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2020 PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND SALMON FISHERY INFORMATION

General Information

This outlook is provided to assist the commercial salmon industry in planning for the 2020 season in the Prince William Sound (PWS) Management Area (Area E). Forecasts for commercial common property fishery (CCPF) harvests by species are summarized in Table 1 with detailed Area E forecasts on ADF&G's web site:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareapws.salmon#forecasts>

Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation (PWSAC) hatchery forecasts can be found on the PWSAC web site:

<https://pwsac.com/2020/01/2020-pwsac-hatchery-return-forecast/>

Valdez Fisheries Development Association (VFDA) hatchery forecasts can be found on the VFDA web site:

<https://www.valdezfisheries.org/forecasted-returns/>

Management of PWS commercial salmon fisheries occurs from the Cordova area office. As in past years, fishery announcements from the Cordova ADF&G office will routinely occur at 2:00 p.m. Announcement recordings will be available for gillnet fisheries at 907-424-7535 and seine fisheries at 907-424-7345. Additionally, announcement recordings are available in Anchorage at 907-267-2843. Daily announcements are compiled and can be found on the ADF&G web site at:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.main>

The first announcement concerning the Copper River District will be issued between May 1 and May 8.

Gillnet Fishery

Copper River District

The Copper River delta SEG is 55,000–130,000 sockeye salmon, and the upper Copper River sustainable escapement goal (SEG) is 360,000–750,000 wild sockeye salmon. The 2020 inriver goal past the Miles Lake sonar is 661,000–1.05 million salmon consisting of the following components:

Spawning escapement	360,000–750,000 sockeye
Other salmon	17,500 salmon
Subsistence	70,100 salmon
Personal use harvest	133,200 salmon
Sport fishery	15,000 salmon
Gulkana broodstock	20,000 sockeye
Gulkana Hatchery surplus	45,200 sockeye
Total	661,000–1.05 million salmon

The standard commercial fishing schedule is two evenly-spaced fishing periods per week with the first period each week starting on Mondays at 7:00 a.m. Fishing effort, harvest, and escapement trends on the Copper River Delta and at Miles Lake sonar station will inform the department's decision on harvest opportunity.

The 2020 CCPF harvest forecast for the Copper River District are 771,000 sockeye and 223,000 coho salmon (Table 1). The Chinook salmon common property harvest (all fisheries) forecast is 36,000 fish. The 2020 sockeye salmon harvest forecast is 41% below the 10-year (2010–2019) average of 1.31 million fish. Based on the recent poor Chinook and sockeye salmon production, a conservative management approach will be implemented at the start of the season. For Chinook salmon conservation, the 'inside closure area', as defined in 5AAC 24.350(1)(B), may be closed during early season fishing periods beyond regulatory requirements; this area may be expanded at the start of the season to include waters inside the barrier islands east of Coffee Creek West (60° 14.13' N. lat., 144° 58.31' W. long.).

Beginning in early to mid-August when coho salmon harvest becomes predominant, the Copper and Bering River districts will be managed for coho salmon. The standard management strategy for coho salmon is one or two 24-hour commercial fishing periods per week depending on escapement and harvest levels.

Individuals planning to participate in state subsistence salmon fishing activities in the Prince William Sound Management Area are required to obtain a permit through any ADF&G office. **In Cordova, permits will be available during normal business hours Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.** ADF&G staff will not be available to issue permits before hours, after hours, on state holidays, or on weekends. **Permit holders are encouraged to call the Cordova office at 907-424-3212 or report online (<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/Harvest/>) to provide preliminary harvest reports to assist with inseason harvest tracking.**

Bering River District

The recent 10-year average (2010–2019) commercial harvests for the Bering River District are 4,000 sockeye and 63,000 coho salmon. The western portion of the Bering River District will open concurrent with the Copper River District to alleviate enforcement concerns in the line fishery along the district boundary. A broader Bering River District opening is expected only after sockeye salmon escapement is tracking to achieve the SEG. Beginning in early August, the Bering River District will be managed for coho salmon and management strategies will be similar to those used for Copper River District.

Eshamy District

The sockeye salmon run to Main Bay Hatchery (MBH) is forecast to be 1.06 million fish. PWSAC requires 71,900 (7%) sockeye salmon for cost recovery and broodstock, leaving 989,000 (93%) fish available for harvest. The management strategy in 2020 will be to provide two periods per week in the hatchery subdistrict. Short duration periods are likely in the Crafton Island Subdistrict based on the Coghill River wild sockeye salmon escapement. Eshamy District is expected to open for the 2020 season on June 1.

Eshamy River escapement will not be assessed in 2020 and no forecast was produced this year. Beginning in early to mid-July, fishing time and area in Crafton Island Subdistrict will be driven by harvest of wild pink and sockeye salmon in Eshamy District, and the strength of wild pink and chum salmon escapement in the Eshamy, Northwestern, Coghill, and Northern districts.

Coghill District

The 2020 Coghill Lake sockeye salmon total run forecast is 175,000 fish with an SEG of 20,000–60,000 fish. The chum salmon run to Wally Noerenberg Hatchery (WNH) is forecast to be 2.55 million fish. PWSAC requires 1.30 million (51%) chum salmon for cost recovery and broodstock, leaving 1.25 million (49%) fish available for harvest. Coghill District is expected to open for the 2020 season on June 1.

Area restrictions may be implemented by emergency order for the conservation of Coghill Lake sockeye salmon and Port Wells wild stock chum and pink salmon. The management strategy in 2020 will be to provide two periods per week. Based on the recent variability in sockeye salmon escapement to Coghill River and increased fishing effort

in the Coghill District, 36 to 48 hour periods are likely in areas outside the WNH terminal area. If sockeye salmon escapement in Coghill District indicate a strong run, the Port Wells area will be regularly opened north to the markers near Coghill Lagoon. If the Coghill River weir counts exceed the escapement goal, fishing area will be expanded to the mouth of Coghill River. If the drift gillnet fleet does not appear to be able to harvest available surplus Coghill Lake sockeye salmon, the purse seine fleet may be allowed to fish north of 61° latitude in the Coghill District.

WNH coho salmon are present in the Coghill District fishery from early August through late September. PWSAC projects the 2020 run to WNH to be 115,000 coho salmon, requiring 2,700 fish for broodstock, with all remaining fish available to for harvest.

Unakwik District

The 2020 wild stock sockeye salmon commercial harvest 10-year average (2010–2019) in Unakwik Inlet is 3,440 fish. During the sockeye salmon run to Miners and Cowpen lakes, the management strategy will be to provide two periods per week. This schedule is expected to begin in early June and run concurrently with openings in the Coghill District. Unakwik District is expected to open for the 2020 season on June 15.

Purse Seine Fishery

The 2020 pink salmon total run forecast for PWS is 33.64 million fish, of which 25.99 million will be available for harvest. This pink salmon total run forecast includes 4.42 million natural stock fish, 14.60 million PWSAC hatchery fish, and 14.62 million Valdez Fisheries Development Association (VFDA) fish. Approximately 3.46 million (24%) of the projected 14.62 million VFDA pink salmon return will be needed for cost recovery and broodstock, leaving 11.15 million fish available for harvest. Approximately 3.39 million (23%) of the projected 14.60 million pink salmon run to the PWSAC hatcheries will be needed for cost recovery and broodstock, leaving 11.20 million fish available for harvest. Based on the department's natural stock pink salmon forecast of 4.42 million fish, there is a potential harvestable surplus of 3.63 million natural pink salmon. The department will manage for each district's aerial index escapement goal for a cumulative SEG of 575,000–992,000 pink salmon.

The 2019 chum salmon forecast is 4.46 million fish. The majority, 3.86 million (86%), are from PWSAC hatchery production, with 500,000 fish returning to the Armin F. Koernig hatchery (AFK). Based on the department's natural chum salmon forecast of 604,000 fish, there is a potential harvestable surplus of 404,000 wild chum salmon. The department will manage for each district's escapement goal for a combined total of 200,000 fish.

The PWS purse seine fishery will begin on Monday, June 1 targeting the enhanced chum salmon run to the AFK hatchery and Port Chalmers remote release site. At the AFK hatchery, a regular schedule of two fishing periods per week are likely at the start of the season. A reduced schedule will be implemented, if necessary, to limit the harvest of salmon bound for other areas of PWS. In the Port Chalmers Subdistrict, a regular schedule of two fishing periods per week is planned at the start of the season. A reduced schedule will be implemented, if necessary, to limit the harvest of salmon bound for other areas of PWS. Areas open to the Port Chalmers CCPF will close in late July, after which purse seine fishing periods will be opened based on the strength of wild pink salmon stocks. Anadromous stream closures and regulatory closed waters within the open area at AFK and Port Chalmers will be suspended during June and July to facilitate the harvest of enhanced chum salmon.

The general waters of the eight purse seine districts will be managed based on the strength of natural stocks. Hatchery subdistricts will be managed based on the strength of both natural and enhanced stocks. Pink and chum salmon aerial escapement trends and fishery performance data will be evaluated inseason and compared to average historical performance to determine the frequency and duration of openings.

The department has used yellow Salmon Harvest Task Force markers in the past to close terminal wild stock areas for both escapement and quality concerns. The coordinates for these markers are available to the public at the Cordova ADF&G office, online, and are included in an annual fishery news release.

Valdez Arm, Valdez Narrows, and Port Valdez will be managed for VFDA's cost recovery and broodstock needs. Openings in Valdez Arm and Port Valdez targeting VFDA pink salmon will be based on the strength of the enhanced run and VFDA's progress towards achieving the pink salmon cost recovery goal. CCPF openings targeting VFDA

fish generally start during the first week of July with daily 14-hour periods (6 a.m. to 8 p.m.). In the remainder of the Eastern District, openings will be based on wild stock escapements. Port Valdez will be closed to the CCPF north of a line from Entrance Point to Potato Point beginning on August 15. Valdez Narrows Subdistrict will open on September 2 to target surplus VFDA coho salmon. The VFDA enhanced coho salmon forecast is 82,000 fish with a forecast commercial harvest of 25,000 fish.

The AFK, Cannery Creek Hatchery (CCH), and WNH pink salmon runs will be managed collectively to achieve PWSAC's cost recovery and broodstock goals. Prior to run entry sustaining consistent hatchery cost recovery harvest, the department may open the WNH, CCH, and AFK Hatchery THAs and SHAs to a CCPF harvest to maintain pink salmon quality. Once PWSAC initiates cost recovery, they intend to complete at least 70–80% of their pink salmon cost recovery harvest goal prior to recommending an opening of the CCPF in the hatchery subdistricts. ADF&G will work closely with PWSAC to achieve the pink salmon cost recovery goal as rapidly as possible to allow for an orderly and consistent CCPF. The department evaluates late pink salmon run progress based on cost recovery and CCPF harvest rates, broodstock collections, sex ratios, stock composition estimates, and natural stock escapement data.

Table 1.—ADF&G, PWSAC, and VFDA commercial harvest forecast for the 2020 salmon fishery in the Prince William Sound and Copper/Bering River areas.

PINK SALMON - HARVEST ESTIMATE (Thousands)

Wild Stocks	3,638
Hatchery Stocks ^a	
Solomon Gulch	11,156
Armin F. Koernig	4,486
Wally Noerenberg	3,563
Cannery Creek	3,155
Wild & Hatchery	25,998

CHUM SALMON - HARVEST ESTIMATE (Thousands)

Wild Stocks	404
Hatchery Stocks ^a	
Wally Noerenberg	1,252
Armin F. Koernig	500
Port Chalmers	810
Wild & Hatchery	2,966

COHO SALMON - HARVEST ESTIMATE (Thousands)

PWS Wild Stocks	No Projection
Copper River	223
Bering River	63
Hatchery Stocks ^a	
Solomon Gulch	25
Wally Noerenberg	112
Wild & Hatchery	423

SOCKEYE SALMON - HARVEST ESTIMATE (Thousands)

Copper River Wild & Hatchery	771
Bering River	4
Coghill Lake	145
PWS Remainder	63
PWS Hatchery Stocks ^a	
Main Bay	989
Wild & Hatchery	1,972

CHINOOK SALMON - HARVEST ESTIMATE (Thousands)

Wild Stocks	
Copper River	No Projection

^a Potential hatchery contributions to the commercial common property harvest are based on the forecast of total hatchery runs minus preseason estimates of cost recovery and broodstock harvest that will be required by hatchery operators.