



Southcentral Region  
Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
Division of Sport Fish

Prince William Sound  
Recreational Fishing Series

# Cordova

## About Cordova

Cordova is a small commercial fishing town (pop. 2,500) on the southeastern side of Prince William Sound, 52 air miles southeast of Valdez and 150 air miles southeast of Anchorage. The town can be reached only by air or by ferries. Check the Alaska Marine Highway website for more information about the ferries: [www.dot.state.ak.us/amhs](http://www.dot.state.ak.us/amhs)

Alaska Natives originally settled the area around the Copper River Delta. The town of Cordova changed its name from Puerto Cordova in 1906 when the railroad was built to move copper ore.

Commercial fishing has been a major industry for Cordova since the 1940s, so please be careful around their boats and nets. The Division of Commercial Fisheries offers a wealth of information on their website, including in-season harvest information at [www.cf.adfg.state.ak.us](http://www.cf.adfg.state.ak.us)

Bears are numerous in the Cordova area and anglers should use caution when fishing salmon spawning areas. Check the ADF&G website for the "Bear Facts" brochure, or request one from the ADF&G Anchorage regional office.

The Cordova area can be very rainy. Waterproof gear and changes of clothing are strongly recommended. July and August are the warmest months, with temperatures



*The Copper River and the Million Dollar Bridge*

ranging 60-65 degrees F. August and September are the rainiest months, with 9-13 inches of precipitation each month. There's a telephone recorded weather forecast at (907) 424-3333.

## Hotels, fishing charters, camping

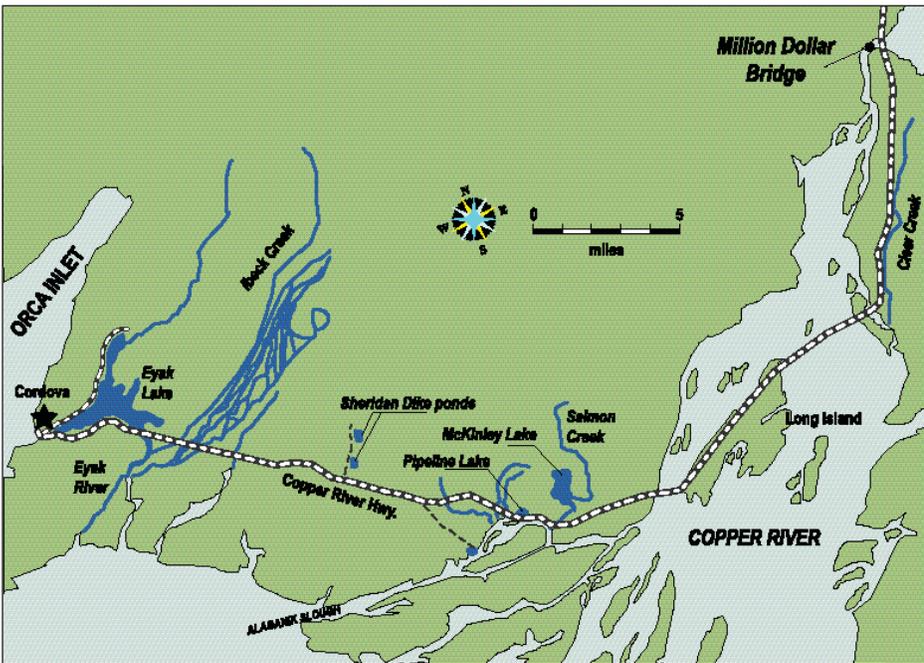
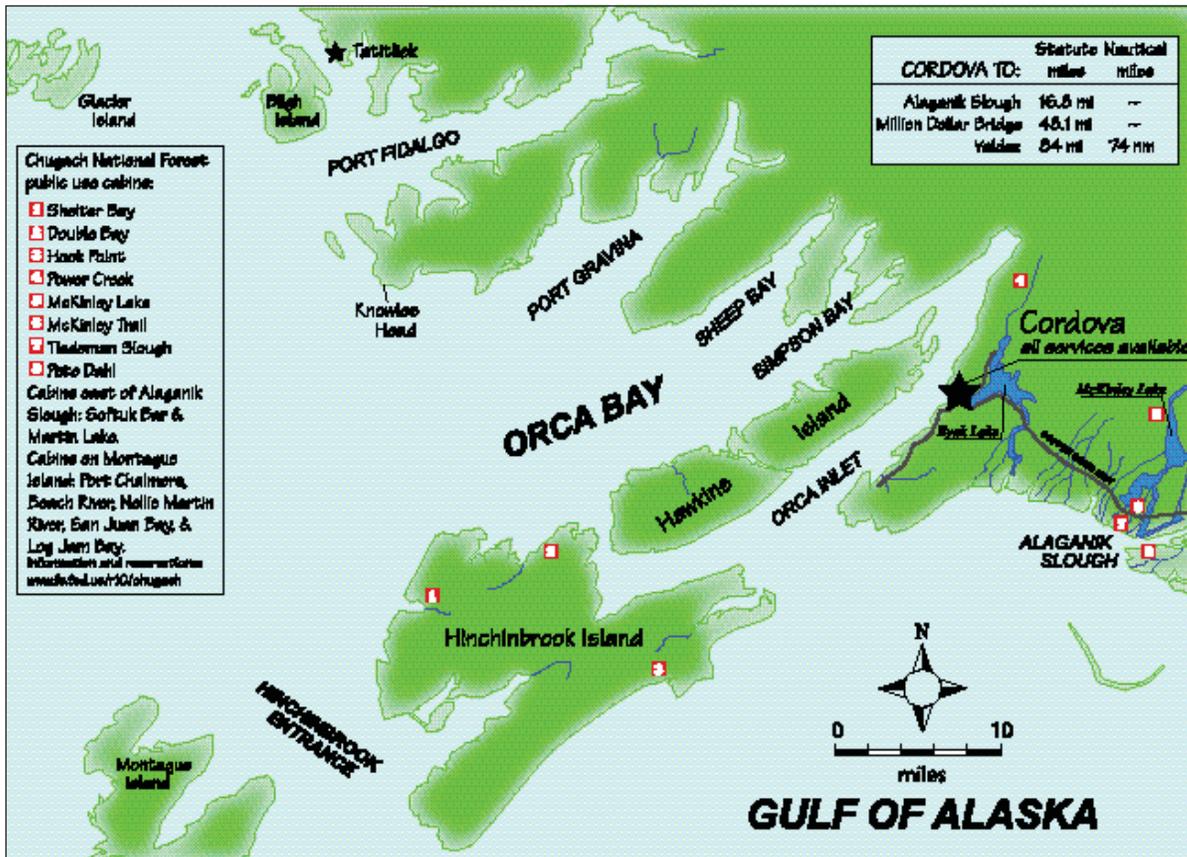
For information about fishing charters, accommodations and other services in Cordova, contact the Chamber of Commerce and Visitor's Center at P.O. Box 99, Cordova, Alaska, 99574, (907) 424-7260 or [cordovachamber.com](http://cordovachamber.com). The City of Cordova also runs an excellent website at [www.cityofcordova.net](http://www.cityofcordova.net).

## Management of Alaska's sport fisheries

The Division of Sport Fish is charged with the management of Alaska's sport fisheries under the sustained yield principle, through regulations and management plans adopted by the Alaska Board of Fisheries. Enforcement of fishing regulations is primarily the responsibility of the Alaska Dept. of Public Safety, State Troopers' Bureau of Wildlife Enforcement. Management of Prince William Sound and Cordova area fisheries is divided between the Anchorage and Cordova offices.

At times the Division issues in-season regulatory changes, called Emergency Orders, primarily in response to under- or over-abundance of fish. Emergency Orders are sent to radio stations, newspapers, and television sta-

For specific fishing regulations, including opening dates, daily limits, and special tackle restrictions, consult the "Prince William Sound section" of the Southcentral Alaska regulation booklet.



Above: general map of the eastern Prince William Sound area. Left: The Copper River Highway. Maps are not to scale.

For topographical maps, visit the U.S. Geological Survey's map website at <http://store.usgs.com>  
 For nautical charts, visit the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administrations chart website at <http://chartmaker.nco.noaa.gov>, or the State of Alaska Boating Safety website at [www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks/boating](http://www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks/boating)  
 Weather: <http://www.arh.noaa.gov>



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If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility, or if you desire further information please write to ADF&G, P.O. Box 115526, Juneau, AK 99811-5526; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4040 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 300 Webb, Arlington, VA 22203; or O.E.O., U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington DC 20240.  
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tions, and posted on our web site at [www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us](http://www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us)

We also maintain hot line recording at (907) 267-2516 Anchorage, or (907) 424-7535 Cordova. Or you can contact the Anchorage Sport Fish Information Center at (907) 267-2218 or the Cordova Sport Fish office at (907) 424-3212.

### Weir counts

Both the Division of Commercial Fisheries and the Division of Sport Fish maintain fish weirs and sonar projects in order to help with in-season management. If available, state weir counts and sonar estimates can be found on our website.

### Fishing regulations

Regulations are often different for each water you fish. Please read the Prince William Sound section of the Southcentral Alaska regulation booklet before heading out to fish. Regulation booklets are available wherever fishing licenses are sold, and posted on the ADF&G Division of Sport Fish home page at [www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us](http://www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us)

Be sure you have your sport fishing license or ADF&G Permanent ID Card in your possession. Also, anglers need to purchase a king salmon stamp to fish for king salmon (exceptions are listed in the regulation booklet).

Licenses and stamps can be purchased at most grocery stores and tackle shops or on-line at [www.admin.adfg.state.ak.us/license](http://www.admin.adfg.state.ak.us/license)

### Fish Identification

Silver salmon or king salmon? Pelagic rockfish or non-pelagic rockfish? You'll find a fish identification guide in the Southcentral Alaska regulation booklet.

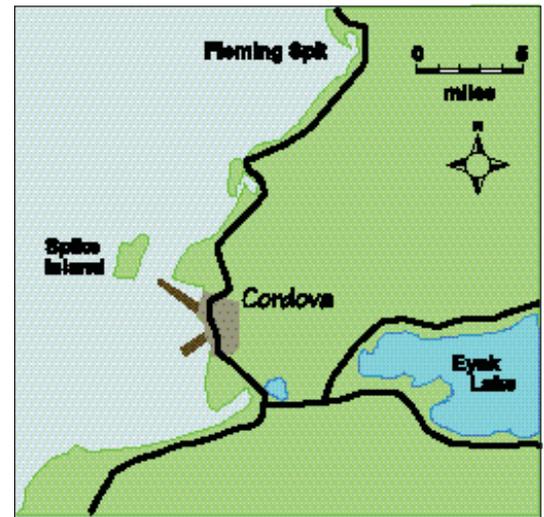
### "Party" Fishing

Party fishing, such as when anglers "pool" their harvest to achieve a "boat limit," is illegal. A fish belongs to the person who originally hooked it. Under Alaska law, once your daily bag limit is reached, you cannot harvest more fish "for the boat."

Only under certain conditions can anglers give someone their fish, and sport-caught fish can never be sold, bartered or traded. Check the regulation booklet for the rules on giving away fish. Once an angler gives away his/her bag limit, he/she may not harvest additional fish of that species on the same day.

## Fresh Waters

Cordova's road system consists of a 50 mile dirt and gravel road between town and the "Million Dollar Bridge," which crosses the Copper River at Miles Lake. Productive red (sockeye) salmon, silver (coho) salmon, rainbow trout, cutthroat trout, and Dolly Varden char freshwater streams such as Clear Creek, Ibeck Creek, and the Eyak



*Cordova and the Fleming Spit area.*

River are easily accessible from this road.

Most of the fresh waters of Prince William Sound and the Cordova area are open the entire year to salmon fishing. There are a few closed waters, so please check the current regulation booklet carefully before heading out to fish.

## Saltwater Fishing

The marine waters of Orca Inlet, Simpson Bay and Sheep Bay also provide opportunity for king (Chinook) salmon, silver salmon, and red salmon. Halibut, rockfish and lingcod can also be found as close as Spike Island, located just outside the boat harbor, and along the coastlines of the numerous islands in eastern Prince William Sound. A stout fishing rod and jigs or cut herring are the best choices for tackle.

Although Prince William Sound is closed to all crab fishing, it is open to shrimping. Razor clams are also available, as well as a wide variety of hardshell clams such as littleneck and butter clams. For PSP advisories, contact the Department of Environmental Conservation at (907) 269-7640 or on the web at [www.state.ak.us/dec/deh/seafood/psp/home.htm](http://www.state.ak.us/dec/deh/seafood/psp/home.htm).

## Catch & Release

There are restrictions on the landing and the catch-and-release of certain fish — read the regulations before heading out to fish. Released fish have the best chance of survival when the following simple guidelines are followed:

- Use strong tackle and heavy line to land the fish quickly.
- Do not handle the fish by its gills or the gill plates.
- Keep the fish in the water, do not boat or land the fish. For some species, this is a regulation.

- Handle the fish gently.
- Back the hook out.
- Cut your line if the fish is deeply hooked
- Move the fish back and forth until it is revived and swims away.

## Red (sockeye) salmon

Small runs of red salmon are available in the Sound during most of the summer, and reds are the first salmon to return to Cordova streams. Juvenile red salmon may spend up to four years rearing in freshwater lakes before becoming smolt and moving out to sea. Once at sea, they reach 4 to 12 pounds after one to four years.

Good numbers of adult reds begin returning to Eyak River in late May and early June, and various later runs in the Eyak provide red salmon through August. Reds return to Alaganik Slough, McKinley Lake area, and Clear Creek from mid-June through early July, with the peak of the run occurring in late June. Anglers can fish from both shore and boats in Alaganik Slough. Boats can be launched at points along the road that parallels the slough, as well as a U.S. Forest Service boat ramp.

### Tackle

These fish are perfect for medium-action spinning gear, or 8- 9-wt. fly rods. Because reds are not aggressive biters, size 2-6 streamer flies such as the Mickey Finn or the Russian River Coho have proven to be the most productive technique for catching red salmon, even for those with spin casting rods. In fresh water, reds tend to hug the shore, so save your 50-yard casts for surf fishing.

## King (Chinook) salmon

King salmon return at different ages. Some, called “jacks,” return after only one year in salt waters. These fish weigh only 1-2 pounds and are almost always males. Others return after two years at about 5-15 pounds. Most of these are also males. The majority of kings, however, return after three and four years at sea at a weight of 25-45 pounds.

Stocked king salmon are available at Fleming Spit in mid-June and remain through mid-July. Popular methods include larger lures and spoons, such as ½- to 2-oz. Pixees, Dardevles, Vibrax, or herring under a bobber. Fishing is best off the shore of the spit during the four hours around high tide. Trolling anglers often add a dodger/flasher.

The most significant run of wild king salmon returns to the glacial Copper River, east of Cordova. Although there is a commercial king fishery at the mouth, most sport fishing targeting kings takes place far upriver.

Wild “feeder” king salmon can sometimes be caught near Cordova salt waters by trolling in mid- to late winter.

## SPECIAL SILVER SALMON BAG LIMITS NEAR CORDOVA

Stocked as smolt by Prince William Sound Aquaculture Association, silver salmon returns to the Fleming Spit area have become very popular.

Marine waters north of a line from Odiak Slough to Stump Point, and south of a line from Orca Cannery to Knot Point are designated a "Terminal Harvest" area. Because this is a terminal harvest area, daily limits are higher than in the rest of Eastern Prince William Sound. Check the regulation booklet.

Try to find areas where herring are overwintering and troll very slowly near these schools.

## Pink (humpy) salmon

There are over 200 streams in Prince William Sound that support natural runs of pink salmon. In addition, four private nonprofit hatcheries produce pink salmon. Pinks return to the Sound from mid-June through late August, with the peak typically occurring in late July. Noteworthy Cordova-area pink salmon fisheries occur at Sawmill Bay on Evans Island, and below Hartney Creek bridge on the Cordova road system.

Pinks are excellent sport action, aggressively biting at any Pixee, Daredevil, or Tee-Spoon-type lure, or at any large flashy fly.

## Silver (coho) salmon

Wild silver salmon spawn in Cordova’s freshwater streams August through October. After spawning, the adult fish die, leaving their eggs to hatch the following spring. Juvenile salmon remain in fresh waters that summer and following winter. In the spring of their second or third years, the young fish, now called smolt, migrate to salt water. They remain in marine waters about 14 months before returning to fresh waters as 8- to 12-pound adults to spawn. Because PWS streams experience severe flooding from time to time, wild stocks have been and will continue to be extremely variable.

Late August and early September are the best silver fishing times. Good spots are Elsinore Creek, Ibeck Creek, Eyak River, as well as Fleming Spit and Orca Inlet just north of town. Alaganik Slough and Clear Creek, especially where it flows into the Copper River, also provide excellent roadside silver fishing. From 1990-1999, the average yearly silver salmon harvest from the Cordova road system was 8,700.

Fishing for salmon of all species on Clear Creek is closed upstream of the Carbon Mountain Bridge.

Silvers strike readily at lures, salmon roe, and streamer flies, making these aggressive and hard fighting a prime target of sport anglers.

## Chum (dog) salmon

Chum salmon have the widest distribution of any of the Pacific salmon, and utilize the broadest spawning areas, both intertidal and freshwater. Like pink salmon, chum salmon juveniles also quickly move out to nearshore salt waters soon after emerging from the gravel. Chum feed in ocean waters for 3 to 6 years before returning as 7 to 18 pound fish.

In the Cordova area, chum are usually taken by anglers targeting other species of salmon. Chums are especially hard fighters that will take a variety of flies and lures.

## Halibut

Halibut spawn in deep offshore waters from November through March. After hatching, the larvae drift with ocean currents, feeding on plankton then larger and larger fish and shellfish. The larvae start life in an upright position, like other fish, with an eye on each side of the head. When the larvae are about 6 months old, the left eye moves over the snout to the right side of the head, and the coloration on the left side of the body fades.

Halibut are found throughout Eastern Prince William Sound waters, on or near the bottom over mud, sand, or gravel banks and below steep drop-offs. From 1990-1999, the average yearly sport harvest for the Cordova area was 2,400.

Most popular methods include herring or fish heads on a circle hook, or large white jigs. Average weight of harvested fish ranges from 8-75 pounds, although fish 350 pounds and over are sometimes caught.

## Rockfish and Lingcod

Both rockfish and lingcod are found throughout Cordova area waters. These fish are extremely long-lived and slow to reproduce. Some rockfish have been aged at over 100 years old. Careful management is required for sustainable fisheries, and there are special fishing regulations for both rockfish and lingcod.

Rockfish are commonly caught while fishing for halibut over rocky structure. There are 32 species of rockfish that live in the Gulf of Alaska, but only about 10 species are regularly caught in the sport fishery.

Lingcod spawn December through March, with males guarding nests through June. Without this protection, other fish and shellfish would eat all the eggs within days. Males are very defensive during this time, and will snap at anything, thus making them more vulnerable to

overharvest.

Adult lingcod are often caught near steep rocky banks by anglers jigging for halibut. In Eastern PWS, fish up to 30 pounds are caught.

## Dolly Varden Char

Dolly Varden are available in most of the Cordova area streams throughout the year. Two distinct populations of Dolly Varden are present in Prince William Sound. Resident Dolly Varden spend their entire lives in fresh water. Anadromous, or sea-run, Dolly Varden spend their first few years in fresh water and then migrate to the ocean to feed. Sea-run Dollies return to spawn in the fall, remain in fresh water lakes through the winter, and then return to the ocean the following spring.

The best fishing is found in Eyak Lake and its tributaries, Ibeck Creek, Alaganik Slough, and Clear Creek, although a majority of the roadside streams and lakes have Dolly Varden.

These fish average 12 to 20 inches long. Dollies readily hit small spinners, single eggs, and salmon roe. Popular flies include nymph and midge patterns fished both wet and dry, as well as salmon smolt or egg imitations.

## Cutthroat Trout

Prince William Sound is probably the most northern and western extreme of the natural range for cutthroat trout, and the populations are small and scattered. Pipeline and McKinley lakes and Alaganik Slough are the most popular fisheries.

The cutthroat gets its name from its distinctive red slash underneath the jaw. Both resident and sea-run cutthroat trout are present near Cordova, and range 9" to 18" long.

Small spinners or spoons, single eggs, and nymph-type flies, all fished deep, are popular for catching cutthroat.

To help protect spawning cutthroat trout, the season is closed April 15 through June 14 in all waters of Prince

### COPPER RIVER DELTA

#### SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREA FOR TROUT

In order to maintain historic size and age distribution, ADF&G has established a "Special Management Area for Trout" in certain waters of the Copper River Delta. In this area, no retention of trout (both cutthroat and rainbow) is allowed year-round, and there are restrictions on tackle. Check the regulation booklet for details.

William Sound.

## Arctic Grayling

Clear Creek is the only Cordova-area flowing water where grayling can be reliably found. Some fish may be found on the Copper River Delta as well. Stocking efforts along the Copper River Highway have been discontinued, but grayling may still be found in Sheridan Dike Pond.

## Shellfish

### Crab

Because of low populations, Prince William Sound (and most of the surrounding area) is closed year-round to king, Dungeness, and tanner crab fishing.

### Shrimp

There are five species of shrimp in Alaskan waters: northern (pink), spot, coonstripe, humpy, and sidestripe. In Prince William Sound, spot and sidestripe shrimp are the main species caught in recreational shrimp pots, while northern shrimp are usually caught by commercial shrimp pots.

ADF&G data show that most shrimp harvest comes

from Port Nellie Juan, Culross Passage, Squaw Bay, Blue Fjord, King’s Bay, Port Wells, Bay of Isles, McClure Bay, Derickson Bay, Deep Water Bay, Cochrane Bay, Knowles Bay, Bligh Reef, Columbia Bay, Unakwik Inlet, Glacier Island, and Port Gravina.

Over 10,700 gallons of shrimp were harvested in 2004. Most harvesters get about 0 to 1 gallons of shrimp per pot-day of effort. Less than 5% of harvesters get 2 or more gallons.

For more information, request a copy of “Prince William Sound Shrimp” from ADF&G, or download a copy from the website. There are regulations on bouys, pot construction and pot limits, please check the regulation booklet.

### Clams

The Cordova area supports the only sizeable razor clam population in Prince William Sound. A permit is required for taking razor clams in the immediate Cordova area. Check the regulations, or ADF&G Cordova at (907) 424-3212.

## Cordova area fisheries

### EYAK RIVER

Red Salmon	Late May through late July.
Silver Salmon	Early August through late September.

### CORDOVA ROADSIDE

Red Salmon	Early July through late July.
Silver Salmon	Early August through late September.

### FLEMING SPIT

King Salmon	Late May through early July.
Silver Salmon	Mid-July through early September.

### MARINE FISHERIES

Halibut	Peak early June - mid-August. Closed in January.
Lingcod	Peak early July - late September. Closed Jan. 1 - June 30.
Rockfish	Available year-round.
Shrimp	Available April 15 - September 15.

For information about camping, accommodations, fishing guides, and other visitor services, contact the agencies listed in this brochure, or the Alaska Travel Industry Association at 2600 Cordova Street, Suite 201, Anchorage, Alaska 99503  
Web: [www.travelalaska.com](http://www.travelalaska.com) E-mail: [info@AlaskaTIA.org](mailto:info@AlaskaTIA.org)



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