



Advisory Announcement

For Immediate Release: October 25, 2022

CONTACT: Heather Scannell and Jeremy Botz

**Finfish Area Management Biologists
(907) 424-3212**

2022 PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND SALMON SEASON SUMMARY

The following is an overview of the 2022 Prince William Sound (PWS) Area commercial salmon season. Numbers in this overview are rounded for simplicity, all data are preliminary, and 10-year averages are years 2012 through 2021.

The 2022 PWS Area commercial and hatchery cost recovery salmon harvest was 33.14 million fish. This harvest was composed of 13,000 Chinook, 1.61 million sockeye, 89,100 coho, 28.39 million pink, and 3.04 million chum salmon. The 2022 harvest included 28.41 million (86%) commercial, and 4.72 million (14%) hatchery cost recovery and broodstock fish (Table 1).

The estimated value of salmon harvest, commercial and hatchery cost recovery, was approximately \$96.91 million and 10% less than the 10-year average of \$108.22 million. During the 2022 season, 454 drift gillnet, 26 set gillnet, and 206 purse seine commercial permit holders fished in at least one fishing period. Drift gillnet exvessel harvest value was an estimated \$27.92 million (average permit earnings of \$61,500 compared to a 10-year average of \$74,713); set gillnet exvessel harvest value was an estimated \$2.00 million (average permit earnings at \$76,800 compared to a 10-year average of \$73,619); and purse seine exvessel harvest value was an estimated \$43.07 million (average permit earnings at \$209,000 compared to a 10-year average of \$233,868). Revenue generated for hatchery operations was approximately \$23.92 million.

GILLNET FISHERIES

COPPER RIVER DISTRICT

The 2022 preseason commercial harvest forecast for the Copper River District was 716,000 sockeye and 211,000 coho salmon. The 2022 common property Chinook salmon forecast was 14,000 fish. Gulkana Hatchery total run was projected to be 53,000 sockeye salmon. The Copper River sockeye salmon run was below forecast, with regular short-duration fishing periods during the first month of the fishery and the sixth smallest commercial harvest in the past 20 years. The sockeye salmon commercial harvest of 592,000 fish was 46% below the 10-year harvest average of 1.09 million fish. The sockeye salmon season was open for 744 hours compared to a 10-year average of 710 hours. Sockeye salmon average weight of 5.3 pounds was 0.6 pounds smaller than the 30-year average (1992–2021) of 5.9 pounds. The number of wild sockeye salmon in the Copper River District commercial harvest was 572,000, or 97% of the total. Gulkana Hatchery commercial harvest was the third lowest in the last 20 years, contributing 16,400 sockeye salmon, or 2% of the total commercial harvest. Main Bay Hatchery (MBH) contributed 3,500 sockeye salmon, or <1% of the Copper River sockeye salmon harvest. The commercial harvest of 11,600 Chinook salmon was 8% below the 10-year average harvest of 12,600 fish. The coho salmon commercial harvest of 35,100 fish was second lowest in the last 30 years and 84% below the previous 10-year average harvest of 221,000 coho salmon.

The 2022 preliminary Mile Lake sonar passage estimate of 785,509 salmon was within the inriver goal range of 656,000–1,046,000 salmon. Considering current preliminary projections of inriver harvest, the Copper River

sockeye salmon escapement goal was achieved. Preliminary Chinook salmon inriver abundance estimates indicate that spawning escapement was likely above the lower bound sustainable escapement goal (SEG) of 21,000 fish. The Copper River delta sockeye salmon escapement estimate of 55,075 sockeye salmon was within the SEG range of 55,000–130,000 fish. Copper River Delta coho salmon spawning escapement monitoring is ongoing, but peak escapement counts are currently 20,400 fish and below the SEG range of 32,000–67,000 fish.

BERING RIVER DISTRICT

The 10-year average commercial harvests for the Bering River District are 3,900 sockeye and 63,700 coho salmon. The sockeye salmon directed commercial fishery in the Bering River District was focused on the western portion of the district to target Copper River District bound fish and had little participation. The total sockeye salmon harvest was 5,300 fish. The coho salmon commercial harvest of 8,000 was 87% below the 10-year harvest average. The aerial escapement index of 7,095 sockeye salmon was below the SEG range of 15,000–24,000 fish. Bering River District spawning escapement monitoring is ongoing, but peak escapement counts are currently 4,685 fish and below the SEG range of 13,000–33,000 fish.

COGHILL DISTRICT

Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation (PWSAC) forecast a run of 2.48 million chum and 138,000 coho salmon to Wally Noerenberg Hatchery (WNH) in 2022. The 2022 Coghill Lake sockeye salmon total run forecast was 414,000 fish. The Coghill River weir passed 34,092 sockeye salmon, which was just above the escapement target of 30,000 fish and within the SEG range of 20,000–75,000 fish. The commercial chum salmon harvest in the Coghill District was 1.04 million; 4% of these were wild stock. The total chum salmon harvest in PWS attributed to WNH was 1.83 million fish, 26% below forecast. PWSAC harvested 744,000 chum salmon (41% of the total run estimate) for cost recovery and broodstock. The Coghill District sockeye salmon commercial harvest of 217,000 fish was 79% wild fish, 18% above the recent 10-year average of 184,000 fish. The Coghill District commercial pink salmon harvest of 497,000 fish was 66% wild fish, 83% below the recent 10-year average of 2.98 million fish. The Coghill District coho salmon commercial harvest was 37,400 fish, 7% below the 10-year average of 40,000.

ESHAMY DISTRICT

PWSAC forecast a run of 841,000 MBH enhanced sockeye salmon in 2022. The total sockeye salmon harvest in PWS attributed to MBH was 686,000 fish and was 18% below forecast. The Eshamy District commercial harvest of 574,000 sockeye salmon was 17% wild fish. PWSAC harvested 125,000 sockeye salmon for cost recovery. The Eshamy District commercial harvest of 151,000 chum and 270,000 pink salmon were 29% and 76% wild fish, respectively.

UNAKWIK DISTRICT

Unakwik District commercial harvest was 25,900 sockeye salmon which was more than six times the 10-year average of 4,300 sockeye salmon.

PURSE SEINE FISHERIES

CHUM SALMON

The 2022 chum salmon total run forecast was 3.45 million fish, with an estimated commercial harvest forecast of 2.03 million fish. Most of the total run, 3.12 million (90%), were from PWSAC hatchery production, with 360,000 fish returning to the Armin F. Koernig hatchery (AFK) and 280,000 fish returning to Port Chalmers Subdistrict purse seine fisheries. Based on the department's wild stock chum salmon forecast of 332,000 fish, there was a potential commercial harvest of 197,000 wild chum salmon. The department managed for each district's escapement goal, aiming for each district's long-term average, for a combined total of 135,000 chum salmon to all districts.

Chum salmon commercial harvest in PWS was 2.33 million fish, 15% above the preseason harvest forecast of 2.03 million fish. The commercial purse seine fleet harvested 1.13 million chum salmon in 2022. Approximately 214,700 AFK chum salmon were harvested in the PWS commercial fishery, 40% below the preseason forecast of 360,000 fish. A total of 47,500 sockeye salmon were harvested in the AFK chum salmon commercial fishery, composed of 30,300 MBH and 17,200 wild fish. Montague District chum salmon commercial harvest was 712,600 fish, composed of 628,100 Port Chalmers, 46,700 WNH, 13,900 AFK, and 23,800 wild fish.

PINK SALMON

The 2022 pink salmon total run forecast for PWS was 26.84 million fish, comprised of 13.50 million VFDA hatchery fish, 8.30 million PWSAC hatchery fish, and 5.04 million wild fish. Approximately 3.60 million (27%) of VFDA's pink salmon preseason forecast was projected for cost recovery and broodstock, with the remaining 9.90 million VFDA fish expected to be available for commercial harvest. Approximately 3.44 million (41%) of PWSAC's pink salmon preseason forecast was projected for cost recovery and broodstock, with the remaining 4.86 million PWSAC fish expected to be available for commercial harvest. Based on the department's wild stock pink salmon forecast, there was a potential commercial harvest of 4.25 million fish. Taking into consideration both VFDA and PWSAC's cost recovery and broodstock needs and a median escapement of 784,000 wild pink salmon, approximately 19.02 million pink salmon were expected to be available for commercial harvest.

The 2022 commercial harvest of 24.50 million pink salmon was 29% above the 19.02 million commercial harvest forecast and this was largely the result of a strong VFDA run that came in well above forecasted. The pink salmon commercial harvest was composed of an estimated 18.12 million VFDA fish, 5.42 million wild fish, and 887,000 PWSAC fish. The PWS purse seine commercial salmon harvest was 25.04 million fish composed of 23.83 million pink, 1.13 million chum, 75,700 sockeye, 8,000 coho, and 730 Chinook salmon. The total pink salmon harvest was 28.39 million fish including 3.89 million fish for hatchery cost recovery and broodstock (2.61 million for PWSAC and 1.28 million for VFDA). The VFDA pink salmon run of 19.40 million fish was 44% (5.90 million fish) above the forecast of 13.50 million fish. The PWSAC pink salmon run of 3.50 million fish was 58% (4.80 million) below the forecast of 8.30 million fish. The PWS wild pink salmon harvest of 5.59 million fish was 32% above the harvest forecast of 4.25 million fish. Both VFDA and PWSAC achieved their respective pink salmon egg-take goals at all facilities.

The number of active permits fished in the PWS purse seine fishery dropped from 212 in 2021 to 206 permits in 2022. This season was also the first time that dual permits were allowed to operate in PWS. Under a dual permit operation two PWS purse seine permit holders may concurrently fish from the same vessel and jointly operate up to 250 fathoms in the aggregate of seine and lead. There were an estimated 22 dual permit operations in PWS for the 2022 season.

The 2022 PWS pink and chum salmon escapement estimates are pending. However, inseason aerial survey escapement estimates were above escapement objectives for both pink and chum salmon in all districts and escapement goals for pink salmon were likely met. Aerial surveys in PWS were flown from late June through early September. Wild stock pink salmon escapement indices in 2022 supported openings outside of hatchery subdistricts starting in mid-July and running through late August. Above average rainfall and freshwater input, beginning in late July, resulted in wild stocks maturing and escaping into the streams sooner than anticipated.

COHO SALMON

The 2022 VFDA enhanced coho salmon forecast was 74,600 fish, with a forecasted commercial harvest of 29,000. The total commercial purse seine harvest of coho salmon in PWS was 8,000 fish, with a harvest of 5,800 in the Eastern District.

Table 1.—Preliminary Area E salmon harvest, 2022.

District	Chinook	Sockeye	Coho	Pink	Chum	Total
Bering River	30	5,247	8,020	0	576	13,873
Copper River	11,631	592,312	35,097	59,583	13,255	711,878
Eastern	28	8,523	5,780	21,034,510	166,670	21,215,511
Northern	0	4,174	220	1,114,514	18,083	1,136,991
Coghill	447	216,688	37,374	496,659	1,043,739	1,794,907
Northwestern	0	4,262	1	312,707	18,837	335,807
Eshamy	106	574,115	310	269,511	150,907	994,949
Southwestern	28	47,504	1,612	1,005,288	202,935	1,257,367
Montague	675	5,829	223	164,382	712,580	883,689
Southeastern	0	16	3	38,997	3,222	42,238
Unakwik	17	25,910	0	417	3,540	29,884
Commercial Total	12,962	1,484,580	88,640	24,496,568	2,334,344	28,417,094
Hatchery						
Solomon Gulch	0	0	426	1,281,142	0	1,281,142
Cannery Creek	0	0	0	851,253	0	851,253
Wally Noerenberg	0	0	NA	949,504	701,433	1,650,937
Main Bay	0	124,581	0	0	133	124,714
Armin F. Koernig	0	0	0	809,568	0	809,568
Hatchery Total ^a	0	124,581	426	3,891,467	701,566	4,718,040
PWS Total Harvest	12,962	1,609,161	89,066	28,388,035	3,035,910	33,135,134

^a Hatchery harvest to meet cost recovery and broodstock needs.