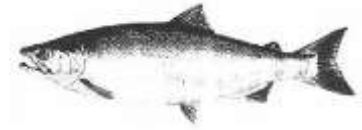


# ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES



## NEWS RELEASE

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### Prince William Sound Salmon Fishery News Release #1

**COPPER RIVER DISTRICT:** The 2017 Copper River king salmon forecast of 29,000 fish is the smallest since 1985 and continues a recent pattern of weak returns. The department will implement additional commercial salmon fishery restrictions this season to reduce commercial king salmon harvest. An expanded inside waters closure area is expected to remain in place through the entire king salmon run timing. There will only be a single 12-hour fishing period during the first week of the fishery instead of the normal two periods per week. Reduced fishing time and area is anticipated during the following weeks of the fishery. Upriver sport, personal use, and subsistence fisheries have already been closed or restricted for the season. These actions are being taken to ensure the achievement of the 24,000 or more king salmon sustainable escapement goal.

The Copper River District will open for the season at 7:00 am on Thursday, May 18 for a 12-hour commercial fishing period. Waters within the expanded Chinook salmon inside closure area will be closed during this period.

The expanded Chinook salmon inside closure area is defined as waters north of a line connecting the following points (see map below):

<i>Point</i>	<i>Latitude</i>	<i>Longitude</i>
<b>Western terminus</b>	<b>60° 23.74' N.</b>	<b>146° 05.36' W.</b>
<b>Egg Island Channel</b>	<b>60° 21.66' N.</b>	<b>145° 41.20' W.</b>
<b>West side Pete Dahl Entrance alternate</b>	<b>60° 18.47' N.</b>	<b>145° 32.04' W.</b>
<b>West end Grass Island alternate</b>	<b>60° 17.90' N.</b>	<b>145° 28.69' W.</b>
East end Grass Island	60° 15.24' N.	145° 17.89' W.
West end Kokenhenik Bar	60° 15.00' N.	145° 16.20' W.
East end Kokenhenik Bar	60° 13.65' N.	145° 09.46' W.
Western tip of Softuk Bar	60° 13.68' N.	145° 05.78' W.
<b>Southeastern tip of Softuk Bar</b>	<b>60° 13.19' N.</b>	<b>144° 58.86' W.</b>
<b>West Strawberry Reef</b>	<b>60° 13.48' N.</b>	<b>144° 53.81' W.</b>
<b>Eastern terminus</b>	<b>60° 12.64' N.</b>	<b>144° 40.21' W.</b>

The grass bank markers, defined in 5AAC 24.350(1)(A), form a closure line with the following points:

<i>Point</i>	<i>Latitude</i>	<i>Longitude</i>
Point Whitshed South	60° 26.49' N.	145° 52.86' W.
Alaganik Slough North	60° 24.65' N.	145° 36.70' W.
Pete Dahl East	60° 20.44' N.	145° 29.14' W.
West Kokenhenik	60° 14.88' N.	145° 10.01' W.
East "East Side"	60° 14.83' N.	145° 03.36' W.
Coffee Creek East	60° 14.19' N.	144° 58.01' W.
Charlie Mohr North	60° 15.15' N.	144° 56.43' W.
Martin River North	60° 15.29' N.	144° 52.52' W.
Straw Reef	60° 13.93' N.	144° 50.66' W.

Waters north of this line, within sloughs, and in Boswell Bay within the bay (5 AAC 24.350 (1)(A)) are closed to commercial and subsistence salmon fishing during all periods.

**Prior to the start of the commercial fishing season, the Copper River District subsistence fishery will open for a single 12-hour fishing period starting at 7:00 am on Monday, May 15. Waters east of 145° 33.50' W. longitude will**

**remain closed during this subsistence fishing period.** During the commercial fishing season, subsistence harvest may occur in the Copper River District concurrent in time and area with commercial fishing periods until the Copper River District is closed at the end of the season. **Additionally, waters west of 145° 33.50' W. longitude will open to subsistence fishing during commercial fishing periods unless superseded by emergency order.** 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.**

Miles Lake sonar camp is anticipated to be deployed on May 8. The banks of the river are currently covered in shore ice. The Prince William Sound Science Center's Lower Copper River Sonar Station will soon be up and running near the mouth of Martin River on the lower east side of the Copper River (60° 22.48' N., 144° 53.68' W.). The Copper River/Prince William Sound Marketing Association provided funding for this project.

**BERING RIVER DISTRICT:** Bering River District, west of a longitude line at 144° 28.20' W., will open at 7:00 am on Thursday, May 18 for a 12-hour commercial fishing period. The intent of this opening is to target Copper River sockeye salmon that are traveling through the western portion of this district. **As overlap with the Bering River sockeye salmon run timing increases, the likelihood of future early season opening in the Bering River District will diminish. Additionally, future openings of the Bering River District will be contingent on accurate reporting of harvest from within this district.**

**PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND:** On May 15 at 8:00 am, districts in PWS outside of the Chenega and the Tatitlek Subsistence Areas (5AAC 01.648) will open for subsistence harvest to the gear types specified in 5AAC 24.330(a), (b), and (c) until 2 days prior to the commercial opening of that district. Gear are restricted to 50 fathom gillnets and 50 fathom seines as described in 5AAC 01.620(b)(3). The Tatitlek and Chenega Subsistence Areas described in 5AAC 01.648 will also open to subsistence harvest at 8:00 am on May 15. Legal gear types in the Tatitlek and Chenega Subsistence Areas are 150 fathom set or drift gillnets, 50 fathom seines, and dipnets in freshwater for pink salmon. Commercial fishing districts within these subsistence areas will close to subsistence harvest 2 days prior to the commercial opening of that district, and will reopen concurrent with commercial fishing periods until that 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.**

**Copies of the updated regulation booklet, *2015-2018 Commercial Salmon Fishing Regulations for Prince William Sound*, can be found under the 'Regulations' heading at the following web address:**  
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fishregulations.commercial>

**The next scheduled salmon fisheries announcement is anticipated to be at 2:00 pm Saturday, May 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 address:  
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareapws.main> (Prince William Sound and Copper River 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.

## Copper River District May 18, 2017 Adjusted Inside Closure Area

