

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES



NEWS RELEASE

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Prince William Sound Salmon Fishery News Release #66

COPPER RIVER DISTRICT: The Copper River District will open at 7:00 am on Monday, September 10 for a 24-hour commercial fishing period. For the week ending September 8, the Copper River Delta survey count was 40,700 coho salmon versus a projected range of 21,447–44,904. Preliminary harvest estimates from the 12-hour period that began on Thursday, September 6 are 21,000 coho salmon with 248 deliveries reported.

During the commercial fishing season, subsistence harvest may occur in the Copper River District concurrent in time and area with commercial fishing periods until the Copper River District is closed at the end of the season. 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.

BERING RIVER DISTRICT: The Bering River District will open at 7:00 am on Monday, September 10 for a 24-hour commercial fishing period. An aerial survey of the Bering River District is scheduled for this afternoon. For the week ending September 1, the Bering River District survey count was 14,350 coho salmon versus a projected range of 8,732–22,165. Preliminary harvest estimates from the 12-hour period that began on Thursday, September 6 are 13,400 coho salmon with 97 deliveries reported.

COGHILL DISTRICT: Waters of the Coghill District will remain closed to commercial drift gillnet fishing. PWSAC recommends closing the enhanced coho salmon directed commercial fishery due to slow broodstock acquisition at WNH.

SEINE FISHERIES: This announcement will provide time and area specifics for daily commercial purse seine fishing opportunity throughout PWS on Sunday, September 9 through Wednesday, September 12.

VFDA coho salmon broodstock collection progress is below expected and they recommend closing Port Valdez to improve broodstock numbers. Expanded fishing opportunity in the port may occur if brood collection progress at the hatchery improves. PWSAC has begun egg takes at all facilities and is approximately 50% complete at CCH, 100% complete at AFK, and 100% complete 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, excluding waters of Port Valdez north of a line from Entrance Point to Potato Point, will open to commercial purse seine fishing for 12-hour periods, from 8:00 am until 8:00 pm, on Sunday, September 9, Monday, September 10; Tuesday, September 11, and Wednesday, September 12.

NORTHERN DISTRICT: Waters of the Northern District, **excluding waters of the Cannery Creek Subdistrict, CCH THA, and SHA,** will open to commercial purse seine fishing for 12-hour fishing periods, from 8:00 am until 8:00 pm, on Sunday, September 9, Monday, September 10; Tuesday, September 11, and Wednesday, September 12..

NORTHWESTERN DISTRICT: Waters of the Northwestern District will open to commercial purse seine fishing for 12-hour fishing periods, from 8:00 am until 8:00 pm, on Sunday, September 9, Monday, September 10; Tuesday, September 11, and Wednesday, September 12.

SOUTHWESTERN DISTRICT: Waters of the Southwestern District, **excluding waters north of the latitude of Squire Point and west of the longitude of Herring Point, San Juan Subdistrict, and the AFK THA and SHA**, will open to commercial purse seine fishing for 12-hour fishing periods, from 8:00 am until 8:00 pm, on Sunday, September 9, Monday, September 10; Tuesday, September 11, and Wednesday, September 12. Southwestern District Priority Stream list will be in effect within waters of the Point Elrington Subdistrict.

MONTAGUE DISTRICT: Waters of the Montague District will open to purse seine fishing for 12-hour periods from 8:00 am until 8:00 pm on Sunday, September 9, Monday, September 10; Tuesday, September 11, and Wednesday, September 12.

SOUTHEASTERN DISTRICT: Waters of the Southeastern District will open to commercial purse seine fishing for 12-hour periods, from 8:00 am until 8:00 pm, on Sunday, September 9, Monday, September 10; Tuesday, September 11, and Wednesday, September 12.

The next salmon fisheries announcement is scheduled for 2:00 pm Wednesday, September 12.

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.