

# ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES



## NEWS RELEASE

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### Prince William Sound Salmon Fishery News Release #37

**COPPER RIVER DISTRICT:** The Copper River District will remain closed to commercial fishing. The Copper River District will open to subsistence fishing from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm on Mondays and Thursdays through August 16. Additionally, waters of the Copper River District will open to subsistence fishing from 6:00 am to 10:00 pm on all Saturdays between June 16 and October 31.

For the week ending July 28, the Copper River Delta survey count was 25,620 sockeye salmon versus a projected range of 32,059–75,775. This week's Copper River Delta aerial survey was flown under poor observational conditions in some index systems. Peak counts from delta index systems to date show 53,540 sockeye salmon versus and escapement goal range of 55,000–130,000 fish. Additional fishing opportunity will need to be supported by ongoing assessment of run entry for both Copper River and Copper River Delta stocks.

Today is the final day of data collection at the Miles Lake sonar project. Cumulative sonar count through July 27 is 699,603. The 0600 count for July 28 is 570 fish.

**BERING RIVER DISTRICT:** The Bering River District will remain closed. For the week ending July 28, the Bering River Delta survey count was 5,100 sockeye salmon versus a projected range of 8,409–18,499. Bering Lake observational conditions were poor in areas of expected fish concentration.

**ESHAMY DISTRICT:** The Eshamy District will open to commercial gillnet harvest for a 24-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Monday, July 30. **The AGZ will open to DRIFT GILLNET permit holders only during this period.** As a reminder, anadromous stream closures in the Main Bay Subdistrict are in effect as of July 8. Harvest estimates from the 24-hour period that began on Thursday, July 26 are 1,200 sockeye and 900 pink salmon with 25 deliveries reported.

**SEINE FISHERIES:** Aerial surveys of the Eastern District were flown on July 27 and indicated that pink salmon counts in bays and stream mouths were average for the date. **Stream counts within the Eastern District are well below the average for the date.** Aerial surveys of all districts are ongoing to further assess the strength of wild stock returns throughout PWS. Additional fishing opportunities will be dependent on aerial survey assessments and continued run entry of wild stocks.

An estimated 1.37 million pink salmon were harvested in PWS on Thursday, July 26 with 417 deliveries reported. The cumulative PWS pink salmon harvest through July 26 is estimated at 9.6 million CPF, 1.1 million VFDA cost recovery fish, and 125,000 PWSAC cost recovery fish, for a total of 10.7 million pink salmon. The 5-year even-year average (2008–2016) cumulative PWS pink salmon harvest (cost recovery and CPF fish) through July 27 is 14 million fish.

VFDA surveyed Port Valdez on July 27 and currently estimates there are approximately 250,000 pink salmon holding within the SHA. VFDA needs approximately 410,000 pink salmon for broodstock and is recommending a closure within Port Valdez in order to continue to build broodstock within the SHA.

PWSAC began its cost recovery sales program on Wednesday, July 25 at WNH and AFK, and has collected approximately 10% of the assigned pink salmon revenue goal through July 27. PWSAC reports cost recovery is continuing today at AFK and WNH. PWSAC reports that cost recovery pink salmon harvested at WNH on Friday, July 27 resulted in 16% female.

**The next scheduled seine fisheries announcement is scheduled for 2:00 pm Monday, July 30.**

**The next scheduled salmon fisheries announcement is scheduled for 2:00 pm Wednesday, August 1.**

**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>

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.