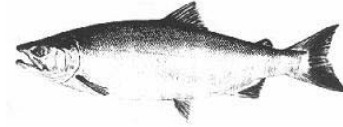


**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES
NEWS RELEASE**



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2011 PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND SALMON FISHERY INFORMATION

General Information

This outlook is provided to assist the commercial salmon industry in planning for the 2011 season in the Prince William Sound (PWS) Management Area (Area E). Preseason forecasts are the basis for the information provided. Area E forecasts can be found on ADF&G's web site:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareapws.salmon>

PWSAC hatchery forecasts can be found on the PWSAC web site:

http://www.pwsac.com/2011_PWSAC_Forecast.pdf

Inseason modifications to harvest projections, season opening dates, and strategies for weekly fishing periods will likely occur as the fisheries develop. Hatchery Annual Management Plans (AMP) are used to provide guidelines to the department when managing fisheries to achieve cost recovery and broodstock objectives. Valdez Fisheries Development Association (VFDA) and Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation's (PWSAC) AMPs underwent Regional Planning Team (RPT) review on April 20, and were then submitted for the Commissioner's signature.

The forecasts for commercial common property fishery (CCPF) harvests by species are summarized in Table 1. The department continues to forecast wild fish runs, but the department no longer forecasts any hatchery runs except Gulkana Hatchery runs of sockeye salmon. All other hatchery run projections are provided by either PWSAC or VFDA. Run projections for species and districts without formal forecasts are based on average historical production. These projections will provide the basis for early season management in all districts. Harvest projections for enhanced runs may change depending upon the success of hatchery cost recovery sales.

Management of Prince William Sound commercial salmon fisheries occurs from the Cordova area office. All emergency order announcements of fishery openings and closures are broadcast on VHF FM-07. As was done last year, fishery announcements from the Cordova ADF&G office will

routinely occur at 2:00 p.m. and will normally provide a minimum of 15 hours advanced notice. Emergency order announcement information is also transmitted by FAX to all registered processors, local radio stations, and news media in Cordova and Valdez. Announcement recordings will be available for gillnet fisheries at 907-424-7535 and seine fisheries at 907-424-7345. In addition, announcement recordings are available in Anchorage at 907-267-2843. Daily announcements are compiled and may be found by following links on the ADF&G web site at:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareapws.salmon>

The first announcement will be released at 2:00 pm Wednesday, May 4 concerning the Copper River District.

On March 14, 2011, the PWSAC Board of Directors approved the annual corporate budget for Fiscal Year 2011. The overall pink salmon and Wally Noerenberg Hatchery (WNH) chum salmon revenue goals are \$5,956,811 and \$2,177,078, respectively.

The projected PWSAC pink salmon harvest goal (cost recovery and broodstock) is 19% of the total forecasted 25.8million pink salmon run to PWSAC hatcheries. PWSAC plans to harvest 22% of the 2.6 million chum salmon run to WNH to meet their cost recovery and broodstock goals. PWSAC does not plan to use any of the 935,000 sockeye salmon run to Main Bay Hatchery (MBH) for cost recovery, but does have a broodstock harvest goal of 8940 fish.

The VFDA 2011 AMP identifies a pink salmon revenue goal of \$3.5 million. Based on VFDA’s 15.5 million pink salmon forecast for the Solomon Gulch Hatchery (SGH) and a sales price estimated at \$0.25/pound, VFDA will require approximately 4.4 million pink salmon with an average weight of 3.16 lbs/fish to meet their 2011 revenue goal. A minimum of 346,000 additional pink salmon will be needed for broodstock. VFDA’s corporate cost recovery and broodstock needs are approximately 30% of the VFDA forecast for the total SGH pink salmon run.

Gillnet Fishery

Copper River District

Copper River District is expected to open for the 2011 season on May 16. The 2011 commercial common property harvest projections for the Copper River District are 1.2 million sockeye, 293,000 coho, and 9,000 Chinook salmon. The Chinook salmon harvest projection is the maximum harvest that could be achieved and still meet the minimum escapement goal of 24,000 given the total run projection. The 2011 inriver goal past the Miles Lake sonar is 622,380 to 822,380 salmon. The upper Copper River’s sustainable escapement goal (SEG) is 300,000 to 500,000 natural sockeye salmon, and the Copper River delta’s SEG is 55,000 to 130,000. The department’s goal is to maintain the long-term average of 361,000 sockeye salmon in the upper Copper River spawning escapement, and 84,400 sockeye salmon in the Copper River delta’s spawning escapement. The components of the inriver goal are as follows:

Spawning escapement	300,000 to 500,000 sockeye
Other salmon	17,500 salmon
Subsistence	72,407 salmon
Personal Use harvest	112,950 salmon
Sport fishery	15,000 salmon
Gulkana broodstock	20,000 sockeye
Gulkana Hatchery surplus	84,524 sockeye
Total	622,380 to 822,380 salmon

The initial management strategy will be based on anticipated weekly sockeye and Chinook salmon harvests for the Copper River District and additional assessments of river conditions, fishing effort, harvest location, and consistency of harvest. When river conditions allow the deployment of the Miles Lake sonar, the attainment of the desired inriver escapement range for the upper Copper River becomes the main factor in deciding management strategy. Two evenly spaced commercial fishing periods per week will be the preferred management approach. However, the fishing schedule may be adjusted inseason as situations dictate. By late June, aerial estimates of sockeye salmon escapement trends on the Copper River Delta are also considered when scheduling fishing periods.

During the 2003 Alaska Board of Fisheries (board) meeting, the board modified 5 AAC 24.361, Copper River District Chinook Salmon Fishery Management Plan, by eliminating the language in the plan that calls for a 5% reduction in harvest potential. At this meeting the board also modified the Copper River District Chinook Salmon Fishery Management Plan to direct the department to achieve a Chinook salmon spawning escapement goal of 24,000 or greater. During the 2005 board meeting, the board amended the Copper River Chinook Salmon Management Plan to limit fishing in most waters inside of the barrier islands to one fishing period per week during statistical weeks 20 and 21. The closed area is defined in 5AAC 24.350(1)(B) and extends from the Steamboat Anchorage to the west side of Big Softuk Channel at Coffee Creek. Scheduled fishing periods will continue if environmental conditions favor upriver salmon migration and Miles Lake sonar is meeting anticipated daily and cumulative counts. While a schedule of two periods per week is the recommended management approach, this schedule could be adjusted to provide for escapement needs. The department will consider using shorter periods, additional inside closures, period closures, or other measures to achieve the required Chinook and sockeye salmon escapements.

The maximum drift gillnet mesh size in Copper River District is 6 inches until July 15 when larger mesh gear will be allowed. As a reminder, **all salmon that are harvested but not sold by commercial permit holders in Alaska waters must be reported on a fish ticket at the time of landing** (5AAC 39.130(c)(10)). Fish tickets have a “not sold/personal use” field to report these salmon.

Whenever possible, the first period each week will begin Monday at 7:00 a.m. Depending upon fishing effort, harvest, and escapement trends on the Copper River Delta and at Miles Lake sonar station, a decision regarding a possible second fishing period for the week will be made by Wednesday at 2:00 p.m. If there is an exceptionally strong run to the Copper River, the department will exercise greater flexibility in deciding when weekly periods should begin. As requested at the 2007 Salmon Harvest Task Force (SHTF) meeting, the second periods in any given week will likely begin at 7:00 a.m. on Thursday.

Beginning in early to mid-August when coho salmon in the harvest become predominant by number, the Copper and Bering River districts will be managed for coho salmon. The management strategy for coho salmon may be one or two 24-hour periods per week depending on escapement and harvest levels. Given satisfactory indications from coho salmon escapement and harvest data, the department will consider lengthening the 24-hour period(s) or adding a second period. Weekly anticipated harvest and escapement data will be compared to the actual harvest and escapement data to determine the frequency and duration of commercial openings.

Individuals planning to participate in subsistence fishing activities in Copper River District are required to obtain a subsistence permit through the Cordova ADF&G office. **Permits will be**

available during normal business hours Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. ADF&G staff will not be available to issue permits before hours, after hours, on state holidays, or on weekends.

Bering River District

Bering River District is expected to open for the 2011 season only after sockeye salmon escapement is above the minimum SEG. The Bering River District has not met the minimum SEG of 20,000 sockeye salmon since 2005. Beginning in early August, the Bering River District will be managed for coho salmon and management strategies will be similar to those used for Copper River District. The projected harvest is 51,500 coho salmon based on the recent 10-year harvest average.

Eshamy District

PWSAC's Main Bay Hatchery forecast is 935,000 sockeye salmon. In 2011 PWSAC plans to harvest 8,940 sockeye salmon for broodstock. Approximately 930,000 MBH sockeye salmon are expected to be available for common property harvest. PWSAC announced at the general board meeting on Monday, March 14 that cost recovery would not take place at Main Bay in 2011. As a result, the management strategy in 2011 will be to provide two extended periods per week in the hatchery subdistrict similar to the strategy used in the past three years. Extended periods may also occur in the Crafton Island Subdistrict provided there are no concerns regarding harvest of wild stocks bound for other districts. Eshamy District is expected to open for the 2011 season on May 23.

The 2005–2009 Commercial Operators Annual Report (COAR) exvessel value calculated the set gillnet fleet harvest at 4.0% of the annual commercial salmon harvest. Consequently in 2011, the set gillnet fleet will not be restricted to 36 hours or less per week after July 10.

The Eshamy River weir will be used to monitor salmon escapement starting in early July. The wild stock sockeye salmon run to Eshamy Lake is forecast at 35,000 fish, 20,500 of which will be needed to meet the midpoint of the 13,000–28,000 biological escapement goal (BEG) range. This BEG range was adjusted at the 2008 Alaska Board of Fisheries meeting from the previous range of 20,000–40,000 fish. Beginning in mid July, fishing time and area in Crafton Island Subdistrict will be linked to the escapement of wild pink and sockeye salmon in Eshamy District, and the strength of wild pink and chum salmon runs to the Northwestern and Coghill districts. When waters of Crafton Island Subdistrict are closed for the protection of pink and sockeye salmon escapement, there may be concurrent closures of the eastern shore of Chenega Island to purse seine gear to further minimize the interception of wild stocks.

Coghill District

The 2011 wild stock sockeye salmon run to Coghill Lake is forecast at 170,000 fish. Achieving a midpoint escapement of 30,000 sockeye salmon will leave approximately 140,000 fish for the common property harvest. The early run of chum salmon to WNH is forecast by PWSAC to be 2.6 million fish. PWSAC requires 588,000 chum salmon for cost recovery and broodstock at this facility, leaving 2.0 million or 78% for the commercial common property fishery. The anticipated opening date for Coghill District is May 23.

The 2005–2009 Commercial Operators Annual Report (COAR) exvessel value calculated the drift gillnet fleet harvest at 41% of the annual commercial salmon harvest. In 2011, the drift gillnet fleet will be allowed exclusive access to Esther Hatchery Subdistrict until July 21.

The Alaska Board of Fisheries supported the use of a reduced Esther Subdistrict boundary when the Coghill Lake sockeye salmon escapement goal may not be met. During escapement shortfalls, the department has confined fishing to within 1 nautical mile off the southern portion of Esther Island. The 1 nautical mile boundary may be implemented by emergency order for the conservation of Coghill Lake sockeye salmon and Port Wells wild stock chum and pink salmon. If escapement to Coghill Lake is less than anticipated, the department may elect to further confine the fleet to the WNH Terminal Harvest Area (THA). If sockeye salmon escapement is within the anticipated range and sockeye salmon harvest rates in Coghill District indicate a strong return, the Port Wells area will be regularly opened to 61° N. latitude. As the season progresses and if Coghill weir escapement counts are projected to meet the escapement goal, the area will be expanded to the markers near Coghill Lagoon. WNH coho salmon are present in the Coghill District fishery from early August through late September. The 2011 run to WNH is expected to be 250,000 coho salmon. PWSAC will require 2,700 fish for broodstock with all remaining fish available to the common property fisheries. Although some WNH fish are harvested in the southern areas of PWS, most of the coho salmon run will be harvested by the drift gillnet fleet in Esther Subdistrict.

Unakwik District

The 2011 wild stock sockeye salmon commercial harvest in Unakwik Inlet is forecast at 6,600 fish. Drift gillnets and purse seines are legal gear during all periods in Unakwik District. The district encompasses only those waters above the reef in Unakwik Inlet. During the sockeye salmon run to Miners and Cowpen lakes, the management strategy will be to provide two periods per week. This schedule is expected to begin in early June, and run concurrently with openings in Coghill District. Commercial harvest and escapement information will be evaluated inseason and adjustments to fishing schedules will be made if necessary. Unakwik District is expected to open for the 2011 season on June 13.

Port Chalmers Subdistrict

The most recent 5-year rolling average, 2005–2009, of the Commercial Operators Annual Report (COAR) exvessel values placed the purse seine fleet at 59% of the annual commercial salmon harvest. As a result, the drift gillnet gear group has exclusive access to the Port Chalmers Subdistrict remote release chum salmon fishery in 2011. The commercial common property fishery in Port Chalmers will begin Monday, May 23. A regular schedule of two fishing periods per week is anticipated; a 60-hour fishing period, from 8:00 a.m. Monday to 8:00 p.m. Wednesday, and an 84-hour fishing period, from 8:00 a.m. Thursday to 8:00 p.m. Sunday. Anadromous stream closures and regulatory closed waters within the open area at Port Chalmers will be suspended during May and June to facilitate the harvest of the enhanced runs. This fishery is anticipated to close in late July.

Purse Seine Fishery

The 2011 pink salmon forecast total run for PWS is 46.9 million fish, of which 35.1 million will be available in the commercial common property fishery (CCPF). This pink salmon total run estimate includes 5.6 million wild stock fish, 15.5 million VFDA fish, and 25.8 million PWSAC hatchery fish. Approximately 4.8 million (31%) of the projected 15.5 million pink salmon run to the VFDA

hatchery will be needed for cost recovery and broodstock. The remaining 10.7 million VFDA fish will be available for commercial common property harvest. Approximately 4.5 million (19%) of the projected 25.8 million pink salmon run to the PWSAC hatcheries will be needed for cost recovery and broodstock. The remaining 20.8 million PWSAC pink salmon will be available for commercial common property harvest. A total of 3.6 million wild stock pink salmon are projected to be available for harvest, leaving 2.0 million fish to meet the SEG midpoint point.

The 2011 chum salmon forecast total run in PWS is 3.9 million fish. The majority, 3.5 million (90%), are from PWSAC hatchery production. PWSAC forecast a run of 2.6 million chum salmon to WNH, 624,000 fish to Port Chalmers, and 280,000 fish to Armin F. Koernig hatchery (AFK). Approximately 588,000 chum salmon (22%) will be harvested out of the 2.6 million WNH run for cost recovery and broodstock. **Port Chalmers remote release chum salmon will be available for harvest in the drift gillnet CCPF (5 AAC 24.370(h)(1)) and the AFK remote release chum salmon will be available for harvest in the purse seine CCPF.** Based on the department's wild chum salmon forecast of 400,000 fish, there is a potential common property harvest of 200,000 wild stock chum salmon. The department will manage for each district's escapement goal, aiming for each district's long-term average, for a combined total of 200,000 fish.

The commercial common property purse seine fishery will begin Monday, May 23 with a directed fishery targeting the enhanced chum salmon run to the AFK hatchery. A regular schedule of two fishing periods per week is anticipated; a 60-hour fishing period, from 8:00 a.m. Monday to 8:00 p.m. Wednesday, and an 84-hour fishing period, from 8:00 a.m. Thursday to 8:00 p.m. Sunday. Anadromous stream closures and regulatory closed waters within the open area at AFK will be suspended during May and June to facilitate the harvest of the enhanced runs. Areas open to the CCPF in AFK (excluding the AFK Special Harvest Area (SHA)) will close in mid-July as management begins to focus on pink salmon returns. The AFK SHA will remain open until pink salmon dominate the harvest and are in concentrations sufficient to sustain sizable cost recovery harvests.

The general waters of the eight purse seine districts will be managed based on the strength of wild stocks. Hatchery subdistricts will be managed based on the strength of both wild and enhanced stocks. Aerial survey pink and chum salmon escapement trends, compared to average historical performance, will determine the duration of openings in these districts. Aerial surveys of the index streams occur on a weekly basis, weather permitting. The department may use the yellow Salmon Harvest Task Force (SHTF) markers as a management tool for closing terminal wild stock areas when escapements are lower than expected, and these markers may be employed as an intermediate step before area wide closures are used.

Openings in Eastern District will be based upon the strength of wild and enhanced stock runs. Valdez Port, Narrows, and Arm may be managed for VFDA's cost recovery and broodstock needs. Openings in Valdez Port and Arm designed to target VFDA pink salmon will be based on the strength of the enhanced run and VFDA's progress towards achieving their pink salmon revenue goal. In the remainder of Eastern District, openings will be based upon the strength of wild stock escapements. The management strategy will be to open area within the district concurrent with openings targeting the VFDA pink salmon run when possible. Jack Bay may be closed inside a line from Tongue Point to Entrance Point or at the SHTF markers to protect early timed wild stocks. If the Galena Bay or Sawmill Bay wild stocks experience shortfalls during the VFDA run, additional area closures may result. Port Valdez will be closed to CCPF north of a line from Entrance Point to Potato Point beginning on August 15. Valdez Narrows Subdistrict will open on September 6 to

target surplus Solomon Gulch Hatchery coho salmon. The VFDA enhanced coho salmon forecast is 189,000 fish with an anticipated CCPF harvest of 95,000 fish .

The AFK, CCH, and WNH pink salmon runs will be managed collectively to achieve PWSAC's cost recovery and broodstock goals through openings and closures of nearby subdistricts or hatchery management areas. Managing the enhanced pink salmon run in aggregate may result in site-specific commercial common property harvest rates above or below the approximate target of an 82% CCPF pink salmon harvest. Prior to run entry sustaining consistent hatchery cost recovery harvest, the department may open the WNH, CCH, and AFK Hatchery THAs and SHAs to a common property harvest to keep pink salmon quality high. Once cost recovery is initiated, PWSAC will likely complete at least 30% of their pink salmon cost recovery harvest goal prior to recommending an opening of the CCPF. PWSAC will work closely with local ADF&G management biologists to achieve the seine fisheries revenue goal as rapidly as possible to allow for an orderly and consistent common property fishery. To minimize congestion in hatchery terminal areas and subdistricts, and to minimize the straying of hatchery pink salmon, effort will be made to provide concurrent openings at CCH, WNH, and AFK hatcheries. However, PWSAC's cost recovery and broodstock harvest requirements may not always provide the opportunity for a common property harvest at all three hatcheries. Late pink salmon run management is closely linked with PWSAC's sales harvesting strategies.

The department will evaluate the late pink salmon run daily with hatchery sales harvests, broodstock collections, commercial fishery harvests, hatchery sex ratios, stock composition estimates, and wild stock escapement data. To further assess run strength and timing of late enhanced pink salmon, a Southwestern District test fishery, using the R/V *Solstice*, will be conducted in late July. Otoliths collected from daily test sets made at key migration corridors will provide stock composition estimates. Stock composition and sex ratios will provide early run entry information and allow for more informed management decisions about time and area restrictions in Southwestern District. Additionally, harvest rate may provide a qualitative gauge of run strength, timing, and quality.

Table 1. ADF&G commercial common property harvest projections for the 2011 salmon fishery in the Prince William Sound and Copper/Bering River areas.

PINK SALMON - HARVEST ESTIMATE (Millions)	
Natural Stocks	3.6
Hatchery Stocks ^a	
Solomon Gulch	10.7
Armin F. Koernig	7.5
Wally Noerenberg	7.7
Cannery Creek	5.7
Natural & Hatchery	35.1
CHUM SALMON - HARVEST ESTIMATE (Thousands)	
Natural Stocks	200
Hatchery Stocks	
Wally Noerenberg	2,024
Armin F. Koernig	280
Port Chalmers	624
Natural & Hatchery	3,128
COHO SALMON - HARVEST ESTIMATE (Thousands)	
PWS Natural Stocks	No Forecast
Copper River	294
Bering River	52
Hatchery Stocks	
Solomon Gulch	95
Wally Noerenberg	250
Natural & Hatchery	691
SOCKEYE SALMON - HARVEST ESTIMATE (Thousands)	
Copper River	1,183
Coghill Lake	140
Eshamy Lake	15
PWS Hatchery Stocks	
Main Bay	926
Marsha Bay	0
Natural & Hatchery	2,268
CHINOOK SALMON - HARVEST ESTIMATE (Thousands)	
Natural Stocks	
Copper River	9

^a Potential hatchery contributions to the common property harvest are based on the forecast of total hatchery runs minus preseason estimates of cost recovery and broodstock harvest that will be required by hatchery operators.