

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES



NEWS RELEASE

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Prince William Sound Salmon Fishery News Release #17

GILLNET FISHERIES: By regulation, deep gear will be allowed in Coghill, Eshamy, and Unakwik District gillnet fisheries, starting Monday, July 7, unless modified by emergency order. Depending on the trend in wild stock sockeye salmon escapement, deep gear may be allowed in these districts as early as Thursday, July 3. Details regarding this decision will be addressed in Wednesday's news release.

COPPER RIVER DISTRICT: The Copper River District will open at 7:00 am on Monday, June 30 for a 48-hour commercial fishing period. Waters within the Chinook salmon inside closure area will be OPEN during this period. Cumulative sonar count to date is 836,000 fish whereas the anticipated count for this date is 460,000 fish. For the week ending June 28, the actual Copper River delta aerial survey count was 33,620 sockeye salmon versus an anticipated range of 17,627–41,665. An aerial survey of the Copper River delta is anticipated to be flown next week. Hatchery contributions from the period that closed on June 20 were 29% Gulkana Hatchery and 4% Main Bay Hatchery. Harvest from the period that closed Friday, June 27 was 70,000 sockeye salmon and 78 Chinook salmon with 494 deliveries reported.

During the commercial fishing season subsistence harvest may occur in the Copper River District concurrent with commercial periods until the Copper River District is closed at the end of the season. Subsistence users may obtain subsistence permits during regular business hours. The Cordova ADF&G office is open to the public Monday– Friday, 8:00 am–12:00 pm and 1:00 pm– 5:00 pm. **Subsistence permits are not available outside of regular office hours.**

BERING RIVER DISTRICT: The Bering River District will open at 7:00 am on Monday, June 30 for a 48-hour commercial fishing period. For the week ending June 28, the actual Bering River District aerial survey count was 12,800 versus an anticipated range of 6,092–13,402 sockeye salmon. The next aerial survey of the Bering River District is anticipated to be flown next week.

COGHILL DISTRICT: The Coghill District, excluding waters of the Esther Subdistrict, will open at 8:00 am on Monday, June 30 for a 48-hour commercial drift gillnet fishing period. Esther Subdistrict, excluding the WNH THA and SHA, will open at 8:00 am on Monday, June 30 for a 36-hour period. **Coghill River regulatory closed waters are in effect.** Harvest from the period that closed Wednesday, June 25 was 68,300 chum and 11,600 sockeye salmon with 455 deliveries reported.

The Coghill weir was operational as of Sunday, June 8. A total of 287 sockeye salmon were passed at the weir yesterday for a season cumulative of 6,259 fish. This compares to an anticipated range of 2,545–7,634 fish for this date. An estimated total run of 168,000 sockeye salmon are expected to return to the Coghill River, with an SEG of 20–40 thousand fish to be passed at the weir.

ESHAMY DISTRICT: The Eshamy District, excluding the AGZ shoreward of a line of buoys in front of the barrier net, will open at 8:00 am on Monday, June 30 for a 48-hour commercial gillnet fishing period. The AGZ, up to a line of buoys in front of the barrier net, will open to **SET GILLNET** permit holders only during this fishing period. Harvest from the period that closed Wednesday, June 25 was 130,500 sockeye and 8,740 chum salmon with 1,470 deliveries reported. As a reminder, regulation 5 AAC 24.367(g) suspends regulatory closed waters in the Main Bay Subdistrict prior to July 8.

UNAKWIK DISTRICT: The Unakwik District will open at 8:00 am Monday, June 30 for a 36-hour commercial purse seine and drift gillnet fishing period. Harvest reported for the period that closed Friday, June 27 is confidential.

SEINE FISHERIES: An aerial survey of the Eastern and Northern districts on Tuesday, June 24, indicated that early wild chum salmon returns to Port Gravina and Sheep Bay were greater than anticipated for this date. Very few of these fish have entered the streams, which is to be expected for this date.

VFDA began its cost recovery sales program on Monday, June 23, and has collected approximately 13% of the assigned pink salmon revenue goal through June 27. VFDA reports that cost recovery pink salmon harvest in Port Valdez on Friday, June 27 was approximately 156,000 fish with an average weight of approximately 3 pounds per fish and 3.3% female. ADF&G sampling of cost recovery pink salmon caught in Port Valdez on June 27 results in 2.8% female. Cost recovery fishing continues today, and initial reports suggest improved run entry.

Through June 25, 134,000 chum and 589,000 pink salmon have been harvested in the Port Chalmers Subdistrict. Harvest reporting for the current period won't be available until Monday morning. However, informal reports indicate that pink salmon harvests have picked up considerably in recent days. Aerial surveys of the fishery on Thursday and Friday indicate that the majority of fishing effort is concentrated south of Green Island. Recent contribution estimates indicate that 95% of pink salmon harvested in Port Chalmers early last week were destined for SGH, with 3% wild, and 2% AFK fish. Historical data suggests an increase in run entry for wild stock pink salmon in PWS in the coming week. In order to focus effort on enhanced chum salmon and reduce the interception of pink salmon, the open area of Port Chalmers will be restricted starting Monday, June 30. Daily 12-hour fishing periods are also being implemented in the Port Chalmers Subdistrict to provide for more timely harvest updates. Please see the Montague District section of this announcement for further details.

The department will begin daily purse seine fishery news releases on Monday, June 30. It is not anticipated that Monday's announcement will detail future fishing opportunity, but instead will provide fishery participants with an update on VFDA cost recovery fishing progress through Sunday, June 29.

EASTERN DISTRICT: Waters of the Eastern District, south of the latitude of the Rocky Point light, will open to commercial fishing for 12 hours on Monday, June 30 beginning at 8:00 am. **All waters of Galena Bay will be closed to commercial fishing during this period. Waters inside of the following Eastern District Salmon Harvest Task Force (SHTF) markers will be closed for this period to ensure early season escapement:**

- (1) **Sheep Bay:** north of a line from a shore marker at approximately 60°41.13' N. lat., 145°58.87' W. long. to a shore marker at approximately 60°40.46' N. lat., 145°58.01' W. long.;
- (2) **Beartrap Bay:** north of a line from a shore marker at approximately 60°45.13' N. lat., 146°06.12' W. long. to a shore marker at approximately 60°44.51' N. lat., 146°04.57' W. long.; **this includes all waters of Port Gravina and Beartrap Bay inside of this line;**
- (3) **Olsen Bay:** north of a line from a shore marker at approximately 60°43.46' N. lat., 146°10.14' W. long. to a shore marker at approximately 60°43.21' N. lat., 146°13.97' W. long.;
- (4) **St. Matthews Bay:** north of a line from a shore marker at approximately 60°43.36' N. lat., 146°19.07' W. long. to a shore marker at approximately 60°43.61' N. lat., 146°21.17' W. long.;
- (5) **Irish Cove:** south of a line from a shore marker at approximately 60°46.73' N. lat., 146°26.62' W. long. to a shore marker at approximately 60°46.27' N. lat., 146°27.12' W. long.;
- (6) **Landlocked Bay:** waters north of 60°50.76' N. lat.;
- (7) **Port Fidalgo Subdistrict:** waters east of 146°24.12' W. long.

SHTF marker coordinates will also be available in the Cordova ADF&G office, and have been provided to area processors, VFDA and PWSAC for distribution to fishery participants. A copy of these coordinates may also be found on the ADF&G Web-site at the following address:

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

Harvest from the June 26 fishing period was 51,800 pink and 2,270 chum salmon with 25 deliveries reported. It is anticipated that early season fishing opportunities will be limited in frequency, with time and area for subsequent openers being dependent upon escapement, harvest and effort.

MONTAGUE DISTRICT: The Port Chalmers Subdistrict will open to commercial purse seine fishing for 12-hour fishing periods beginning at 8:00 am and ending at 8:00 pm on Monday, June 30; Tuesday, July 1; and Wednesday, July 2. **Waters of the Port Chalmers Subdistrict south of 60°12.56' N. lat. will be closed to commercial fishing during these periods.** 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. Harvest from the period that closed Wednesday, June 25 was 16,540 chum and 398,000 pink salmon with 93 deliveries reported.

NORTHERN DISTRICT: Waters of the Northern District east of Granite Point will open to commercial fishing for 12 hours on Monday, June 30 beginning at 8:00 am. Waters of Long Bay north of a line from a shore marker at approximately 60°57.63' N. lat., 147°13.50' W. long. to a shore marker at approximately 60°57.01' N. lat., 147°15.47' W. long. will be closed to commercial fishing during this period. Harvest from the June 26 fishing period was 37,200 pink and 214 chum salmon with 8 deliveries reported.

SOUTHEASTERN DISTRICT: Waters of the Southeastern District will open to commercial fishing for 12 hours on Monday, June 30 beginning at 8:00 am. There was no harvest reported for the June 26 fishing period. It is anticipated that early season fishing opportunities will be limited in frequency, with time and area for subsequent openers dependent upon escapement, harvest and effort.

SOUTHWESTERN DISTRICT: The AFK Hatchery THA and SHA will open to purse seine fishing for 60 hours at 8:00 am on Monday, June 30 with an additional 84-hour period beginning at 8:00 am on Thursday, July 3. Anadromous stream closures within the AFK Hatchery THA and SHA will not be in effect until further notice. Harvest from the period that closed Wednesday, June 25 was 6,430 chum, 1,800 sockeye, and 8,430 pink salmon with 23 deliveries reported.

The next scheduled purse seine salmon fisheries announcement is anticipated to be at 2:00 pm Monday, June 30.

The next scheduled gillnet salmon fisheries announcement is anticipated to be at 2:00 pm Wednesday, June 2.

Permit holders are advised that unscheduled announcements based on current escapement data may occur at any time inseason either establishing an additional period or extending an open period.

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 267-2843.**

Additionally, announcements, inseason harvest data, and escapement data are available at the following web addresses:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareacopperriver.main> (Copper River homepage) or

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareapws.main> (Prince William Sound 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 that 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 in the course of 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 (visit http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pdfs/interactions/mmap_reporting_form.pdf for a copy).
- 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 http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pdfs/esa_factsheet.pdf 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 NMFS at 907-271-5006.