

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



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2016 PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND SALMON FISHERY INFORMATION

General Information

This outlook is provided to assist the commercial salmon industry in planning for the 2016 season in the Prince William Sound (PWS) Management Area (Area E). Forecasts for commercial common property fishery (CCPF) harvests by species are summarized in Table 1. Preseason forecasts are the basis for the information provided. Detailed Area E total run forecasts can be found on ADF&G's web site:

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

Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation (PWSAC) hatchery forecasts can be found on the PWSAC web site:

<http://pwsac.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/2016-PWSAC-Forecast.pdf>

Management of PWS commercial salmon fisheries occurs from the Cordova area office. As in past years, fishery announcements from the Cordova ADF&G office will routinely occur at 2:00 p.m. and will normally provide a minimum of 15 hours advanced notice. Announcement recordings will be 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. Daily announcements are compiled and may be found on the ADF&G web site at:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.main>

The first announcement concerning the Copper River District will be issued between May 1 and May 8.

Gillnet Fishery

Copper River District

The most likely start date for the first commercial fishing period in the Copper River District is Monday, May 16. The 2016 CC PF harvest projections for the Copper River District are 1.6 million sockeye, 201,000 coho, and 21,000 Chinook salmon (Table 1). The 2016 inriver goal past the Miles Lake sonar is 712,000 to 1.1 million salmon. The upper Copper River sustainable

escapement goal (SEG) is 360,000 to 750,000 natural sockeye salmon, and the Copper River delta SEG is 55,000 to 130,000. The department's goal is to maintain the long-term average of 450,000 sockeye salmon in the upper Copper River spawning escapement, and 84,500 sockeye salmon in the Copper River delta spawning escapement. The components of the inriver goal are as follows:

Spawning escapement	360,000 to 750,000 sockeye
Other salmon	17,500 salmon
Subsistence	82,500 salmon
Personal Use harvest	150,000 salmon
Sport fishery	15,000 salmon
Gulkana broodstock	20,000 sockeye
Gulkana Hatchery surplus	66,550 sockeye
Total	759,000 to 1.1 million

The initial management strategy will be based on anticipated weekly sockeye and Chinook salmon harvests for the Copper River District and additional assessments of river conditions, fishing effort, harvest location, and consistency of harvest. Once the Miles Lake sonar is deployed, the inriver goal becomes one of the primary factors in management decisions. By late June, aerial estimates of Copper River Delta sockeye salmon escapement are also considered.

The standard commercial fishing schedule is two evenly spaced fishing periods per week with the first period each week starting on Mondays at 7:00 a.m. Depending upon fishing effort, harvest, and escapement trends on the Copper River Delta and at Miles Lake sonar station, a decision on a possible second weekly fishing period will be made by Wednesday at 2:00 p.m. The second period typically begins at 7:00 a.m. on Thursday. The 2016 sockeye salmon harvest forecast is larger than average and the frequency and duration of fishing periods may need to increase to keep pace with sockeye salmon run entry. Dependent on inseason Chinook salmon abundance, it may be necessary to close the 'inside closure area', as defined in 5AAC 24.350(1)(B), for all or a portion of fishing periods until mid-June, and it may also be necessary to expand this area to include waters inside the barrier islands east of Coffee Creek West (60° 14.13' N. lat., 144° 58.31' W. long.).

Beginning in early to mid-August when coho salmon harvest becomes predominant, the Copper and Bering River districts will be managed for coho salmon. The standard management strategy for coho salmon is one or two 24-hour periods per week depending on escapement and harvest levels.

Individuals planning to participate in subsistence fishing activities in Copper River District are required to obtain a subsistence permit through the Cordova ADF&G office. **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.** ADF&G staff will not be available to issue permits before hours, after hours, on state holidays, or on weekends.

Bering River District

The 2016 CCPF harvest projections for the Bering River District are 14,000 sockeye and 46,000 coho salmon. Bering River District is expected to open for the 2016 season only after sockeye salmon escapement is above the minimum SEG (15,000–33,000 fish). Beginning in early August, the Bering River District will be managed for coho salmon and management strategies will be similar to those used for Copper River District.

Eshamy District

PWSAC's Main Bay Hatchery forecast is 1.6 million sockeye salmon. The management strategy in 2016 will be to provide two extended periods per week in the hatchery subdistrict similar to the strategy used in the past five years. Extended periods may also occur in the Crafton Island Subdistrict provided there are no concerns regarding harvest of wild stocks bound for other districts. Eshamy District is expected to open for the 2016 season on May 30.

Eshamy River escapement will be assessed with a video monitoring system in 2016. No forecast is available this year for the wild stock sockeye salmon run to Eshamy Lake. Beginning in early to mid July, fishing time and area in Crafton Island Subdistrict will be driven by escapement of wild pink and sockeye salmon in Eshamy District, and the strength of wild pink and chum salmon runs to the Northwestern, Coghill, and Northern districts.

Coghill District

The 2016 Coghill Lake sockeye salmon forecast is 110,000 fish with an SEG of 20,000–60,000 fish and an anticipated harvest of 80,000 fish. The chum salmon run to Wally Noerenberg Hatchery (WNH) is forecast to be 2.2 million fish. PWSAC requires 1.2 million (55%) chum salmon for cost recovery and broodstock, leaving 978,000 (45%) for the CCPF. Coghill District is expected to open for the 2016 season on May 30.

Granite Bay Subdistrict will be managed to achieve PWSAC corporate escapement goals when management of Esther and Perry Island subdistricts is not adequately achieving these goals.

Area restrictions may be implemented by emergency order for the conservation of Coghill Lake sockeye salmon and Port Wells wild stock chum and pink salmon. If sockeye salmon escapement is within the anticipated range and sockeye salmon harvest rates in Coghill District indicate a strong run, the Port Wells area will be regularly opened north to the markers near Coghill Lagoon. If the Coghill River weir escapement counts exceed the escapement goal, fishing area may be expanded to the mouth of Coghill River. If the drift gillnet fleet does not appear to be able to harvest available surplus Coghill Lake sockeye salmon, the purse seine fleet may be allowed to fish north of 61° latitude in the Coghill District.

WNH coho salmon are present in the Coghill District fishery from early August through late September. The 2016 run to WNH is expected to be 20,700 coho salmon. PWSAC will require 2,700 fish for broodstock with all remaining fish available to the common property fisheries.

Unakwik District

The 2016 wild stock sockeye salmon commercial harvest in Unakwik Inlet is forecast at 3,200 fish. During the sockeye salmon run to Miners and Cowpen lakes, the management strategy will be to provide two periods per week. This schedule is expected to begin in early June and run concurrently with openings in Coghill District. Unakwik District is expected to open for the 2016 season on June 16.

Port Chalmers Subdistrict

The drift gillnet gear group has exclusive access to the Port Chalmers Subdistrict chum salmon fishery in 2016. The CCPF in Port Chalmers is anticipated to begin on Monday, May 30 with a forecast of 330,000 chum salmon.

Purse Seine Fishery

The 2016 pink salmon total run forecast for PWS is 40.9 million fish, of which 31.6 million will be available for common property harvest. This pink salmon total run forecast includes 3.8 million wild stock fish, 17.4 million Valdez Fisheries Development Association (VFDA) fish, and 19.6 million PWSAC hatchery fish. Approximately 3.4 million (20%) of the projected 17.4 million pink salmon run to VFDA's Solomon Gulch Hatchery will be needed for cost recovery and broodstock leaving 14.0 million for common property harvest. Approximately 4.7 million (24%) of the projected 19.6 million pink salmon run to the PWSAC hatcheries will be needed for cost recovery and broodstock. The remaining 14.9 million PWSAC pink salmon will be available for common property harvest. Based on the department's wild stock pink salmon forecast of 3.8 million fish, there is a potential common property harvest of 2.7 million wild pink salmon. The department will manage for each district's escapement goal for a combined total of 1.2 million fish.

The 2016 chum salmon forecast total run in PWS is 3.3 million fish. The majority, 2.9 million (87%), are from PWSAC hatchery production, with 394,000 fish returning to the Armin F. Koernig hatchery (AFK). Based on the department's wild chum salmon forecast of 426,000 fish, there is a potential common property harvest of 226,000 wild chum salmon. The department will manage for each district's escapement goal, aiming for each district's long-term average, for a combined total of 200,000 fish.

The PWS purse seine fishery will begin on Thursday, June 2 targeting the enhanced chum salmon run to the AFK hatchery. A regular schedule of two fishing periods per week is anticipated for the beginning of the season; an 84-hour fishing period, from 8:00 a.m. Thursday to 8:00 p.m. Sunday, and a 60-hour fishing period, from 8:00 a.m. Monday to 8:00 p.m. Wednesday. Anadromous stream closures and regulatory closed waters within the open area at AFK will be suspended during June and July. Daily fishing periods may be implemented in the AFK Special and Terminal Harvest Areas (SHA and THA) starting around June 20 or based on sockeye salmon run entry, allowing for more frequent monitoring of purse seine harvests. Inseason monitoring of seine catches in the AFK SHA and THA may be used to adjust fishing time and/or area to focus the harvest on chum salmon. Areas open to the CCPF at AFK will remain open until pink salmon dominate the harvest and are sufficient to sustain sizable pink salmon cost recovery harvests. Daily fishing periods will continue and/or recommence at AFK on Monday, July 18 to provide more frequent updates on chum and pink salmon harvests.

The general waters of the eight purse seine districts will be managed based on the strength of wild stocks. Hatchery subdistricts will be managed based on the strength of both wild and enhanced stocks. The 2016 wild stock pink salmon forecast is the third smallest forecast in the past 10 years, and is 34% below the 1960–2014 even-year average preseason forecast of 5.8 million fish. A conservative management approach is anticipated if returns are as weak as expected. Pink and chum salmon escapement trends will be evaluated during weekly aerial surveys and compared to average historical performance to determine the frequency and duration of openings. 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 coordinates for these markers are available to the public at the Cordova office, and are included in fishery news releases. Valdez Arm, Valdez Narrows, and Port Valdez will be managed for VFDA's cost recovery and broodstock needs. Openings in Valdez Arm and Port Valdez designed to target VFDA pink salmon will be based on the strength of the enhanced run and VFDA's progress towards achieving the pink salmon cost recovery goal. CCPF openings targeting VFDA fish generally start during the first

week of July with daily 14-hour periods (6 a.m. to 8 p.m.). In the remainder of the Eastern District, openings will be based on wild stock escapements. Port Valdez will be closed to the CCPF north of a line from Entrance Point to Potato Point beginning on August 15. Valdez Narrows Subdistrict will open on September 6 to target surplus Solomon Gulch Hatchery (SGH) coho salmon. The VFDA enhanced coho salmon forecast is 101,000 fish with an anticipated CCPF harvest of 52,800 fish.

The AFK, Cannery Creek Hatchery (CCH), and WNH pink salmon runs will be managed collectively to achieve PWSAC's cost recovery and broodstock goals. Prior to run entry sustaining consistent hatchery cost recovery harvest, the department may open the WNH, CCH, and AFK Hatchery THAs and SHAs to a common property harvest to keep pink salmon quality high. Once PWSAC initiates cost recovery, they intend to complete at least 70–80% of their pink salmon cost recovery harvest goal prior to recommending an opening of the CCPF in the hatchery subdistricts. PWSAC will work closely with local ADF&G management biologists to achieve the pink salmon cost recovery goal as rapidly as possible to allow for an orderly and consistent common property fishery. The department evaluates late pink salmon run progress based on cost recovery and commercial harvest rates, broodstock collections, sex ratios, stock composition estimates, and wild stock escapement data.

Table 1.—ADF&G, PWSAC and VFDA commercial common property harvest projections for the 2016 salmon fishery in the Prince William Sound and Copper/Bering River areas.

PINK SALMON - HARVEST ESTIMATE (Millions)

Natural Stocks	2.7
Hatchery Stocks ^a	
Solomon Gulch	14.0
Armin F. Koernig	4.7
Wally Noerenberg	4.9
Cannery Creek	5.3
Natural & Hatchery	31.6

CHUM SALMON - HARVEST ESTIMATE (Thousands)

Natural Stocks	226
Hatchery Stocks ^a	
Wally Noerenberg	978
Armin F. Koernig	394
Port Chalmers	330
Natural & Hatchery	1,928

COHO SALMON - HARVEST ESTIMATE (Thousands)

PWS Natural Stocks	No Forecast
Copper River	201
Bering River	46
Hatchery Stocks ^a	
Solomon Gulch	53
Wally Noerenberg	18
Natural & Hatchery	318

SOCKEYE SALMON - HARVEST ESTIMATE (Thousands)

Copper River	1,620
Bering River	14
Coghill Lake	80
PWS Remainder	91
PWS Hatchery Stocks ^a	
Main Bay	1,591
Natural & Hatchery	3,227

CHINOOK SALMON - HARVEST ESTIMATE (Thousands)

Natural Stocks	
Copper River	21

^a Potential hatchery contributions to the commercial common property harvest are based on the forecast of total hatchery runs minus preseason estimates of cost recovery and broodstock harvest that will be required by hatchery operators.