

**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES
NEWS RELEASE**



*Sam Cotten, Commissioner
Scott Kelley, Director*



Contact:
Cordova Management and Research Staff: Jeremy Botz,
Charles Russell, Steve Moffitt, and Stormy Haught
Phone: (907) 424-3212
Fax: (907) 424-3235

Cordova ADF&G
401 Railroad Avenue
P.O. Box 669
Cordova, AK 99574
Date Issued: 10/14/2016

2016 PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND SALMON SEASON SUMMARY

The following is an overview of the 2016 Prince William Sound (PWS) Area commercial salmon season. Please note that numbers in the narrative are rounded for simplicity and all data are considered preliminary.

The 2016 PWS Area commercial salmon harvest was 19.13 million fish. Harvest was composed of 13.27 million pink, 1.94 million sockeye, 3.43 million chum, 478,000 coho, and 12,000 Chinook salmon. The 2016 harvest included 13.67 million (71.5%) commercial common property fishery (CCPF), and 5.46 million (28.5%) hatchery cost recovery and broodstock fish.

GILLNET FISHERIES

COPPER RIVER DISTRICT

The 2016 preseason commercial harvest forecast for the Copper River District was 21,000 Chinook, 1.62 million sockeye, and 201,000 coho salmon. Gulkana Hatchery was projected to contribute 169,000 sockeye salmon to the CCPF harvest. The commercial salmon fishing season in the Copper River District began on Monday, May 16. Through the end of July, the commercial fishery was open 756 hours, 96 hours more than the recent 10-year average. The sockeye salmon harvest of 1.14 million fish was 22% less than the previous 10-year (2006–2015) harvest average of 1.46 million sockeye salmon. The average sockeye salmon weight of 5.3 lb was the second smallest on record. The number of wild sockeye salmon in the Copper River District CCPF harvest was 968,000 or 85%. Gulkana Hatchery contribution to the sockeye salmon CCPF was 153,000 fish or 13% of the harvest. Main Bay Hatchery contributed 16,800 fish, or 2% of the Copper River harvest. The CCPF harvest of 11,600 Chinook salmon was below the previous 10-year (2006–2015) average harvest of 17,200. The season total coho salmon commercial harvest of 365,000 fish was nearly double the previous 10-year (2006–2015) average harvest of 201,000 coho salmon. The 2016 preliminary sonar inriver estimate was 802,000 salmon and was within the 712,000–1,100,000 salmon range of the inriver goal. Spawning escapement to Copper River delta systems based on aerial survey indices was 51,600 sockeye salmon, and was below the sustainable escapement goal (SEG) range of 55,000-130,000 fish. However, pilot availability and poor survey conditions likely contributed to the lower counts and

it is likely that the goal was achieved. Coho salmon spawning escapement to the Copper River Delta based on aerial survey indices was 65,700 and was within the SEG range of 32,000–67,000 fish. Preliminary estimates of inriver Chinook salmon abundance indicate that spawning escapement was below the lower bound SEG of 24,000 fish.

BERING RIVER DISTRICT

The 2016 preseason commercial harvest forecast for the Bering River District was 14,000 sockeye, and 46,000 coho salmon. The sockeye salmon commercial harvest of 9,400 fish was 23% above the previous 10-year (2006–2015) harvest average of 7,600 fish. The coho salmon commercial harvest of 81,400 was 80% above the previous 10-year (2006–2015) harvest average of 45,300 fish. Commercial fishing effort in both the sockeye and coho salmon fisheries was high due to productive fishing in the eastern portion of the Copper River Delta. The aerial escapement index of 21,700 sockeye salmon was within the SEG range of 15,000–33,000 fish. Aerial surveys of coho salmon produced an escapement index of 25,800 fish that was within the SEG range of 13,000–33,000 fish.

COGHILL DISTRICT

Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation (PWSAC) forecast a 2016 run of 2.15 million chum and 20,700 coho salmon to Wally Noerenberg Hatchery (WNH) and required 1.17 million (55%) chum and 2,700 (13%) coho salmon for cost recovery and broodstock. The CCPF drift gillnet harvest of chum salmon in the Coghill District was 1.83 million fish. PWSAC harvested 942,000 chum salmon for cost recovery and broodstock. The CCPF drift gillnet harvest of sockeye salmon in the Coghill District was 67,100 fish. The proportion of wild sockeye salmon in the Coghill District CCPF harvest was 10,500 fish (16%). Pink salmon CCPF drift gillnet harvest in the Coghill District was 9,200 fish. The proportion of wild pink salmon in the Coghill District CCPF harvest was 29%. The CCPF drift gillnet harvest of coho salmon in the Coghill District was 6 fish.

The sockeye salmon run forecast for Coghill River was 110,000 fish. The Coghill River weir passed 8,708 sockeye salmon, coming in below the SEG range of 20,000–60,000 fish.

ESHAMY DISTRICT

PWSAC forecast a run of 1.60 million Main Bay Hatchery enhanced sockeye salmon. The CCPF harvest of sockeye salmon in the Eshamy District was 656,000 fish, 41% below the forecast. The proportion of wild sockeye salmon in the Eshamy District CCPF harvest was 3% (19,200 fish).

UNAKWIK DISTRICT

Unakwik District CCPF drift gillnet harvest was 340 sockeye salmon, which was well below the 10-year average of 3,000 sockeye salmon.

MONTAGUE DISTRICT, PORT CHALMERS SUBDISTRICT

PWSAC forecast a run of 330,000 chum salmon to the Port Chalmers remote release site in 2016. The drift gillnet gear group had access to the Port Chalmers Subdistrict in 2016 under the Prince William Sound Management and Salmon Enhancement Allocation Plan. The CCPF drift gillnet harvest of chum salmon in the Montague District was 200,500, 40% below forecast. The proportion of wild chum salmon in the Port Chalmers Subdistrict CPF harvest 11%.

PURSE SEINE FISHERIES

CHUM SALMON

The 2016 chum salmon total run forecast was 3.3 million fish, with 2.87 million fish (87%) projected to be of PWSAC origin. Of these, 394,000 chum salmon were expected to be harvested by the purse seine fleet at the Armin F. Koernig Hatchery (AFK).

Based on the department's wild chum salmon forecast of 426,000 fish, there was a preseason expectation for the potential CCPF harvest of 242,000 wild chum salmon in PWS, leaving 200,000 fish for escapement.

Purse seine chum salmon harvest in PWS was predominantly from the Southwestern, Eastern, and Coghill districts. Chum salmon commercial harvest at AFK was 211,533 hatchery fish, or 46% below PWSAC's 394,000 preseason forecast. Despite a restrictive fishing schedule the purse seine harvest of sockeye salmon during the AFK chum salmon fishery was 52,000 fish, 5% of which were wild stock origin (2,900 fish). Eastern District harvest total was 57,000 chum salmon. The purse seine fleet was allowed into the Coghill District on July 7 and 11, to harvest a buildup of poor quality fish in the WNH THA and harvested 65,000 chum salmon.

PINK SALMON

The 2016 pink salmon total run forecast for PWS was 40.9 million fish. This estimate included 19.6 million PWSAC enhanced fish, 3.8 million wild fish, and 17.4 million Valdez Fisheries Development Association (VFDA) enhanced fish. Approximately 4.7 million (24%) of PWSAC's pink salmon forecast was projected for cost recovery and broodstock with the remaining 14.9 million PWSAC fish expected to be available for CCPF harvest. Approximately 3.4 million (20%) of VFDA's pink salmon forecast were projected for cost recovery and broodstock. The remaining 14.0 million VFDA fish were expected to be available for CPF harvest. A total harvest of 2.7 million wild stock pink salmon was forecasted for CCPF harvest in PWS, leaving 1.2 million fish for escapement.

The CCPF harvest of 8.7 million pink salmon is the lowest harvest since 2002 and the second lowest in the last 20 years, or 73% below the 31.6 million CCPF preseason forecast. Total pink salmon harvest was 13.2 million fish, including 4.5 million fish for hatchery cost recovery (2.5 million for PWSAC and 2.0 million for VFDA). Pink salmon otolith contributions estimate CCPF harvest contributions of 2.2 million wild stock fish, and 6.0 million Solomon Gulch Hatchery fish and 460,000 PWSAC fish.

For the 2016 season, weather and pilot availability resulted in limited aerial survey escapement data at times during the season. When surveys were completed estimates were above anticipated escapements in most districts for most of the season. This allowed for some opportunity to target surplus wild and enhanced pink salmon. Escapements were below anticipated within the Northern District for most of the season and a conservative management approach was taken in Northern District migration corridors to ensure escapement goals were met. The area-under-the-curve estimates of pink salmon escapements are not yet available, but considering that inseason escapement indices were above anticipated counts, overall escapement was likely within or above the even-year pink salmon SEG range for all districts.

COHO SALMON

The VFDA coho salmon run was anticipated to be 101,000 fish. Total CCPF harvest of coho salmon in PWS (excluding Copper River and Bering River districts) was 29,570 fish. Otolith contributions estimate that 82% of CCPF coho salmon harvested in PWS were of wild origin.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The department would like thank Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation (PWSAC) and the Copper River/Prince William Sound Marketing Association for providing funding assistance during the 2016 season. The department's Prince William Sound Management Area program budget has been reduced close to 20% over the last two years and further cuts are anticipated. As such the participation of these groups in funding core management projects is invaluable.

Table 1.—Preliminary Area E salmon harvest, 2016.

District	Chinook	Sockeye	Coho	Pink	Chum	Total
Bering River	48	9,393	81,363	23	116	90,943
Copper River	11,628	1,137,723	364,803	35,069	5,613	1,554,836
Eastern	29	6,187	27,265	7,659,309	57,528	7,750,318
Northern	1	1,664	890	408,485	5,571	416,611
Coghill	82	67,156	12	12,373	1,898,528	1,978,151
Northwestern	3	2,916	248	168,007	3,976	175,150
Eshamy	77	655,984	331	65,758	98,489	820,639
Southwestern	15	52,412	1,233	347,355	217,461	618,476
Montague	79	2,617	4	21,308	200,445	224,453
Southeastern	1	201	124	38,145	289	38,760
Unakwik	0	338	0	0	567	905
CPF Total	11,963	1,936,591	476,273	8,755,832	2,488,583	13,669,242
Hatchery						
Solomon Gulch	0	0	1,620	2,027,724	0	2,027,724
Cannery Creek	0	0	0	527,221	0	527,221
Wally Noerenberg	0	42	0	575,221	942,202	1,519,085
Main Bay	0	0	0	0	0	0
Armin F. Koernig	0	0	0	1,383,404	0	1,383,404
Hatchery total ^a	0	42	1,620	4,513,570	942,202	5,457,434
PWS Total Harvest	11,963	1,936,633	477,893	13,269,402	3,430,785	19,126,676

^a Hatchery sales harvest for operating costs and broodstock harvest.