

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



Cora Campbell, Commissioner
Jeff Regnart, Director



Contact:
Cordova Management and Research Staff: Jeremy Botz,
Tommy Sheridan, Steve Moffitt, Amanda Wiese, Richard Brenner
Phone: (907) 424-3212
Fax: (907) 424-3235

Cordova ADF&G
401 Railroad Avenue
P.O. Box 669
Cordova, AK 99574
Date Issued: 10/17/2012

2012 PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND SALMON SEASON SUMMARY

The following is an overview of the 2012 Prince William Sound (PWS) Area commercial salmon season. Fishing is complete in all districts and preliminary harvest totals should be representative for all species. Note that numbers in the narrative are rounded for simplicity and all data are considered preliminary.

The 2012 PWS Area commercial salmon harvest was 34.4 million fish. Harvest was composed of 26.7 million pink, 3.7 million sockeye, 3.7 million chum, 202,000 coho, and 12,000 Chinook salmon. The 2012 harvest was composed of 30.8 million commercial common property fishery (CPF) (90%), and 3.6 million (10%) hatchery cost recovery and broodstock fish.

GILLNET FISHERIES

COPPER RIVER DISTRICT

The 2012 preseason commercial harvest forecast for the Copper River District was 20,000 Chinook, 1.2 million sockeye, and 281,000 coho salmon. Gulkana Hatchery was expected to contribute 335,000 sockeye salmon to the CPF harvest. The commercial salmon fishing season in the Copper River District began on Thursday, May 17. The sockeye salmon harvest of 1.9 million fish was more than 1.5 times the previous 10-year (2002–2011) harvest average of 1.2 million sockeye salmon. The preliminary harvest composition was 1.5 million (82%) wild, 327,000 (18%) Gulkana Hatchery, and 14,000 (<1%) Main Bay Hatchery (MBH) sockeye salmon. The CPF harvest of 12,000 Chinook salmon was below the previous 10-year (2002–2011) average harvest of 28,000. The coho salmon commercial harvest of 124,000 fish was below the previous 10-year (2002–2011) average harvest of 278,000 coho salmon. The inriver goal for salmon passing the Miles Lake sonar site was 684,000–1,074,000 salmon. The 2012 preliminary sonar escapement estimate was 1.3 million salmon. Spawning escapement to Copper River delta systems based on aerial survey indices was 67,000 sockeye salmon, and was within the sustainable escapement goal (SEG) range of 55,000-130,000 fish. Coho salmon spawning escapement to the Copper River Delta based on aerial survey indices was 37,000 and was within the SEG range of 32,000–67,000 fish.

BERING RIVER DISTRICT

The Bering River District was initially closed to commercial sockeye salmon harvest due to aerial survey escapement estimates from 2007–2011 that were below the SEG range of 23,000–35,000 fish. Inseason aerial survey escapement estimates above the anticipated goal for the week ending June 23 led to the opening of the district to sockeye salmon fishing on June 25. The district remained open for the remainder of the season concurrent with the Copper River District fishery. The aerial escapement index of 18,000 sockeye salmon was within the new SEG range of 15,000–33,000 fish. No fishing effort was reported in the district until the beginning of the coho salmon fishery in mid-August. The coho salmon commercial harvest of 46,000 was below the previous 10-year (2002–2011) harvest average of 56,000 coho salmon. Aerial surveys of coho salmon produced an escapement index of 17,000 fish that was within the SEG range of 13,000–33,000 fish.

COGHILL DISTRICT

Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation (PWSAC) forecasted a run of 1.0 million chum salmon to Wally Noerenberg Hatchery (WNH) in 2012. Approximately 380,000 chum salmon (37%) of the forecasted run were designated for corporate cost recovery and broodstock. The CPF harvest of chum salmon in the Coghill District was 2.4 million fish. PWSAC harvested 422,000 chum salmon for corporate cost recovery and broodstock.

The Coghill River weir passed 72,000 sockeye salmon, which exceeded the SEG range of 20,000–60,000 fish. The total CPF harvest of sockeye salmon in the Coghill District was 428,000 fish. The proportion of wild sockeye salmon in the Coghill District CPF harvest is not available at this time. The total CPF harvest of coho salmon in the Coghill District was 10,000 fish, the majority of which were likely enhanced from WNH. Pink salmon CPF harvest in the Coghill District was 3.3 million fish. The proportion of wild pink salmon in the Coghill District CPF harvest is not available at this time.

ESHAMY DISTRICT

The department's preseason forecast for Eshamy Lake was 53,000 wild sockeye salmon and PWSAC forecasted a run of 1.2 million MBH enhanced sockeye salmon. The CPF harvest of sockeye salmon in the Eshamy District was 1.3 million fish. The proportion of wild sockeye salmon in the Eshamy District CPF harvest is not available at this time. Sockeye salmon escapement to Eshamy Lake was monitored by video camera and foot survey this past season and counts are not yet available. The sockeye salmon Biological Escapement Goal (BEG) range for Eshamy Lake is 13,000-28,000 fish.

UNAKWIK DISTRICT

The department's preseason harvest forecast for the Unakwik District was 6,500 sockeye salmon. Unakwik District CPF harvest was 2,000 sockeye salmon, which was below the 10-year average of 7,000 sockeye salmon.

MONTAGUE DISTRICT, PORT CHALMERS SUBDISTRICT

PWSAC forecasted a run of 504,000 chum salmon to the Port Chalmers remote release site in 2012. CPF drift gillnet harvest of chum salmon in the Montague District was 292,000 fish. The drift gillnet gear group had access to the Port Chalmers Subdistrict in 2012 under the Prince William Sound Management and Salmon Enhancement Allocation Plan. The harvest was below

the five-year (2007–2011) CPF average of 597,000 chum salmon. The proportion of wild chum salmon in the Port Chalmers Subdistrict CPF harvest is not available at this time.

PURSE SEINE FISHERIES

CHUM SALMON

The 2012 chum salmon total run forecast for PWS was 2.0 million fish. The majority of the forecasted return, 1.8 million fish (90%), was projected to be of PWSAC hatchery origin. Of these PWSAC hatchery origin chum salmon, 210,000 fish were forecasted to be harvested primarily in the AFK Hatchery purse seine CPF. All other enhanced chum salmon were forecasted to be harvested primarily in gillnet fishery.

Based on the department's wild chum salmon forecast of 236,000 fish, there was a preseason expectation for the potential CPF harvest of 36,000 wild stock chum salmon in PWS, leaving 200,000 fish for escapement. The preseason forecast for total chum salmon CPF harvest in PWS was 1.4 million fish.

Chum salmon CPF harvest in PWS was 3.3 million fish, which was 1.9 million fish above the CPF preseason forecast. Purse seine chum salmon harvest in PWS was predominantly from the Eastern, Coghill, Southwestern, and Southeastern districts. CPFs targeting predominately enhanced chum salmon in the Southwestern District resulted in purse seine harvest totals of 173,600 fish. From July 21 until July 25, CPFs targeting predominately enhanced chum salmon in the Coghill District resulted in purse seine harvest totals of approximately 122,000 fish. The proportion of wild chum salmon in the Southwestern and Coghill districts CPF harvest totals is not available at this time. CPFs targeting predominately wild chum salmon in the Eastern and Southeastern districts exceeded preseason expectations with harvest totals of 99,100 and 35,100 fish, respectively.

PINK SALMON

The 2012 pink salmon total run forecast for PWS was 37.5 million fish. This estimate included 4.4 million wild fish, 13.5 million Valdez Fisheries Development Association (VFDA) hatchery fish, and 19.6 million PWSAC hatchery fish. Approximately 3.4 million (17%) of the 19.6 million pink salmon return forecast to the PWSAC hatcheries was projected for cost recovery and broodstock with the remaining 16.2 million PWSAC fish expected to be available for CPF harvest. Approximately 2.7 million (20%) of the projected 13.5 million pink salmon return forecast to VFDA's Solomon Gulch Hatchery (SGH) were projected for cost recovery and broodstock. The remaining 10.8 million VFDA fish were expected to be available for CPF harvest. A total harvest of 3.2 million wild stock pink salmon was forecasted for CPF harvest in PWS, leaving 1.2 million fish for escapement.

The CPF harvest of 23.6 million pink salmon was the 14th highest PWS pink salmon harvest since 1971. Total pink salmon harvest was 26.7 million fish, including 3.2 million (1.8 million for PWSAC and 1.4 million for VFDA) fish for hatchery cost recovery and broodstock. The proportion of wild stock pink salmon in PWS CPF harvest totals is unknown at this time.

For the 2012 season, the PWS pink salmon sustainable escapement goals (SEGs) for even- and odd-year brood lines changed to district-specific SEGs. Inseason pink salmon aerial survey escapement estimates remained above minimum anticipated escapement thresholds in most

districts for much of the season. This allowed for targeted fishing effort on wild pink salmon and expanded area for targeted fishing effort on enhanced pink salmon. Inseason pink salmon aerial survey escapement estimates were below anticipated escapement thresholds in the Eshamy District for the entirety of the 2012 season, resulting in some time and area restrictions in the Southwestern District to reduce fishing effort on Eshamy District pink salmon stocks traveling through migratory corridors. The area-under-the-curve estimate of pink salmon escapement used for direct comparison with the SEG goals is not yet available, but considering that inseason pink salmon escapement indices were above anticipated aerial survey counts, overall escapement was likely within the even-year SEG range for all districts except Eshamy District. Aerial surveys ended early this year because of poor weather.

COHO SALMON

The VFDA coho salmon run was anticipated to be 129,000 fish. VFDA's broodstock objective was 1,000 coho salmon. Total CPF harvest of coho salmon in PWS (excluding Copper River and Bering River districts) was 28,000 fish. This was the lowest PWS CPF coho salmon harvest since 2010, when 15,000 fish were harvested. The majority of CPF coho salmon harvested in the Southwestern (9,000) and Coghill (10,200) districts are assumed to be of enhanced stock origin.

Table 1.—Preliminary Area E salmon harvest, 2012.

District	Chinook	Sockeye	Coho	Pink	Chum	Total
Bering River	1	0	46,095	1	0	46,097
Copper River	11,617	1,855,903	123,957	6,192	29,219	2,026,888
Eastern	30	9,671	7,222	10,509,665	99,152	10,625,740
Northern	1	534	496	3,638,861	1,999	3,641,891
Coghill	155	427,574	10,248	3,252,752	2,409,957	6,100,686
Northwestern	0	58	28	52,697	37	52,820
Eshamy	65	1,281,219	286	105,307	278,706	1,665,583
Southwestern	87	83,973	8,999	5,607,558	173,556	5,874,173
Montague	16	2,505	177	173,557	293,205	469,460
Southeastern	30	3,324	650	225,259	35,061	264,324
Unakwik	0	1,897	0	49	150	2,096
CPF Total	12,002	3,666,658	198,158	23,571,898	3,321,042	30,769,758
Hatchery						
Solomon Gulch	0	0	1,000 ^a	1,383,133	2,675	1,386,808
Cannery Creek	0	0	0	106,625	0	106,625
Wally Noerenberg	0	0	2,700 ^b	1,042,350	422,336	1,467,386
Main Bay	0	13,793	0	0	0	13,793
Armin F. Koernig	0	0	0	645,252	0	645,252
Hatchery total^c	0	13,793	3,700	3,177,360	425,011	3,619,864
PWS Total Harvest	12,002	3,680,451	201,858	26,749,258	3,746,053	34,389,622

^a SGH coho salmon broodstock needs as stated in AMP (no harvest as of October 2).

^b WNH coho salmon broodstock needs as stated in AMP (no harvest as of October 2).

^c Hatchery sales harvest for operating costs and broodstock harvest.