

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES



NEWS RELEASE

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Prince William Sound Salmon Fishery News Release #15

COPPER RIVER DISTRICT: The Copper River District will open at 7:00 am on Thursday, June 30 for a 48-hour commercial fishing period.

Cumulative Miles Lake sonar count through 6/28 was 570,024 fish whereas the anticipated range for this date is 444,435–687,875. The 0600 count for 6/29 was 2,127 fish. For the week ending June 25, the actual Copper River delta survey count was 18,140 sockeye salmon versus an anticipated range 17,627–41,665 fish. During this survey strong winds and complete cloud cover limited visibility in index systems. Contribution estimates are available for Copper River commercial harvests from period 11 (6/16 to 6/17). Period 12 contributions were estimated as 86% wild, 5% Main Bay Hatchery, and 8% Gulkana Hatchery. A preliminary harvest estimate from the 36-hour period that started on Monday, June 27 was 77,300 sockeye salmon with 385 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, west of a longitude line at **144° 33.60' W.**, will open at **7:00 am Thursday, June 30 for a 48-hour commercial fishing period.** Bering River sockeye salmon run timing overlap has increased and open area within the district will likely remain reduced until escapement indices support additional fishing effort. Bering Lake and the surrounding area have been flooded with a glacial water outburst from Berg Lake and are currently unsurveyable.

COGHILL DISTRICT: Waters of the Granite Bay and Esther subdistricts, excluding the following:

- all waters of Esther Passage,
 - waters of Granite Bay Subdistrict north of a latitude line at 60° 54.94 N. lat.,
 - waters of Esther Subdistrict east of a longitude line at 147° 57.30' W. long,
 - waters within 0.5 nautical miles of Culross Island,
 - waters of the WNH THA and SHA,
- will open to commercial drift gillnet harvest for a 24-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Thursday, June 30.

Waters of the WNH THA and SHA, excluding the WNH Hatchery Escapement Exclusion Zone (HEEZ), will open at 8:00 am on Thursday, June 30 for a 48-hour commercial drift gillnet fishing period. Waters of the WNH HE EZ west of a line from 60° 47.81' N. lat., 148° 05.31' W. long. to 60° 48.04' N. lat., 148° 05.65' W. long. will open for 12-hours (8am-8pm) on Thursday, June 30 and Friday, July 1. The WNH HE EZ consists of waters of Lake Bay north of a latitude line at 60° 47.78' N. long.

To date, 1,508 sockeye salmon have passed the Coghill River weir versus an anticipated range of 3,012–9,037 fish. Preliminary sockeye salmon contributions to Coghill District period 5 (6/20 to 6/21) were 80% MBH and 20% wild fish. A preliminary harvest estimate from the 36-hour period that started on Monday, June 27 was 121,400 chum and 6,300 sockeye salmon with 372 deliveries reported.

ESHAMY DISTRICT: The Eshamy District, excluding the Main Bay Subdistrict, will open to commercial gillnet harvest for a 24-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Thursday, June 30. The Main bay Subdistrict up to a line of buoys in front of the

MBH barrier seine will open to commercial gillnet harvest for a 48-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Thursday, June 30. **The AGZ will open to DRIFT GILLNET permit holders only during this fishing period.** A preliminary harvest estimate from the 36-hour period that started on Monday, June 27 was 15,200 chum and 87,400 sockeye salmon with 567 deliveries reported.

MONTAGUE DISTRICT: The Port Chalmers Subdistrict will open to drift gillnet fishing for 84 hours at 8:00 am on Thursday, June 30, with an additional 60-hour period beginning at 8:00 am on Monday, July 4. 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.** A preliminary harvest estimate from the 84-hour period that started on Thursday, June 23 was 35,143 chum and 1,750 pink salmon with 149 deliveries reported.

UNAKWIK DISTRICT: The Unakwik District will open to commercial drift gillnet and purse seine harvest for a 24-hour fishing period beginning at 8:00 am on Thursday, June 30.

SEINE FISHERIES: The second aerial survey for portions of the Eastern and Northern District was conducted on Sunday, June 26. Stream escapement observations were minimal during these surveys, which is to be expected for the date. The next aerial survey for portions of the Eastern district is schedule for later this week.

VFDA began its cost recovery sales program yesterday, June 28, and reports a harvest of approximately 72,000 lbs.; with an average set size of 1,500 lbs. Cost recovery fishing is anticipated to continue today. Cost recovery fishing is continuing today with reports of increased harvest per set. VFDA is currently sampling harvest from June 28 for sex ratio's and average weight. This information will be available in the next seine update.

EASTERN DISTRICT: Waters of the Eastern District, south of the latitude of the Black Point, will open to commercial fishing for 12 hours on Friday, July 1 beginning at 8:00 am. A preliminary harvest estimate from the 12-hour period that started on Monday, June 27 was 20,983 chum, 54,783 pink, 259 coho, and 1,038 sockeye salmon with 108 deliveries reported.

Waters inside of all applicable Eastern District Salmon Harvest Task Force (SHTF) markers will be closed for this period to ensure early season escapement. Waters inside all applicable SHTF markers closed for this period include the following areas:

- (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 maker 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 will be provided to area processors, VFDA and PWSAC for distribution to fishery participants. 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.

SOUTHEASTERN DISTRICT: Waters of the Southeastern District will open to commercial fishing for 12 hours on Friday, July 1 beginning at 8:00 am. 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. A preliminary harvest estimate from the 12-hour period that started on Monday, June 27 was 374 chum, 303 pink, 8 coho, and 82 sockeye salmon with 8 deliveries reported.

SOUTHWESTERN DISTRICT: The AFK Hatchery THA and SHA will open to purse seine fishing for an **8-hour** commercial fishing period from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm starting on Friday, July 1. A regular schedule of 8-hour fishing periods every other day is anticipated to remain in effect until further notice. As discussed at preseason meetings, the intent of this schedule is to maintain efforts on enhanced chum salmon returning to AFK and reduce the harvest of sockeye salmon destined for other areas of PWS. **The Anadromous stream closures within the AFK Hatchery THA and SHA will not be in effect until further notice.** A preliminary harvest estimate from the 14-hour period that started on Monday, June 27 was 14,372 chum and 7,983 sockeye salmon with 44 deliveries reported.

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