

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES



NEWS RELEASE

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Date Issued: Wednesday, June 24, 2015
Time: 2:00 pm

Prince William Sound Salmon Fishery News Release #15

COPPER RIVER DISTRICT: Copper River District will open at 7:00 am on Thursday, June 25 for a 36-hour commercial fishing period. **The Chinook salmon inside closure area will be OPEN during this fishing period.**

Cumulative sonar count through June 23 was 860,729 fish, whereas the anticipated count for this date is 438,166 fish. The 0600 count for June 24 was 4,170 fish. For the week ending June 27, the actual Copper River delta survey count was 32,420 sockeye salmon versus an anticipated range 17,627–41,665. Hatchery contributions from the period that closed on June 9 were 3% Gulkana Hatchery and 4% Main Bay. Harvest from the fishing period that closed Tuesday, June 23 was 392 Chinook and 66,000 sockeye salmon with 557 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: Bering River District will open at 7:00 am on Thursday, June 25 for a 12-hour commercial fishing period. For the week ending June 27, the actual Bering River District survey count was 11,500 sockeye salmon versus an anticipated range of 6,092–13,402.

COGHILL DISTRICT: 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 Thursday, June 25. Granite Bay Subdistrict will open to commercial drift gillnet harvest for a 12-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Thursday, June 25. To date, 1,405 sockeye salmon have been passed at the Coghill River weir. Harvest from the fishing period that closed Tuesday, June 23 was 13,200 chum and 6,700 sockeye salmon with 127 deliveries reported.

ESHAMY DISTRICT: Eshamy District, excluding the Main Bay Subdistrict, will open for a 36-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Thursday, June 25. Harvest from the fishing period that closed Tuesday, June 23 was 40,000 sockeye and 4,600 chum salmon with 283 deliveries reported.

MONTAGUE DISTRICT: Port Chalmers Subdistrict will open to drift gillnet for 84 hours at 8:00 am on Thursday, June 25 with an additional 60-hour period beginning at 8:00 am on Monday, June 29. 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 fishing period that closed Sunday, June 21 was 21,000 chum, 3,400 sockeye, and 8,500 pink salmon with 175 deliveries reported.

UNAKWIK DISTRICT: Unakwik District will open to commercial drift gillnet and purse seine harvest for a 36-hour fishing period beginning at 8:00 am on Thursday, June 25. Fishing period specific harvest data remain confidential due to low participation. Cumulative harvest through June 23 is 620 sockeye, 180 chum, 3 Chinook, and 1 pink salmon.

SEINE FISHERIES: This announcement will detail PWS purse seine fishing periods commencing on Thursday, June 25. Aerial surveys of eastern PWS flown last week indicate that early wild pink salmon returns are greater than anticipated for the date. An aerial survey of eastern PWS will be flown again today. VFDA reports that test fishing continues today, with a maximum set size of 150 pink salmon. VFDA expects to begin its cost recovery sales program as soon as harvest volumes warrant. **There will be a commercial fishing opener on Monday, June 29 in portions of eastern Prince William Sound, with time and area to be announced on Saturday, June 27.** It is anticipated that early

season fishing opportunities will be limited in frequency, with time and area being dependent upon VFDA cost recovery progress, wild stock escapements, harvest and effort. Harvest reporting from Monday's purse seine fishery in the Eastern, Northern, and Southeastern districts is incomplete as of this morning. However, it is estimated that between 100,000—125,000 pink salmon were harvested, with approximately 80 seine boats participating in the Eastern, Northern, and Southeastern districts.

EASTERN DISTRICT: Waters of the Eastern District south of the latitude of Black Point will open to commercial fishing for 12 hours on Thursday, June 25 beginning at 8:00 am. **Waters of Port Gravina and Beartrap Bay inside of the following Eastern District Salmon Harvest Task Force (SHTF) marker will be closed for this period to ensure early season escapement:**

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.**

NORTHERN DISTRICT: Waters of the Northern District will remain closed to commercial fishing this period.

SOUTHEASTERN DISTRICT: Waters of the Southeastern District will open to commercial fishing for 12 hours on Thursday, June 25 beginning at 8:00 am.

SOUTHWESTERN DISTRICT: AFK Hatchery THA and SHA will open for 84 hours at 8:00 am on Thursday, June 25 with an additional 60-hour period beginning at 8:00 am on Monday, June 29. Anadromous stream closures within the AFK Hatchery THA and SHA will not be in effect until further notice. Harvest from the 84-hour period that ended on Sunday, June 21 is 14,700 chum, 4,970 sockeye, 570 pink, 257 coho, and 53 Chinook salmon, with 34 deliveries reported.

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

The next scheduled salmon fisheries announcement is anticipated to be at 2:00 pm Saturday, June 27.

Permit holders are advised that unscheduled announcements based on current escapement data may occur at any time in season 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, in season 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 fishery 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." (16 U.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.