



Western Prince William Sound

Whittier
Esther Lake
Coghill River
Eshamy Lagoon
Main Bay

Alaska's Prince William Sound

This publication covers fisheries from Whittier to Unakwik Inlet (see map on page 2). For more information about Eastern Prince William Sound sport fishing, pick up the Valdez or Cordova publications.

The Western Prince William Sound area includes the community of Whittier and the villages of Chenega and Tatitlek. The Alaska Marine Highway ferry system regularly serves Whittier, and will “whistle stop” at Chenega and Tatitlek.

The Sound is an incredibly rich resource for native populations all five species of Pacific salmon, as well as halibut, rockfish, lingcod, sharks, steelhead trout, rainbow trout, cutthroat trout, and Dolly Varden char.

Salmon are also raised in state and private nonprofit hatcheries in the Sound and are available for sport anglers. Pink and silver salmon are the most abundant salmon species, providing most of the sport fishing opportunities in Prince William Sound.

Hotels, fishing charters, camping

Since the only road-accessible fisheries are at Whittier and Valdez, many sport anglers charter a boat to access the fisheries. For charter information, as well as hotels and



Western Prince William Sound's many sheltered bays, such as Eshamy, provide good anchorages as well as good fishing.

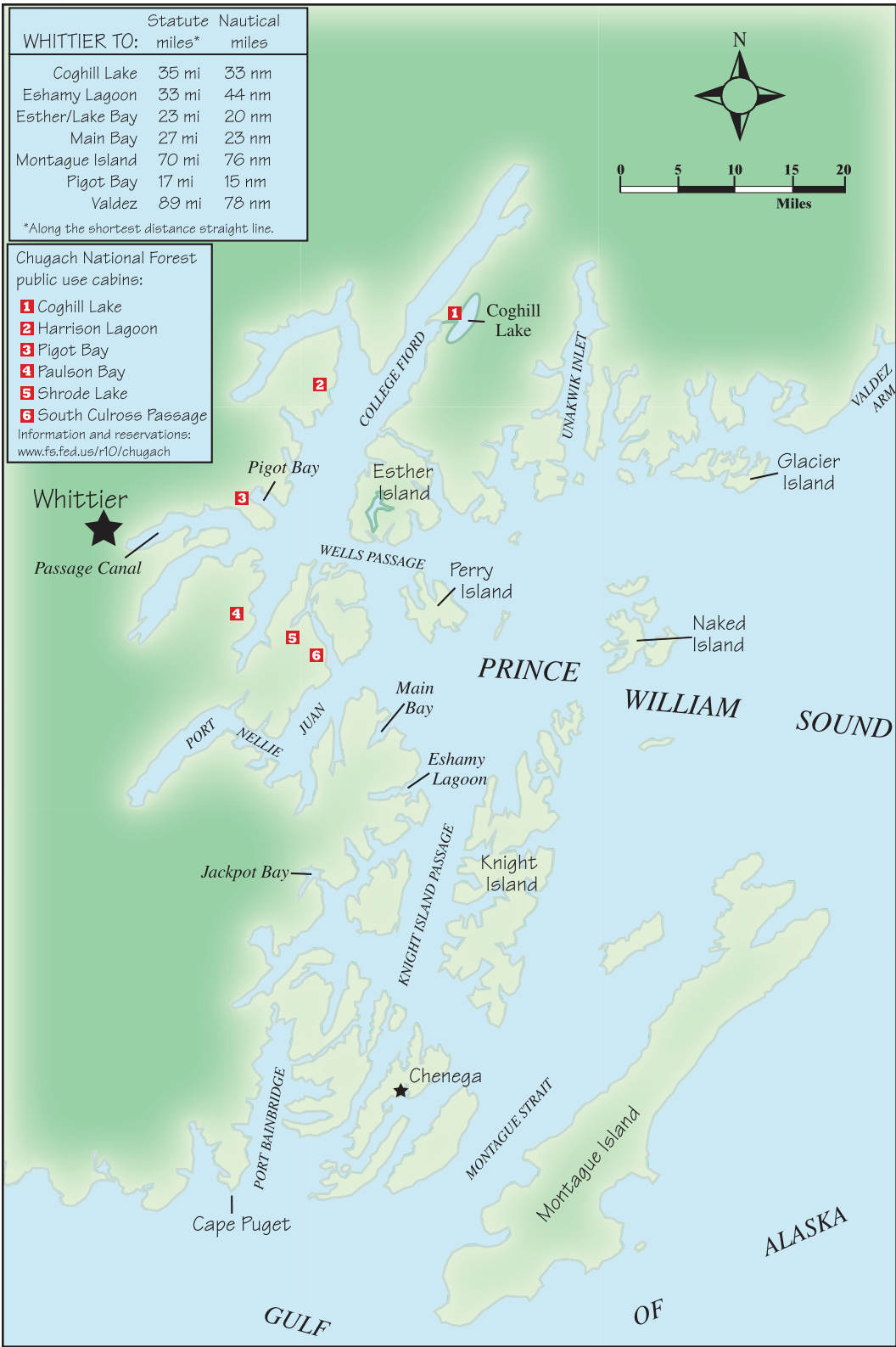
camping information, contact the Chamber of Commerce or visitor's center for the city you'd like to fish from.

Whittier Chamber of Commerce
P.O. Box 607
Whittier, Alaska, 99693
www.whittieralaska.com
e-mail info@whittieralaska.com

Valdez Visitor & Convention Bureau
P.O. Box 1603
Valdez, Alaska 99686
(907) 835-2984
www.valdezalaska.org

For specific opening dates, daily limits, regulations, and special tackle restrictions, consult the Southcentral Alaska regulation booklet.

Western Prince William Sound also has six public cabins managed by the U.S. Forest Service's Chugach National Forest (see map on page 2). For more information, go to www.reserveusa.com, or contact the Chugach National Forest Glacier Ranger District at Forest Station Road, P.O. Box 129, Girdwood, Alaska 99587 (907) 783-3242 or on the web at www.fs.fed.us/r10/chugach



General map of the Western Prince William Sound 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 arh.noaa.gov



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The Alaska Department of Fish and Game administers all programs and activities free from discrimination based on race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, marital status, pregnancy, parenthood, or disability. The department administers all programs and activities in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.

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.

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.

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 out of the Anchorage office, with an area office located in Cordova.

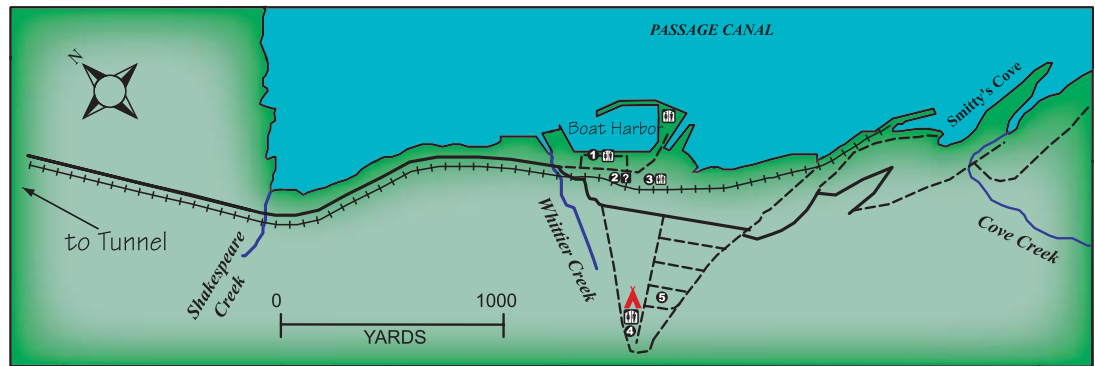
At times the Division issues in-season regulatory changes, called Emergency Orders, primarily in response to under- or over-abundance of fish. Emergency Orders are sent to radio stations, newspapers, and television stations, and posted on our web site.

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



Whittier, Alaska. The city is accessed through a toll tunnel. For more information and a schedule, visit www.dot.state.ak.us/creg/whittiertunnel

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.sf.adfg.state.ak.us

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.admin.adfg.state.ak.us/license

"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

There are over 200 streams in PWS that support natural returns of pink salmon. In addition, four private nonprofit hatcheries produce pink salmon.

Pink salmon have a two-year life cycle. Wild pink salmon fry do not rear in fresh water, instead, almost im-



Main Bay hatchery technicians tend the net pens. Prince William Sound supports large commercial fisheries. Please be courteous around commercial gear and boats. Waters near holding facilities are often closed to fishing. Check the regulation booklet and the Emergency Order web pages before heading out to fish.

mediately after emergence, they travel to near shore salt waters to feed. Pink salmon grow quickly, reaching 3.5 to 4 pounds before returning for spawning the following summer.

Pink salmon return to the Sound from mid-June through late August, with the peak typically occurring in late July. Noteworthy western sound pink salmon fisheries occur at Sawmill Bay on Evans Island, at Lake Bay, and Cannery Creek in Unakwik Inlet.

Medium-sized spinners or lures such as ¼ to ¾-oz. Pixees, Daredevles, or Vibrax in size 4-6 provide good action here. Fishing is generally best within a few hours either side of high tide.

Silver (coho) salmon

Western Prince William Sound's small, scattered wild silver salmon runs present a management challenge. To help relieve pressure and to provide diverse opportunity, hatchery silver salmon smolt are stocked at Chenega and Whittier in Western Prince William Sound.

Wild silver salmon spawn in Western Prince William Sound's freshwater streams August through October. After spawning, the adult fish die, leaving their eggs to hatch the following spring. Juvenile silvers 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. There are many factors that affect juvenile silver salmon survival in the fresh water stages of their life cycle. Flooding of their fresh water streams has the most impact on juveniles, which then affects the number and run timing of adult silvers.

Bay of Isles on Knight Island, Port Chalmers on Montague Island, Jackpot Bay, Culross Passage, Lake Bay on Esther Island, and Perry Island are some of the areas boat anglers report success for silvers. Both boat and shore anglers either fish where they see jumpers, or fish near a freshwater stream. Boat anglers out of Whittier troll or mooch for silvers around Pigot Point at the head of Passage Canal.

The peak for Whittier shore anglers is typically late August through early September, sometimes as late as early October.

While most anglers use spinners or lures on medium-action rods and at least 15-lb.-test monofilament, fishing herring or salmon roe suspended below a bobber is also popular and productive. Silvers strike readily at lures, roe and streamer flies, making these aggressive and hard fighting fish a prime target of sport anglers.

Western PWS red (sockeye) salmon

Small runs of red salmon are available in the Sound during 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 Western PWS, Eshamy Lagoon, Coghill Lake, and Main Bay are favorite destinations for both sport anglers and commercial fishing boats.

Size 2-6 streamer flies on a 8-9 wt. fly rod, or small spinners and a medium-action spinning rod loaded with 15-20 lb. monofilament are popular sport methods. Some anglers report success with a size 1/0 bare red hook and a small flasher/dodger.

Coghill River

The most popular freshwater sport fishery for red salmon in western Prince William Sound is at the Coghill River. Reds begin returning in late June, peak in early July, and continue into August. Coghill can be accessed by boat from Whittier or by float plane into Coghill Lake. Anglers commonly troll or snag in the saltwater lagoon, or fish from shore at the outlet of the lake.

Typical escapement is 25,000 to 30,000 and typical commercial harvest is around 60,000.

Eshamy Lagoon

Strong returns in recent years make the Eshamy red salmon run a popular sport fishery in the western Sound. Recent weir count estimates range from 12,900 in 2004 to 41,800 in 2006. The Eshamy return usually begins in mid- to late July, but in recent years it has peaked in early to mid-September. Eshamy can be accessed by boat from Whittier or Valdez, or by float planes that land in the lagoon. Anglers fish in the lagoon or at the outlet of Eshamy Creek.

Main Bay

The Main Bay hatchery run begins to return in early June and peaks in late June to early July, but anglers can catch a few fish as late as early August. 400,000 to 700,000 sockeye salmon return to the Main Bay hatchery every year. Sport anglers troll at the mouth of the bay, or anchor (out of the path of commercial boats) and cast into schools of jumpers.

Fishing for 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.

Stocked king salmon are available in Whittier through an ADF&G state hatchery program. Wild “feeder” king salmon can sometimes be caught in Western Prince William Sound.

The Whittier stocked kings begin to return in mid- to late May and are available to anglers through mid-June. Most anglers head to the Small Boat Harbor or Smitty’s Cove, or wherever jumpers are spotted. Anglers fish all tidal stages.

Boat anglers also find success trolling for kings. Boats troll off the points in Passage Canal, or head out to Ester Island. Anglers have also had success in Lake Bay on Ester Island in late May and June.

Most fish harvested by shore anglers are snagged, which is legal in Prince William Sound salt waters outside the Whittier Small Boat Harbor. Many king salmon anglers also use larger lures and spoons, such as ½- to 2-oz. Pixees, Dardevles, Vibrax, or herring under a bobber. Trolling anglers often add a dodger/flasher.

Chum (dog) 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.

In Western PWS, chum are usually taken by anglers targeting other species of salmon. Chums are especially hard fighters that will take a variety of flies and lures. Hatchery chum runs to Esther Island and Port Chalmers are fished by sport anglers.

Halibut

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 Western Prince William Sound waters, on or near the bottom over mud, sand, or gravel banks and below steep drop-offs.

Most popular methods include herring or fish heads on a circle hook, or large white jigs. Average weight of harvested fish ranges from 8-75 pounds, although fish 350 pounds and over are sometimes caught.

Rockfish and Lingcod

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, so rockfish and lingcod both 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. Certain species of adult rockfish can reach 40 inches and 30 pounds.

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 Western 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

Northern (formerly called “pink”), spot, and coonstripe shrimp are the main species in Prince William Sound. Northern shrimp occur over the widest depth range. Spot and coonstripe shrimp typically are found in shallower water and over rock piles or debris-covered bottoms. Spot and sidestripe shrimp are the species most often caught in the recreational fishery.

There are regulations on buoys, pot construction and pot limits, please check the regulation booklet.

Clams

There are few places in Western PWS where clams are available. Look for butter and littleneck clams on cobble beaches around the sound.

Fresh water fishing

Around the Western Sound's many salmon streams, anglers often find Dolly Varden feeding on out-migrating fry and smolt in the spring and early summer, and eggs and flesh in the late summer and fall. For an on-shore break, try light

tackle where streams empty into salt waters.

Very small populations of cutthroat trout can occasionally be found in Western Sound fresh waters. Prince William Sound is the extreme northern and western range of this fish, so management is conservative and special regulations apply.

There are no native populations of rainbow trout or Arctic grayling in the Western Sound. Rainbows are stocked in landlocked lakes near Valdez and Cordova.

GENERAL WESTERN PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND FISHERIES

Red Salmon	Mid-July through late August.
Pink Salmon	Mid-June through mid-September, peak late July - late August.
Dolly Varden	May-June and again July - August.

COGHILL LAKE Red Salmon Early June through mid-July.

ESHAMY LAGOON Red Salmon Mid-July through late August.

LAKE BAY, Esther Island King Salmon Late May through early July.
Silver Salmon Early August through early September.
Pink Salmon Mid-July through late August.
Chum Salmon Early June through early July.

MAIN BAY Red Salmon Early May through mid-September, peak late June - late August.
Chum Salmon Mid-June.

UNAKWIK INLET Pink Salmon Mid-July through late August.

WHITTIER & Passage Canal King Salmon Late May through early July.
Silver Salmon Mid-July through late August.

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 brochure, or the Alaska Travel Industry Association, 2600 Cordova Street, Suite 201, Anchorage, Alaska 99501
web: travelalaska.com e-mail: info@AlaskaTIA.org



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Division of Sport Fish

333 Raspberry Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99518

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Sport Fish Information Center

(907) 267-2218

M-F 8am - 5 pm

Except on state & federal holidays