

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



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2019 PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND SALMON FISHERY INFORMATION

General Information

This outlook is provided to assist the commercial salmon industry in planning for the 2019 season in the Prince William Sound (PWS) Management Area (Area E). Forecasts for commercial common property fishery (CCPF) harvests by species are summarized in Table 1 with detailed Area E forecasts on ADF&G's web site:

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

Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation (PWSAC) hatchery forecasts can be found on the PWSAC web site:

<https://pwsac.com/2019/01/2019-pwsac-hatchery-return-forecast/>

Valdez Fisheries Development Association (VFDA) hatchery forecasts can be found on the VFDA web site:

<https://www.valdezfisheries.org/forecasted-returns/>

Management of PWS commercial salmon fisheries occurs from the Cordova area office. As in past years, fishery announcements from the Cordova ADF&G office will routinely occur at 2:00 p.m. Announcement recordings will be available for gillnet fisheries at 907-424-7535 and seine fisheries at 907-424-7345. Additionally, announcement recordings are available in Anchorage at 907-267-2843. Daily announcements are compiled and can be found on the ADF&G web site at:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.main>

The first announcement concerning the Copper River District will be issued between May 1 and May 8.

Gillnet Fishery

Copper River District

The 2019 inriver goal past the Miles Lake sonar is 618,000–1.01million salmon. The upper Copper River sustainable escapement goal (SEG) is 360,000–750,000 wild sockeye salmon, and the

Copper River delta SEG is 55,000–130,000 sockeye salmon. The components of the inriver goal are as follows:

Spawning escapement	360,000– 750,000 sockeye
Other salmon	17,500 salmon
Subsistence	70,400 salmon
Personal use harvest	125,600 salmon
Sport fishery	15,000 salmon
Gulkana broodstock	19,800 sockeye
Gulkana Hatchery surplus	9,400 sockeye
Total	618,000–1.01 million

The standard commercial fishing schedule is two evenly-spaced fishing periods per week with the first period each week starting on Mondays at 7:00 a.m. Fishing effort, harvest, and escapement trends on the Copper River Delta and at Miles Lake sonar station will inform the department’s decision on harvest opportunity.

The first commercial fishing period of the season in the Copper River District is anticipated to occur during the week of May 12. The 2019 CCPF harvest projections for the Copper River District are 756,000 sockeye and 235,000 coho salmon (Table 1). The Chinook salmon common property harvest (all fisheries) projection is 31,000 fish. The 2019 sockeye salmon harvest forecast is 39% below the 10-year (2009–2018) average of 1.25 million fish. Based on the recent poor Chinook and sockeye salmon production, a conservative management approach will be implemented. For Chinook salmon conservation, the ‘inside closure area’, as defined in 5AAC 24.350(1)(B), will likely be closed during early season fishing periods beyond regulatory requirements; this area may be expanded at the start of the season to include waters inside the barrier islands east of Coffee Creek West (60° 14.13’ N. lat., 144° 58.31’ W. long.).

Beginning in early to mid-August when coho salmon harvest becomes predominant, the Copper and Bering River districts will be managed for coho salmon. The standard management strategy for coho salmon is one or two 24-hour periods per week depending on escapement and harvest levels.

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. **Permit holders are encouraged to call the Cordova office at 907-424-3212 to provide preliminary harvest reports to assist with inseason harvest tracking.**

Bering River District

The recent 10-year average (2009–2018) CCPF harvests for the Bering River District are 2,000 sockeye and 67,000 coho salmon. The western portion of the Bering River District will open concurrent with the Copper River District to alleviate enforcement concerns in the line fishery along the district boundary. A broader Bering River District opening is expected only after sockeye salmon escapement is tracking to achieve the SEG. 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.

Eshamy District

PWSAC's Main Bay Hatchery CCPF harvest forecast is 1.37 million sockeye salmon. The management strategy in 2019 will be to provide two periods per week in the hatchery subdistrict. Short duration periods are anticipated in the Crafton Island Subdistrict based on the recent trend in Coghill River wild sockeye salmon escapement. Eshamy District is expected to open for the 2019 season on June 3.

Eshamy River escapement will not be assessed in 2019 and no forecast was produced this year. Beginning in early to mid-July, fishing time and area in Crafton Island Subdistrict will be driven by harvest of wild pink and sockeye salmon in Eshamy District, and the strength of wild pink and chum salmon escapement in the Eshamy, Northwestern, Coghill, and Northern districts.

Coghill District

The 2019 Coghill Lake sockeye salmon total run forecast is 473,000 fish with an SEG of 20,000–60,000 fish. The chum salmon run to Wally Noerenberg Hatchery (WNH) is forecast to be 1.99 million fish. PWSAC requires 843,000 (42%) chum salmon for cost recovery and broodstock, leaving 1.15 million (58%) for the CCPF. Coghill District is expected to open for the 2019 season on June 3.

Area restrictions may be implemented by emergency order for the conservation of Coghill Lake sockeye salmon and Port Wells wild stock chum and pink salmon. The management strategy in 2019 will be to provide two periods per week. Based on the recent variability in sockeye salmon escapement to Coghill River and increased fishing effort in the Coghill District, medium duration (36 to 48 hour) periods are anticipated in areas outside the WNH terminal area. If sockeye salmon escapement is within the anticipated range and sockeye salmon harvest rates in Coghill District indicate a strong run, the Port Wells area will be regularly opened north to the markers near Coghill Lagoon. If the Coghill River weir counts exceed the escapement goal, fishing area will be expanded to the mouth of Coghill River. If the drift gillnet fleet does not appear to be able to harvest available surplus Coghill Lake sockeye salmon, the purse seine fleet may be allowed to fish north of 61° latitude in the Coghill District.

WNH coho salmon are present in the Coghill District fishery from early August through late September. PWSAC projects the 2019 run to WNH to be 230,000 coho salmon, requiring 2,700 fish for broodstock, with all remaining fish available to the CCPF.

Unakwik District

The 2019 wild stock sockeye salmon commercial harvest 10-year average (2009–2018) in Unakwik Inlet is 2,750 fish. 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 the Coghill District. Unakwik District is expected to open for the 2019 season on June 13.

Port Chalmers Subdistrict

The drift gillnet gear group has exclusive access to the Port Chalmers Subdistrict chum salmon fishery in 2019. The CCPF in Port Chalmers is anticipated to begin on Monday, June 3 with a harvest forecast of 250,000 chum salmon.

Purse Seine Fishery

The 2019 pink salmon total run forecast for PWS is 66.02 million fish, of which 57.88 million will be available for CCPF harvest. This pink salmon total run forecast includes 23.56 million natural stock fish, 22.30 million PWSAC hatchery fish, and 20.16 million Valdez Fisheries Development Association (VFDA) fish. Approximately 3.43 million (17%) of the projected 20.16 million VFDA pink salmon return will be needed for cost recovery and broodstock leaving 16.72 million for CCPF. Approximately 2.87 million (13%) of the projected 22.30 million pink salmon run to the PWSAC hatcheries will be needed for cost recovery and broodstock. The remaining 19.43 million PWSAC pink salmon will be available for common property harvest. Based on the department's natural stock pink salmon forecast of 23.56 million fish, there is a potential CCPF of 21.73 million natural pink salmon. The department will manage for each district's aerial index escapement goal for a cumulative SEG of 1,121,000–2,555,000 pink salmon.

The 2019 chum salmon forecast is 3.10 million fish. The majority, 2.57 million (83%), are from PWSAC hatchery production, with 330,000 fish returning to the Armin F. Koernig hatchery (AFK). Based on the department's natural chum salmon forecast of 527,000 fish, there is a potential common property harvest of 327,000 natural chum salmon. The department will manage for each district's escapement goal for a combined total of 200,000 fish.

The PWS purse seine fishery will begin on Monday, June 3 targeting the enhanced chum salmon return to the AFK hatchery. At the AFK hatchery, a regular schedule of two extended fishing periods per week is anticipated at the start of the season. A reduced schedule will be implemented when necessary to limit the harvest of salmon bound for other areas of PWS. Starting on Thursday, June 17 daily fishing periods will be used to allow for more frequent monitoring of purse seine harvests.

The general waters of the eight purse seine districts will be managed based on the strength of natural stocks. Hatchery subdistricts will be managed based on the strength of both natural and enhanced stocks. If the 2019 natural stock pink salmon forecast is realized it would be the second largest natural run on record, and well above the 2009–2017 odd-year average return of 14.23 million fish. Liberal fishing time and area is expected if returns are as strong as forecast. Pink and chum salmon escapement will be evaluated during weekly aerial surveys to determine the frequency and duration of openings.

The department has used yellow Salmon Harvest Task Force markers in the past to close terminal natural stock areas for both escapement and quality concerns. The coordinates for these markers are available to the public at the Cordova ADF&G office, online, and are included in an annual fishery news release.

Valdez Arm, Valdez Narrows, and Port Valdez will be managed for VFDA's cost recovery and broodstock needs. Openings in Valdez Arm and Port Valdez designed to target VFDA pink salmon will be based on the strength of the enhanced run and VFDA's progress towards achieving the pink salmon cost recovery goal. CCPF openings targeting VFDA fish generally start during the first week of July with daily 14-hour periods (6 a.m. to 8 p.m.). In the remainder of the Eastern District, openings will be based on natural stock escapements. Port Valdez will be closed to the CCPF north of a line from Entrance Point to Potato Point beginning on August 15. Valdez Narrows Subdistrict will open on September 3 to target surplus VFDA coho salmon. The VFDA enhanced coho salmon forecast is 87,000 fish with an anticipated CCPF harvest of 33,000 fish.

The AFK, Cannery Creek Hatchery (CCH), and WNH pink salmon runs will be managed collectively to achieve PWSAC's cost recovery and broodstock goals. 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 CCPF harvest to maintain pink salmon quality. Once PWSAC initiates cost recovery, they intend to complete at least 70–80% of their pink salmon cost recovery harvest goal prior to recommending an opening of the CCPF in the hatchery subdistricts. ADF&G will work closely with PWSAC to achieve the pink salmon cost recovery goal as rapidly as possible to allow for an orderly and consistent CCPF. The department evaluates late pink salmon run progress based on cost recovery and CCPF harvest rates, broodstock collections, sex ratios, stock composition estimates, and natural stock escapement data.

Table 1.—ADF&G, PWSAC, and VFDA commercial common property harvest projections for the 2019 salmon fishery in the Prince William Sound and Copper/Bering River areas.

PINK SALMON - HARVEST ESTIMATE (Thousands)	
Natural Stocks	21,730
Hatchery Stocks ^a	
Solomon Gulch	16,723
Armin F. Koernig	7,792
Wally Noerenberg	4,298
Cannery Creek	7,340
Natural & Hatchery	57,883
CHUM SALMON - HARVEST ESTIMATE (Thousands)	
Natural Stocks	327
Hatchery Stocks ^a	
Wally Noerenberg	1,147
Armin F. Koernig	330
Port Chalmers	250
Natural & Hatchery	2,054
COHO SALMON - HARVEST ESTIMATE (Thousands)	
PWS Natural Stocks	No Projection
Copper River	235
Bering River	67
Hatchery Stocks ^a	
Solomon Gulch	33
Wally Noerenberg	230
Natural & Hatchery	565
SOCKEYE SALMON - HARVEST ESTIMATE (Thousands)	
Copper River	756
Bering River	2
Coghill Lake	443
PWS Remainder	52
PWS Hatchery Stocks ^a	
Main Bay	1,396
Natural & Hatchery	2,649
CHINOOK SALMON - HARVEST ESTIMATE (Thousands)	
Natural Stocks	
Copper River	No Projection

^a Potential hatchery contributions to the commercial 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.