

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES



NEWS RELEASE

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Prince William Sound Salmon Fishery News Release #13

PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND GILNET 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, excluding waters of the Esther Subdistrict west of 148° 00.00' W. longitude and waters of the WNH THA and SHA, will remain open to commercial drift gillnet harvest for an additional 12 hours starting at 8:00 am on Tuesday, June 26. As of June 16, 1,900 sockeye salmon had passed the Coghill River weir. Currently the weir is not operational due to high water and damage to weir components. Preliminary harvest estimates from the 24-hour period that started on Thursday, June 21 were 137,000 chum and 6,500 sockeye salmon with 649 deliveries reported.

ESHAMY DISTRICT: The Eshamy District, excluding waters of the AGZ inside a line of buoys in front of the barrier seine, will remain open to commercial gillnet harvest for an additional 12 hours starting at 8:00 am on Tuesday, June 26. **The AGZ will remain 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 were 109,000 sockeye and 15,500 chum salmon with 545 deliveries reported.

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 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.” (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.