

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES



NEWS RELEASE

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Prince William Sound Salmon Fishery News Release #30

COPPER RIVER DISTRICT: The Copper River District will open at 7:00 am on Monday, July 18 for a 36-hour commercial fishing period.

Cumulative Miles Lake sonar count through 7/15 was 754,579 fish whereas the anticipated range for this date is 563,890–872,763. The 0600 count for 7/16 was 1,476 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 14 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 18 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.

PWS GILLNET FISHERIES: Gillnet depth restrictions, as specified in 5 AAC 24.331(b)(6), **ARE NOT IN EFFECT** in the Coghill, Eshamy, and Unakwik District fisheries. 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, July 18. Waters of the WNH THA, excluding the WNH SHA, will open at 8:00 am on Monday, July 18 for a 36-hour commercial drift gillnet fishing period. Waters of the WNH SHA up to a line of buoys in front of the barrier seine will open at 8:00 am on Monday, July 18 for a 60-hour commercial drift gillnet fishing period.

To date, 6,999 sockeye salmon have passed the Coghill River weir versus an anticipated range of 13,430–40,289 fish. A preliminary harvest estimate from the 60-hour period that started on Thursday, July 14 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 18. The Main Bay Subdistrict, excluding the MBH THA, SHA, and AGZ, will open to commercial gillnet harvest for a 36-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Monday, July 18. The MBH THA, SHA, and AGZ will open to commercial gillnet harvest for a 60-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Monday, July 18. **The AGZ will open to SET GILLNET permit holders only during this fishing period.** Preliminary sockeye salmon contributions to Eshamy District period 13 (7/11 to 7/12) were 90% MBH and 10% wild fish. A preliminary harvest estimate from the 36-hour period that started on Monday, July 11 was 43,416 sockeye, 7,032 pink, and 2,391 chum salmon with 294 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 18, with an additional 84-hour period beginning at 8:00 am on Thursday, July 21. 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 11 was 2,948 chum and 259 pink salmon with 16 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 18.

SEINE FISHERIES: The Eastern, Northern and Southeastern District fisheries will be closed until further notice for VFDA brood stock acquisition.

VFDA estimates it currently has less than 200,000 pink salmon in the waters near the hatchery as of Saturday, July 16 and estimates total escapement needs to be approximately 475,000 pink salmon (25,000 for cost recovery and 450,000 for broodstock). Due to a drop off in run entry of VFDA pink salmon into Port Valdez, VFDA recommends no commercial fishery openers targeting VFDA pink salmon until broodstock goals have been met. VFDA began its cost recovery sales program on June 28, and has collected approximately 98% of the assigned pink salmon revenue goal through July 16.

Aerial surveys of the Northern, Eastern, and Southeastern Districts were conducted on July 12 and July 14. Wild pink salmon are starting to return to the Eastern and Southeastern Districts and returns are slightly above average for this date. The Coghill River weir has passed 5,214 pink salmon as of 7/15, which is above average for this date.

SOUTHWESTERN DISTRICT: The AFK Hatchery THA and SHA will open to purse seine fishing for a 14-hour commercial fishing period from 6:00 am to 8:00 pm on Tuesday, July 19. A regular schedule of 14-hour fishing periods every other day is 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.

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.

The next scheduled seine fisheries announcement is anticipated to be at 2:00 pm Monday, July 18.

The next scheduled gillnet fisheries announcement is anticipated to be at 2:00 pm Wednesday, July 20.

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.