

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES



NEWS RELEASE

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Prince William Sound Salmon Fishery News Release #33

COPPER RIVER DISTRICT: The Copper River District will open at 7:00 am on Thursday, July 21 for a 36-hour commercial fishing period.

Cumulative Miles Lake sonar count through 7/19 was 777, 227 fish whereas the anticipated range for this date is 597,388–924,610. The 0600 count for 7/20 was 576 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 36-hour period that started on Monday, July 18 is 27,200 sockeye, 200 coho, and 12,500 pink salmon with 304 deliveries reported. Preliminary sockeye salmon contributions to Copper River District period 18 (7/11 to 7/12) were 71% wild and 29% Gulkana Hatchery fish.

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, July 21 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 Coghill District are closed to commercial drift gillnet and purse seine fishing effective 8:00 pm, Wednesday, July 20. The next opening will be dependent on PWSAC pink salmon cost recovery progress.

As of 7/19, 7,915 sockeye salmon have passed the Coghill River weir versus an anticipated range of 16,757–50,270 fish for this date.

ESHAMY DISTRICT: The Main Bay Subdistrict, excluding the MBH THA, SHA, and AGZ, will open to commercial gillnet harvest for a 24-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Thursday, July 21. The MBH THA, SHA, and AGZ will open to commercial gillnet harvest for an 84-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Thursday, July 21. **The AGZ will open to DRIFT GILLNET permit holders only during this fishing period.** Preliminary sockeye salmon contributions to Eshamy District period 14 (7/14 to 7/17) were 92% MBH and 8% wild fish. A preliminary harvest estimate from the 84-hour period that started on Thursday, July 14 was 31,295 sockeye, 1,371 pink, and 341 chum salmon with 233 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 84 hours at 8:00 am on Thursday, July 21, with an additional 60-hour period beginning at 8:00 am on Monday, July 25. 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.

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, July 21.

SEINE FISHERIES: VFDA currently estimates there are approximately 300,000 pink salmon and building in the SHA. VFDA needs approximately 475,000 pink salmon; 25,000 for cost recovery and 450,000 for broodstock. An aerial survey conducted on July 18 of the Valdez Arm indicated continued run entry of pink salmon into Port Valdez. At this time VFDA has recommended no commercial fishery openers targeting VFDA pink salmon until broodstock goals can be assured.

Recent aerial surveys of wild stock chum and pink salmon in the Northern, Eastern, and Southeastern District are better than anticipated based on the survey dates, but the department does not anticipate that these stocks will sustain a consistent schedule of openings at this time. Aerial surveys of all districts are expected to be conducted this week, weather depending, to further assess the strength of wild stock returns throughout PWS. The Coghill River weir has passed 11,184 pink salmon as of 7/19, which is above average for this date.

PWSAC and the department will switch to pink salmon management in PWSAC hatchery subdistricts tomorrow, July 21. PWSAC has recommended closures within the AFK, CCH, and WNH THAs and SHAs; and corresponding hatchery subdistricts. PWSAC is reporting having small numbers of pink salmon starting to return to AFK and WNH. PWSAC anticipates beginning its pink salmon cost recovery program as soon as a harvestable amount of hatchery escapement is available.

It is anticipated that there could be a commercial fishing opener in portions of the Northern, Eastern, and Southeastern districts as early as Friday, July 22, dependent on wild stock escapements and VFDA broodstock acquisition.

SOUTHWESTERN DISTRICT: The AFK Hatchery THA and SHA is closed to commercial salmon fishing until further notice. A preliminary harvest estimate from the 14-hour period that started on Tuesday, July 19 is 4,205 pink, 798 chum, and 427 sockeye salmon with 13 deliveries reported.

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 Thursday, July 21.

The next scheduled gillnet fisheries announcement is anticipated to be at 2:00 pm Saturday, July 23.

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 Mammal 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.