

# ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

## DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES



### NEWS RELEASE

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### Prince William Sound Salmon Fishery News Release #12

**COPPER RIVER DISTRICT:** The Copper River District will remain closed to commercial fishing. Fishermen are advised that the Copper River commercial fishery may open on short notice should indices of sockeye salmon abundance support fishing. A minimum of 17 hours advance notice of a fishery opening is anticipated. **The Copper River District will open to subsistence fishing at 7:00 am on Monday, June 25 for a 12-hour fishing period.** Waters within the Chinook salmon expanded inside closure area will be **OPEN** during this subsistence fishing period. **Additionally, waters of the Copper River District, including the Chinook salmon expanded inside closure area, will open to subsistence fishing from 6:00 am to 10:00 pm on all Saturdays between June 16 and October 31.**

Due to low inriver passage numbers at the Miles Lake sonar, Upper Copper River sockeye salmon personal use and sport fisheries were closed indefinitely effective 12:01 am, Monday, June 18. Starting Monday, June 25 at 12:01 am the Glennallen Subdistrict state subsistence fishery will close and reopen for weekly 48-hour fishing periods from 12:00 pm Friday to 12:00 pm Sunday.

To date, the sonar count is the 5th lowest on record (1978-2017). Cumulative commercial harvest this year is the 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest harvest to-date in the last 50 years. Cumulative sonar count through June 21 is 250,506 fish whereas a minimum of 360,889 fish are projected by this date. The 0600 count for June 22 is 1,962 fish. Water levels on the Copper River are well above historical average currently and passage rates at the sonar will likely be lower than at average water levels. For the week ending June 16, the actual Copper River Delta survey count was 11,110 sockeye salmon versus an anticipated range 14,273 – 33,736.

**BERING RIVER DISTRICT:** The Bering River District will remain closed to commercial fishing.

**PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND GILLET FISHERIES:** Gillnet depth restrictions, as specified in 5 AAC 24.331(b)(6), WILL NOT BE IN EFFECT in the Coghill, Eshamy, and Unakwik District fisheries starting 8:00 am, Monday, June 25.

**COGHILL DISTRICT:** Waters of the Esther and Granite Bay subdistricts and WNH THA, excluding waters of the WNH SHA, will open to commercial drift gillnet harvest for a 24-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Monday, June 25. As of June 16, 1,900 sockeye salmon had passed the Coghill River weir. Currently the weir is not operational due to high water. Preliminary chum salmon contributions from the Coghill District 36-hour period that began on Monday, June 18 were 97% WNH, 2% AFK, and 1% wild fish. Preliminary harvest estimates from the 24-hour period that started on Thursday, June 21 are not yet available.

**ESHAMY DISTRICT:** The Eshamy District, 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 Monday, June 25. **The AGZ will open to DRIFT GILLNET permit holders only during this fishing period.** Preliminary harvest estimates from the 24-hour period that started on Thursday, June 21 are not yet available.

**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 Monday, June 25.

**SEINE FISHERIES:** VFDA made four test sets in Port Valdez on Wednesday, June 20, with a total catch of one pink salmon. Test fishing is expected to continue Friday, June 22.

The first aerial survey of portions of the Eastern District was conducted on Wednesday, June 20. No pink or chum salmon were observed during this survey, which is expected for the date. The next aerial survey for the Eastern District is scheduled for Tuesday, June 26.

**SOUTHWESTERN DISTRICT:** The AFK Hatchery THA and SHA will open to purse seine fishing for a 12-hour period at 8:00 am on Monday, June 25. Due to increasing sockeye salmon harvest, shorter duration periods are necessary to focus efforts on enhanced chum salmon returning to AFK. A regular schedule of three fishing periods per week (Monday, Thursday, and Saturday) is anticipated to remain in effect until further notice. **Anadromous stream closures within the AFK Hatchery THA and SHA will not be in effect until further notice.** Preliminary contribution reports from the Monday, June 18 fishing period indicate that chum salmon harvest was 81% AFK, 15% WNH, 3% wild and 1% PC. Preliminary contribution reports from the Monday, June 18 fishing period indicate that sockeye salmon harvest was 89% MBH and 11% wild.

**MONTAGUE DISTRICT:** The Port Chalmers Subdistrict, **north of 60°12.56' N. lat. 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 purse seine fishing for a 36-hour period at 8:00 am on Monday, June 25. A regular schedule of two fishing periods per week is anticipated to remain in effect until further notice. **Regulatory closed waters and anadromous stream closures within the Port Chalmers Subdistrict will not be in effect until further notice.**

**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 12:30 pm Wednesday, June 27.**

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.