

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES



NEWS RELEASE

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Prince William Sound Salmon Fishery News Release #19

GILLNET FISHERIES: PWSAC has reported a large reduction in chum salmon broodstock in the WNH SHA and has suspended cost recovery. PWSAC currently estimates 110,000 chum salmon in the SHA, a reduction from the June 30 estimate of over 200,000 fish. A minimum of 220,000 chum salmon will likely be needed to complete egg-take. PWSAC has recommended that the Granite Bay and Esther subdistricts remain closed. Coghill River weir sockeye salmon passage is below anticipated daily minimum projections through historical peak run timing. Conservative management actions are being taken in Coghill and Eshamy districts to allow wild stock run entry through migratory corridors.

COPPER RIVER DISTRICT: The Copper River District will open to commercial salmon fishing for a **24-hour** period from 7:00 a.m. Thursday, July 4 to 7:00 a.m. Friday, July 5. An extension of this fishing period is possible pending results of the next aerial survey.

The grass bank marker line is defined in 5AAC 24.350(1)(A) with the exception of this year's extension of the closure line across Little Softuk (**see bold font below**). This closure line is defined with the following points:

<i>Point</i>	<i>Latitude</i>	<i>Longitude</i>
Point Whitshed South	60° 26.49' N.	145° 52.86' W.
Alaganik Slough North	60° 24.65' N.	145° 36.70' W.
Pete Dahl East	60° 20.44' N.	145° 29.14' W.
West Kokenhenik	60° 14.88' N.	145° 10.01' W.
East "East Side"	60° 14.83' N.	145° 03.36' W.
Coffee Creek East	60° 14.19' N.	144° 58.01' W.
Charlie Mohr North	60° 15.15' N.	144° 56.43' W.
Martin River North	60° 15.29' N.	144° 52.52' W.
Strawberry Reef	60° 13.93' N.	144° 50.66' W.
Little Softuk	60° 13.16' N.	144° 41.38' W.

Waters north of this line, within sloughs, and in Boswell Bay within the bay (5 AAC 24.350(1)(A)) are closed to commercial and subsistence salmon fishing during all periods.

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, including the Chinook salmon inside closure area, will open to subsistence fishing from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. on all Saturdays between June 15 and October 31.** Subsistence permits may be obtained at the Cordova ADF&G office during regular business hours (Monday – Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.). **Subsistence permits are not available outside of regular office hours.**

Cumulative sonar count through 7/2 is 727,760 fish, whereas 457,244 fish are projected by this date. The 0600 count for 7/3 is 1,020 fish. North bank sonar temporarily ceased operations at 4:30 p.m., July 2, due to high water. For the week ending June 29, the actual Copper River Delta survey count was 32,140 sockeye salmon versus an anticipated range of 17,627 – 41,665. Preliminary harvest estimate from the 24-hour period that started on Monday, July 1 was 61,900 sockeye, 28,200 pink, and 100 Chinook salmon with 353 deliveries reported.

BERING RIVER DISTRICT: The Bering River District will open to commercial salmon fishing for a 24-hour period from 7:00 a.m. Thursday, July 4 to 7:00 a.m. Friday, July 5. For the week ending June 29, the actual Bering River District survey count was 13,350 sockeye salmon versus an anticipated range of 6,092 – 13,402.

COGHILL DISTRICT: The Coghill District will close to commercial salmon fishing at the end of the current fishing period. The Coghill District may open to commercial salmon fishing on short notice, anticipated to be no less than 12 hours, depending on chum and sockeye salmon abundance indices in the coming days. As of July 2, 9,198 sockeye salmon passed the Coghill River weir versus a minimum cumulative anticipated of 7,411 fish. Preliminary harvest estimate from the 84-hour period that started on Thursday, June 27 was 46,300 sockeye, 15,600 chum, and 21,400 pink salmon with 345 deliveries reported.

ESHAMY DISTRICT: The Eshamy District, **excluding the AGZ inside a line of buoys in front of the barrier seine**, will open to commercial gillnet harvest for a **24-hour** period starting at 8:00 am on Friday, July 5. The AGZ will open to **SET GILLNET** permit holders only during this fishing period. Preliminary harvest estimate from the 36-hour period that started on Monday, July 1 was 44,900 sockeye, 100,600 chum, and 12,900 pink salmon with 639 deliveries reported.

MONTAGUE DISTRICT: The Port Chalmers Subdistrict will open to commercial drift gillnet fishing for an **84-hour** period starting at 8:00 am on Thursday, July 4 with an additional **60-hour** period beginning at 8:00 am on Monday, July 8. A regular schedule of two fishing periods per week is anticipated to remain in effect until further notice. The western boundary of the Port Chalmers Subdistrict is defined by lines from 60°20.00'N., 147°26.59'W. to 60°14.75'N., 147°35.35'W. to 60°02.50'N., 147°44.41'W. **Regulatory closed waters and anadromous stream closures within the Port Chalmers Subdistrict will not be in effect until further notice.** Preliminary harvest estimate from the 84-hour period that started on Thursday, June 27 was 51,600 chum and 1,400 pink salmon with 221 deliveries reported.

UNAKWIK DISTRICT: The Unakwik District will open to commercial drift gillnet and purse seine harvest for a **24-hour** period starting at 8:00 am on Friday, July 5.

SEINE FISHERIES: VFDA began its cost recovery sales program on June 22, and has collected approximately 73% of the assigned pink salmon revenue goal through July 2. VFDA reports that cost recovery pink salmon harvest in Port Valdez on Tuesday, July 2 resulted in an average weight of 3.2 pounds per fish and 31% female.

A fishing opportunity targeting VFDA pink salmon is anticipated for Friday, July 5, in portions of eastern Prince William Sound, with time and area to be announced on Thursday, July 4. Aerial surveys of Eastern and Northern PWS were flown on Monday, July 1 and indicated that pink salmon escapements are within expected ranges for the date and chum salmon escapements are below expected ranges for the date. The department does not anticipate that these stocks will sustain a

consistent schedule of openings at this time. The next aerial survey of Eastern and Northern districts is scheduled for Monday, July 8.

SOUTHWESTERN DISTRICT: The AFK Hatchery THA and SHA will open to purse seine fishing for a 36-hour period at 8:00 am on Thursday, July 4. **Anadromous stream closures within the AFK Hatchery THA and SHA will not be in effect until further notice.** Preliminary harvest estimate from the 12-hour period that started on Monday, July 1 was 18,315 chum and 842 sockeye salmon with 61 deliveries reported.

Copies of the updated regulation booklet, *2019–2021 Commercial Salmon Fishing Regulations for Prince William Sound*, are available in the Cordova ADFG office.

The next scheduled seine fisheries announcement is anticipated to be at 2:00 p.m. Thursday, July 4.

The next scheduled salmon fisheries announcement is anticipated to be at 2:00 p.m. Saturday, July 6.

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 (<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/webdam/download/75366778>).
- 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 <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/endangered-species-conservation/endangered-threatened-and-candidate-species-alaska> 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 NOAA at 907-586-7221.