

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



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2018 PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND SALMON FISHERY INFORMATION

General Information

This outlook is provided to assist the commercial salmon industry in planning for the 2018 season in the Prince William Sound (PWS) Management Area (Area E). Forecasts for commercial common property fishery (CCPF) harvests by species are summarized in Table 1 with detailed Area E forecasts on ADF&G's web site:

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

Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation (PWSAC) hatchery forecasts are available on the PWSAC web site:

<http://pwsac.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/2018PWSACForecast-1.pdf>

Valdez Fisheries Development Association (VFDA) hatchery forecasts can be found on the VFDA web site:

<https://www.valdezfisheries.org/forecasted-returns/>

Management of PWS commercial salmon fisheries occurs from the Cordova area office. As in past years, fishery announcements from the Cordova ADF&G office will routinely occur at 2:00 p.m. Announcement recordings will be available for gillnet fisheries at 907-424-7535 and seine fisheries at 907-424-7345. Additionally, announcement recordings are available in Anchorage at 907-267-2843. Daily announcements are compiled and can be found on the ADF&G web site at:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.main>

The first announcement concerning the Copper River District will be issued between May 1 and May 8.

Gillnet Fishery

Copper River District

The 2018 inriver goal past the Miles Lake sonar is 644,000–1.03 million salmon. The upper Copper River sustainable escapement goal (SEG) is 360,000–750,000 wild sockeye salmon, and the Copper River delta SEG is 55,000–130,000 sockeye salmon. The department’s goal is to maintain the long-term averages of 450,000 sockeye salmon in the upper Copper River spawning escapement and 84,500 sockeye salmon in the Copper River Delta spawning escapement. The components of the inriver goal are as follows:

Spawning escapement	360,000– 750,000 sockeye
Other salmon	17,500 salmon
Subsistence	77,000 salmon
Personal use harvest	130,500 salmon
Sport fishery	15,000 salmon
Gulkana broodstock	20,000 sockeye
Gulkana Hatchery surplus	24,300 sockeye
Total	644,000–1.03 million

The standard commercial fishing schedule is two evenly-spaced fishing periods per week with the first period each week starting on Mondays at 7:00 a.m. Depending on fishing effort, harvest, and escapement trends on the Copper River Delta and at Miles Lake sonar station, a decision on a possible second weekly fishing period will be made by 2:00 p.m. on Wednesdays. The second period will typically begin at 7:00 a.m. on Thursday.

The first commercial fishing period of the season in the Copper River District is anticipated to occur during the week of May 13. The 2018 CCPF harvest projections for the Copper River District are 13,000 Chinook, 942,000 sockeye, and 226,000 coho salmon (Table 1). The 2018 sockeye salmon harvest forecast is 25.2% below the 10-year (2008–2017) average of 1.26 million fish, and the frequency and duration of fishing periods may be lessened to match sockeye salmon run entry. Based on forecasted low Chinook salmon abundance, the ‘inside closure area’, as defined in 5AAC 24.350(1)(B), will likely be closed during fishing periods more than required in regulation; this area may be expanded at the start of the season to include waters inside the barrier islands east of Coffee Creek West (60° 14.13’ N. lat., 144° 58.31’ W. long.).

The initial management strategy will be based on projected weekly sockeye and Chinook salmon harvests for the Copper River District and additional assessments of river conditions, fishing effort, harvest location, and consistency of harvest. Once the Miles Lake sonar is deployed, the inriver goal becomes one of the primary factors in management decisions. By late June, aerial estimates of Copper River Delta sockeye salmon escapement are also considered.

Beginning in early to mid-August when coho salmon harvest becomes predominant, the Copper and Bering River districts will be managed for coho salmon. The standard management strategy for coho salmon is one or two 24-hour periods per week depending on escapement and harvest levels.

Individuals planning to participate in subsistence fishing activities in Copper River District are required to obtain a subsistence permit through the Cordova ADF&G office. **Permits will be available during normal business hours Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00**

p.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. ADF&G staff will not be available to issue permits before hours, after hours, on state holidays, or on weekends.

Bering River District

The recent 10-year average CCPF harvests for the Bering River District are 3,000 sockeye and 59,000 coho salmon. The western portion of the Bering River District is expected to open concurrent with the Copper River District to alleviate enforcement concerns in the line fishery along the district boundary. A Bering River District opening targeting Bering River sockeye salmon is expected only after sockeye salmon escapement is consistently above the minimum weekly escapement index necessary to achieve the SEG. Beginning in early August, the Bering River District will be managed for coho salmon and management strategies will be similar to those used for Copper River District.

Eshamy District

PWSAC's Main Bay Hatchery forecast is 763,000 sockeye salmon. The management strategy in 2018 will be to provide two periods per week in the hatchery subdistrict. Short duration periods are anticipated in the Crafton Island Subdistrict based on the recent trend in Coghill River wild sockeye salmon escapement. Eshamy District is expected to open for the 2018 season on May 31.

Eshamy River escapement will not be assessed in 2018 and no forecast was produced this year. Beginning in early to mid-July, fishing time and area in Crafton Island Subdistrict will be driven by escapement of wild pink and sockeye salmon in Eshamy District, and the strength of wild pink and chum salmon runs to the Northwestern, Coghill, and Northern districts.

Coghill District

The 2018 Coghill Lake sockeye salmon total run forecast is 183,000 fish with an SEG of 20,000–60,000 fish. The chum salmon run to Wally Noerenberg Hatchery (WNH) is forecast to be 3.12 million fish. PWSAC requires 656,000 (21%) chum salmon for cost recovery and broodstock, leaving 2.46 million (79%) for the CCPF. Coghill District is expected to open for the 2018 season on May 31.

Granite Bay Subdistrict will be managed to achieve PWSAC cost recovery and broodstock goals when management of Esther and Perry Island subdistricts is not adequately achieving these goals.

Area restrictions may be implemented by emergency order for the conservation of Coghill Lake sockeye salmon and Port Wells wild stock chum and pink salmon. The management strategy in 2018 will be to provide two periods per week. Based on the recent trend in Coghill River wild sockeye salmon escapement, short duration periods are anticipated in areas outside the WNH terminal area. If sockeye salmon escapement is within the anticipated range and sockeye salmon harvest rates in Coghill District indicate a strong run, the Port Wells area will be regularly opened north to the markers near Coghill Lagoon. If the Coghill River weir counts exceed the escapement goal, fishing area may be expanded to the mouth of Coghill River. If the drift gillnet fleet does not appear to be able to harvest available surplus Coghill Lake sockeye salmon, the purse seine fleet may be allowed to fish north of 61° latitude in the Coghill District.

WNH coho salmon are present in the Coghill District fishery from early August through late September. The 2018 run to WNH is projected to be 87,000 coho salmon. PWSAC will require 2,700 fish for broodstock with all remaining fish available to the CCPF.

Unakwik District

The 2018 wild stock sockeye salmon commercial harvest in Unakwik Inlet is forecast at 2,100 fish. During the sockeye salmon run to Miners and Cowpen lakes, the management strategy will be to provide two periods per week. This schedule is expected to begin in early June and run concurrently with openings in the Coghill District. Unakwik District is expected to open for the 2018 season on June 14.

Purse Seine Fishery

The 2018 combined pink salmon forecast for PWS is 34.35 million fish, of which 28.31 million will be available for CCPF harvest. This pink salmon forecast includes 16.93 million Valdez Fisheries Development Association (VFDA) fish, 15.40 million PWSAC hatchery fish, and a CCPF forecast of 2.02 million wild fish. Approximately 3.03 million (18%) of the projected 16.93 million pink salmon run to VFDA's Solomon Gulch Hatchery will be needed for cost recovery and broodstock leaving 13.90 million for CCPF. Approximately 3.01 million (20%) of the projected 15.40 million pink salmon run to the PWSAC hatcheries will be needed for cost recovery and broodstock. The remaining 12.39 million PWSAC pink salmon will be available for common property harvest. The 2018 PWS wild pink salmon CCPF forecast is 2.02 million. The department will manage for each district's escapement aerial index goal for a cumulative SEG of 575,000–992,000.

The 2018 chum salmon forecast total run in PWS is 3.45 million fish. The majority, 3.06 million fish (89%), are from PWSAC hatchery production, with 450,000 fish returning to the Armin F. Koernig hatchery (AFK) and 150,000 fish returning to Port Chalmers Subdistrict. The 2018 PWS wild chum salmon CCPF forecast is 391,000 fish. The department will manage for each district's escapement goal, aiming for each district's long-term average, for a combined total of 200,000 fish.

The PWS purse seine fishery will begin on Friday, June 1 targeting the enhanced chum salmon run to the AFK hatchery and Port Chalmers remote release site. At the AFK hatchery, a regular schedule of two fishing periods per week is anticipated at the start of the season. A reduced schedule will be implemented when necessary to limit the harvest of salmon bound for other areas of PWS. Starting on Thursday, June 15 daily fishing periods will be used to allow for more frequent monitoring of purse seine harvests.

In the Port Chalmers Subdistrict, a regular schedule of two fishing periods per week is planned at the start of the season. A reduced schedule will be implemented when necessary to limit the harvest of salmon bound for other areas of PWS. Areas open to the Port Chalmers CCPF will close in late July, after which purse seine fishing periods will be opened based on the strength of wild pink salmon stocks. Anadromous stream closures and regulatory closed waters within the open area at AFK and Port Chalmers will be suspended during June and July to facilitate the harvest of enhanced chum salmon.

The general waters of the eight purse seine districts will be managed based on the strength of wild stocks. Hatchery subdistricts will be managed based on the strength of both wild and enhanced stocks. If the 2018 wild stock CCPF pink salmon forecast is realized, it would be 21% below the 10-year average harvest. The below average wild stock CCPF pink salmon forecast for 2018 is a result of the weak 2016 parent year. Pink and chum salmon aerial escapement trends and fishery

performance data will be evaluated inseason and compared to average historical performance to determine the frequency and duration of openings.

The department has used yellow salmon harvest task force (SHTF) markers in the past to close terminal wild stock areas, both for escapement and quality concerns. The coordinates for these markers are available to the public at the Cordova ADF&G office, online, and are included in an annual fishery news release.

Valdez Arm, Valdez Narrows, and Port Valdez will be managed for VFDA's cost recovery and broodstock needs. Openings in Valdez Arm and Port Valdez designed to target VFDA pink salmon will be based on the strength of the enhanced run and VFDA's progress towards achieving the pink salmon cost recovery goal. CCPF openings targeting VFDA fish generally start during the first week of July with daily 14-hour periods (6 a.m. to 8 p.m.). In the remainder of the Eastern District, fishing periods will be based on wild stock escapements. Port Valdez will be closed to the CCPF north of a line from Entrance Point to Potato Point beginning on August 15. The Valdez Narrows Subdistrict will open on September 4 to target surplus VFDA coho salmon. The VFDA enhanced coho salmon forecast is 85,000 fish with a projected CCPF harvest of 41,000 fish.

The AFK, Cannery Creek Hatchery (CCH), and WNH pink salmon runs will be managed collectively to achieve PWSAC's cost recovery and broodstock goals. Prior to run entry sustaining consistent hatchery cost recovery harvest, the department may open the WNH, CCH, and AFK Hatchery THAs and SHAs to CCPF harvest to maintain pink salmon quality. Once PWSAC initiates cost recovery, they intend to complete at least 70–80% of their pink salmon cost recovery harvest goal prior to recommending an opening of the CCPF in the hatchery subdistricts. ADF&G will work closely with PWSAC to achieve the pink salmon cost recovery goal as rapidly as possible to allow for an orderly and consistent CCPF. The department evaluates late pink salmon run progress based on cost recovery and CCPF harvest rates, broodstock collections, sex ratios, stock composition estimates, and wild stock escapement data.

Table 1.—ADF&G, PWSAC, and VFDA commercial common property harvest projections for the 2018 salmon fishery in Prince William Sound and Copper/Bering River areas.

PINK SALMON - HARVEST ESTIMATE (Thousands)	
Wild Stocks	2,020
Hatchery Stocks ^a	
Solomon Gulch	13,900
Armin F. Koernig	4,262
Wally Noerenberg	3,712
Cannery Creek	4,420
Wild & Hatchery	28,314
CHUM SALMON - HARVEST ESTIMATE (Thousands)	
Wild Stocks	391
Hatchery Stocks ^a	
Wally Noerenberg	2,464
Armin F. Koernig	450
Port Chalmers	150
Wild & Hatchery	3,455
COHO SALMON - HARVEST ESTIMATE (Thousands)	
PWS Wild Stocks	No Forecast
Copper River	226
Bering River	59
Hatchery Stocks ^a	
Solomon Gulch	40
Wally Noerenberg	84
Wild & Hatchery	408
SOCKEYE SALMON - HARVEST ESTIMATE (Thousands)	
Copper River	942
Bering River	3
Coghill Lake	153
PWS Remainder	13
PWS Hatchery Stocks ^a	
Main Bay	753
Wild & Hatchery	1,873
CHINOOK SALMON - HARVEST ESTIMATE (Thousands)	
Wild Stocks	
Copper River	13

^a Potential hatchery contributions to the commercial common property harvest are based on the forecast of total hatchery runs minus preseason estimates of cost recovery and broodstock harvest that will be required by hatchery operators.