	116
1999	86
2000	582
2001	87
2002	313
2003	3,902*
2004	135
2005	390
2006	15
2007	52
2008	29
2009	22
2010	309
2011	913
2012	510

*Note: Incidental coho fry captures may include hatchery-raised individuals. Hatchery coho fry were released unmarked.

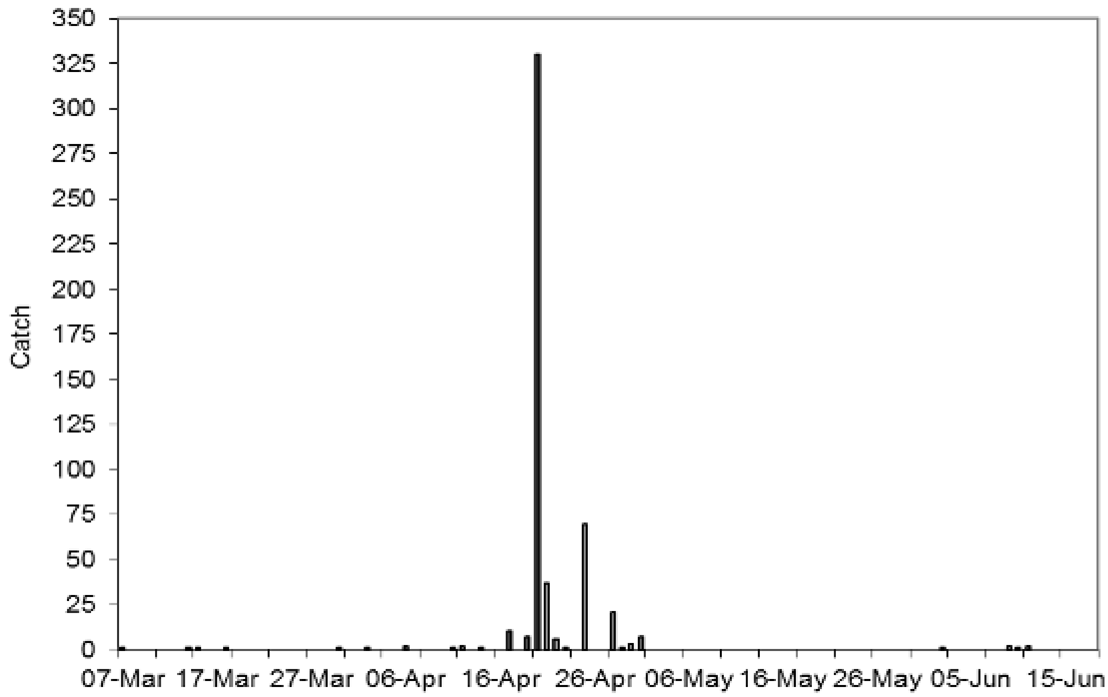

Figure 3.11. Daily coho salmon fry catch for the South Alouette River, 2012.

3.5. Chinook Fry

In 2012, hatchery reared chinook fry were not released until downstream trapping was completed and for the first time chinook fry out-migration (i.e. Under-yearling smolts) was enumerated with confidence. In total, 9,522 chinook fry were captured. Including estimates for those days where catch was lost or traps were disabled (n=3), the total fry captures for the 2012 out-migration was 10,408. This represents the highest annual capture to date (Figure 3.12). Based on the increasing trend in chinook salmon out-migrants during the past three years, chinook salmon appear to be responding to stocking efforts (p=0.07; regression, n=15).

The seasonal pattern of chinook fry out-migration in the South Alouette River was characterized by first emergence in late March, peak migration mid-June, and the end of migration most likely in late June; after enumeration operations have been ended (Figure 3.13). In 2012, the dates of 10%, 50% and 90% migration were 25 April, 6 June, and 13 June, respectively. These dates and timing are biased early due to the end of enumeration operations 14 June when chinook out-migrants were still being captured in numbers.

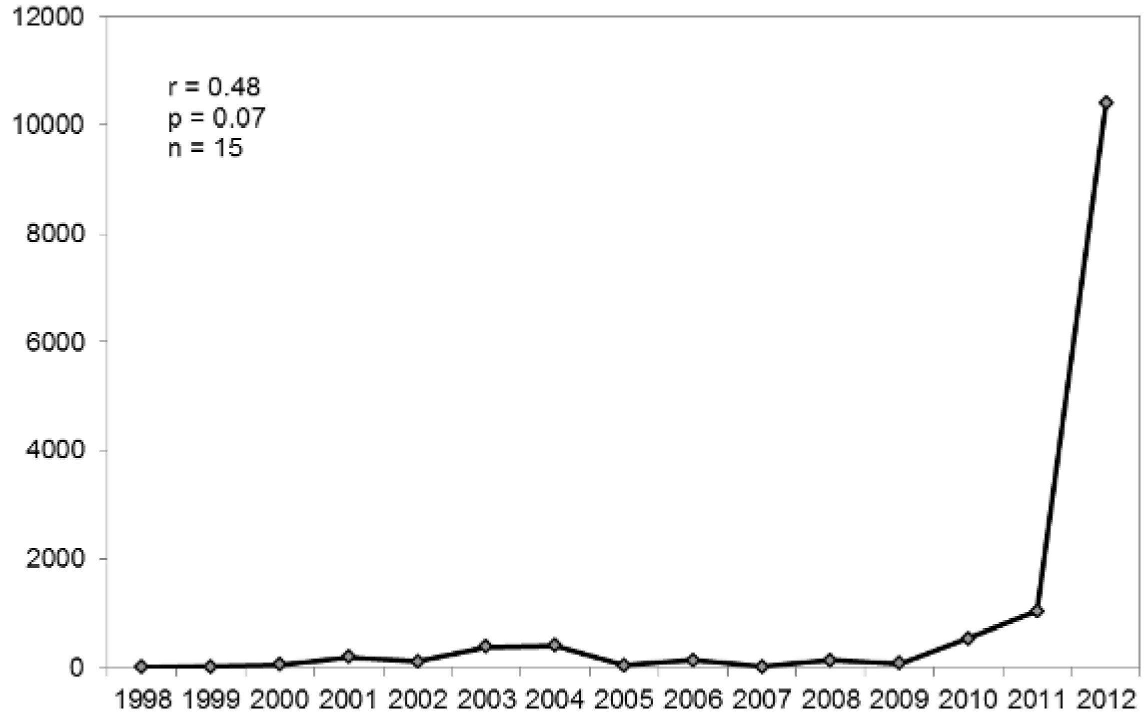

Figure 3.12. Summary of wild spawned chinook salmon fry captures within the South Alouette River, 1998 - 2012.

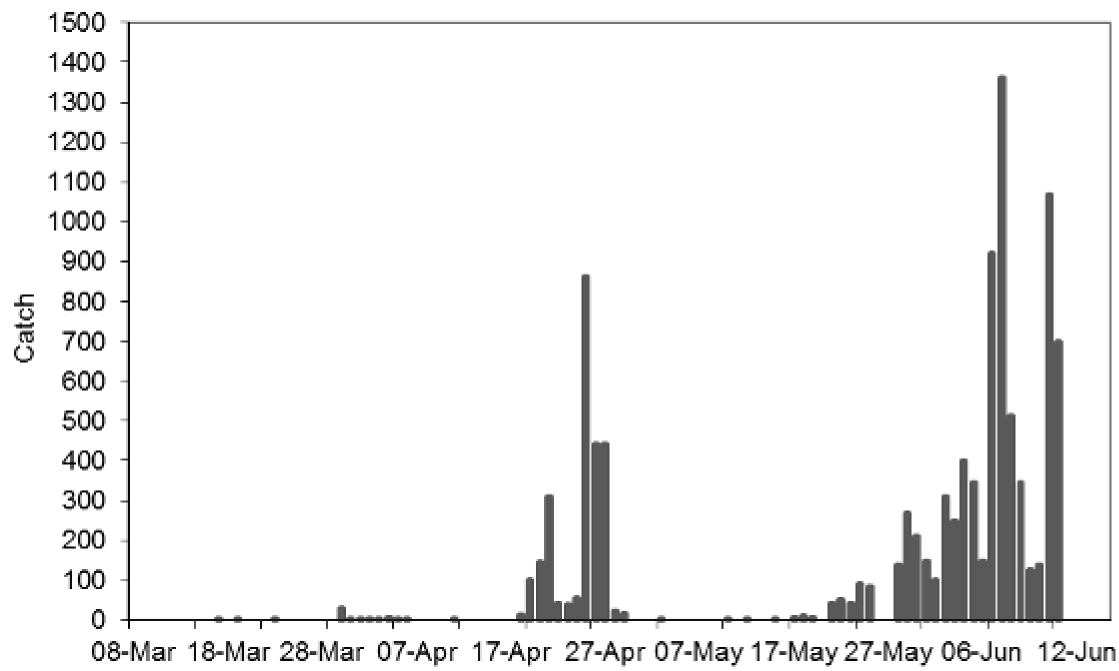

Figure 3.13. Daily chinook salmon fry catch for the South Alouette River, 2012.

One mark – recapture sequence was completed using caudal fin clips during peak out-migration June 8 – 11. Total number of chinook fry marked and released was 521 (5.0% of catch). There were 184 recaptures for a trap efficiency of 35.0%. The pooled Peterson estimate for the 2 March to 14 June, 2012 chinook fry out-migrant population was 29,370 fish (95% confidence interval 25,560 to 34,117 fish).

Figure 3.13 clearly illustrates the 2012 out-migration estimate is biased low due to the early end of trapping operations 14 June. This date coincided with the ascending limb of the out-migration distribution. Reliable population estimates would require continued trapping to at least the end of June to document the majority of the out-migration distribution.

June is a well-documented month of active downstream movement of under-yearling chinook smolts and the temporal pattern in three Vancouver Island rivers suggest early to mid-June peak timing (Healey 1991). For discussions sake, if it is assumed the mid-June peak represents the peak out-migration, and that the distribution is symmetrical, then approximately 60,000 wild spawned chinook smolts were produced. Assuming a mean fecundity of 4,800 eggs (Hart 1973) and an egg to out-migrant survival of 3 – 34% (Healey 1991) and a 1:1 sex ratio, then a spawner escapement between 61 and 833 would be expected. Since the FRCC-ARMS fence enumerated 141 returning chinook (Table 3.4), and at least two thirds of the spawning habitat lies downstream of the fence, these estimates would be consistent with observed spawning escapements. Elson (1985) reported chinook as extirpated in 1985 and the increasing trend in chinook spawning within the South Alouette River is a direct result of water releases from Alouette Dam and restoration stocking efforts from FRCC-ARMS and Chilliwack hatcheries.

3.6. Coho Smolts

The seasonal pattern of smolt out-migration was characterized as starting in Mid-April, peaking in May, and ending in mid to late June (Figure 3.14). Timing has been consistent since the establishment of the current trapping location and duration in 2009 (Figure 3.14). Out-migration timing before 2009 is not summarized due to tidal backwatering, loss of trap efficiency and early cessation of trapping (see Section 3.11 Hypothesis testing).

In total, 9,740 wild coho smolts were captured. Including estimates for those days where catch was lost or traps were disabled (n=2), the total coho smolt captures for the 2012 out-migration was 9,878. Figure 3.15 clearly illustrates out-migration catch prior to 2009 was incomplete due to tidal backwatering and loss of trap efficiency resulting in early cessation of trapping (see Section 3.11 Hypothesis testing).

In total, 3,958 marks were applied to the catch and 1,027 of these were recaptured. This resulted in a mean trap efficiency of 25.9% compared to 28.6% the previous year. Previously, mean annual trap efficiency (n=12; 1999 – 2010) was 12.4% (range 4.1 – 18.9%). The pooled Peterson estimator results in a coho smolt out-migration estimate of 38,046 (95% confidence interval: 35,824 to 40,484; Figure 3.16)

Prior to 2008, before the smolt trapping location was moved upstream to the current location, the linear trend line for the previous five years (2003-2007) suggested a significant decline in coho smolt production for the South Alouette River was occurring (Figure 3.16). However, it was suspected that much of the decline was due to early tidal backwatering effects on trap efficiency. In 2008, the trap was moved upstream, out of the tidal influence and this resulted in the expected improvements to trap efficiency thus confirming the loss of trap efficiency and resulting enumeration bias at the 216th St location. However, it was discovered that smolt out-migration was longer in duration than previously thought. In 2009 the trapping duration was extended almost two weeks to June 14. The four years 2009 to 2012 represent four of the five years that coho smolt production has exceeded 19,000 smolts since 1998 (Figure 3.16).

The mean length and weight of emigrating, wild reared, coho smolts in 2012 was 99.6 mm (range 73 – 144 mm, n=3,035) and 11.2 g (range 4.3 – 32.3 g, n=3,016), respectively. Mean smolts size (fork length) has been trending downward since 2007 and the 2012 mean fork length represents the smallest mean size on record (Figure 3.17). Smolt growth is often density-dependent and a relatively large out-migrant population would be expected to be relatively smaller.

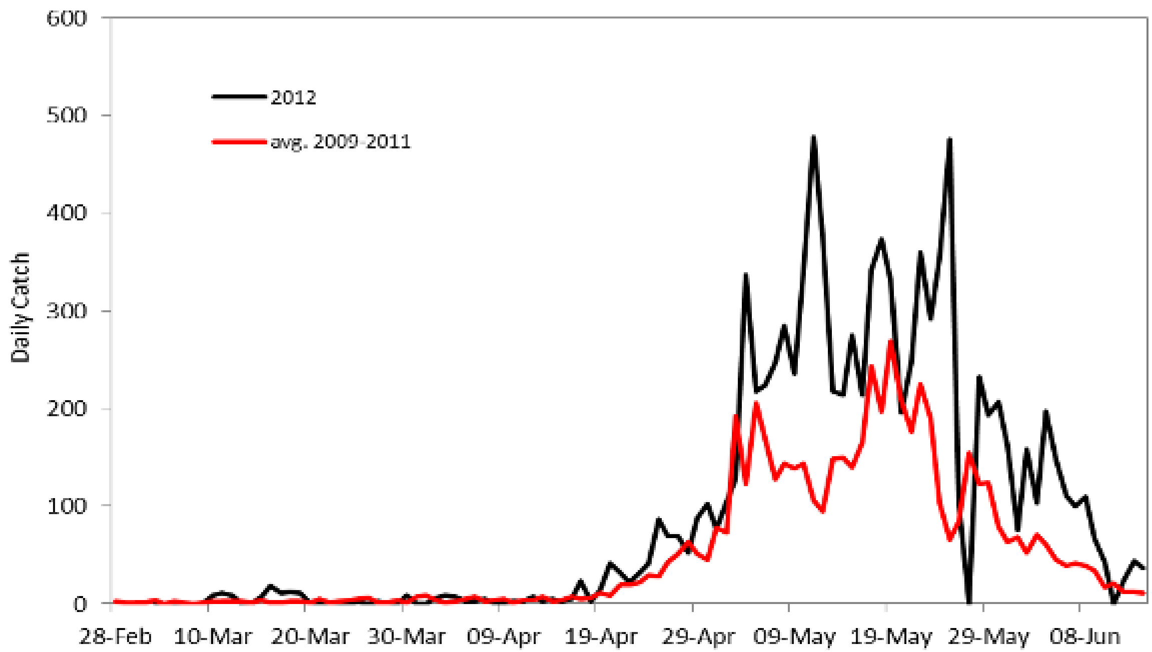

Figure 3.14. Daily coho smolt catch for the South Alouette River, 2012.

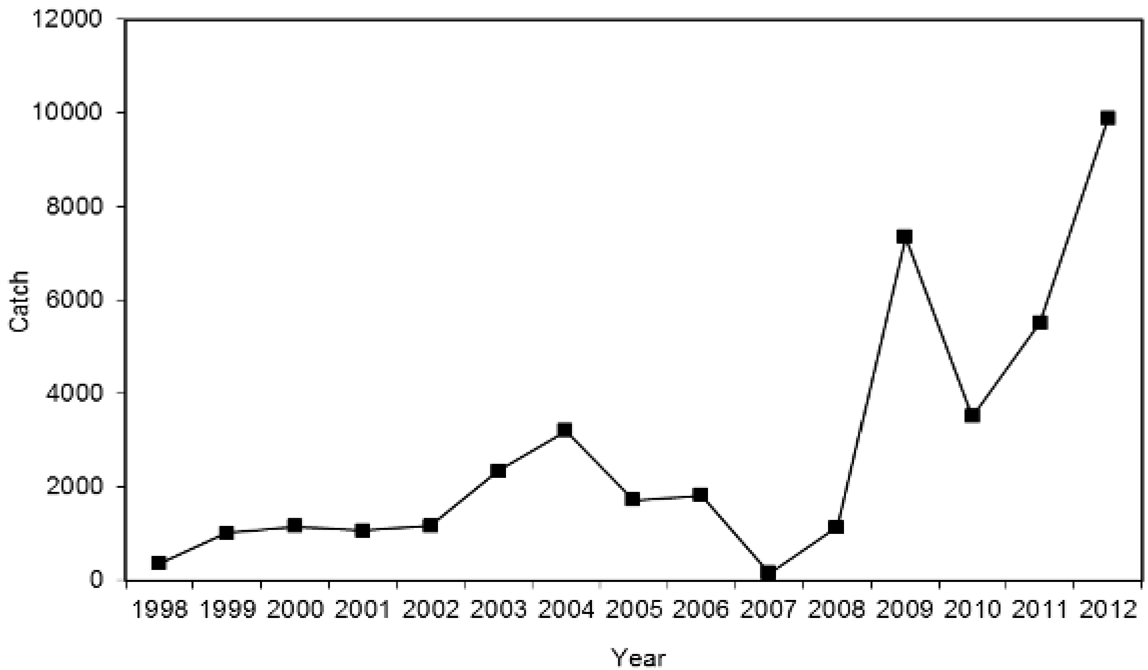

Figure 3.15. Summary of wild reared coho smolt captures within the South Alouette River, 1998 - 2012.

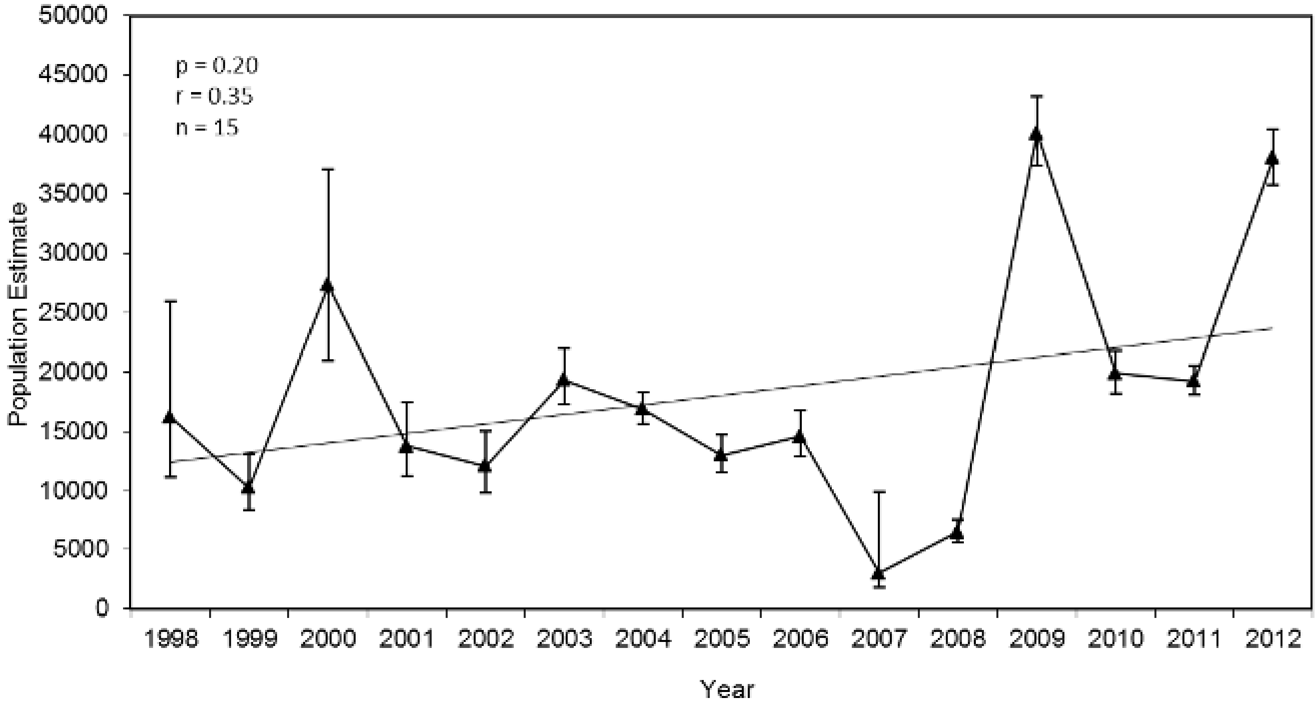

Figure 3.16. Summary of annual wild reared coho smolt out-migration estimates (+/- 95% confidence interval) for the South Alouette River, 1998 - 2012.

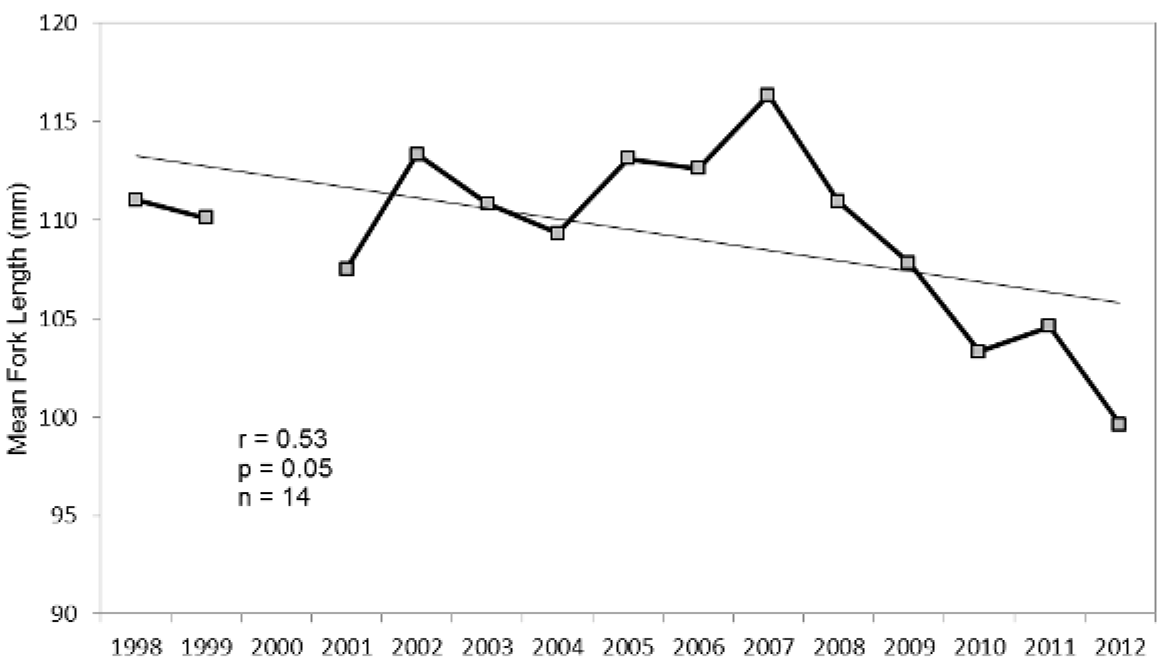

Figure 3.17. Summary of annual coho smolt size (fork length) for the South Alouette River Rotary Screw trap catch (1998 – 2012).

3.7. Steelhead Smolts

The seasonal pattern of smolt out-migration was characterized as starting in late-April, peaking in May, and ending in mid-June (Figure 3.18). Timing has been consistent since establishment of the current trapping location and duration in 2009. Out-migration timing before 2009 is not summarized due to tidal backwatering, loss of trap efficiency and early cessation of trapping (see Section 3.11 Hypothesis testing).

In total, 720 wild reared steelhead smolts were captured. Including estimates for those days where catch was lost or traps were disabled (n=2), the total coho smolt captures for the 2012 out-migration was 737. The 2012 out-migration catch was within the range expected since moving the trap upstream to the 224th St. location in 2008 (Figure 3.19). In total, 576 marks were applied to the catch and 71 of these were recaptured. This resulted in a mean trap efficiency of 12.3%. The mean annual trap efficiency from 1998 to 2011 has been 14.4% (range 0.0 – 32.6%). The respective pooled Peterson estimator results in a steelhead smolt out-migration estimate of 5,778 (95% confidence interval: 5,110 to 6,457; Figure 3.20).

There has been a weak positive (i.e. increasing) relationship for annual estimates of steelhead out-migrants (regression, p=0.07, n=14, Figure 3.20). Prior to 2008, the linear trend line for the previous five years (2003-2007) suggested a decline in steelhead smolt production for the South Alouette River was occurring. However, it was suspected the decline was due to tidal backwatering effects on trap efficiency. In 2008, the trap was moved upstream, out of the tidal influence and this resulted in the expected improvements to trap efficiency thus confirming the loss of trap efficiency and resulting enumeration bias at the 216th St location. However, it was discovered that smolt out-migration was longer in duration than previously thought. In 2009 the trapping duration was extended almost two weeks to June 14. Since 2009, estimated steelhead smolt production has met or exceeded the 5,000 to 6,000 smolt range (Figure 3.20).

The mean length and weight of emigrating, wild reared, steelhead smolts in 2012 was 144.1 mm (range 72 – 230 mm, n=541) and 35.4 g (range 3.0 – 112.0 g, n=533), respectively. Mean smolts size (fork length) has decreased significantly since monitoring began (regression, p<0.01, n=14, Figure 3.21). Smolt growth is often density-dependent and a relatively large out-migrant population would be expected to be relatively smaller.

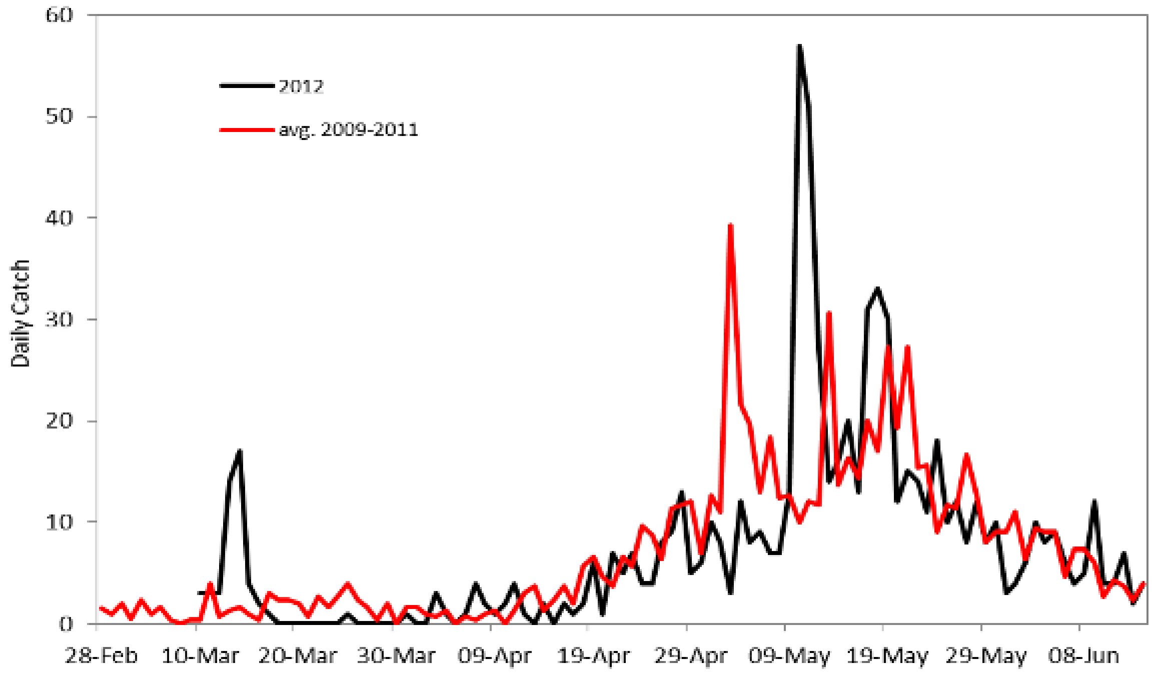

Figure 3.18. Daily steelhead smolt catch for the South Alouette River, 2012.

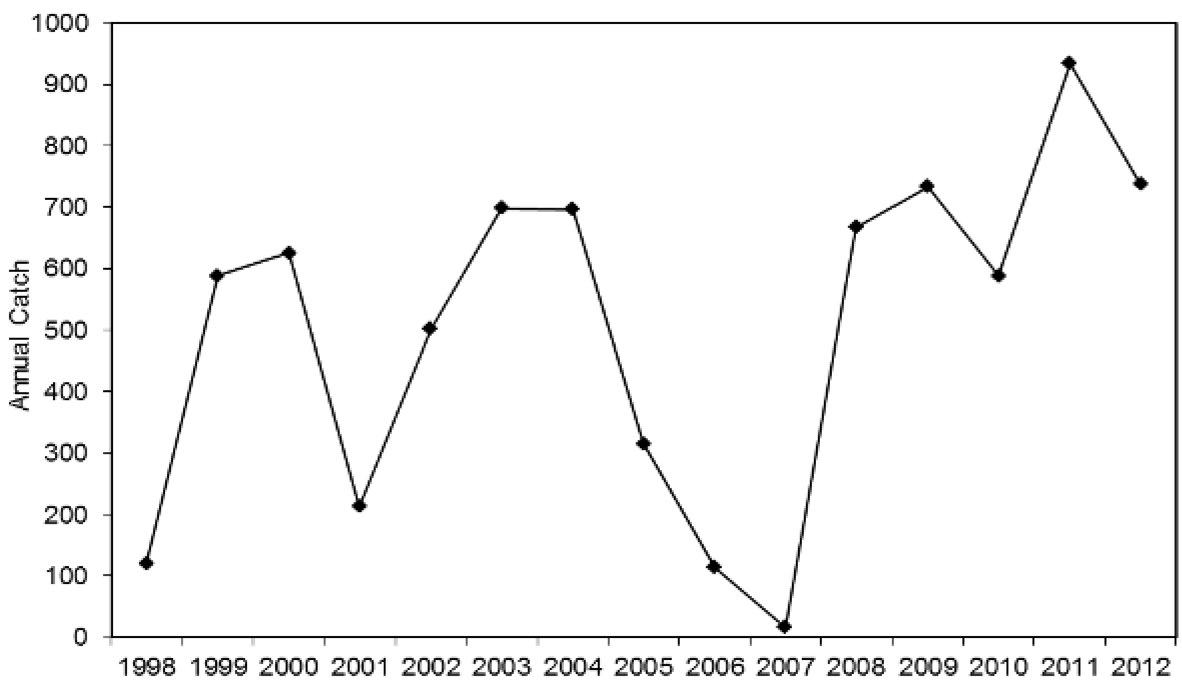

Figure 3.19. Summary of wild reared steelhead smolt captures within the South Alouette River, 1998 - 2012.

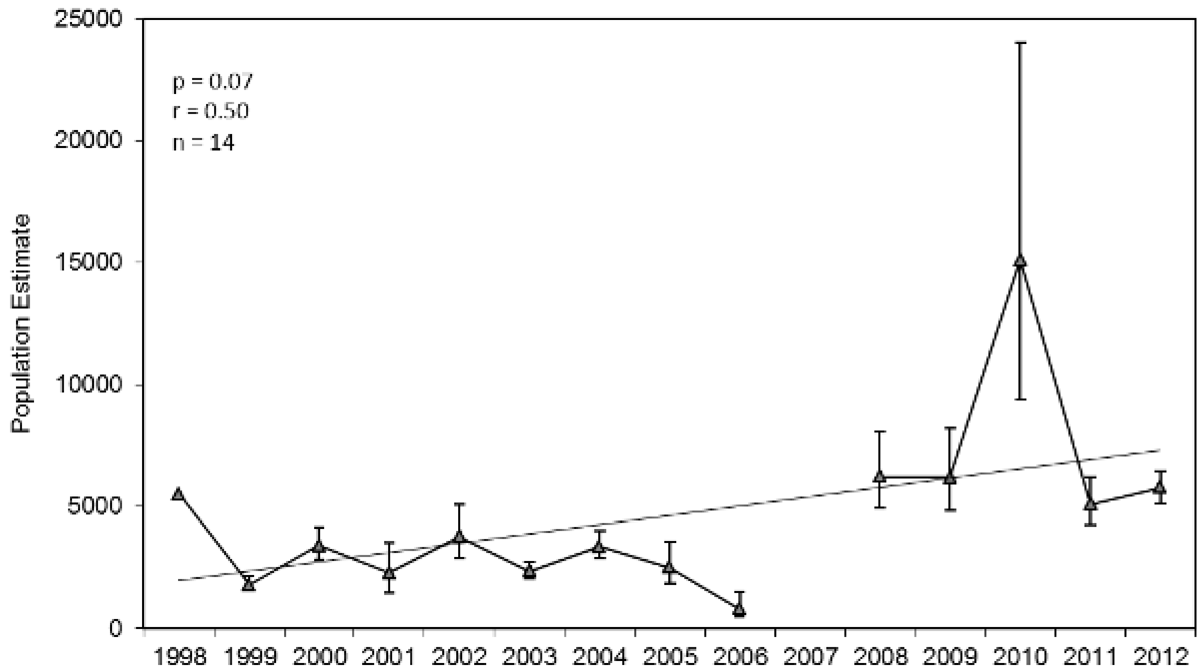

Figure 3.20. Summary of annual wild reared steelhead smolt out-migration estimates (+/- 95% confidence interval), South Alouette River, 1998 - 2012. The 2007 out-migration estimate could not be calculated due to low capture number for 2007 (n=16).

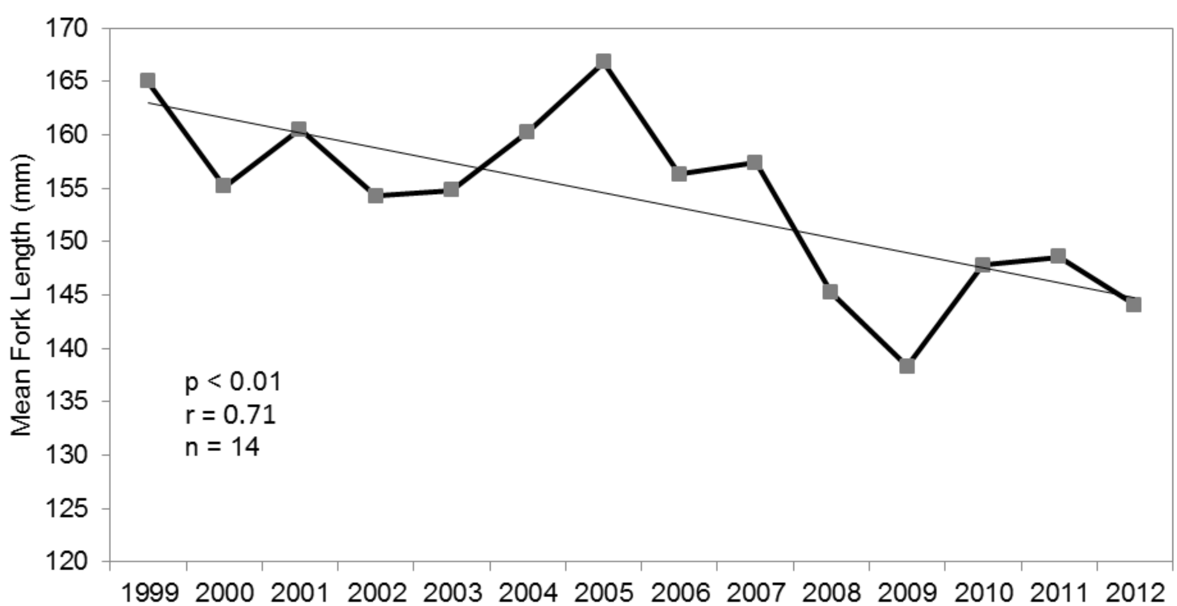

Figure 3.21. Summary of annual steelhead smolt size (fork length) for the South Alouette River Rotary Screw trap catch (1998 – 2012).

3.8. Cutthroat Trout

In total, 189 wild reared and 61 hatchery reared cutthroat trout smolts were captured between 4 March and 14 June (Figure 3.22). Including estimates for those days where catch was lost or traps were disabled (n=2), the total wild reared cutthroat trout smolt captures for the 2012 out-migration was 191. Annual captures have been rebuilding the last four years from the low in 2007 (Figure 3.23).

In total, 126 cutthroat trout smolts were marked and there were 23 recaptures (18.3%). Although captures were insufficient to determine out-migration timing as opposed to incidental captures of rearing juveniles, and the recaptures were below the statistically acceptable minimum number for avoiding small sample biases in population estimators (n=25; Ricker 1975), it is interesting to note the resulting population estimate of between 706 and 1,592 wild reared cutthroat trout out-migrant smolts (95% confidence interval). This compares to similar estimates for 2011 (650 – 1,885).

The mean length and weight of cutthroat trout out-migrants was 149.2 mm (range 102 - 300 mm) and 31.5 g (range 11.5 – 76.3 g).

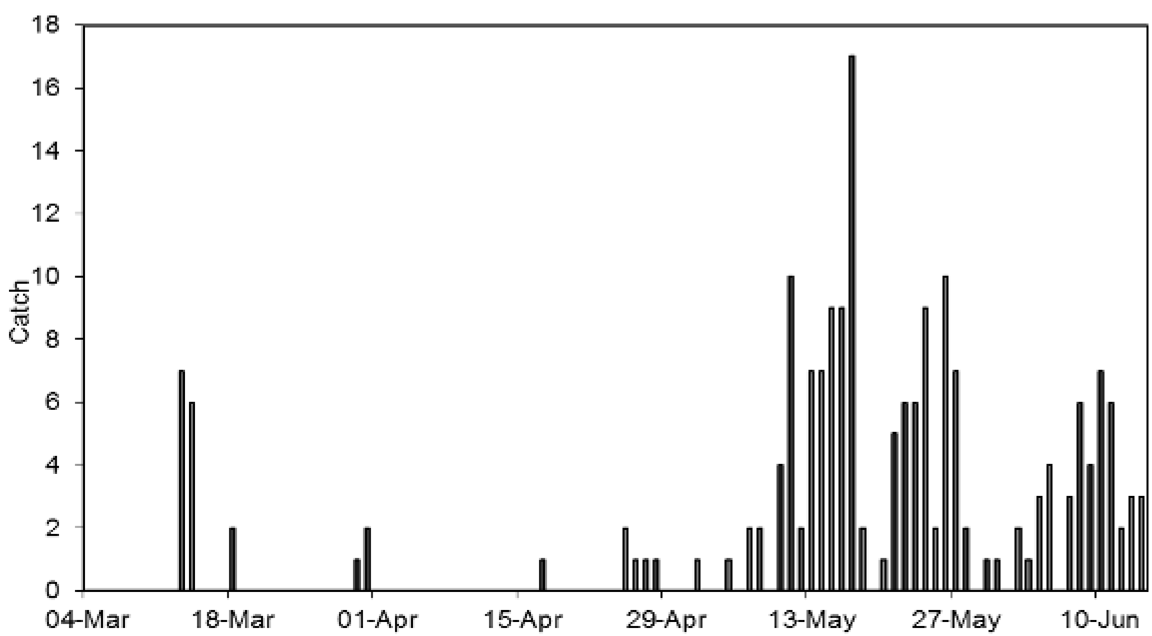

Figure 3.22. Daily wild reared cutthroat trout smolt catch for the South Alouette River, 2012.

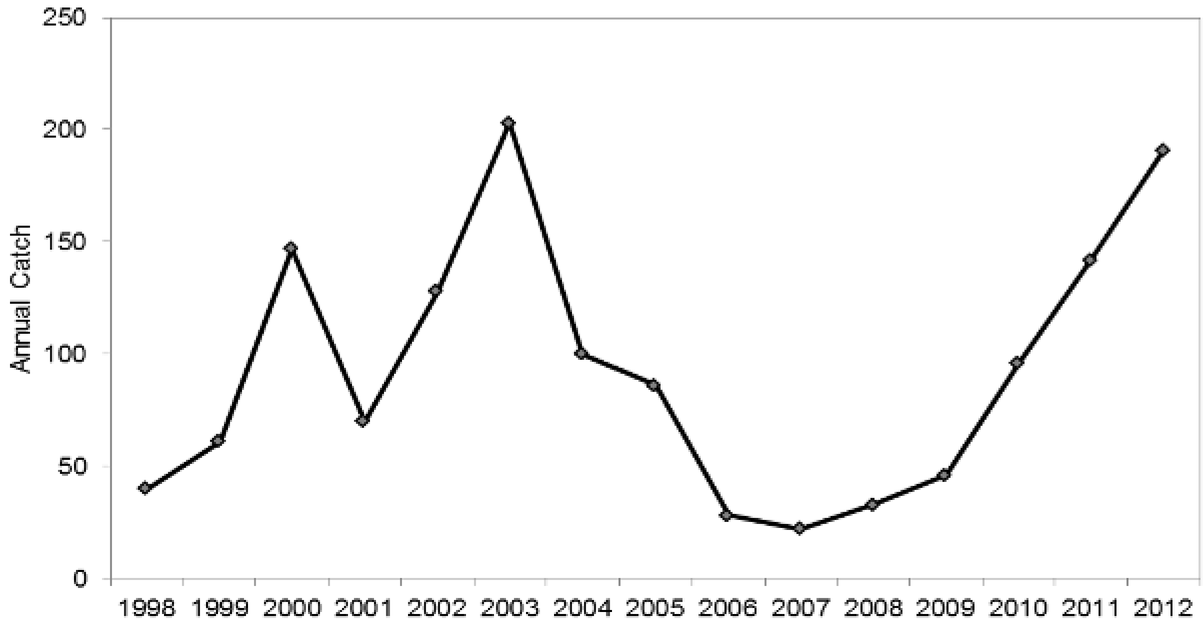

Figure 3.23. Summary of wild reared cutthroat trout smolt captures within the South Alouette River, 1998 - 2012.

3.9. Sockeye

Previously, the 2005 and 2006 data reports referred to sockeye salmon smolts captured exiting the Alouette Reservoir as kokanee. In 2007, what were assumed to be kokanee smolts from Alouette Lake were genetically confirmed to represent descendants of sockeye salmon trapped within Alouette Lake at the time of dam construction (ARMS 2007). These smolts are captured exiting the Alouette Reservoir as part of the on-going field trials (2005 – 2012) to assess smolt migration success through the Alouette Reservoir (Mathews *et al*. 2013). In 2012, the spillway gate on Alouette Dam was opened for smolt migration trials 16 April to 14 June. The average mean daily spillway flows were 3.86 m^3/s. A flushing flow was not implemented in 2012.

There were 26 sockeye smolts captured in the 224th St. rotary screw trap between 24 April and 8 June. These captures include 2 smolts that were mark recaptures from the Mud Creek trap upstream. In addition, a further 2 sockeye smolt captures were estimated for the two days of lost catch. This results in a total estimated out-migrant catch of 28 sockeye smolts (Figure 3.24). This represents 1.4% the catch total of 2011. This decrease was also observed upstream at the Mud Creek site (Figure 3.24). A decrease of this magnitude was unexpected and at this time remains unexplained.

In 2012, captures in the lower watershed at the 224th Street location closely tracked the captures immediately below the dam at the Mud Creek site (Figure 3.24). This pattern has been consistent for the last six years (Figure 3.25). It is clear from the time difference of only a day or two in out-migration peaks or pulses between the two trapping locations that sockeye smolts, following their emigration from Alouette Lake, continue their migration out of the Alouette system without delay. Furthermore, the flushing flow dam releases in 2009 through 2011 (n=3) did not “flush out” reluctant sockeye migrants residing within the South Alouette River. Similarly, the 2008 storm event that resulted in a mean daily discharge of 9.95 m^3/s and an instantaneous maximum discharge of 16.41 m^3/s; compared to a mean daily and maximum instantaneous flow the previous seven days of 5.54 m^3/s and 6.2 m^3/s, respectively did not “flush out” any reluctant sockeye migrants residing within the South Alouette River. Therefore, it appears typical mean daily flows of between 3.0 to 6.0 m^3/s is adequate to ensure movement of Alouette Lake sockeye smolts out of the system without delay.

In total, 12 sockeye smolts were marked and there were 2 recaptures for a mean trap efficiency of 16.7%. Population estimates could not be generated due to low sample size however; based on 9 recaptures, a population estimate of 728 out-migrants (95% C.I. 348 – 1,108) was provided for the Mud Creek site (Figure 3.26; Mathews *et al*. 2013).

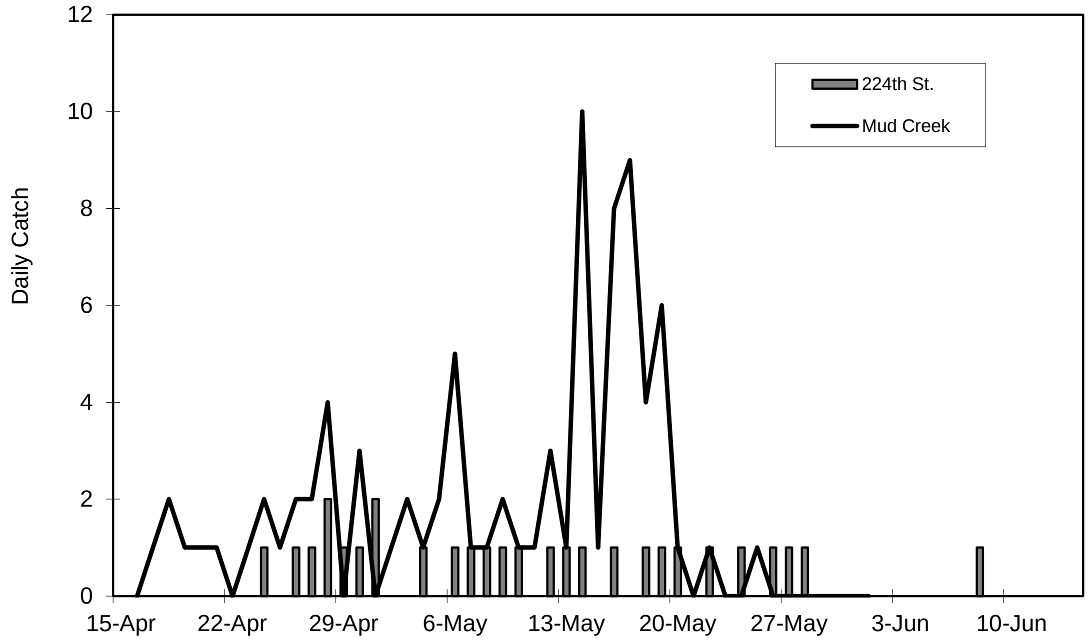

Figure 3.24. Daily sockeye smolt catch for the South Alouette River, 2012. Mud Creek data from LGL Limited (*see* Mathews *et al*. 2013).

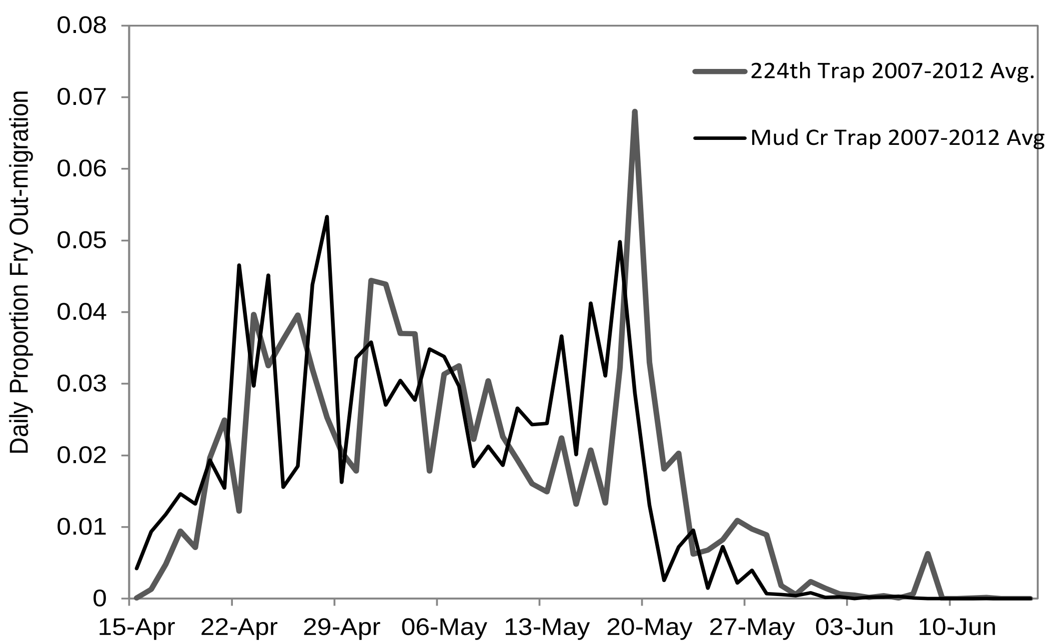

Figure 3.25. Daily sockeye smolt out-migration catch represented as a proportion of total annual catch illustrating the average out-migration timing (2007 – 2012).

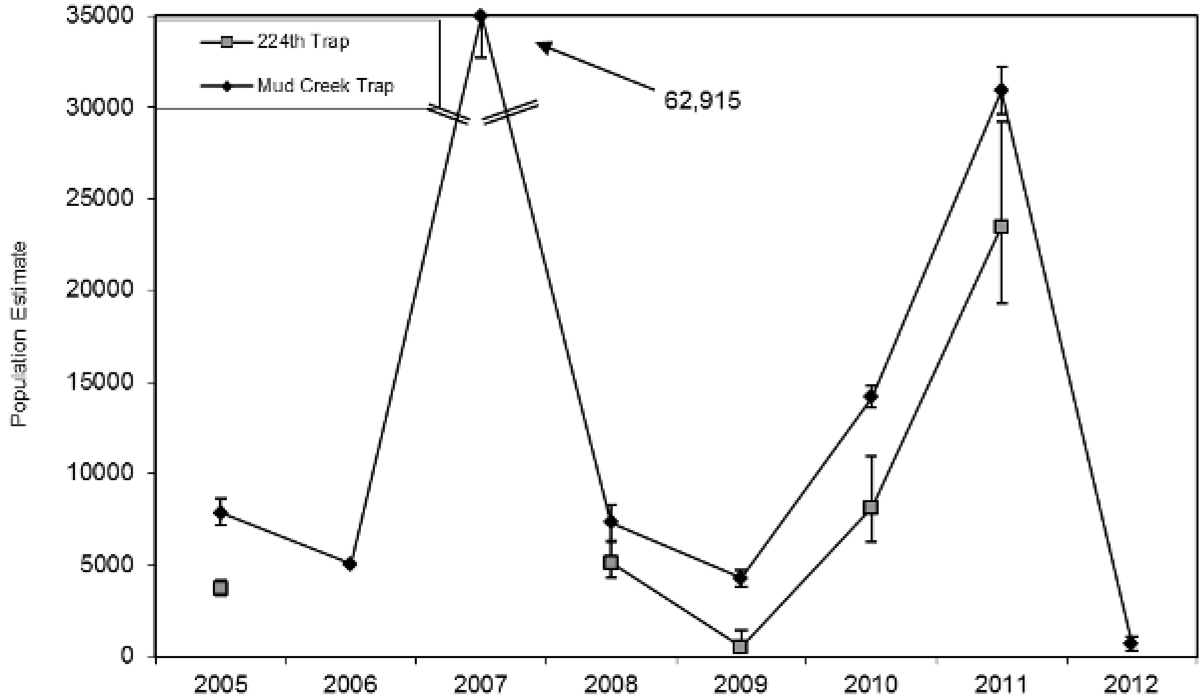

Figure 3.26. Summary of annual Alouette Lake sockeye smolt out-migration estimates (+/- 95% confidence interval) for the Mud Creek (upper watershed) and 224th Street (lower watershed) trapping locations. Mud Creek Data from LGL Limited (see Mathews *et al*. 2013). Note that Mud Creek confidence interval for 2005 was derived from hatchery coho trap efficiency ratings (Baxter and Bocking 2006) and 2006 was derived from steelhead smolt trap efficiency ratings (Humble *et al*. 2006).

Prior to 2012 when both traps generated sockeye smolt out-migrant estimates, the mean annual estimated mortality for sockeye smolts migrating the 13.8 km from the Alouette Reservoir (Mud Creek RST) to tidewater this is not tidewater 216th is(224th Street RST) has ranged from 24 – 70% (Mean = 47.5%, n=5). A large portion of total smolt to adult natural mortality occurs during a short migration window of a few weeks during within river downstream migration (Melnychuk 2009). Melnychuk (2009) reported within river mortality for acoustic tagged migrating pacific salmon smolts in Southern B.C. was 42%; and this was likely low due to bias associated with tagging the upper size distribution to meet minimum body size guidelines.

The mean length and weight of sockeye smolts captured in the 224th St. rotary screw trap was 91.8 mm (range 55 - 170 mm; n=23) and 10.6 g (range 2.7 – 51.6 g; n=22), respectively. Except for the first year of sockeye re-anadromization (2006), smolt size (mean annual fork length) has remained relatively constant the last 6 years (2007-2012, Figure 3.27).

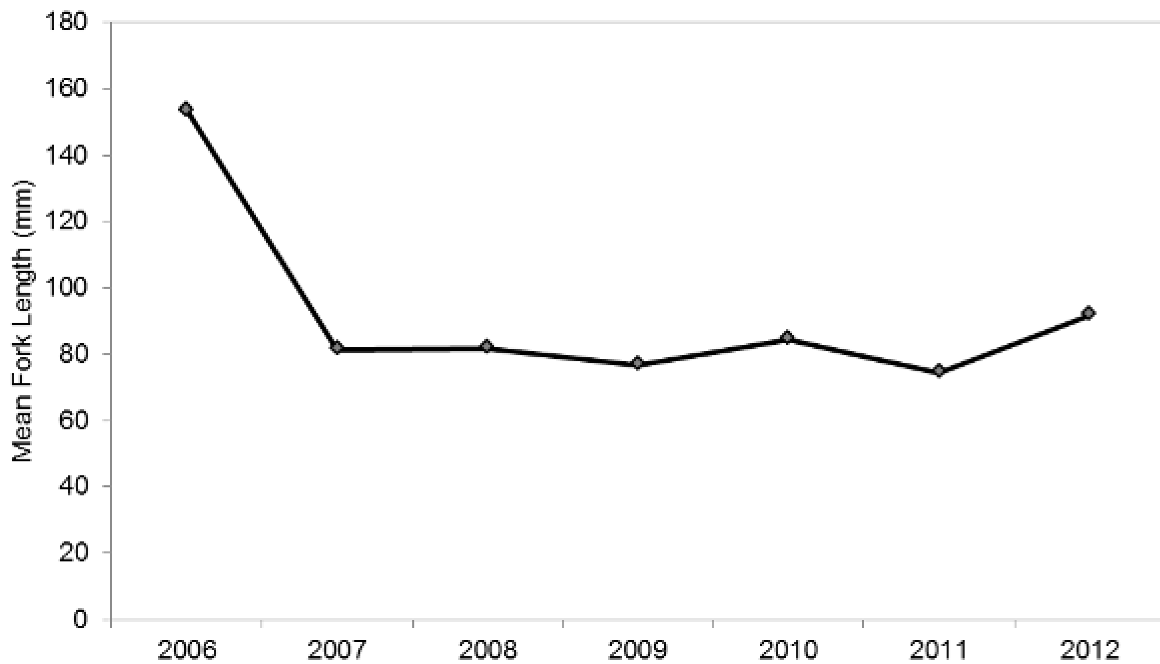

Figure 3.27. Summary of annual sockeye smolt size (fork length) for the South Alouette River, 224th Street Rotary Screw trap catch (2006 – 2012).

3.10. Physical Conditions

Mean daily water temperatures in the South Alouette River, during downstream trapping operations (1 March to 14 June 2012), ranged from 4.5 ^oC to 13.5 ^oC. The mean 2012 water temperature during the peak period of fry and smolt out-migration (18 March to 31 May) was 8.5 ^oC. This represents the median value observed over the last 15 years on record (Figure 3.28). The 15 year mean water temperature during the peak period of fry and smolt out-migration is 8.8 ^oC.

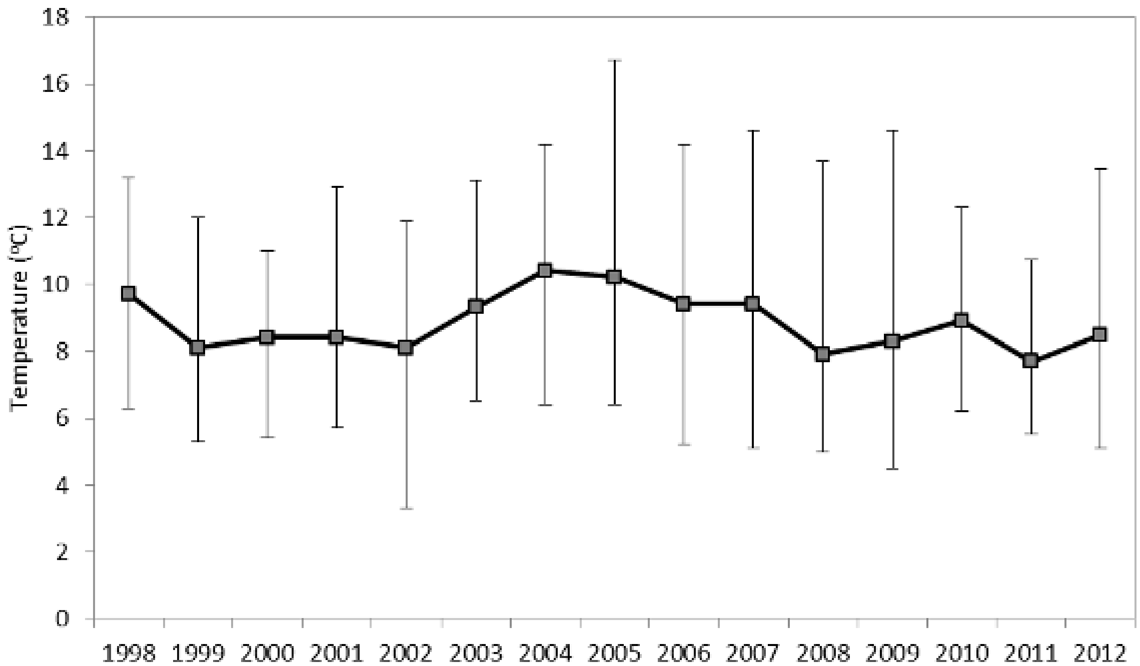

Figure 3.28. Mean, minimum and maximum daily water temperatures (^oC) for the peak period of fry and smolt out-migration (18 March to 31 May) for the S. Alouette River downstream enumeration program (1998-2012).

Annual variation in mean daily water temperatures for the 1998 to 2012 period of record is illustrated in Figure 3.29 and the 2012 out-migration temperatures are highlighted. In general, the 2012 water temperatures represented long-term averages; with the exception of early summer rearing temperatures which approached minimums for the period of record (Figure 3.29).

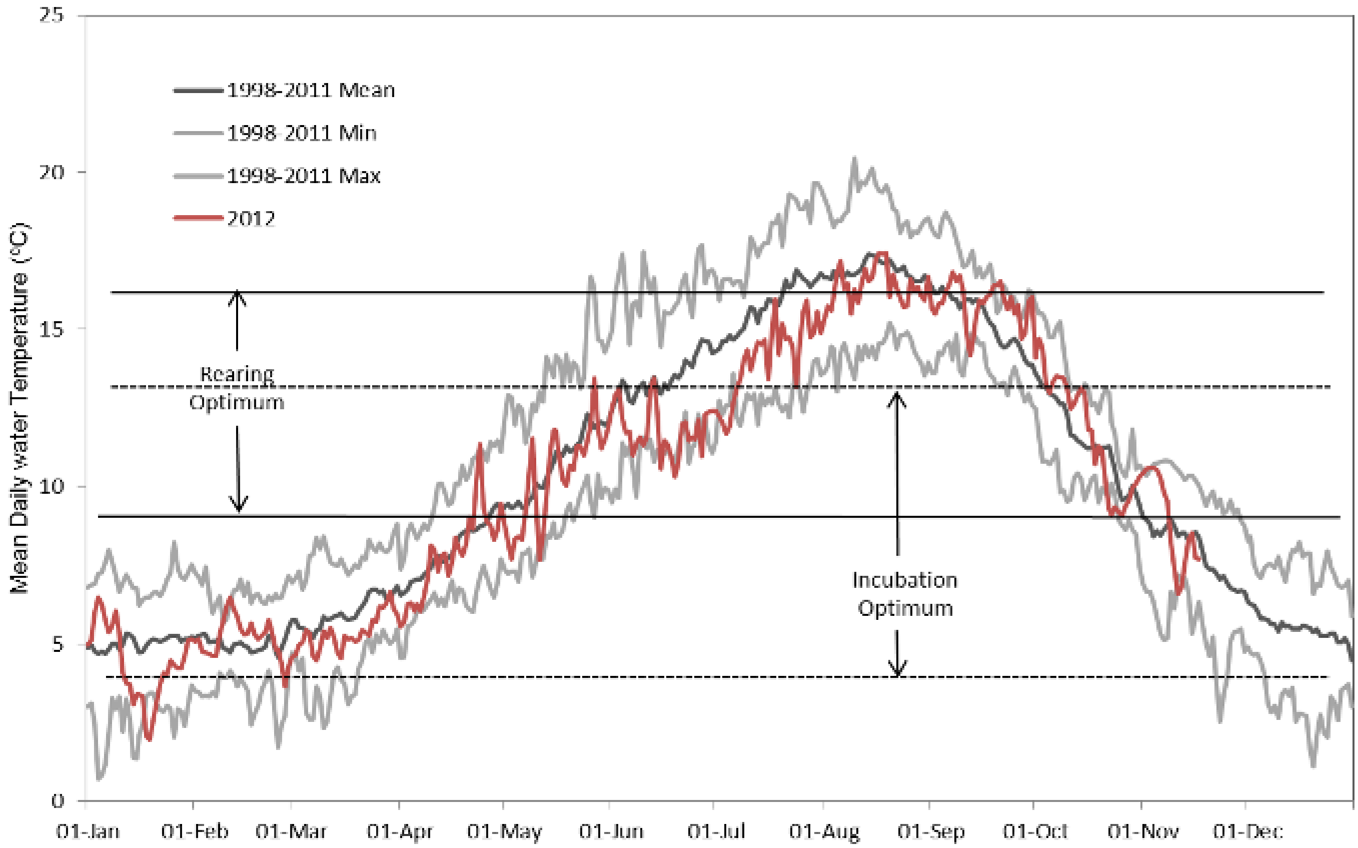

Figure 3.29. Mean daily water temperature for the mainstem South Alouette River at 224th Street, 1998-2012.

Mean daily temperatures of the South Alouette River are generally within the provincial guidelines for optimum temperature ranges for incubation of salmon embryos (4.0 – 13.0 °C; Anon. 2001). Typically, there are short periods of lower than optimal incubation temperatures in December through March however; they do not appear to adversely affect incubation survival of South Alouette River chum salmon. Lower incubation temperatures prolong incubation time of eggs and the time of hatching and emergence varies among stocks because of differences in the number of temperature units required for hatching and development (Salo 1991).

In 2012, water temperatures at the 224th location followed the typical pattern of generally remaining within the optimum temperature range for rearing coho salmon (9.0 – 16.0 °C; Anon. 2001) and juvenile rainbow trout/steelhead growth (10.0 – 14.0 °C; Ford *et al.* 1995). The notable exception being that summer rearing temperatures approach or briefly exceed maximum optimum temperatures in August and September (Figure 3.29). Although this location is relatively low in the watershed, it is generally representative of the mainstem South Alouette

River when compared to additional thermographs upstream (Cope 2006).

Mean daily discharge for the peak period of fry and smolt out-migration (25 February to 9 June) at the 232nd Street Water Survey of Canada Station (WSC No. 08MH005) was 4.91 m^3/s (range 2.44 – 18.18 m^3/s; Figure 3.30). Annual variation in mean daily discharge for the 1998 to 2012 period of record is illustrated in Figure 3.31. The extreme flows of 2007 were due to flood control releases and are not typical and the hydrometric station was not operating from 27 April, 2004 to 11 Apr, 2005 and data for the trapping period in these years is incomplete; therefore these years are excluded from the following discussion of average flows. The 13-year average mean daily discharge during the peak period of fry and smolt out-migration (excluding 2004, 2005, 2007, Figure 3.31) was 4.32 m^3/s. The difference of only 46% (2.0 m^3/s) between the 13 year mean daily flow and the highest mean annual flow illustrates the stable hydrograph resulting from upstream flow control.

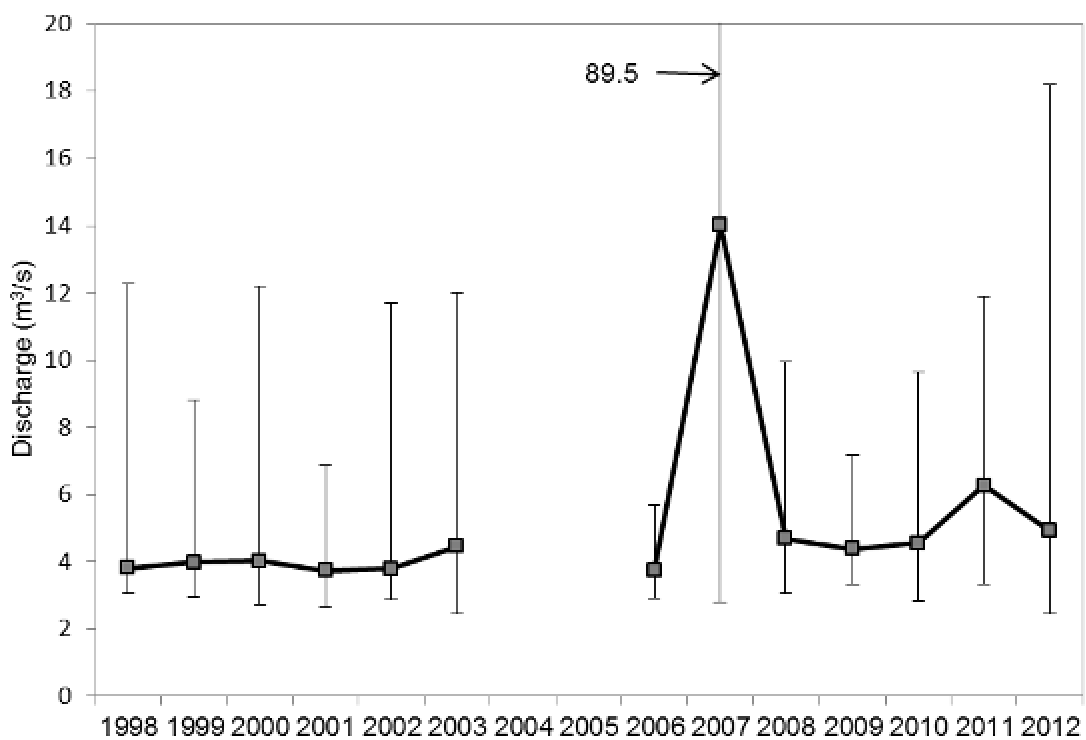

Figure 3.30. Mean, minimum and maximum daily discharge (m^3/s) for the peak period of fry and smolt out-migration (25 February to 9 June) for the S. Alouette River downstream enumeration program (1998-2012). Note that the hydrometric station was not operating from 27 April, 2004 to 11 Apr, 2005 and data for the trapping period in these years is incomplete.

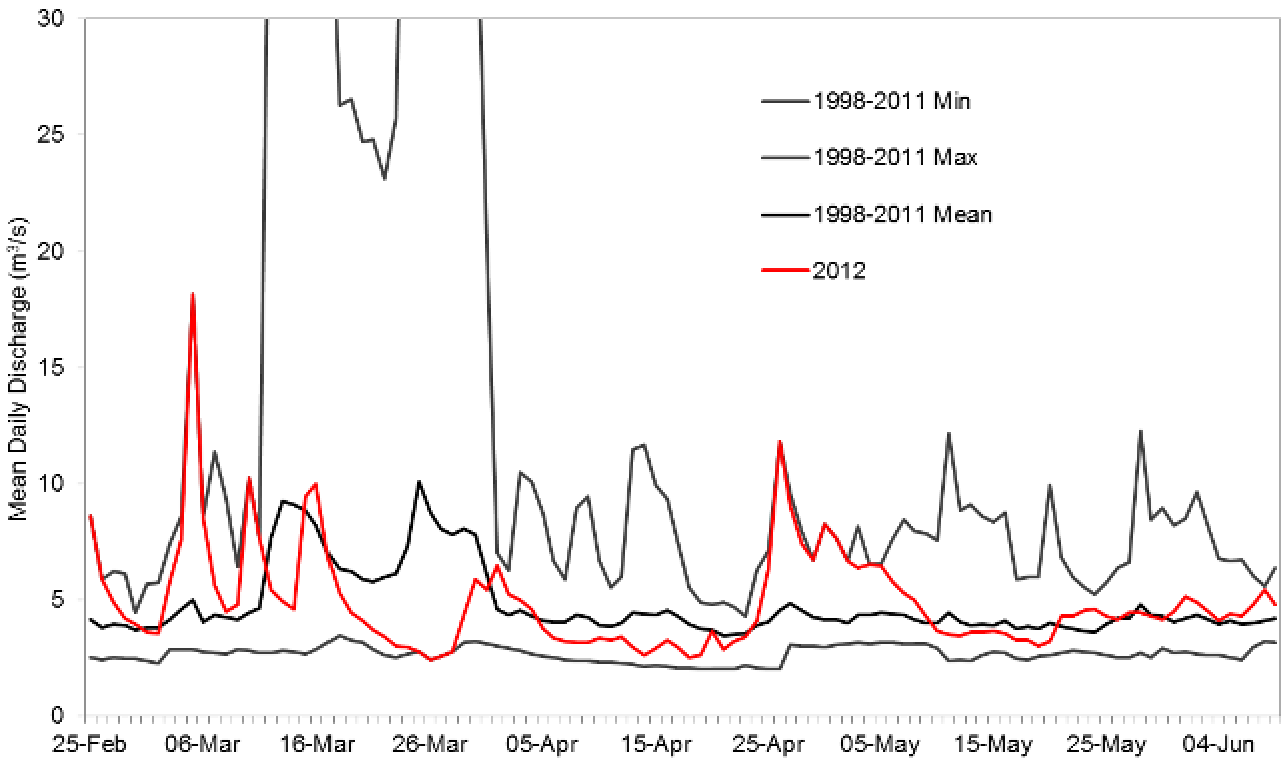

Figure 3.31. Mean daily discharge for the mainstem South Alouette River at Water Survey of Canada Station No. 08MH005 (232nd Street bridge), 1998-2012. Note that the 2012 data is preliminary and currently under review and revision.

The mainstem flows are controlled by the Alouette River Dam low-level outlet (outflow range 1.98 – 2.97) and typically, fluctuations in mainstem flows are due to tributary inflows resulting from precipitation events. Figure 3.31 illustrates there were four storm events that resulted in mean daily flows in excess of 8 m^3/s.

3.11. Hypothesis Testing

Preliminary analysis for possible correlations with independent variables available (Appendix A, Table A1) consisted of separately plotting the independent variable as a function of smolt estimates. Chum salmon was utilized for this preliminary analysis because these data are the most complete and have the greatest level of confidence in regards to their accuracy and precision. Similar analyses will be conducted for additional species as the data becomes available in future years.

There is, as yet, no positive (i.e. increasing) relationship for annual estimates of chum out-migrants (regression, p=0.55, n=15; *see* Figure 3.4). However, a non-linear relationship is expected for pacific salmon species that typically have variable egg-to-fry survival year to year due to density-dependent mortality (i.e. a plateau or decline in recruitment in a compensatory relationship like a Beverton-Holt or Ricker relationship). Figure 3.32 illustrates the emerging compensatory stock-recruitment relationship for South Alouette River chum salmon. The assumption that the low 2007 fry production was due to the atypical flood conditions was inaccurate. The replication of the low fry production results in 2010 following similar high spawner escapements (i.e. ALLCO fence count >150,000, Table 3.4) indicates that fence counts are a fair indicator of run size in the river as a whole and that egg-to-fry survival is not constant year to year but has hit the point of significant density-dependent mortality. This suggests that the 2007 and 2010 years represent over-escapement and maximum chum fry production would be achieved in the range of 60,000 to 120,000 chum spawners at the ALLCO fence. The 2012 chum fry production was much lower than the approximately 15 million fry the stock-recruitment curve predicts (Figure 3.32). Due to the low sample size and large amount of variation, caution should be exercised in interpreting results and further data is required to comment with any confidence.

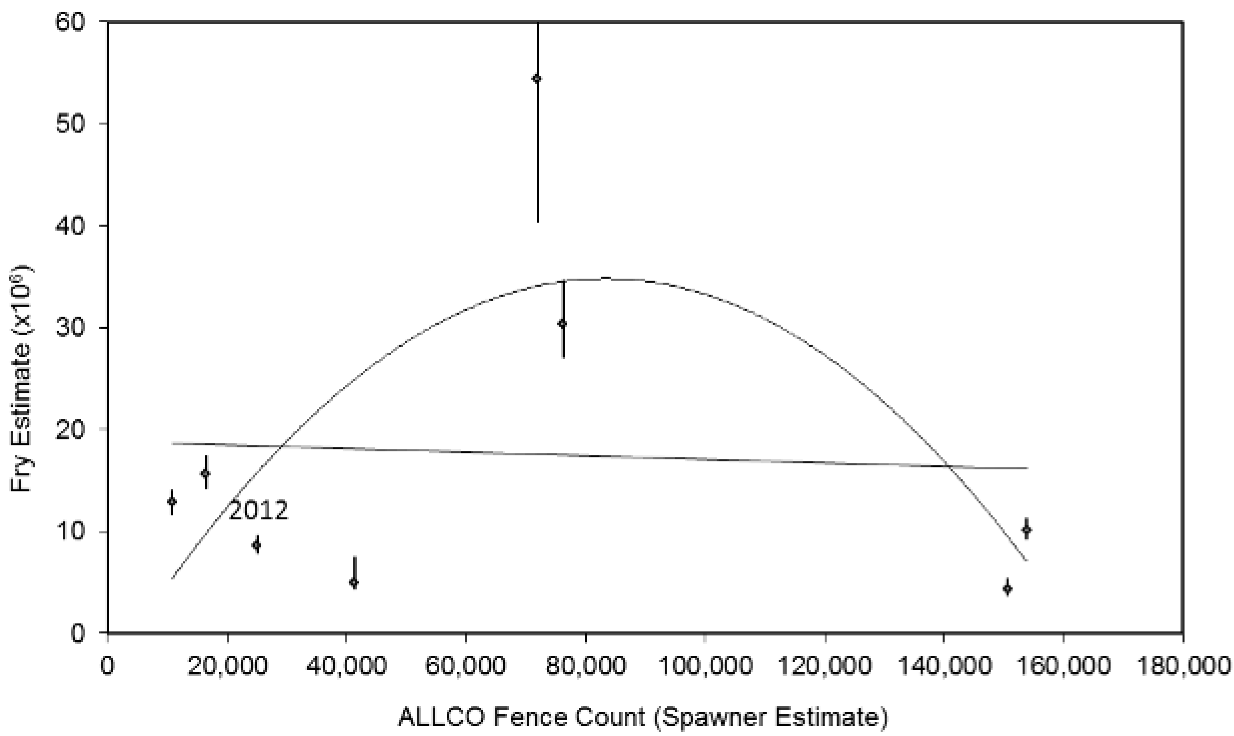

Figure 3.32. Relationship between chum salmon spawners enumerated at the FRCC-ARMS hatchery fence and the number of fry out-migrants the following spring.

The remaining independent variables of water discharge (during out-migration period and mean annual), water temperature (during out-migration period) and substrate quality illustrated little effect on chum fry production. This is due in large part to the high variability in fry production and the low variability in the associated environmental data (Figure 3.33).

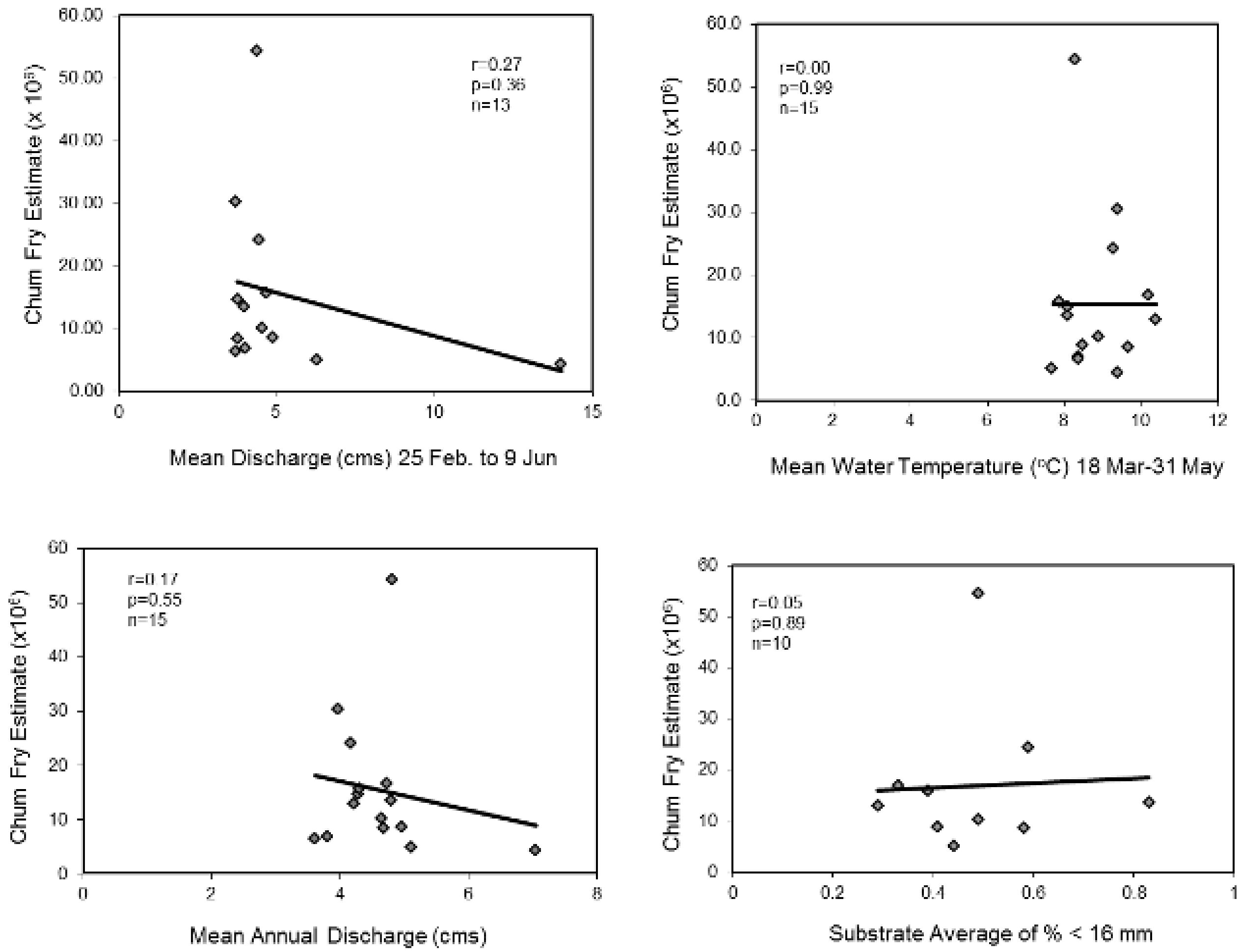

Figure 3.33. Relationship between chum fry production and environmental variables monitored within the South Alouette River.

There is a very weak relationship between fence counts of coho salmon spawners at the FRCC-ARMS hatchery fence and the number of smolt out-migrants one year later in the spring (Figure 3.34). This suggests that fence counts are not a good indicator of coho run size in the river as a whole. This result was expected as coho are typically tributary spawners.

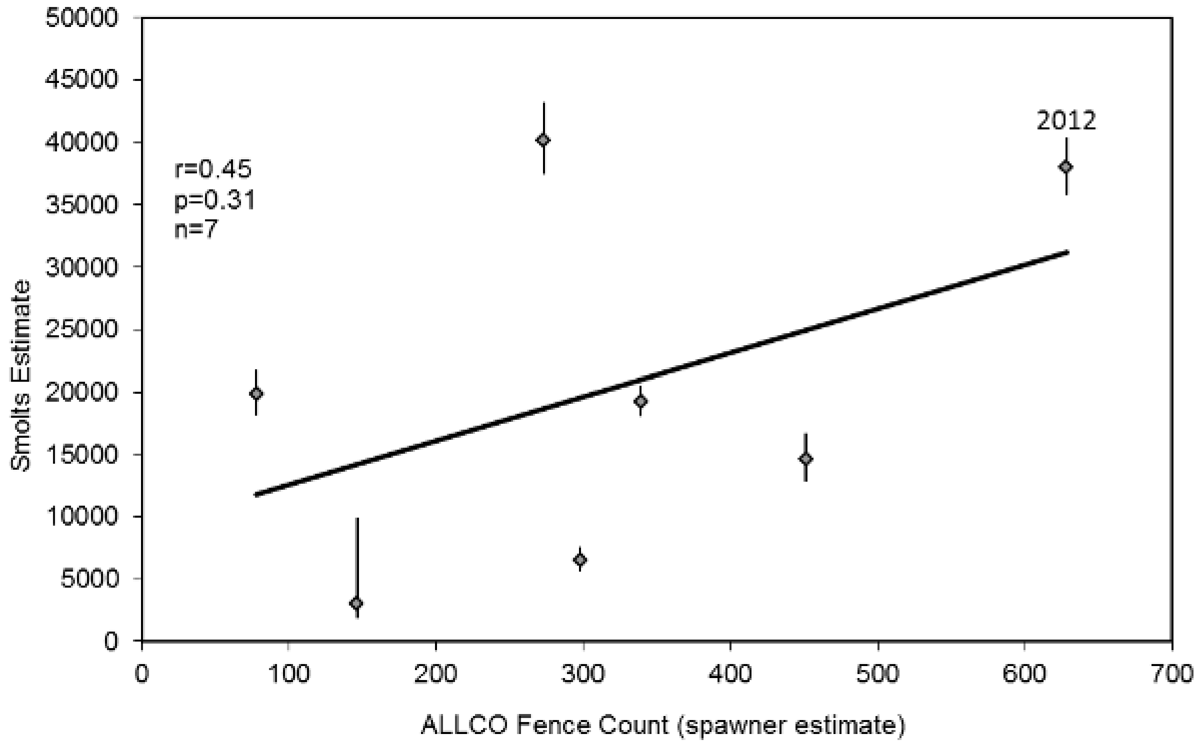

Figure 3.34. Relationship between coho salmon spawners enumerated at the FRCC-ARMS hatchery fence and the number of smolt out-migrants one year later.

There is a significant relationship between trapping duration and coho smolt out-migrant estimate (Figure 3.35; regression, p=0.02). This was due to the confounding effect in recent years (i.e. 2003-2007) of the increasing impact of tidal backwatering from the Pitt River on trapping efficiency at the previous (216th St.) trapping location. This effect was manifest as earlier end dates (i.e. trap duration) resulting from declining and/or inefficient trapping. The strong positive relationship between trap duration and coho smolt out-migrants confirms incomplete enumeration during these years.

The independent variables of water discharge (during out-migration period and mean annual), water temperature (during out-migration period) and substrate quality illustrated little effect on coho smolt production. This is not surprising as alternative environmental variables that more accurately reflect rearing conditions during the year of tributary residence (coho freshwater rearing occurs primarily in tributary and off-channel habitat not mainstem habitat) would be more appropriate variables for further analysis.

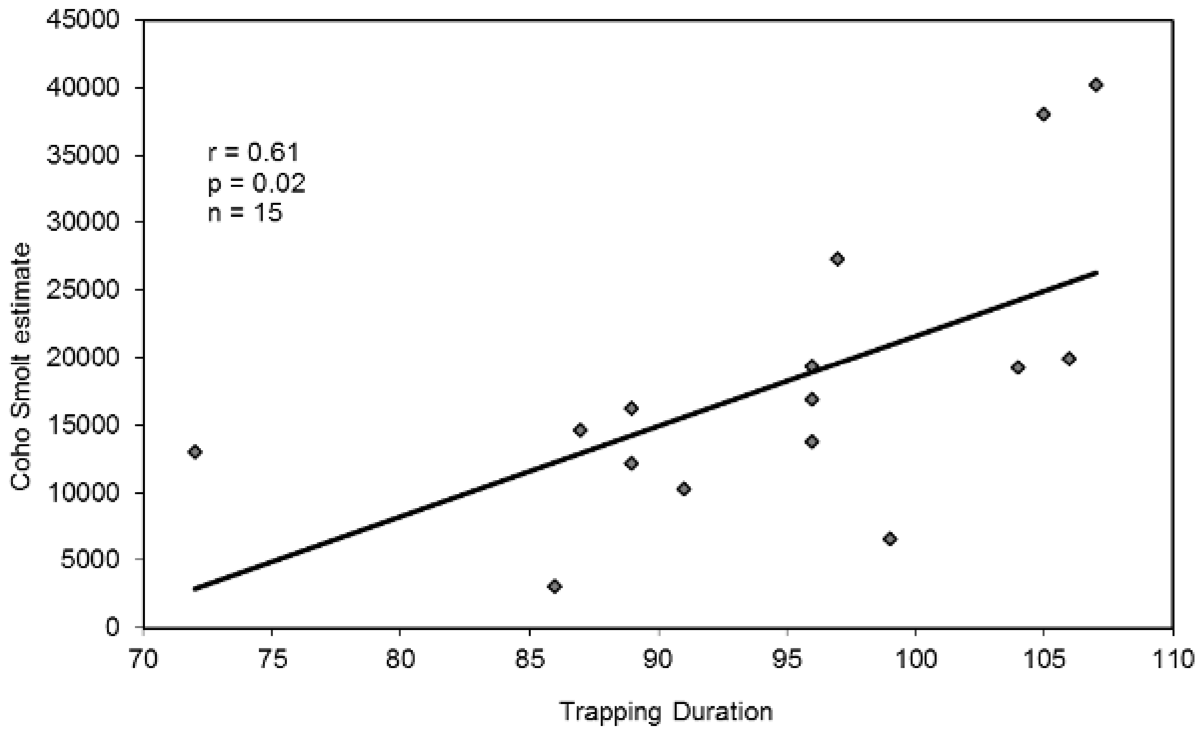

Figure 3.35. Relationship between trapping duration and coho smolt out-migrant estimate reflecting the effect of early trap backwatering in the years 2003 – 2007.

4. Discussion

4.1. Chum Fry

The 2012 chum salmon fry out-migrant estimate was 8.6 million smolts (95% confidence interval: 7.8 to 9.6 million; Table 4.1). While there has been no significant increase in chum fry production over the duration of the study (regression, r=0.07, p=0.87); the 2012 estimate represents a 26.5% increase in fry production since monitoring began for this cycle year (i.e. since 2000, n=4).

The RST trap is located 13.8 km downstream from the Alouette Dam and the mean wetted width was estimated to be 19.24 m (BC Hydro 1998). Since 1998, South Alouette River chum smolt yield has averaged 1,119,927 smolts/km (range 311,594 to 3,934,782 smolts/km) or 58.2 smolts/m^2 (range 16 – 205 smolts/m^2). This compares with 106,667 to 560,000 smolts/km or between 4.5 and 24 smolts/m^2 produced in the Coquitlam River during the same time period (2000 – 2010, Decker *et al.* 2011). The Alouette and Coquitlam Rivers are nearby rivers within the same regional area that share many similarities (regulated by dams with flow diversions, headed by large reservoirs, comparable in size, gradient, morphology and support similar fish communities) and chum smolt abundance are correlated (r=0.63, Decker *et al.* 2011). Annual chum fry enumeration has also been monitored for the Cheakamus River using similar methodology over the same time period (2000-2010) and chum out-migrant yield has ranged between 130,435 to 426,087 smolts/km (Melville and McCubbing 2011). The Cheakamus River is also regulated by a dam with flow diversion.

By comparison, Koning and Keeley (1997) suggest a bio standard of 76 migrating fry or smolts/m^2 based on post restoration values for spawning gravel enhancement projects. Keeley *et al.* (1996) recommend a bio standard of 225 chum fry/m^2 (range 4 – 552 fry/m^2) for estimation of expected chum fry production benefits for off-channel fish habitat rehabilitation. Off-channel habitats can provide highly productive fish habitat, especially for chum and coho salmon, and fry yields would be expected to be higher within these habitats. These bio standards suggest that chum smolt productivity in the South Alouette River (58.2 smolts/m^2, range 16 – 205 smolts/m^2) is comparable to that expected from successful fish habitat restoration projects, and in some years, approaches the estimated production benefits expected from highly productive off-channel habitat.

Table 4.1. Cumulative catch (fry) and out-migration estimates for South Alouette River chum and pink fry (1998 – 2012).

Species	Year	Catch	Mean Trap Efficiency (%)	Fry Estimate	95% C.I.	Egg-to-Fry (%)	95% C.I.
Chum Fry	1998	918,376	13.5	8.3 x10^6	7.5 – 9.3 x10^6		8.2 – 17.9**
	1999	1,875,131	16.7	13.4 x10^6	12.0 – 15.2 x10^6	8.7	7.2 – 10.8
	2000	985,672*	16.8	6.8 x 10^6	6.2 – 7.6 x 10^6	12.1	10.3 – 14.6
	2001	909,102	14.4	6.4 x 10^6	5.9 – 7.0 x 10^6		
	2002	1,885,532	12.0	14.7 x 10^6	13.5 – 16.0 x 10^6		
	2003	2,694,767	14.3	24.1 x 10^6	22.0 – 26.6 x 10^6		
	2004	1,408,019	13.4	12.8 x 10^6	11.6 – 14.1 x 10^6		
	2005	1,486,963	10.9	16.6 x 10^6	15.0 – 18.5 x 10^6		
	2006	2,174,360	7.6	30.3 x 10^6	26.9 – 34.6 x 10^6		
	2007	251,976	10.3	4.3 x 10^6	3.6 – 5.4 x 10^6		
	2008	1,439,429	10.0	15.6 x 10^6	14.1 – 17.4 x 10^6		
	2009	2,142,604	8.0	54.3 x 10^6	40.4 – 65.6 x 10^6		
	2010	1,122,960	12.3	10.1 x 10^6	9.1 – 11.3 x 10^6		
	2011	557,602	13.0	4.9 x 10^6	4.3 – 6.9 x 10^6		
	2012	1,574,903	16.1	8.6 x 10^6	7.7 – 9.6 x 10^6		
Pink Fry	1998	5,716*	11.0	55,000	44,000 – 67,000		
	2000	29,558*	16.5	190,000	160,000 – 230,000		
	2002	15,550	10.7	143,291	112,087 – 189,925		
	2004	119,904	10.8	1.25 x 10^6	1.16 –1.35 x 10^6		
	2006	17,742	10.0	175,630	140,585 – 225,922		
	2008	23,290	8.3	279,167	232,435 – 341,800		
	2010	9,433	7.8	118,068	86,238 – 171,944		
	2012	21,944	7.5	289,844	233,040 – 370,736		

Note: * Includes hatchery captures
** Estimate (re-capture objectives not met).

The replication of low fry production following high spawner escapements in 2006 and 2009 (i.e. ALLCO fence count >150,000) indicates that fence counts are a fair indicator of run size in the river as a whole and that egg-to-fry survival is not constant year to year but has hit the point of significant density-dependent mortality. This is expected for pacific salmon species that typically have variable egg-to-fry survival year to year due to density-dependent mortality (i.e. a plateau or decline in recruitment in a compensatory relationship like a Beverton-Holt or Ricker relationship). In this model, the 2006 and 2009 years represent over-escapement and maximum chum fry production would be achieved in the range of 60,000 to 120,000 chum spawners at the ALLCO fence. The ALLCO fence is located approximately 7 km downstream of the Alouette Dam with approximately two thirds the available chum spawning habitat located downstream. This suggests that spawning escapements of 150,000 fish at the ALLCO fence would represent a total escapement of approximately 450,000 fish. Therefore, maximum chum fry production would be achieved in the range of 180,000 to 300,000 spawners.

Koning and Keeley (1997) report density of migrating fry reaches a maximum 500 smolts/m^2 when female spawner densities approach 1 female per m^2. Based on an assumed 1:1 sex ratio and the estimated 265,512 m^2 mainstem river habitat available (BC Hydro 1998), this would suggest South Alouette River spawner escapements beyond approximately 500,000 would not result in any further chum fry or smolt production. Estimated maximum fry production would result from chum salmon spawner densities of between 0.67 spawners/m^2 to 1.13 spawners/m^2.

In previous years, chum salmon spawning escapement for the South Alouette River was not estimated but was back calculated using the mean egg-to-fry survival estimates for the 1999 and 2000 out-migration years, when escapements were estimated. This assumes egg-to-fry survival is constant regardless of the number of spawners and that these survival estimates are still valid for the South Alouette River in 2012. It is unlikely these assumptions are true given the compensatory stock-recruitment relationship emerging for South Alouette River chum salmon. Back-calculation of spawning escapement at very high escapements such as 2006 and 2009 are inaccurate. For example, the maximum likelihood estimate for the 2009 chum salmon spawning escapement was 77,973 fish. The ALLCO fence count was 153,882. While it is unknown what percentage of the total run the ALLCO fence count represents, approximately two thirds of the available chum spawning habitat is located downstream and it is clear the back-calculation estimator is low and inaccurate due to low egg-to-fry survival at high spawner escapements. These results were replicated in the 2006 broodyear data.

4.2. Pink Fry

The estimate for the 2012 pink fry out-migrant population was 289,844 fish (95% confidence interval 233,040 to 370,736 fish). While there has been no significant increase in pink fry production over the duration of the study (regression, p=0.87); the current emigrating pink fry estimate represents an increase of 145% over the last year (2010).

Just as with chum salmon, model assumptions of constant survival based on the lower chum spawner escapement years of 1999 and 2000 are not true and therefore back-calculating pink spawning escapement from pink fry out-migrant estimates is inaccurate. It is likely that pink salmon egg-to-fry survival also experiences density dependent mortality due to very high chum spawner escapements in some years.

4.3. Chinook Fry

In 2012, hatchery reared chinook fry were not released until downstream trapping was completed and for the first time chinook fry out-migration (i.e. under-yearling smolts) was enumerated with confidence. In total, fry captures for the 2012 out-migration was 10,408. This represents the highest annual capture to date and based on the increasing trend in chinook salmon out-migrants during the past three years, chinook salmon appear to be responding to stocking efforts (regression; p=0.07, r=0.48).

The pooled Peterson estimate for the 2012 chinook fry out-migrant population was 29,370 fish (95% confidence interval 25,560 to 34,117 fish). The 2012 out-migration estimate is biased low due to the early end of trapping operations 14 June. This date coincided with the ascending limb of the out-migration distribution. Reliable population estimates would require continued trapping to at least the end of June to document the majority of the out-migration distribution.

4.4. Coho Smolts

In 2008, moving the rotary screw trapping location upstream to the 224th St. location out-side the tidal backwatering influence and incorporating flow deflection panels was successful in restoring smolt catch. In 2009, extending the duration of trapping to June 14th enabled the more complete capture of the out-migration, resulting in much improved population estimates. The 2012 coho smolt out-migration estimate was the second highest on record at 38,046 fish (95% C.I. 35,824 – 40,484). Since 2009, the annual coho smolt estimate has averaged 29,332 fish compared to 15,000 fish previously (1998 – 2008 excluding 2007 failure; Table 4.2).

Table 4.2. Cumulative catch (smolt) and out-migration estimates for South Alouette River coho smolts (1998 – 2012).

Species	Year	Catch	Mean Trap Efficiency (%)	Population Estimate	95% Confidence Interval
Coho Smolt	1998	358	2.2	16,200	11,100 – 26,000
	1999	1,020	9.2	10,238	8,407 – 13,089
	2000	888*	4.1	20,003	16,125 – 28,543
	2001	1,068	7.7	13,789	11,191 – 17,429
	2002^{+}	1,173	9.6	12,102	9,846 – 15,017
	2003^{+}	2,340	12.1	19,358	17,220 - 21,926
	2004^{+}	3,197	18.9	16,880	15,600 – 18,326
	2005^{+}	1,717^{++}	15.7	13,020	11,575 – 14,758
	2006	1,825^{++}	12.5	14,591	12,837 – 16,737
	2007	159	4.6	3,040	1,796 – 9,901
	2008	1,117	17.6	6,508	5,638 – 7,600
	2009	7,346	19.0	40,156	37,422 – 43,205
	2010	3,503	17.6	19,885	18,186 – 21,743
	2011	5,514	28.6	19,240	18,062 – 20,540
	2012	9,878	25.9	38,046	35,824 – 40,484

* Includes Hatchery Captures.
** Estimate (re-capture objectives not met).
$^{+}$ Second Rotary Screw Trap (1.8 m dia.) added.
++Trapping ended approximately 1 week earlier than previous years.

Based on the last four years (2009-2012) results at the current location and duration, the mean coho smolt yield upstream of the RST has been 2,126 smolts/mainstem km (range 1,394 – 2,910) or 11.0 smolts/100m^2 (range 7.2 – 15.1; Table 4.3). Bradford *et al.* (1997) predict an average coho smolt yield of 1,664 smolts/km for Pacific Northwest streams of similar latitude to the South Alouette River. By comparison, the Coquitlam River produced an average of 1,893 smolts/km during this period (Table 4.3, Decker *et al.* 2011). The Alouette and Coquitlam Rivers are nearby rivers within the same regional area that share many similarities (regulated by dams with flow diversions, headed by large reservoirs, comparable in size, gradient, morphology and support similar fish communities). Coho smolt yield between these two watersheds has been strongly correlated (r=0.89, Decker *et al.* 2011). Although coho smolt yields within the South Alouette and Coquitlam Rivers are most likely within the range predicted by the empirical model developed by Bradford *et al.* (1997) they are lower than other regional coho populations (Cheakamus, Seymour) that are also currently being monitored using similar enumeration methodology (Table 4.3.).

Table 4.3. Summary of estimated coho smolt yields and densities for select watersheds within the southern coastal region of British Columbia.

			Smolt Yield		Smolts/km		Smolts/100 m^2	
River	Year	Km[1]	Mean	Range	Mean	Range	Mean	Range
S. Alouette	1998-2008[2]	14.8	15,000	6,508- 20,003	1,014	440- 1,352	5.3	2.3-7.0
	2009-2012	13.8	29,332	19,240- 40,156	2,126	1,394- 2,910	11.0	7.2-15.1
Coquitlam[4]	2000-2010	7.5[3]	14,200	8,400- 24,500	1,893	1,120- 3,267	Main	1.9-9.2
							Off-ch	19.9-44.9
Cheakamus[5]	2001-2010	11.5[6]	73,184	36,209-127,974	6,364	3,149-11,128	n/a	n/a
Seymour[7]	2010	19.3[6]	53,422	40,791- 66,054	2,768	2,114- 3,422	11.9	9.0-14.7

[1] refers to mainstem river km above the enumeration trapping site.
[2] excluding 2007.
[3] includes constructed off-channel habitat representing 10% available habitat producing 33-77% annual smolt yield.
[4] Decker *et al.* 2011.
[5] Melville and McCubbing 2011.
[6] includes extensive rehabilitated and constructed off-channel habitat.
[7] Enumeration data - McCubbing 2010 (*preliminary file data*) and habitat estimates -Jarvis and Gidora 1987.

The differences in coho smolt yield illustrated in Table 4.3 are due to the availability and quality of highly productive off-channel habitat within the respective watersheds. Off-channel habitats can provide highly productive fish habitat for some species of rearing juvenile salmonids, especially for coho and chum salmon (Koning and Keeley 1997). Koning and Keeley (1997) report average coho smolt densities of 67 – 69 smolts/100m^2 for constructed side-channels and ponds in other Pacific Northwest streams. Both the Seymour and Cheakamus Rivers contain extensive constructed and rehabilitated off-channel habitat. Within the Coquitlam River, off-channel coho smolt densities were several times higher than the mainstem portion of the study area, with approximately 10% of the available habitat supporting 33% to 77% of the overwintering coho smolt population (Table 4.3, Decker *et al.* 2011). Minnow trapping catch-per-unit-effort data within the South Alouette River clearly demonstrate the highest densities of over-wintering coho smolts were located in small, low gradient tributaries and rehabilitated off-channel habitat (Cope 2001).

4.5. Steelhead Smolts

In 2008, moving the rotary screw trapping location upstream to the 224th St. location out-side the tidal backwatering influence and incorporating flow deflection panels was successful in restoring smolt catch and resulting in much improved population estimates (Table 4.4). The 2012 steelhead smolt out-migration estimate was 5,778 fish (95% C.I. 5,110 – 6,457). Since 2008 (excluding 2010 anomaly), the annual steelhead smolt estimate has averaged 5,813 fish (range 5,077 – 6,204) compared to 2,531 fish (range 784 – 3,768) previously (1999 – 2006 excluding 1998 and 2007 failures; Table 4.4).

During 2008, 2009, 2011 and 2012, steelhead smolt yield upstream of the RST averaged 421 smolts/km (range 368 – 450) or 2.2 smolts/100m^2 (range 1.9 – 2.3). Data prior to 2008 were not included as the smolt catch at the 216th St trapping location was confirmed to be biased low due to physical site changes and tidal backwatering (Cope 2007). The 2010 steelhead smolt outlier was over double that expected and was most likely biased as a result of the low recaptures in 2010 (Cope 2011). Therefore, this estimate was also excluded as these results were inconsistent with the additional four years trap efficiency at this location and the low trap efficiency for steelhead smolts remains unexplained (Table 4.4). The 2010 outlier will be re-examined if, in the future, estimates replicate this result.

Average South Alouette River steelhead smolt densities (2.2 smolts/100m^2, range 1.9 – 2.3) exceed the provincial steelhead bio-standard of 2.0 smolts/100m^2 (Tautz *et al.* 1992). This compares with 2.7 smolts/m^2 produced in the Coquitlam River during a similar time period (2000 – 2010, Decker *et al.* 2011). The Alouette and Coquitlam Rivers are nearby rivers within the same regional area that share many similarities (regulated by dams with flow diversions

Table 4.4. Cumulative catch (smolt) and out-migration estimates for South Alouette River steelhead and sockeye smolts (1998 – 2012).

Species	Year	Catch	Mean Trap Efficiency (%)	Population Estimate	95% Confidence Interval
Steelhead Smolt	1998	121	0.0		
	1999	585	32.6	1,803	1,565 – 2,125
	2000	625	18.3	3,392	2,837 – 4,131
	2001	231	9.0	2,286**	1,474 – 3,508
	2002+	502	13.1	3,768	2,871 – 5,067
	2003+	698	29.5	2,364	2,058 – 2,745
	2004+	696	20.7	3,355	2,861 – 3,992
	2005+	315++	12.4	2,493	1,844 – 3,567
	2006	114++	12.2	784**	485 – 1,495
	2007	16++	9.0	N/a	
	2008	667	11.1	6,204	4,926 – 8,063
	2009	733	12.0	6,191	4,852 – 8,183
	2010	588	3.7	15,130	9,397 – 24,016
	2011	934	18.3	5,077	4,238 – 6,198
	2012	737	12.3	5,778	5,110 – 6,457
Sockeye Smolts	2005+	1,115	29.9	3,720	3,333 – 4,180
	2006	34	N/a		
	2007	231	N/a		
	2008	999	19.8	5,123	4,290 – 6,231
	2009	114	20.0	498	255 – 1410
	2010	779	9.4	8,143	6,285 – 10,987
	2011	2,040	8.3	23,465	19,263 – 29,236

* Includes Hatchery Captures.
** Estimate (re-capture objectives not met).
+ Second Rotary Screw Trap (1.8 m dia.) added.
++Trapping ended approximately 1 week earlier than previous years.

headed by large reservoirs, comparable in size, gradient, morphology and support similar fish communities). Unlike chum and coho, steelhead smolt abundance was not correlated (r=0.44, Decker *et al.* 2011), however, this is most likely due to the bias identified in the Alouette data prior to 2008. Although steelhead smolt yields meet or exceed the Provincial bio-standards, they are lower than other regional steelhead populations that are also currently being monitored using similar enumeration methodology (Table 4.5).

Table 4.5. Summary of estimated steelhead smolt yields and densities for select watersheds within the southern coastal region of British Columbia.

			Smolt Yield		Smolts/km		Smolts/100 m^2	
River	Year	Km[5]	Mean	Range	Mean	Range	Mean	Range
S. Alouette	2008-2011	13.8	5,813	5,077-6,204	421	368-450	2.2	1.9-2.3
Coquitlam[1]	2000-2010	7.5	4,100	2,300-5,600	547	307-747	2.7	1.7-3.7
Keogh[2]	1976-1982	25.0	7,500	5,725-10,750	300	229-430	2.7	2.1-3.9
Cheakamus[3]	2010	11.5	6,959	2,837-10,657	605	247-927	n/a	n/a
Seymour[4]	2010	19.3	17,314	10,000-30,000	897	518-1,554	3.8	2.2-6.7

1 Decker *et al.* 2011
2 Ward and Slaney 1993
3 Melville and McCubbing 2011
4 Enumeration data - McCubbing 2010 (*preliminary file data*) and habitat estimates -Jarvis and Gidora 1987.
5 refers to mainstem river km above the enumeration trapping site.

4.6. Sockeye Salmon

In 2012 the extremely low capture results (n=28) precluded sockeye smolt out-migration estimation. Nevertheless, it was clear from both independent trapping studies in the South Alouette River that very few sockeye smolts emigrated out of Alouette Lake during the 2012 field trials to assess smolt migration success through the Alouette Reservoir (Mathews *et al*. 2013).

While the current low numbers remain unexplained, previously (2008-2011), the average sockeye smolt enroute mortality was 47.6% (range 24.1 - 88.4%); assuming the difference in estimates between traps is an accurate representation of enroute mortality. Downstream (within river) smolt migration mortality for acoustic tagged pacific salmon smolts in Southern British Columbia was reported to be 42% and likely biased low due to tagging the upper size distribution to meet minimum body size guidelines (Melnychuk 2009). Therefore, these estimates are consistent with expectations.

It is clear from the time difference of only a day or two in out-migration peaks or pulses between the two trapping locations that sockeye smolts, following their emigration from Alouette Lake, continue their migration out of the Alouette system without delay. Furthermore, the annual 6 m^3/s flushing flow dam releases (2009-2011) did not “flush out” reluctant sockeye migrants residing within the South Alouette River. Therefore, it appears typical mean daily flows of between 3.0 to 6.0 m^3/s is adequate to ensure movement of Alouette Lake sockeye smolts out of the system without delay.

5. Summary

Increased flow releases, stocking, and rehabilitation efforts within the South Alouette River have resulted in the following salmon restoration milestones:

- Prior to 1975, the South Alouette River stock of chum salmon was reduced to average run sizes less than 3,000 spawners (Range 200 to 7,500; Elson 1985). Substantial increases were first noted in the early 1980's, partly due to the returns from the FRCC-ARMS Hatchery. This stock has continued rebuilding to spawning escapements well in excess of 200,000 fish. Egg-to-fry survival now appears to be variable indicating the S. Alouette River has hit the point of significant density-dependent mortality during high escapement years.
- Prior to 1985, the South Alouette River stock of pink salmon was considered extinct. This stock had been re-building to run sizes estimated to range between 4,500 to 20,000 spawners.
- Chinook salmon have re-colonized the South Alouette River and, based on the increasing trend in wild reared chinook salmon out-migrants during the past three years, chinook salmon appear to be responding to stocking efforts.
- Since 2009, the annual wild coho smolt production has averaged 29,332 fish and the coho smolt yield has ranged between 1,394 – 2,910 smolts/km or 11.0 smolts/100m^2; which is comparable to both the Coquitlam River yield and the average yield predicted for streams of similar latitude; but lower than other regional populations that are also currently being monitored using similar enumeration methodology..
- Since 2008, the annual wild steelhead smolt production has averaged 5,813 fish and the steelhead smolt yield was 421 smolts/km or 2.2 smolts/100m^2. Although steelhead smolt yields meet or exceed the Provincial bio standards, they are lower than other regional steelhead populations that are also currently being monitored using similar enumeration methodology.
- Prior to 2007, the South Alouette River stock of sockeye salmon was considered extinct. Since 2007, returning sockeye salmon (e.g. mature pre-spawners) have been documented at the base of the Alouette Dam and at the FRCC-ARMS Hatchery fence. DNA testing has confirmed these sockeye are from Alouette Lake smolt out-migrants.

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Appendix A - Smolt Abundance and Potential Physical Correlates Database

Table A1. Chum fry annual abundance estimates and possible physical correlates (data sources: ALLCO fence count from FRCC-ARMS hatchery, Discharge from Water Survey Canada, water temperature from BC Hydro and substrate from Ross Davies).

CHUM SALMON S. ALOUETTE RIVER

						WSC 08MH005	WSC 08MH005	224th ST.	224th St.				
						Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Surficial Substrate Particle Distribution			
	Chum				ALLCO	Discharge	Annual	Water Temp.	Annual	Average	Average	Average	Average
	Fry	Low	High		Fence	(CMS)	Discharge	(deg. C.)	Water Temp.	of %	of %	of %	of %
Year	Estimate	95% C.I.	95% C.I.	Broodyear	Count	(25 Feb - 9 June)	(CMS)	(18 Mar-31 May)	(deg. C.)	< 2 mm	< 4 mm	< 8 mm	< 16 mm
1998	8,300,000	7,500,000	9,300,000	1997		3.81	4.67	9.7	++	0.36	0.42	0.48	0.58
1999	13,400,000	12,000,000	15,200,000	1998		3.99	4.79	8.1	++	0.7	0.76	0.81	0.83
2000	6,800,000	6,200,000	7,600,000	1999		4.02	3.8	8.4	++				
2001	6,400,000	5,900,000	7,000,000	2000		3.73	3.6	8.4	++				
2002	14,700,000	13,500,000	16,000,000	2001	*	3.79	4.28	8.1	9.82				
2003	24,100,000	22,000,000	26,600,000	2002	*	4.47	4.16	9.3	10.82	0.46	0.5	0.55	0.59
2004	12,800,000	11,600,000	14,100,000	2003**	10,727	+	4.22	10.4	11.07	0.13	0.19	0.21	0.29
2005	16,600,000	15,000,000	18,500,000	2004	*	+	4.73	10.2	10.54	0.22	0.3	0.32	0.33
2006	30,300,000	26,900,000	34,600,000	2005	76,191	3.73	3.96	9.4	++				
2007	4,300,000	3,600,000	5,400,000	2006	150,734	14.02	7.05	9.4	++				
2008	15,600,000	14,100,000	17,400,000	2007	16,502	4.69	4.3	7.9	++	0.27	0.28	0.33	0.39
2009	54,300,000	40,400,000	65,600,000	2008	71,980	4.39	4.8	8.3	9.99	0.23	0.29	0.38	0.49
2010	10,100,000	9,100,000	11,300,000	2009	153,882	4.56	4.64	8.9	10.34	0.22	0.3	0.44	0.49
2011	4,900,000	4,300,000	6,900,000	2010	41,312	6.28	5.11	7.7	9.03	0.26	0.37	0.38	0.44
2012	8,600,000	7,800,000	9,600,000	2011	25,042	4.91	4.96	8.5	10.24	0.21	0.3	0.37	0.41

n/a data not available at time of reporting
* data lost on computer due to virus
** fence down 10 days in 2003
+ Hydrometric station not operating
++ Missing data

Table A2. Coho smolt annual abundance estimates and possible physical correlates (data sources: ALLCO fence count from FRCC-ARMS hatchery, Discharge from Water Survey Canada, water temperature from BC Hydro and substrate from Ross Davies).

Alouette River Coho Smolts													
						WSC 08MH0	SC 08MH0	224th ST.	224th St.				
						Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Surficial Substrate Particle Distribution			
					ALLCO	Discharge	Annual	Water Temp.	Annual	Average	Average	Average	Average
					Fence	(CMS)	Discharge	(deg. C.)	Vater Temp	of %	of %	of %	of %
Year	pooled POP est	"+"	"-"	Broodyear	Count	Feb - 9 Ju	(CMS)	8 Mar-31 Ma	(deg. C.)	< 2 mm	< 4 mm	< 8 mm	< 16 mm
1998	16200	9800	5100			3.81	4.67	9.7	++	0.36	0.42	0.48	0.58
1999	10238	2851	1831			3.99	4.79	8.1	++	0.7	0.76	0.81	0.83
2000	27311	9783	6337			4.02	3.8	8.4	++				
2001	13789	3640	2598			3.73	3.6	8.4	++				
2002	12102	2915	2256			3.79	4.28	8.1	9.82				
2003	19358	2568	2138			4.47	4.16	9.3	10.82	0.46	0.5	0.55	0.59
2004	16880	1446	1280			+	4.22	10.4	11.07	0.13	0.19	0.21	0.29
2005	13020	1738	1445			+	4.73	10.2	10.54	0.22	0.3	0.32	0.33
2006	14591	2146	1754	2005	451	3.73	3.96	9.4	++				
2007	3040	6861	1244	2006	146	14.02	7.05	9.4	++				
2008	6508	1092	870	2007	298	4.69	4.3	7.9	++	0.27	0.28	0.33	0.39
2009	40156	2734	3049	2008	273	4.39	4.8	8.3	9.99	0.23	0.29	0.38	0.49
2010	19,885	1858	1699	2009	79	4.56	4.64	8.9	10.34	0.22	0.3	0.44	0.49
2011	19,240	1300	1178	2010	339	6.28	n/a	7.7	9.15	0.26	0.37	0.38	0.44
2012	38,046	2438	2222	2011	628	4.91	4.96	8.5	10.24	0.21	0.3	0.37	0.41