

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES



NEWS RELEASE

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Date Issued: Saturday, June 13, 2015
Time: 11:00 am

Prince William Sound Salmon Fishery News Release #12

COPPER RIVER DISTRICT: The Copper River District will open at 7:00 am on Monday, June 15 for a 48-hour commercial fishing period. **The Chinook salmon inside closure area will be OPEN during this fishing period.**

Cumulative sonar count through June 12 was 674,182 fish, whereas the anticipated count for this date is 344,000 fish. The 0600 count for June 13 was 5,532 fish. Preliminary harvest estimate from the 60-hour period that started on Thursday, June 11 is not yet available.

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.**

COGHILL DISTRICT: The Coghill District, excluding waters of the Esther and Granite Bay Subdistricts and waters of the WNH SHA and THA, will open to commercial drift gillnet harvest for a 36-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Monday, June 15. Waters of the Granite Bay Subdistrict will open to commercial drift gillnet harvest for 12 hours, 8:00 am to 8:00 pm, Monday, June 15. The Coghill River weir is in place and fish tight and to date no fish have been passed at the weir. Harvest from the fishing period that closed Tuesday, June 9 was 92,000 chum and 500 sockeye salmon with 362 deliveries reported.

ESHAMY DISTRICT: The Eshamy District, excluding the Main Bay Hatchery AGZ, will open for a 48-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Monday, June 15. Harvest from the fishing period that closed Wednesday, June 10 was 5,800 sockeye and 2,300 chum salmon with 82 deliveries reported.

MONTAGUE DISTRICT: The Port Chalmers Subdistrict will open to drift gillnet for 60 hours at 8:00 am on Monday, June 15 with an additional 84-hour period beginning at 8:00 am on Thursday, June 18. 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.

UNAKWIK DISTRICT: The Unakwik District will open to commercial drift gillnet and purse seine harvest for a 36-hour fishing period beginning at 8:00 am on Monday, June 15.

SEINE FISHERIES: The first aerial surveys of portions of the Eastern District were conducted this past week. Stream escapement observations were minimal during these surveys, which is to be expected for the date. The next aerial survey for portions of Eastern, Northern and Southeastern districts is scheduled for this week. VFDA anticipates making cost recovery test sets later this week.

There will be a commercial fishing opener on Monday, June 22 in portions of the Eastern and Southeastern districts, with time and area to be announced on Saturday, June 20. It is anticipated that early season fishing opportunities will be limited in frequency, with time and area being dependent upon escapement, harvest and effort.

The department has used yellow Salmon Harvest Task Force (SHTF) markers in the past to close terminal wild stock areas, both for escapement and quality concerns. The department may use the yellow SHTF markers as a management tool for closing terminal wild stock areas to allow for early season broad area openings, and when escapements are lower than expected. These markers may also be employed as an intermediate step before area-wide closures are used. Electronic copies

of these coordinates may be found at the web site provided below. When these area closures are in effect, SHTF markers will be referenced in detail in applicable news releases.

Please refer to Prince William Sound News Release #8 from Wednesday, June 3 for details regarding Prince William Sound stream closures. This announcement highlights closed waters in the vicinity of select streams in Prince William Sound. Electronic copies of SHTF coordinates, the stream closures list and a map associated with this stream closures list are available at the following web address under the *Prince William Sound Stream Closures* heading:

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

Hard copies of these resources will also be available in the Cordova ADF&G office.

Please refer to the ADF&G **2015–2018 Commercial Salmon Fishing Regulations for Prince William Sound** booklet for regulations regarding commercial salmon fisheries in the Prince William Sound Area. This booklet is available in the Cordova ADF&G office and at the following web address:

www.adfg.alaska.gov/static-f/regulations/fishregulations/pdfs/commercial/2015-2018PrinceWilliamSoundAreaSalmonFishingRegulations.pdf

SOUTHWESTERN DISTRICT: The AFK Hatchery THA and SHA will open for 60 hours at 8:00 am on Monday, June 15 with an additional 84-hour period beginning at 8:00 am on Thursday, June 18. Anadromous stream closures within the AFK Hatchery THA and SHA will not be in effect until further notice. Harvest from the 60-hour period that ended on Wednesday, June 10 is 17,500 chum, 1,130 sockeye, 386 pink, 15 coho, and 2 Chinook salmon, with 34 deliveries reported. ADF&G's otolith contribution estimate indicates that the June 8–June 10 Southwestern District pink salmon harvest was 92.6% wild fish, 6.6% AFK, and less than 1.0% SGH.

The next scheduled salmon fisheries announcement is anticipated to be at 2:00 pm Wednesday, June 17.

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 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 907-586-7642.