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Sport fishing the Prince of Wales Island Alaska area

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Southeast Regional Office
802 Third Street
Douglas, AK 99824-0020
(907) 465-4270

Ketchikan Area Office
2030 Sea Level Drive
Ketchikan, AK 99901
(907) 225-2859

State Headquarters
Division of Sport Fish
1255 W. 8th St.
P.O. Box 3-2000
Juneau, AK 99801
(907) 465-4180

Prince of Wales Island Area Office
P.O. Box _____
Craig, AK 999__
(907) 826-2498

Recorded fishing information for Southeast Alaska:

(907) 465-4116 (Juneau)
(907) 225-0475 (Ketchikan)

Questions about the ADF&G Trophy Fish Program should be directed to the Headquarters office.

Other ADF&G publications are available through the Public Communications Section.

ADF&G Public Communications Section: (907) 465-4112

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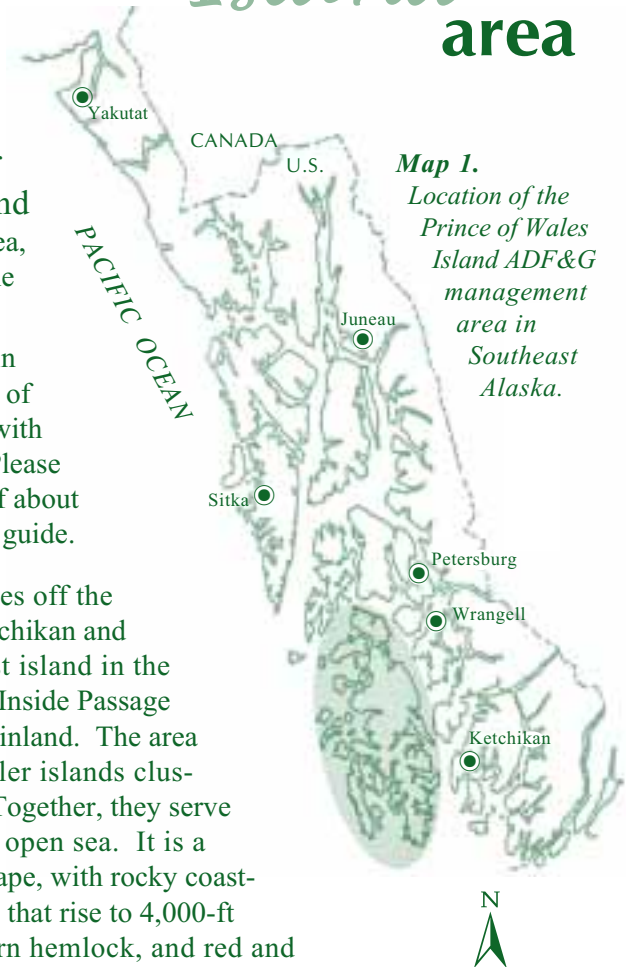
Guide to sport fishing opportunities in the Prince of Wales Island area



In southern Southeast Alaska, sport fishing is our most popular recreation, and in the Prince of Wales Island area, opportunities abound for even the most discriminating anglers.

This guide summarizes the main sport fishing locations on Prince of Wales Island and nearby areas, with maps and related information. Please don't hesitate to contact our staff about information not presented in the guide.

Prince of Wales Island (PoW) lies off the mainland coast, across from Ketchikan and Wrangell—it is the third largest island in the U.S. A waterway known as the Inside Passage separates the Island from the mainland. The area encompasses a number of smaller islands clustered along PoW's west coast. Together, they serve as a protective barrier from the open sea. It is a rugged and mountainous landscape, with rocky coastlines and heavily forested slopes that rise to 4,000-ft elevations. Sitka spruce, Western hemlock, and red and yellow cedar dominate the forest. Dozens of small streams and lakes are scattered throughout the area.



Map 1.
Location of the Prince of Wales Island ADF&G management area in Southeast Alaska.

Land Ownership. . .

Most of the land in the PoW area is within the Tongass National Forest and managed by the U.S. Forest Service. The rest is owned by Native corporations, state and local governments, and private landowners. Public access is limited along some area waterways because of private land ownership. The Forest Service road map of PoW indicates most of the privately held lands.

Population and Economy . . .

The area is sparsely populated: Craig is the largest town, with a 2000 population of 1,397. The only incorporated cities in the area are Craig, Klawock, Thorne Bay, Hydaburg, Coffman Cove, and Kasaan—all on Prince of Wales Island. Economic patterns have been historically influenced by logging and commercial fishing, but tourism has shown recent growth.

Climate . . .

Relative to the rest of Alaska, the area climate is mild and moist. Winter temperatures average around freezing (32°F), and summer temperatures average 56°F (ranging from 45° to

80°F). From November to April (and as late as June in higher elevations), snow and ice cover limit access to lakes and streams. Rainfall averages over 100 inches per year. Our weather is always unpredictable—high quality rain gear and rubber boots are recommended year-round!

Roads . . .

The road system on PoW is more extensive than elsewhere in Southeast Alaska. Of over 1,000 miles of public-use roads on the island, about 900 miles are Forest Service gravel roads maintained at various levels, depending on road-use patterns. DOT (the Alaska Department of Transportation) maintains the rest (about 105 miles of which are paved), linking the Inter-Island Ferry Authority terminal at Hollis and the airstrip at Klawock to the island's larger towns—Craig, Klawock, Thorne Bay, and Hydaburg. The communities of Craig, Hollis, Hydaburg, Klawock, and Thorne Bay are all connected by paved road, and work is in progress on the road to Coffman Cove.

Kosciusko, Heceta, Tuxecan, and Marble islands have about 280 combined miles of Forest Service roads, but vehicle access is very limited to those islands, because they are not served by any ferry system.

Access to *Prince of Wales Island* communities

Prince of Wales Island can be reached by the Inter-Island Ferry Authority system (IFA) or by small aircraft from Ketchikan. Floatplane service is also available to northern PoW from Wrangell and Petersburg. PoW has only one developed airstrip, and it is located 2 miles north of Klawock.

The IFA provides daily service to the island and is a dependable method of travel, regardless of weather. The ferry terminal is at Hollis, about 35 miles west of Ketchikan, across Clarence Strait. Autos, trucks, boats, and RVs can be transported on the ferry, but advance reservations are recommended.

Air charter companies offer both wheeled and floatplane service for island area transportation. **Car and boat rentals** are also available to facilitate travel around the island.

For a complete list of area operators, contact these organizations:

Prince of Wales
Chamber of
Commerce
P. O. Box 490
Klawock, AK 99925
(907) 755-2626

Petersburg Visitor
Information Center
c/o Chamber of
Commerce
Box 649
Petersburg, AK 99833
(907) 772-4636

Ketchikan Visitors
Bureau
131 Front Street
Ketchikan, AK 99901
(907) 225-6166

Wrangell Chamber
of Commerce
Box 49
Wrangell, AK 99929
(907) 874-3901

The Inter-Island Ferry Authority . . .

The IFA maintains year-round ferry service between Ketchikan and Hollis. The system is very busy during summer and holidays. Reservations should be made well in advance at:

Inter-Island Ferry Authority
P.O. Box 495
Craig, AK 99921

1-866-308-4848 toll-free
(907) 826-4848 telephone
(907) 277-4829 (fax)
ifa@interislandferry.com (e-mail)

Visit the IFA Website: www.interislandferry.com

Lodging and facilities in the *Prince of Wales* *Island* area

Commercial lodging facilities are available in about half of the PoW area communities shown on Map 4. A number of sport fishing lodges, small motels, and bed-and-breakfast establishments operate in the PoW area. In addition to Forest Service facilities, there are private campgrounds and cabin rentals in some communities. Additional information on lodging may be obtained from:

Prince of Wales Island
Chamber of Commerce
P. O. Box 490
Klawock, AK 99925
(907) 755-2626

City of Craig
P.O. Box 725
Craig, AK 99921
(907) 826-3275

City of Coffman Cove
P. O. Box 18135
Coffman Cove, AK 99918
(907) 329-2233

City of Hydaburg
P. O. Box 49
Hydaburg, AK 99922
(907) 285-3761

City of Kaasan
PO Box KXA
Kasaan, AK 99950
(907) 542-2212

City of Klawock
P. O. Box 113
Klawock, AK 99925
(907) 755-2261

City of Thorne Bay
P.O. Box 19110
Thorne Bay, AK 99919
(907) 828-3380

U.S. Forest Service *Public Use* *Cabins*



The U.S. Forest Service manages 19 cabins, one 3-sided shelter, and 10 picnic/campground areas for public use in the Prince of Wales Island area (see maps on pages 15, 18 and 22). The cabins house four to six people and are modestly priced (\$25–\$45/night in 2004, depending on location and time of year). Most are remote cabins,

where access is limited to floatplane, boat, or trail. Skiffs are available at many of the lakeside cabins. Sport fishing is available near all but two cabins. Reservations are required and can be made up to 180 days in advance at www.reserveUSA.com.

If you are planning road travel and are not familiar with the PoW road system, a USFS road map is recommended. To purchase road maps, make cabin reservations, or request information, go to www.reserveUSA.com or contact a Forest Service office at:



U.S. Forest Service offices . . .

Tongass National Forest
SE Alaska Discovery Center
50 Main Street
Ketchikan, AK 99901
(907) 228-6220

Craig Ranger District
P.O. Box 500
Craig, AK 99921
(907) 826-3271

Thorne Bay Ranger District
P.O. Box 19001
Thorne Bay, AK 99919
(907) 828-3304

Summary of *Prince of Wales Island* area
transportation services



	Gas	Groc- eries	Float plane service	Road access	Boat ramp	Police	Medical services	Lodging	Fishing/ hunting license
<i>Coffman Cove</i>	•	•	•	•	•			•	•
<i>Craig</i>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
<i>Dolomi</i>			•						
<i>Dora Bay</i>			•						
<i>Edna Bay</i>			•						
<i>Hollis</i>			•	•	•			<i>L</i>	
<i>Hydaburg</i>	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	
<i>Kasaan</i>	•		•	•	•			•	
<i>Klawock</i>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
<i>Labouchere Bay</i>			•	•	<i>P</i>				
<i>Long Island</i>			•						
<i>Naukati</i>	•		•	•	<i>P</i>				
<i>Point Baker</i>	•	•	•						•
<i>Port Alice</i>			•		<i>P</i>				
<i>Port Protection</i>	•	•	•					•	•
<i>Thorne Bay</i>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
<i>Tokeen</i>	<i>L</i>	•	•					<i>L</i>	
<i>Whale Pass</i>	•	•	•	•	•			•	

L = limited availability

P = primitive launch ramp—recommended only for cartop boats or skiffs.

Fishing in the *Prince of Wales Island* area

Marine waters in the PoW area support catchable populations of salmon, halibut, lingcod, Pacific cod, greenling, herring, and at least ten common species of rockfish.

Dungeness, Tanner, and king crab, and shrimp, scallops, abalone, and clams are also common. Other fish, shellfish, and invertebrate species can also be found, but this guide covers the most common and popular species.



salmon

All five species of Pacific salmon resident to waters of the northwest U.S. and Canada are common in the PoW area: king (chinook), coho (silver), pink ('humpy'), sockeye (red), and chum ('dog') salmon.

KING SALMON—the largest, scarcest and most highly prized of the Pacific salmon in the PoW area, renowned for their fighting strength and endurance.

The king salmon sport fishery in marine waters off the west coast of PoW and nearby islands is strongly

influenced by fish bound for spawning streams and hatcheries in the Pacific Northwest and Canada. King salmon fishing off the coast of PoW is also affected by hatchery releases from the Ketchikan, Sitka, and Petersburg areas.

Kings are found mostly in coastal marine waters as they pass through on their migration to mainland spawning streams. Mature ('spawner') kings weighing up to 65 pounds can be found in area waters from May to August, with peak availability during June. Immature ('feeder') kings from 10 to 30 pounds are around all year, but fishing is best from May to July.

There are no king salmon spawning streams in the PoW area, although a few mature king salmon stray into island streams every year. King salmon fishing in fresh water is closed unless opened in-season by ADF&G emergency order.

Locating king salmon in marine waters can be difficult. They frequent nearshore areas off points of land, around kelp beds, or in open water. Schools of baitfish such as herring or needlefish are good indicators of king salmon in the area. Baitfish schools may be located by fathometer or found



where concentrations of sea birds are observed diving for fish. Nearshore areas that extend out into tidal currents are effective ambush points for feeding baitfish, and, accordingly, for king salmon.

The most effective techniques for catching kings are trolling, mooching, or jigging; flyfishing is less common.

COHO SALMON—hard fighters and popular targets for anglers in PoW area salt waters. Coho range from 3 to 20 pounds or more (average 8 pounds), and they are abundant in coastal waters from July to September. The best saltwater fishing is from mid-July through August. In salt water, coho travel in large schools, are often aggressive, and can provide intense action. They are usually caught within 30 feet of the surface, but it's not uncommon to catch them down to 100 feet or deeper.

Coho can be caught by trolling, mooching, flyfishing, or by casting lures from boats. Fishing success is usually best within one or two hours of a tide change. Fishing is often productive in bays or estuaries near stream mouths from late August to October when the coho return to spawn in fresh water.

Hatchery-reared coho are released into two island streams—the Klawock River and Neck Lake. Those released into Neck Lake (near the community of Whale Pass) are a summer-run stock, and anglers can find excellent fishing

Before fishing, acquaint yourself with the particular location where you plan to fish and know the sport fishing regulations for that location.

for these fish in the outlet stream of Neck Lake from late June through August. Fishing for the Klawock coho is best in August and September—anglers often find excellent fishing from the shoreline along the road between Craig and Klawock.

cont'd . . .

Most area streams wider than 6 feet that enter salt water support at least small runs of coho. Summer-run coho enter some streams in late June, but most coho are fall-run fish that enter streams from mid-August to November.

PINK SALMON—the smallest and most abundant salmon in PoW area waters. They have a 2-year life cycle and weigh from 2 to 6 pounds (3 lb. on average). ‘Pinks’ typically travel in coastal waters in large schools (hundreds or thousands of fish). They’re abundant in coastal waters from early to late summer. Upon entering freshwater streams in summer, pinks develop a dorsal hump which is most pronounced in males—thus the nickname ‘humpy.’ Saltwater ‘humpy’ fishing is best in August, but it’s also good in middle or late July.

Trolling, mooching, or casting lures or flies produces nice catches in salt water when pinks are biting. They are usually brightest and preferred for harvest while in open ocean or coastal waters, before they enter their spawning streams. They often provide excellent action when schooled near stream mouths in August, and roadside fishing near jutting points can be productive—especially in August.

Flyfishing is usually the most effective technique for catching

humpies in area streams, but spinning, baitcasting, and spincasting can also be productive.

SOCKEYE SALMON—regarded for their fighting skill as well as their satisfying flavor, these are perhaps the most difficult salmon to catch in PoW area waters. The saltwater sockeye sport fishery is very limited. Most sockeye are caught by trolling or casting artificial lures or flies. Adult sockeye feed on small crustaceans and other zooplankton in marine waters and stop feeding once they return to spawn in fresh water. However, sockeye are most commonly caught in fresh water in July on flies or spinners.

CHUM SALMON—famous for their large teeth, which develop most prominently in males upon entering fresh water. Chums are caught infrequently in local sport fisheries,



usually by anglers trolling in salt waters, drift fishing or casting in streams for other salmon species.



Bottomfish

'Bottomfish' are fishes normally caught on or near the ocean floor: halibut, rockfish, and lingcod.

HALIBUT—the most popular bottomfish in PoW area marine waters. These white-fleshed fish are delicious when prepared in any of a variety of ways. Pacific halibut is a toothy flatfish that resembles flounder but grows much larger—adult halibut over 400

pounds have been caught locally. Halibut live over 20 years and are usually harvested at 15 to 100 pounds. Their preferred habitat is along fairly uniform sandy, rocky, or muddy bottoms near abrupt dropoffs or rocky points of land.

Peak fishing occurs in summer. Though normally caught on or near the ocean floor at depths below 80 feet, halibut are sometimes caught at shallower depths by anglers trolling or mooching for salmon.

Check regulation book for halibut seasons!

Halibut will strike a number of offerings—whole or chunked herring, salmon heads or tails, octopus, squid,

and chrome or lead-head jigs with a variety of optional rubber tails or skirts.

Heavy, conventional tackle is standard for halibut. Use caution when landing and handling halibut!

ROCKFISH—at least 10 species are commonly harvested in PoW area marine waters. These light-fleshed fish have a distinctive, appealing flavor. Most rockfish species weigh between 1 and 6 pounds (2 lb. on average). Yelloweye (red snapper) are the largest species; they can reach weights of 30 pounds, but average about 6 pounds. Rockfish are long-lived and, depending on species, may live 30 to 100 years or more.

Rockfish are often caught incidentally by anglers fishing for salmon or halibut. Although rockfish are available year-round, the best sport fishing is in the warmer months. All resident rockfish species can be caught with herring or various jigs, spoons, or flies, anywhere from near-surface to bottom. If you are planning to release the rockfish you catch, reel it up slowly to the surface, to avoid rupturing its swim bladder.

LINGCOD—popular marine fish renowned for their prominent teeth and aggressive and territorial nature. Lingcod prefer irregular rocky formations such as caves, particularly in exposed areas with heavy tidal movement.

cont'd . . .

Fish as heavy as 30 pounds are standard, although some exceed 50 pounds.

This member of the greenling family is commonly caught with chrome or lead-head jigs, herring, or heads or tails from various other marine fishes.

***Check regulation book for
lingcod seasons!***



Trout, Char, Grayling

Other gamefish caught in streams and lakes are steelhead, rainbow, and cutthroat trout, Dolly Varden char, and Arctic grayling. The chart on page 13 shows seasonal freshwater availability of these fishes.

STEELHEAD—the most sought-after game fish in island streams from November to May. The popularity of steelhead stems from their fighting prowess and low numbers, compared to salmon, other trout, and char. Steelhead are sea-run rainbow trout that, unlike salmon, are capable of spawning during two or more years.

Adult steelhead (3–20 pounds, average 7 pounds) return yearly to spawning streams in the PoW area. The island has a large concentration of steelhead streams, relative to most of Alaska: 85 are documented by ADF&G. Several larger stream systems with lakes support both spring- and fall-run fish, while most steelhead streams support only the dominant spring-run fish. Information is limited for many of the area streams, but in most systems fewer than 200 adult steelhead return annually.

Anglers fish for spring-run steelhead from early March through May (peak fishing is early April to mid-May), and for fall-run steelhead between late October and mid-January (peak is late November through December).

Drift fishing with spinning or bait-casting tackle and flyfishing are both effective. A host of hardware, flies, and other artificials will attract strikes. ‘Steelies’ will at times smack almost any offering, while they may go ‘off-bite’ during cold spells, low or clear water, periods of heavy fishing pressure, or for no apparent reason at all.

Steelhead can be susceptible to angler-induced mortality from being deeply hooked and from improper handling. Anglers are encouraged to practice catch-and-release when fishing for wild steelhead because of their low numbers and vulnerability.

RAINBOW TROUT—hard-fighting game fish which are highly prized by anglers. They are known for a prominent red stripe on the side, but their overall coloration varies widely and reflects habitat or degree of maturity.

Rainbow trout are found in area waters both as freshwater resident and as sea-run races. Sea-run rainbows are discussed above, under “steelhead.”

Rainbow trout up to 18 inches long inhabit many area streams and lakes. They are present year-round, but the best sport fishing is in spring and early summer.

Rainbows feed voraciously on aquatic insects and their larvae, small fish, eggs, and crustaceans. Effective offerings therefore include flies, spinners, spoons, and other artificials which imitate preferred foods. Rainbows are caught with flyfishing and spinning gear.

CUTTHROAT TROUT—popular native fish inhabiting many PoW area waters. Like rainbows, they occur both as sea-run and resident in streams and lakes, inhabiting almost any freshwater habitat—even beaver ponds and backwater sloughs.

Trophy fish over 3 pounds are caught occasionally in freshwater systems. However, because area lakes and streams are not very productive, these fish are slow-

growing and have low population densities and reproductive rates.

These factors, coupled with their popularity with anglers, make them susceptible to overharvest. Catch-and-release fishing is therefore encouraged.

Cutthroat will strike any of a variety of lures or flies. Sea-run cutthroat are usually caught in area streams in late spring and fall. Resident ‘cutts’ often hold near inlet stream mouths and along lake margins, especially near vegetation.

Trolling with artificial lures produces nice fish in some lakes during summer, when fish are deeper. Instream catch rates are highest in spring, when salmon fry emerge from stream gravels.

DOLLY VARDEN CHAR—the only species of char native to area waters, Dolly Varden are known for following adult salmon upstream and feeding on eggs discharged by ripe female salmon. ‘Dollies’ are common both as sea-run and resident in many area streams and lakes.

Dolly Varden fishing is generally good from late spring to early fall in area waters. A variety of flies and artificials will catch ‘Dollies’ in lakes and streams. Casting or trolling various spoons or spinners adjacent to marine shorelines and stream mouths also produces fish.

ARCTIC GRAYLING— introduced into three PoW lakes in the 1960s and 1970s. Distinguished from trout and char by a prominent dorsal fin, grayling are sensitive to pollution and prefer cold, clear streams. Healthy populations of grayling

inhabit Summit Lake, Lake Melon, and Lake Marge. Their growth rate is slow; most fish are only 8–12 inches long. Their diet is mostly insects; hence flyfishing is most effective. Small spinners or spoons will also take grayling.

Shellfish

Dungeness crab and shrimp are popular targets, especially in summer. Crab and shrimp are usually caught in traps, pots, or ring nets baited with fish heads, tails, and viscera.



Seasonal availability of shrimp and Dungeness crab in Prince of Wales Island area salt waters.

WARNING!

The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation recommends **no harvest** of mussels, clams, scallops, and other filter-feeding bivalves in the Prince of Wales Island area for human consumption. Those shellfish can transmit paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP), a potentially lethal neurotoxin, to humans. Additional information or questions should be directed to:

ALASKA DEPT. OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

3601 C St., Suite 1324
Anchorage, AK 99503
(907) 563-0318

555 Cordova Street
Anchorage, AK 99501-2617
(907) 269-7640