

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES



NEWS RELEASE

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Date Issued: Wednesday, June 28, 2017
Time: 2:00 pm

Prince William Sound Salmon Fishery News Release #17

COPPER RIVER DISTRICT: The Copper River District will open for a 24-hour commercial fishing period starting at 7:00 am on Thursday, June 29. Waters within the Chinook salmon inside closure area will be **OPEN** during this fishing period.

Cumulative sonar count through 6/27 was 507,043 fish whereas the anticipated range for this date is 415,283–650,008. The 0600 count for 6/28 was 1,482 fish. For the week ending June 24, the actual Copper River Delta survey count was 32,070 sockeye salmon versus an anticipated range 17,627 – 41,665. Period 10, June 19, contributions were estimated as 93% wild and 6% Gulkana Hatchery, and 1% Main Bay Hatchery. Preliminary harvest estimates from the 24-hour period that occurred on Monday, June 26 are 116 Chinook and 23,500 sockeye salmon with 188 deliveries reported. This compares to an anticipated harvest of 42,200 sockeye salmon for this 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. 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 will open at 7:00 am Thursday, June 29 for a 24-hour commercial fishing period. For the week ending June 24, the actual Bering River District survey count was 8,120 sockeye salmon versus an anticipated range 6,092 – 13,402.

COGHILL DISTRICT: The Esther Subdistrict, west of a longitude line at 147° 55.20' W., and north of a latitude line at 60° 46.00' N., and east of a longitude line at 148° 8.30' W., **excluding the WNH SHA**, will open to commercial drift gillnet harvest for a 14-hour fishing period starting at 8:00 am on Thursday, June 29. Waters of the Granite Bay Subdistrict within Esther Pass east of a longitude line at 148° 02.94' W., waters of the WNH THA, and waters of Esther Bay north of a latitude line at 60° 48.17' N., will open to commercial drift gillnet harvest for 14-hour periods starting at 8:00 am daily on Thursday, June 29, Friday, June 30, and Saturday, July 1. To date, 3,210 sockeye salmon have passed the Coghill River weir and 2,500 sockeye salmon are estimated below the weir versus an anticipated range of 2,489–7,467 fish. Harvest contribution estimates from the fishing period starting June 22 were 8% wild and 92% hatchery chum salmon, and 7% wild and 93% hatchery sockeye salmon. Preliminary harvest estimates from the 48-hour period that started on Monday, June 26 are not yet available.

ESHAMY DISTRICT: The Eshamy District, excluding the Main Bay Subdistrict, will open to commercial gillnet harvest for a 6-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Thursday, June 29. The Main Bay Subdistrict, excluding waters of the AGZ inside a line of buoys in front of the barrier seine, will open to commercial gillnet harvest for a 24-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Thursday, June 29. **The reduced AGZ will open to DRIFT GILLNET permit holders only during this fishing period.** Harvest contribution estimates from the fishing period starting June 22 were 5% wild and 95% hatchery sockeye salmon. Preliminary harvest estimates from the 24-hour period that started on Monday, June 26 are 76,300 sockeye and 4,400 chum salmon with 321 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 Thursday, June 29.

SEINE FISHERIES: VFDA made five test sets near Entrance Point and Potato Point on Tuesday, June 27, with an average catch of 125 pink salmon per set. Test fishing is expected to continue on Wednesday, June 28.

EASTERN DISTRICT: Waters of the Eastern District, south of **60°54.50' N.**, will open to commercial fishing for 12 hours on Thursday, June 29 beginning at 8:00 am. **All anadromous stream closures within the Eastern District remain in effect until further notice. All waters of Galena Bay will be closed to commercial fishing during this period. Waters inside of all applicable Eastern District Salmon Harvest Task Force (SHTF) markers will be closed for this period to ensure early season escapement. Waters inside all applicable SHTF markers are closed for this period include the following areas:**

- (1) Sheep Bay: north of a line from a shore marker at approximately 60°41.13' N. lat., 145°58.87' W. long. to a shore marker at approximately 60°40.46' N. lat., 145°58.01' W. long.;
- (2) Beartrap Bay: north of a line from a shore marker at approximately 60°45.13' N. lat., 146°06.12' W. long. to a shore marker at approximately 60°44.51' N. lat., 146°04.57' W. long.; **this includes all waters of Port Gravina and Beartrap Bay inside of this line;**
- (3) Olsen Bay: north of a line from a shore marker at approximately 60°43.46' N. lat., 146°10.14' W. long. to a shore marker at approximately 60°43.21' N. lat., 146°13.97' W. long.;
- (4) St. Matthews Bay: north of a line from a shore marker at approximately 60°43.36' N. lat., 146°19.07' W. long. to a shore maker at approximately 60°43.61' N. lat., 146°21.17' W. long.;
- (5) Irish Cove: south of a line from a shore marker at approximately 60°46.73' N. lat., 146°26.62' W. long. to a shore marker at approximately 60°46.27' N. lat., 146°27.12' W. long.;
- (6) Landlocked Bay: waters north of 60°50.76' N. lat.;
- (7) Port Fidalgo Subdistrict: waters east of 146°24.12' W. long.

It is anticipated that early season fishing opportunities will be limited in frequency, with time and area for subsequent openers being dependent upon escapement, harvest and effort.

Anadromous stream and priority stream maps and lists have been updated for 2017 and are available in the Cordova ADF&G office, and will be provided to area processors, VFDA and PWSAC for distribution to fishery participants.

Electronic copies of SHTF Marker coordinates, anadromous stream, and priority stream lists and associated maps are available at the following web address under the *Prince William Sound Stream Information* heading:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareapws.salmon#maps>

SOUTHEASTERN DISTRICT: Waters of the Southeastern District, north of **60°17.00' N.**, will open to commercial fishing for 12 hours on Thursday, June 29 beginning at 8:00 am. **All anadromous stream closures within the Southeastern District remain in effect until further notice.**

MONTAGUE DISTRICT: ; The Port Chalmers Subdistrict, **north of 60°12.56' N. and east a line from 60° 12.56'N., 147° 20.25'W. to 60° 20.00'N., 147° 14.30'W.,** will open to seine fishing for 12 hours beginning at 8:00 am on Thursday, June 29, with additional 12-hour period anticipated to begin at 8:00 am on Saturday, July 1. Due to increasing harvest of salmon destined for other areas of Prince William Sound within the Port Chalmers Subdistrict, shorter duration periods are necessary to focus efforts on enhanced chum salmon returning to Port Chalmers. **Regulatory closed waters and anadromous stream closures within the Port Chalmers Subdistrict will not be in effect until further notice.** Preliminary harvest estimates from the 48-hour period that ended on Saturday, June 24 are 78,134 chum with 75 deliveries reported. Preliminary contribution reports from the 48-hour period that ended on Saturday, June 24 indicate that chum salmon harvest was 46% WNH, 46% PC, 3% AFK and 5% wild, and sockeye salmon harvest was 74% MBH and 26% wild.

SOUTHWESTERN DISTRICT: The AFK Hatchery THA and SHA will open for 8 hours beginning at 8:00 am on Thursday, June 29, with additional 8-hour periods anticipated to begin at 8:00 am on Saturday, July 1 and Monday, July 3. Due to increasing sockeye salmon harvest, shorter duration periods are necessary to focus efforts on enhanced chum salmon. **Anadromous stream closures within the AFK Hatchery THA and SHA will not be in effect until further notice.** Preliminary harvest estimates from the 8-hour period that ended on Monday, June 26 are 27,184 chum and 913 sockeye with 35 deliveries reported. Preliminary contribution reports from the June 24 fishing period indicate that sockeye salmon harvest was 93% MBH and 7% wild.

The next scheduled salmon fisheries announcement is anticipated to be at 2:00 pm Saturday, July 1.

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 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." (16 U.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.

Esther and Granite Bay Subdistrict Adjusted Open Area for June 28 announcement.

