

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES



NEWS RELEASE

*Sam Cotten, Commissioner
Scott Kelley, Director*



Contact:
Jeremy Botz, Gillnet Area Management Biologist
Charles Russell, Seine Area Management Biologist
Stacy Vega, Assistant Area Management/Research Biologist
Phone: (907) 424-3212 Fax: (907) 424-3235

Prince William Sound Area Office
401 Railroad Avenue, PO Box 669
Cordova, AK 99574-0669
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Prince William Sound Salmon Fishery News Release #20

COPPER RIVER DISTRICT: The Copper River District will open at 7:00 am on Monday, July 9 for a 12-hour commercial fishing period. The 0600 count for July 7 is 3,216 fish. For the week ending July 7, the actual Copper River Delta survey count was 42,990 sockeye salmon versus an anticipated range 30,055 – 71,040. Run entry into Delta index systems is low considering the absence of regular commercial fishing effort in the Copper River District. Cumulative sonar count through July 6 is 492,625 fish whereas a minimum of 475,179 fish are projected by this date. Additional fishing opportunity will need to be supported by ongoing assessment of run entry for both upriver and delta stocks.

BERING RIVER DISTRICT: The Bering River District will remain closed. For the week ending July 7, the actual Bering River Delta survey count was 11,400 sockeye salmon versus an anticipated range 11,051 – 24,313.

COGHILL DISTRICT: Waters of the Coghill District, excluding waters of the Esther Subdistrict and WNH SHA and THA, will open to commercial drift gillnet harvest for a 36-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Monday, July 9. Waters of College Fiord, north of the latitude 61°00.20' N, will open to commercial drift gillnet harvest for a 60-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Monday, July 9. Effective from 8:00 am, Monday, July 9 to 8:00 pm, Wednesday, July 11, regulatory closed waters pertaining to the Coghill River, as specified in 5 AAC 24.350(6)(B)), will not be in effect. Commercial fishing will not be permitted within the bed or channel of the Coghill River at any stage of the tide. Beginning Sunday, June 17, Coghill weir was inoperable due to high water and structural damage. The weir was reinstalled and fish-tight on Saturday, June 30. Passage to date is 27,514 sockeye salmon versus an anticipated range of 9,631–28,894 fish. Preliminary chum salmon contributions from the Coghill District 36-hour period that began on Monday, July 2 were 95% WNH, 3% PC, 1% AFK, and 1% wild fish. Preliminary sockeye salmon contributions from the Coghill District 36-hour period that began on Monday, July 2 were 49% MBH and 51% wild fish. Harvest estimates from the 84-hour period that started on Thursday, July 5 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 12-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Monday, July 9. Waters of the Main Bay Subdistrict will open to commercial gillnet harvest for a 36-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Monday, July 9. **The AGZ will open to DRIFT GILLNET permit holders only during this fishing period.** As a reminder, anadromous stream closures in the Main Bay Subdistrict are in affect as of July 8. Preliminary sockeye salmon contributions from the Eshamy District 36-hour period that began on Monday, July 2 were 89% MBH and 11% wild fish. Harvest estimates from the 36-hour period that started on Monday, July 2 are 34,300 sockeye and 3,100 chum salmon with 236 deliveries reported.

UNAKWIK DISTRICT: The Unakwik District will open to commercial drift gillnet and purse seine harvest for a 36-hour fishing period beginning at 8:00 am on Monday, July 9.

SEINE FISHERIES: A fishing opportunity targeting VFDA pink salmon is anticipated for Monday, July 9 or Tuesday, July 10 in eastern Prince William Sound with an announcement by 2:00 pm on Sunday, July 8.

VFDA began its cost recovery sales program on Monday, July 2 and has collected approximately 31.7% of the assigned pink salmon revenue goal through July 6. VFDA reports that cost recovery pink salmon harvest in Port Valdez on Friday, July 6 resulted in an average weight of 3.5 pounds per fish and 12% female. VFDA cost recovery is continuing today.

The next aerial survey for the Eastern and Northern districts is scheduled for Saturday, July 7.

SOUTHWESTERN DISTRICT: The AFK Hatchery THA and SHA will open to purse seine fishing for a 36-hour period at 8:00 am on Monday, July 9. A regular schedule of two fishing periods per week is anticipated to remain in effect until further notice. Preliminary harvest estimates from the 36-hour period that started on Thursday, July 5 are 18,300 chum salmon with 25 deliveries reported. **Anadromous stream closures within the AFK Hatchery THA and SHA will not be in effect until further notice.**

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, July 9. A regular schedule of two fishing periods per week is anticipated to remain in effect until further notice. Preliminary harvest estimates from the 36-hour period that started on Thursday, July 5 are 24,100 chum salmon with 65 deliveries reported. **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 seine fisheries announcement is anticipated to be at 2:00 pm Sunday, July 8.

The next scheduled salmon fisheries announcement is anticipated to be at 12:30 pm Wednesday, July 11.

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.