

# ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

## DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES



### NEWS RELEASE

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### **Prince William Sound Salmon Fishery News Release #22**

**COPPER RIVER DISTRICT:** The Copper River District will open at 7:00 am on Monday, July 11 for a 36-hour commercial fishing period.

Cumulative Miles Lake sonar count through 7/8 was 695,184 fish whereas the anticipated range for this date is 505,961–783,102. The 0600 count for 7/9 was 1,566 fish. For the week ending July 2, the actual Copper River delta survey count was 31,600 sockeye salmon versus an anticipated range 28,229–66,722 fish. A preliminary harvest estimate from the 48-hour period that started on Thursday, July 7 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.**

**BERING RIVER DISTRICT:** Bering River District, west of a longitude line at **144° 33.60' W.**, will open at **7:00 am Monday, July 11 for a 36-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.

**PWS GILLNET FISHERIES:** Gillnet depth restrictions, as specified in 5 AAC 24.331(b)(6), **WILL REMAIN IN EFFECT** through Wednesday, July 13 in the Coghill, Eshamy, and Unakwik District fisheries. **Deep gear is anticipated to be allowed in these districts starting Thursday, July 14.** Drift gillnet fishermen are reminded that, per 5 AAC 24.331(f), a person **may not operate a drift gillnet** when the fishing vessel to which the gillnet is attached is grounded, or when any part of the gillnet is grounded above the water line. Additionally, mechanical power may not be used to hold the vessel in substantially the same geographic location while attached to the drift gillnet.

**COGHILL DISTRICT:** Waters of the Granite Bay Subdistrict, excluding all waters of Esther Passage and waters of north of a latitude line at **60° 54.94 N. lat.**, and waters of Esther Bay north of a latitude line at **60° 48.17' N. lat.**, will open to commercial drift gillnet harvest for a 6-hour period starting at **8:00 am on Monday, June 11.** Waters of the WNH THA and SHA, excluding the WNH Hatchery Escapement Exclusion Zone (HEEZ), will open at 8:00 am on Monday, July 11 for a 60-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° 47.96' N. lat.**, **148° 05.45' W. long.** will open for 12-hours (8am-8pm) on Monday, July 11; Tuesday, July 12; Wednesday, July 13. The WNH HE EZ consists of waters of Lake Bay north of a latitude line at **60° 47.78' N. long.**

To date, 5,104 sockeye salmon have passed the Coghill River weir versus an anticipated range of 10,833–32,498 fish. A preliminary harvest estimate from the 84-hour period that started on Thursday, July 7 is not yet available.

**ESHAMY DISTRICT:** The Eshamy District, excluding the Main Bay Subdistrict, will open to commercial gillnet harvest for a 12-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Monday, July 11. The Main bay Subdistrict will open to commercial gillnet harvest for a 36-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Monday, July 11. **The AGZ will open to SET GILLNET permit holders only during this fishing period.** Preliminary sockeye salmon contributions to Eshamy District period 11 (7/4 to 7/5) were

98% MBH and 2% wild fish. A preliminary harvest estimate from the 36-hour period that started on Thursday, July 7 was 71,900 sockeye, 11,900 pink, and 4,700 chum salmon with 379 deliveries reported.

**MONTAGUE DISTRICT:** The Port Chalmers Subdistrict, **north of 60°12.56' N. lat. and within 0.5 miles of Montague Island**, will open to drift gillnet fishing for 60 hours at 8:00 am on Monday, July 11, with an additional 60-hour period beginning at 8:00 am on Thursday, July 14. 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 60-hour period that started on Monday, July 4 was 15,600 chum and 500 pink salmon with 73 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 Monday, July 11.

**SEINE FISHERIES:** This announcement will provide an update on VFDA cost recovery progress. All current purse seine fishing periods remain open as previously announced. Eastern District fisheries will be closed on Sunday, July 10, to allow for cost recovery fishing, acquisition of brood stock, and further evaluation of fishery performance data. Fishing opportunity targeting VFDA pink salmon may occur on Monday, July 11, with details being provided at 2 pm on Sunday, July 10.

VFDA began its cost recovery sales program on June 28, and has collected approximately 78% of the assigned pink salmon revenue goal through July 7. VFDA reports that cost recovery pink salmon harvest in Port Valdez on Monday, July 7, was approximately 158,000 fish with an average weight of 4.0 pounds per fish and 42% female. VFDA reports cost recovery is continuing today and sex ratio sampling of fish harvested this morning at Entrance Point resulted in 48.5% female.

It is estimated that 1 million pink salmon were harvested in eastern PWS on Friday, July 8, with 199 deliveries reported. The cumulative PWS pink salmon harvest in the Eastern district through July 8 is estimated at 3.3 million CPF and 1.2 million VFDA cost recovery fish, for a total of 4.5 million fish. The 10-year even-year average (1996–2014) cumulative PWS pink salmon harvest (cost recovery and CPF fish) through July 8 is 5 million fish.

An aerial survey of Eastern district streams was flown on Thursday, July 7. Early wild pink and chum salmon returns have begun throughout the Eastern district. But very few of these fish have entered the streams, which is to be expected for this date. Early season indicators of wild stock chum and pink salmon run entry and escapement in the Northern and Eastern districts do not support a wild stock fishery at this time.

**The next scheduled seine fisheries announcement is anticipated to be at 2:00 pm Sunday, July 10.**

**The next scheduled gillnet fisheries announcement is anticipated to be at 2:00 pm Wednesday, July 13.**

**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](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](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.