



SOUTH CENTRAL REGION

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME



Fishing in the Valdez Area

About Valdez

Valdez is home to about 4,500 year-round residents, but the population swells considerably in the summer.

Visitors arrive by air (35 minute jet flight from Anchorage), road (305 miles from Anchorage and 365 miles from Fairbanks), and by sea (using the Alaska Marine Highway System ferries).

Valdez Arm supports the largest recreational fishery in Prince William Sound (PWS) and the largest pink salmon commercial fishery in the state. Anglers fishing from Valdez account for nearly one-half the fishing effort in all the Sound.

Security Zone -- U.S. Coast Guard/ U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security

There is a large security buffer zone around the Alyeska Pipeline terminus. Boat traffic is not allowed. Boaters are responsible for knowing where the boundaries are. For more information, visit the Alaska district web pages at www.uscg.mil/d17/index.htm, or contact the Valdez Coast Guard at (907) 835-7200.

Hotels, fishing charters, campgrounds, derbies

For information about accommodations and other services in Valdez, contact the Valdez Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB), 200 Chenega Street, P.O. Box 1603, (907) 835-2984, fax: (907) 835-4845, www.valdezalaska.org

Eastern Prince William Sound also has seventeen public cabins managed by the U.S. Forest Service's Chugach National Forest. For more information, go to www.reserveusa.com, or contact the Chugach National Forest at 3301 C Street, Anchorage, Alaska 99503 (907) 743-9500 www.fs.fed.us/r10/chugach

The City of Valdez sponsors a halibut derby from May



through Labor Day weekend, a silver (coho) salmon derby from early August through Labor Day weekend, and a pink salmon derby during July. Derby tickets and details are available from the Valdez CVB (above). The tickets are also sold at many Valdez tackle shops, grocery stores, and other vendors.

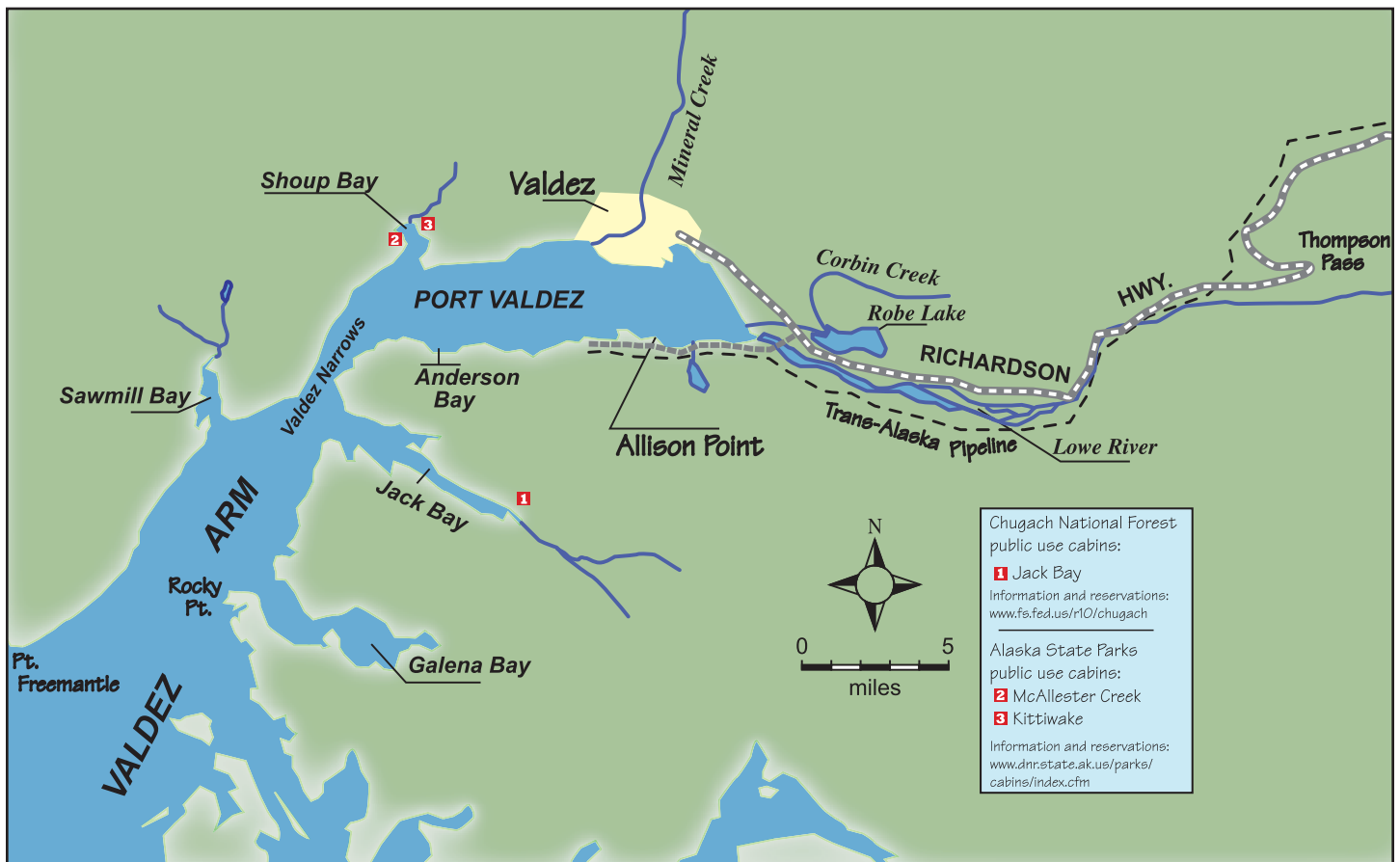
Weather

Summer temperatures are usually moderate, with highs ranging from 55° F. to 70° F. (12.7° C. to 21° C.) Layered clothing is best, and don't forget the raincoat, rain pants, and a good waterproof hat.

Weather conditions in Prince William Sound can change quickly. Use caution when boating and obtain current weather forecasts from National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) at (907) 835-4505, or from their recorded message at 1-800-472-0391.

A current weather briefing is also available for boaters equipped with VHF by dialing up "Weather 1" on the radio and listening to the current NOAA weather forecast.





General map of the Valdez area (not to scale).

For topographical maps, visit the U.S. Geological Survey's map web site at <http://store.usgs.com>. For nautical charts, visit the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration's chart web site at <http://chartmaker.nco.noaa.gov> or the Alaska Office of Boating Safety at www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks/boating.

Marine weather can change from flat calm to large swells in minutes. Stay up-to-date by visiting the National Weather Service's Alaska regional web site at www.noaa.gov



These opportunities funded in part by Federal Aid in Sport Fish and Wildlife Restoration.

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If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility, or if you desire further information please write to ADF&G, P.O. Box 115526, Juneau, AK 99811-5526; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4040 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 300 Webb, Arlington, VA 22203; or O.E.O., U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington DC 20240.

For information on alternative formats for this and other department publications, please contact the department ADA Coordinator at (voice) 907-465-6077, (TDD) 907-465-3646, or (FAX) 907-465-6078.

Management of Alaska's sport fisheries

The Division of Sport Fish is charged with the management of Alaska's sport fisheries under the sustained yield principle, through regulations and management plans adopted by the Alaska Board of Fisheries. Enforcement of fishing regulations is primarily the responsibility of the Alaska Dept. of Public Safety, State Troopers' Bureau of Wildlife Enforcement.

Management of Prince William Sound sport fisheries is based in the Anchorage office, with an area office in Cordova.

At times the Division issues in-season regulatory changes, called Emergency Orders, primarily in response to under- or over-abundance of fish. Emergency Orders are sent to radio stations, newspapers, and television stations, and posted on our web site.

We also maintain two hot line recordings at (907) 267-2516 (Anchorage) or (907) 424-7535 (Cordova). Or you can contact the Anchorage Sport Fish Information Center at (907) 267-2218, or the Cordova ADF&G office at (907) 424-3212.

There is an active commercial fishery in Prince William Sound, so please be careful around their boats and nets. The Division of Commercial Fisheries offers a wealth of information on their web site, including in-season harvest information at www.cf.adfg.state.ak.us

Weir counts

Both the Division of Commercial Fisheries and the Division of Sport Fish maintain fish weirs and sonar projects in order to help with in-season management. In addition, private, non-profit hatcheries may have weir projects set up. If available, weir counts and sonar estimates can be found on our web site.

Fishing regulations

Regulations are often different for each water you fish. Please read the fishing regulations before heading out to fish. Check both the "Prince William Sound Salt Water" section and the "Prince William Sound Fresh Waters" sections. Regulation booklets are available wherever fishing licenses are sold, and posted on the ADF&G Division of Sport Fish home page at www.adfg.alaska.gov.

Be sure you have your sport fishing license or ADF&G Permanent ID Card in your possession. Also, anglers need to purchase a King Salmon stamp to fish for king salmon (exceptions are listed in the regulation booklet).

Licenses and stamps can be purchased at most grocery stores and tackle shops or on-line at www.adfg.alaska.gov/store.



A young Allison Point shore angler has help landing a pink salmon.

"Party" Fishing

Party fishing, such as when anglers "pool" their harvest to achieve a "boat limit," is illegal. A fish belongs to the person who originally hooked it. Under Alaska law, once your daily bag limit is reached, you cannot harvest more fish "for the boat."

Only under certain conditions can anglers give someone their fish, and sport-caught fish can never be sold, bartered or traded. Check the regulation booklet for the rules on giving away fish. Once an angler gives away his/her bag limit, he/she may not harvest additional fish of that species on the same day.

Fish Identification

Silver salmon or king salmon? Pelagic rockfish or non-pelagic rockfish? You'll find a fish identification guide in the Southcentral Alaska regulation booklet.

Pink (humpy) salmon

Solomon Gulch Creek and Hatchery

Pink (and silver) salmon returning to the Valdez Fisheries Development Association's (VFDA) Solomon Gulch hatchery have created a popular sport fishery in recent years. These hatchery fish are "common property" fish, and are available for all user groups to harvest. Over 100 million pink salmon fry and several hundred thousand silver salmon smolt are released every year. This results in runs of tens of millions pink salmon heading back to Port Valdez.

For those wishing to view the hatchery operations, both guided and unguided tours are available by contacting VFDA in advance at (907) 835-4874. There is a small fee for the tour.

In addition, there are three more hatcheries that pro

duce pinks, and over 200 streams that support natural returns of pink salmon. Pinks arrive in Valdez Bay in mid-June, peak around July 4, and fresh fish are still available into August. From 1990-1999, the average yearly Valdez Arm pink salmon sport harvest was 39,500 fish.

Wild pink salmon have a two-year life cycle. Pink salmon fry do not rear in fresh water, instead, they travel almost immediately after emergence out to near shore salt waters to feed. Pink salmon grow quickly, reaching 3.5 to 4 pounds before returning for spawning the following summer.

Ranging from 3 ½ to 6 pounds, pinks provide excellent action on light tackle. Since they are such aggressive biters and good fighters, pinks are a fun way to introduce someone to salmon angling, as well as providing excellent table fare when fresh or canned right away.

Shore fishing is best off the breakwater beach near the harbor and along the beach at Allison Point. Anglers fishing by boat can catch pinks by casting or trolling along the shoreline off Allison Point.

Medium-sized spinners or lures such as Pixees, Dare-devils, and Tee-Spoons provide good action. Pink salmon fishing is generally best within a few hours either side of high tide. Cannery Creek in Unakwik Inlet is another noteworthy pink salmon fishery accessible from Valdez.

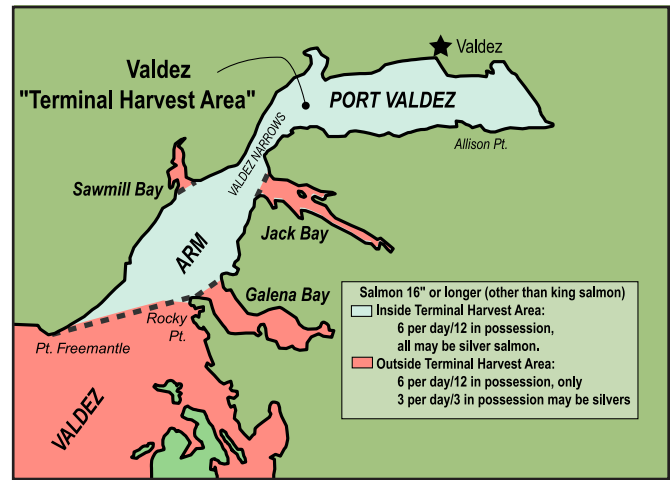
Silver (coho) salmon

Prince William Sound has both wild and hatchery silvers. Wild stocks support growing fisheries in many of the small streams draining into bays of PWS. Most wild stocks are characterized as small and scattered, and present management challenges to protect them from overharvest.

Wild silver salmon spawn in Eastern Prince William Sound's freshwater streams August through October. After spawning, the adult fish die, leaving their eggs to hatch the following spring. The juvenile salmon remain in fresh waters that summer and following winter. In the spring of their second or third years, the young fish, now called smolt, migrate to salt water. They remain in marine waters about 14 months before returning to fresh water as 8- to 12-pound adults to spawn. Because PWS streams experience severe flooding from time to time, wild stocks have been and will continue to be extremely variable.

The primary silver fisheries are in the Valdez Narrows and off the beaches of Allison Point, Anderson Bay, Mineral Creek, and Gold Creek. Silvers arrive in Valdez Bay by the first week of August, and peak mid-August through early September. From 1990-1999, the average yearly silver salmon harvest in Valdez Arm was 26,700 fish.

Silvers strike readily at lures, salmon roe, and streamer flies, making these aggressive and hard fighting 8- to



Special silver salmon bag limits near Valdez. Much of the marine waters in Valdez Arm are a "Terminal Harvest" area for silver salmon. Daily limits are higher than in the rest of Prince William Sound. Consult your regulation booklet.

20 - pound fish a prime target of sport anglers. While most shore anglers use spinners or lures, such as Pixees, Vibrax, Spin-N-Glos, and Tee-Spoons, fishing salmon roe or herring below a bobber is also popular and productive. Boat anglers will find trolling with whole or cut herring behind a flasher effective. Many boat anglers fish with bright hootchies (imitation squid) in the silty waters near Allison Point.

Elsewhere in Prince William Sound, there are good silver runs at Bay of Isles, Port Chalmers, and the north side of Hinchinbrook Island.

King (Chinook) salmon

King salmon return at different ages. Some, called "jacks," return after only one year in salt waters. These fish weigh only 1-2 pounds and are almost always males. Others return after two years at about 5-15 pounds. Most of these are also males. The majority of kings, however, return after three and four years at sea at a weight of 25-45 pounds.

Even though ADF&G only began stocking king salmon near Valdez Arm in 1999, this fishery is now a substantial spring event. Fish can be caught in Port Valdez and in Valdez Arm in May and June. Try a large spinner from shore near Old Town Valdez or try trolling cut herring in the Arm.

Chinook can also be caught year round as "feeder" kings, which roam around the rich waters of Prince William Sound, fattening up before returning to their home streams to spawn.

Chum (dog) salmon

Chum salmon are usually caught while fishing for pink or silver salmon. Chum salmon have the widest

distribution of any of the Pacific salmon, and utilize the broadest spawning areas, both intertidal and freshwater. Like pink salmon, chum salmon fry also quickly move out to near shore salt waters soon after emerging from the gravel. Chum feed in ocean waters for 3 to 6 years before returning as 7 to 18 pound fish.

Chums are especially hard fighters that will take a variety of flies and lures. Hatchery chum runs to Port Chalmers have also been fished by sport anglers.

Red (sockeye) salmon

There are small runs of red salmon available in the Sound throughout most of the summer. Juvenile red salmon may spend up to four years rearing in freshwater lakes before becoming smolt and moving out to sea. Once at sea, they reach 4 to 12 pounds after one to four years.

In the Valdez area, most of the red salmon are caught in the fly-fishing-only area of the Robe River. Small streamer flies on an 8-9 wt. fly rod, or smaller spinners and a medium-action spinning rod loaded with 15-20 lb. monofilament are popular methods.

Halibut, rockfish and lingcod

Halibut spawn in deep offshore waters from November through March. After hatching, the larvae drift with ocean currents, feeding on plankton then larger and larger fish and shellfish. The larvae start life like other fish, with an eye on each side of the head. When the larvae are about 6 months old, the left eye moves over the snout to the right side of the head, and the coloration on the left side of the body fades.

Halibut are found throughout PWS waters, on or near the bottom over mud, sand, or gravel banks and below steep drop-offs. Near Valdez, they can be found in the Narrows and along the coastlines of the numerous islands in eastern Prince William Sound. From 1990-1999, the average yearly halibut harvest near Valdez was 8,400 fish.

For these fish, a stout fishing rod and jigs or cut herring are the best tackle. Some of the more popular fishing areas include Knowles Head and Red Head, Galena Bay, and Sawmill Bay. Peak halibut fishing is June through July.

Both rockfish and lingcod are found throughout Western PWS waters. These fish are extremely long-lived and slow to reproduce. Some rockfish have been aged at over 100 years old. Careful management is required for sustainable fisheries, and both rockfish and lingcod have special regulations.

Rockfish are commonly caught while fishing for halibut over rocky structure. There are 32 species of rockfish that live in the Gulf of Alaska, but only about 10 species are regularly caught in the sport fishery.

Lingcod spawn December through March, with males

guarding nests through June. Without this protection, other fish and shellfish would eat all the eggs within days. Males are very defensive during this time, and will snap at anything, thus making them more vulnerable to overharvest.

Adult lingcod are often caught near steep rocky banks by anglers jigging for halibut. In Eastern PWS, fish up to 30 pounds are caught.

Shellfish

Crab

Because of low populations, Prince William Sound (and most of the surrounding area) is closed year-round to king, Dungeness, and tanner crab fishing.

Shrimp

There are five species of shrimp in Alaskan waters: northern (pink), spot, coonstripe, humpy, and sidestripe. In Prince William Sound, spot and sidestripe shrimp are the main species caught in recreational shrimp pots, while northern shrimp are usually caught by commercial shrimp pots.

Shrimp live at various depths and various habitats. Spots and coonstripes are generally found in rock piles, coral gardens, and on debris-covered bottoms. Northerns, sidestripes and humpies are usually found on flatter, muddy bottoms. Northern shrimp can be found over the widest depth range (60 - 4,800 feet) while humpies and coonstripes usually are found in shallower waters (18 - 1,200 feet). Spot shrimp seem to be caught in greatest concentrations around 360 feet, but range from 6 to 1,500 feet, but most concentrations occur in waters deeper than 240 feet.

ADF&G data show that most shrimp harvest comes from Port Nellie Juan, Culross Passage, Squaw Bay, Blue Fjord, King's Bay, Port Wells, Bay of Isles, McClure Bay, Derickson Bay, Deep Water Bay, Cochrane Bay, Knowles Bay, Bligh Reef, Columbia Bay, Unakwik Inlet, Glacier Island, and Port Gravina.

Over 10,700 gallons of shrimp were harvested in 2004. Most harvesters get about 0 to 1 gallons of shrimp per pot-day of effort. Less than 5% of harvesters get 2 or more gallons.

For more information, request a copy of "Prince William Sound Shrimp" from ADF&G, or download a copy from the web site. There are regulations on buoys, pot construction and pot limits, please check the regulation booklet.

Clams

There are no sizeable clam populations in the Valdez area.

Dolly Varden char

Dolly Varden belong to a group of fish called char. The light spots on their sides distinguish them from most trout and salmon, which are usually black spotted or speckled.

Dollies spawn in streams, usually during the fall from mid-August to November. Most Dollies migrate to sea in their third or fourth year, but some wait as long as their sixth year. This migration usually occurs in May or June. Once at sea, they begin a fascinating pattern of migration.

After their first seaward migration, Dolly Varden usually spend the rest of their lives wintering in and migrating to and from fresh water. Southcentral Alaska Dolly Varden overwinter in lakes, go on out to sea in the spring to feed, then return to a lake or river each year for the winter.

Mature Dollies are about 5-6 years old, and about 12-16 inches long. They may weigh up to 1 pound at this age. The state record Dolly Varden was caught from the Noatak River, in Interior Alaska, and weighed 19 pounds, 12.5 ounces.

Dolly Varden are available in most of the Valdez area streams throughout the year. Dolly Varden will usually strike readily at almost anything the angler offers. During the spring, try small spinning lures in the lake outlet streams and in salt water. For fly anglers, smolt or alevin

patterns can produce surprising results along the salt-water beaches during the spring and summer months.

Try fishing near spawning salmon, in deep holes, and at the creek mouth on an incoming tide. Lake fishing for sea-run Dolly Varden can be good from late August through November. The fish begin entering lakes in late August and are in prime condition after their spring and summer growing season. Ice fishing in lakes during the winter can also provide excellent sport for those willing to brave the elements.

Like its close relative, the Eastern brook trout, the Dolly Varden is excellent for eating. Catch one which has been at sea for awhile, and you have a fish unsurpassed in quality. The flesh is pink, firm, and full of flavor.

Stocked Lakes

In order to provide additional angler opportunity and diversity to Valdez fisheries, state hatcheries stock rainbow trout in 3 area lakes. Every spring fish are released into Worthington and Blueberry lakes in the Thompson Pass area off the Richardson Highway; and in Ruth Pond in downtown Valdez.

VALDEZ AREA

King Salmon	Late May through early July.
Pink Salmon	Mid-June through late July.
Silver Salmon	Mid-July through late August.

LONG BAY

Red Salmon	Early June through mid-July.
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UNAKWIK

Pink Salmon	Mid-July through late August.
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MARINE FISHERIES

Halibut	Peak early June - mid-August. Closed in January.
Lingcod	Peak early July - late September. Closed Jan. 1 - June 30.
Rockfish	Available year-round.
Shrimp	Available April 15 - September 15.

For information about camping, accommodations, fishing guides, and other visitor services, contact the agencies listed in this publication, or the Alaska Travel Industry Association at 2600 Cordova Street, Suite 201, Anchorage, Alaska, 99503
web: www.travelalaska.com email: info@AlaskaTIA.org



RECREATIONAL FISHING SERIES PRODUCED BY:

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Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Division of Sport Fish

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