

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES



NEWS RELEASE

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Prince William Sound Salmon Fishery News Release #41

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 August 4, the Copper River Delta survey count was 26,945 sockeye salmon versus a projected range of 24,976–59,034. This aerial survey was flown under poor observational conditions in some index systems. Peak counts from delta index systems to date show 58,020 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.

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, August 6. **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, August 2 is not yet available.

SEINE FISHERIES: This announcement will detail PWS purse seine fishing periods commencing on Saturday, August 4. VFDA began egg takes on July 30 and has completed approximately 17% of their pink salmon egg-take goal. VFDA surveyed Port Valdez on August 3 and currently estimates there are 350,000 pink salmon holding within the SHA.

PWSAC began its cost recovery sales program on Wednesday, July 25, and has collected approximately 71% of the assigned pink salmon revenue goal through August 2, comprised of 375,000 AFK fish, 149,000 CCH fish, and 683,000 WNH fish. PWSAC reports increased pink salmon run entry at all three hatcheries. The most recent cost recovery fisheries had a 3.6 pound average weight and 28% female at WNH.

All regulatory closed waters and all anadromous stream closures are in effect unless otherwise stated. Additionally, fishermen are prohibited from driving or attempting to drive salmon from closed waters as stated in 5AAC 39.190.

EASTERN DISTRICT: Waters of the Eastern District will open to commercial purse seine fishing for a 14-hour period, from 6:00 am until 8:00 pm, on Saturday, August 4. **Waters of Port Valdez north of a line from Entrance Point to Potato Point will be closed to commercial fishing during this period.**

NORTHERN DISTRICT: Waters of the Cannery Creek Subdistrict, CCH SHA, and THA, will open to commercial purse seine fishing for a 14-hour fishing period, from 6:00 am until 8:00 pm, on Saturday, August 4. **Anadromous stream closures within the CCH THA and SHA will not be in effect until further notice.**

Waters inside of the following Northern District Salmon Harvest Task Force (SHTF) markers are closed to commercial fishing during this period:

- (1) **Siwash Bay:** west of a line from a shore marker at approximately 60°58.26' N. lat., 147°37.32' W. long. to a shore marker at approximately 60°56.96' N. lat., 147°36.02' W. long.;
- (2) **Jonah Bay:** west of a line from a shore marker at approximately 61°01.17' N. lat., 147°35.07' W. long. to a shore marker at approximately 61°00.40' N. lat., 147°35.93' W. long.;

COGHILL DISTRICT: Waters of the Coghill District, **excluding the WNH SHA and THA**, will open to **commercial drift gillnet and purse seine** fishing for a 14-hour period, from 6:00 am until 8:00 pm, on Saturday, August 4.

NORTHWESTERN DISTRICT: Waters of the Northwestern District will open to commercial purse seine fishing for a 14-hour fishing period, from 6:00 am until 8:00 pm, on Saturday, August 4.

Waters inside of the following Northwestern District Salmon Harvest Task Force (SHTF) markers are closed to commercial fishing during this period:

- (1) **Culross Pass:** within the passage south of a line from a shore marker at approximately 60°45.47' N. lat., 148°12.63' W. long. to a shore marker at approximately 60°45.82' N. lat., 148°13.57' W. long. and north of a line from a shore marker at approximately 60°37.48' N. lat., 148°10.12' W. long. to a shore marker at approximately 60°37.16' N. lat., 148°11.42' W. long.;
- (2) **Port Nellie Juan:** south and west of a line from a shore marker at approximately 60°30.36' N. lat., 148°15.03' W. long. to a shore marker at approximately 60°32.36' N. lat., 148°19.42' W. long.

SOUTHEASTERN DISTRICT: Waters of the Southeastern District will open to commercial purse seine fishing for a 14-hour period, from 6:00 am until 8:00 pm, on Saturday, August 4.

SOUTHWESTERN DISTRICT: Waters of the Point Elrington and San Juan subdistricts **excluding the AFK SHA and THA**, will open to purse seine fishing for a 14-hour period, from 6:00 am until 8:00 pm, on Saturday, August 4. **The Southwestern District Priority Stream list will be in effect within waters of Point Elrington and San Juan subdistricts.**

The next seine fisheries announcement is scheduled for 2:00 pm Sunday, August 5.

The next salmon fisheries announcement is scheduled for 2:00 pm Wednesday, August 8.

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 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.