



Advisory Announcement

For Immediate Release: June 28, 2023

CONTACT: Jeremy Botz and Heather Scannell
Finfish Area Management Biologists
(907) 424-3212

Prince William Sound Salmon Fishery Announcement #14

COPPER RIVER DISTRICT: The Copper River District will open at 7:00 am on Thursday, June 29 for a 36-hour commercial drift gillnet fishing period.

The grass bank marker line is defined in 5 AAC 24.350(1)(A) with the exception of this year's extension of the closure line across Little Softuk (**see bold font below**). This closure line is defined with the following points:

<i>Point</i>	<i>Latitude</i>	<i>Longitude</i>
Point Whitshed South	60° 26.49' N.	145° 52.86' W.
Alaganik Slough North	60° 24.65' N.	145° 36.70' W.
Pete Dahl East	60° 20.44' N.	145° 29.14' W.
West Kokenhenik	60° 14.88' N.	145° 10.01' W.
East "East Side"	60° 14.83' N.	145° 03.36' W.
Coffee Creek East	60° 14.19' N.	144° 58.01' W.
Charlie Mohr North	60° 15.15' N.	144° 56.43' W.
Martin River North	60° 15.29' N.	144° 52.52' W.
Strawberry Reef	60° 13.93' N.	144° 50.66' W.
Little Softuk	60° 13.16' N.	144° 41.38' W.

Waters north of this line, within sloughs, and in Boswell Bay within the bay (5 AAC 24.350 (1)(A)) are closed to commercial and subsistence salmon fishing during all periods.

During the commercial fishing season, subsistence harvest may occur in the Copper River District concurrent in time and area with commercial fishing periods until the Copper River District is closed at the end of the season. Additionally, waters of the Copper River District, including the expanded Chinook salmon inside closure area, will open to subsistence fishing from 6:00 am to 10:00 pm on all Saturdays from June 24 through October 28. Prince William Sound Management Area salmon subsistence permits may be obtained through any ADF&G office or online (<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/Store/>). 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. To assist with inseason harvest tracking, 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.

Cumulative sonar count through 6/27 is 457,956 fish whereas 432,221 fish are projected by this date. The 0600 count for 6/28 is 6,601 fish. Preliminary harvest estimates from the 36-hour period that occurred on Monday, June 26 were 450 Chinook and 41,200 sockeye salmon with 228 deliveries reported. This compares to a projected harvest of 65,400 sockeye salmon for this period. The cumulative Copper River District harvest to date is 9,460 Chinook and 537,000 sockeye salmon.

BERING RIVER DISTRICT: The Bering River District will open to commercial salmon fishing, west of a longitude line at 144° 33.60' W., for a 36-hour period starting at 7:00 a.m. on Thursday, June 29.

PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND GILLET FISHERIES: Gillnet depth restrictions, as specified in 5 AAC 24.331(b)(6), **WILL NOT BE IN EFFECT** in the Coghill District, Eshamy District, Montague, and Unakwik District fisheries starting **8:00 am, Thursday, June 29.**

COGHILL DISTRICT: The Coghill District, excluding the Esther Subdistrict, and WNH THA and SHA, will open to commercial drift gillnet harvest for a 36-hour fishing period starting at 8:00 am on Thursday, June 29. **The Esther Subdistrict may open on short notice as WNH cost recovery and broodstock collection progress warrants.** Waters of Port Wells and College Fiord, north of 60° 55.81' N., and east of a line from Pakenham Point (61° 00.45' N., 148° 04.85' W.) to 60° 55.81' N., 148° 10.92' W., will open to commercial drift gillnet harvest for an 84-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Thursday, June 29. **Until further notice, regulatory closed waters pertaining to the Coghill River, as specified in 5 AAC 24.350(6)(B)), will not be in effect during open commercial fishing periods. Commercial fishing will not be permitted within the bed or channel of the Coghill River at any stage of the tide.** The Coghill River weir has passed 4,146 sockeye salmon through 6/27 with a cumulative target of 3,767–14,129 fish for the date. Preliminary harvest estimates from the 84-hour period that started on Thursday, June 22 were 43,400 chum and 13,600 sockeye salmon with 334 deliveries reported.

PWSAC recommends keeping the Esther Subdistrict closed. PWSAC is approximately 86% complete on the 2023 chum revenue goal, and cost recovery fishing continues as run entry and hatchery escapement warrants. Of the 228,000 broodstock goal, 24,000 fish have been collected to date.

ESHAMY DISTRICT: The Eshamy District, excluding the Main Bay Hatchery AGZ inside a line of buoys in front of the barrier seine, will open to commercial gillnet harvest for a 36-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Thursday, June 29. The AGZ will open to **DRIFT GILLNET** permit holders only during this fishing period. Preliminary harvest estimates from the 24-hour period that started on Monday, June 26 were 11,600 chum and 76,400 sockeye salmon with 340 deliveries reported.

PWSAC recommends keeping the inner portion of the MBH AGZ closed for broodstock collection. PWSAC is approximately 86% complete on the 2023 MBH sockeye revenue goal. Cost recovery fishing is anticipated to be completed today. Of the 8,940 sockeye salmon broodstock goal, 0 fish have been collected to date.

MONTAGUE DISTRICT: The Port Chalmers Subdistrict will open to drift gillnet fishing for an 84-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Thursday, June 29 with an additional 60-hour period beginning at 8:00 am on Monday, July 3. A regular schedule of two fishing periods per week is anticipated to remain in effect until further notice. The western boundary of the Port Chalmers Subdistrict is defined by lines from 60°20.00'N., 147°26.59'W. to 60°14.75'N., 147°35.35'W. to 60°02.50'N., 147°44.41'W. **Regulatory closed waters and anadromous stream closures within the Port Chalmers Subdistrict will not be in effect until further notice.** Preliminary harvest estimates from the 84-hour period that started on Thursday, June 22 were 151,000 chum, 4,450 pink, and 6,410 sockeye salmon with 552 deliveries reported.

UNAKWIK DISTRICT: The Unakwik District will open to commercial drift gillnet and purse seine harvest for a 36-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Thursday, June 29. The harvest for the 36-hour period that started on Monday, June 26 is confidential.

SEINE FISHERIES: VFDA has been test fishing in the Valdez Narrows and has not yet seen enough fish to begin cost recovery. Test fishing will continue today.

An aerial survey of the Eastern District and portions of the Northern District was conducted yesterday, June 27. During this survey, observed run entry into most Eastern District bays was encouraging but overall stream escapement observations were minimal, which is to be expected for the date. Current indices of escapement do not support a purse seine fishery targeting wild stocks in the Eastern District. The next aerial survey of the Eastern and Northern Districts is expected to occur next week.

SOUTHWESTERN DISTRICT: The AFK Hatchery SHA will open to purse seine fishing for a 24-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Thursday, June 29 and for an additional 24-hour period on Saturday, July 1. **Anadromous stream closures within the AFK Hatchery SHA will not be in effect until further notice.** Preliminary harvest estimates from the period ending on Tuesday, June 27 were 13,300 chum and 7,490 sockeye salmon with 27 deliveries reported.

Copies of the updated regulation booklet, *2022-2024 Commercial Salmon Fishing Regulations for Prince William Sound*, are available in the Cordova ADFG office.

ALL buyers purchasing fish in the PWS Management Area are required to complete a Processor Registration Form. Contact the Cordova office for any questions regarding registration.

The next scheduled salmon fisheries announcement is anticipated to be at 2:00 pm Saturday, July 1.

Announcement recordings are available for gillnet fisheries at 907-424-7535 and seine fisheries at 907-424-7345. In addition, announcement recordings are available in Anchorage at 907-267-2843.

Additionally, announcements, inseason harvest data, and escapement data are available at the following web address: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareapws.main> (Prince William Sound and Copper River homepage).

Unless otherwise specified, all openings are clock openings based on Alaska Daylight Time, which is based on Coordinated Universal Time and may be obtained by calling 303-499-7111.

The department encourages commercial permit holders to renew their licenses early and to check their CFEC vessel registration stickers to make sure they are current.

The department also encourages permit holders to report observed violations to Wildlife Safeguard at 800-478-3377. Reports are anonymous and cash rewards may be paid for successful prosecution of violations.

PWS commercial fishers are reminded that area fisheries often necessitate fishing in close proximity to marine mammals. Under the Marine Mammals Protection Act (MMPA), the PWS drift gillnet fishery is classified as a Category II fishery. Participants in Category I and II fisheries must be registered in the Marine Mammal Avoidance Program (MMAP) to be authorized for lawful incidental, but not intentional, marine mammal takes during fishing. However, this authorization explicitly does not exempt holders of commercial fishing permits from the MMPA prohibition on takes of marine mammals listed as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act. As a participant in the PWS drift gillnet fishery, you are automatically registered in the Marine Mammal Authorization Program (MMAP) by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). As a participant in a Category II fishery, you must:

- Maintain an MMAP Authorization Certificate, or a photocopy, on board the vessel while engaging in any of the fisheries identified on the reverse side of the certificate. For non-vessel or set net fisheries, the enclosed Certificate, or a photocopy, must be in the possession of the permit holder during fishing operations. This Certificate, in combination with a current, valid state or Federal fishing permit, will serve

as your authorization to incidentally take non-endangered or non-threatened marine mammals during commercial fishing operations.

- Report all injuries and mortalities of marine mammals within 48 hours of returning from the trip during which these takes occurred using the MMAP Mortality/Injury Reporting Form (<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/marine-mammal-protection/marine-mammal-authorization-program>).
- If so requested, take an observer aboard your vessel.

Purse seine and set gillnet gear are classified as a Category III fisheries under the MMPA. Category III fishery participants are automatically exempted from the incidental take prohibition in the MMPA. Therefore, you do not need to maintain the MMAP certificate aboard your vessel but must report any incidental takes of marine mammals within 48 hours of the incident or your return to port. Such reports must be made on the Marine Mammals Authorization Program Mortality/Injury Reporting Form.

Because some marine mammals are also listed under the Endangered Species Act, incidental takes are also regulated under that act and are not authorized. All MMPA category fisheries are liable for incidentally taking ESA listed species.

Please reference <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/endangered-species-conservation/endangered-threatened-and-candidate-species-alaska> for a list of marine mammals currently listed under the ESA (you should periodically check with the National Marine Fisheries Service for any changes in listed species).

Under the ESA, “take” means to “harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct.” (16U.S.C. 1532(19)); and “harass” means an “intentional or negligent act or omission which creates the likelihood of injury to the wildlife by annoying it to such an extent as to significantly disrupt normal behavioral patterns which include, but are not limited to, breeding, feeding, or sheltering.” (50 C.F.R. 17.3).

To reduce the possibility of incidentally taking an ESA listed species and its associated liability ADF&G recommends that:

- Fishermen participating in area fisheries remain vigilant in monitoring gear when marine mammals may be present.
- Fishermen use avoidance measures (e.g., not fishing or relocating fishing activities when marine mammals are present or likely to be present) to minimize interactions with marine mammals.
- Avoid fishing in areas where marine mammals are likely to be present at night or when visibility or weather conditions make it difficult to spot marine mammals.

For further questions concerning marine mammal regulations call NOAA at 907-586-7221.