

# ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

## DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES



### NEWS RELEASE

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### Prince William Sound Salmon Fishery News Release #37

**COPPER RIVER DISTRICT:** The Copper River District will open to commercial salmon fishing for a **24-hour** period from 7:00 a.m. Monday, July 22 to 7:00 a.m. Tuesday, July 23.

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.
<b>Little Softuk</b>	<b>60° 13.16' N.</b>	<b>144° 41.38' W.</b>

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 7/19 is 965,604 fish, whereas 547,634 fish are projected by this date. The 0600 count for 7/20 is 3,636 fish. For the week ending 7/20, the actual Copper River Delta survey count was 25,431 sockeye salmon versus an anticipated range of 31,424 – 74,276. Preliminary harvest estimate from the 24-hour period that started on Thursday, July 18 was 26,927 sockeye, 2,792 pink, and 34 Chinook salmon with 189 deliveries reported. Period 17, the 24-hour period that started on July 11, sockeye salmon contributions were estimated as 81% wild and 19% Gulkana Hatchery.

**BERING RIVER DISTRICT:** The Bering River District will open to commercial salmon fishing for a **24-hour** period from 7:00 a.m. Monday, July 22 to 7:00 a.m. Tuesday, July 23. For the week ending July 20, the actual Bering River District survey count was 16,140 sockeye salmon versus an anticipated range of 11,004 – 24,208.

**COGHILL DISTRICT:** Waters of Esther Subdistrict north of a latitude line at 60° 46.00' N., waters of the Granite Bay Subdistrict, waters of the WNH THA and SHA, excluding waters of the SHA inside the barrier seine, and waters of Port Wells and College Fiord, north of 60° 55.81' N., and east of a line from Pakenham Point (61° 00.45' N., 148° 04.85' W.) to 60° 55.81' N., 148° 10.92' W., will open to commercial drift gillnet for **36 hours**, from 8:00 a.m. Monday, July 22 to 8:00 a.m. Tuesday, July 23. Additionally, waters of the WNH THA and SHA, excluding waters of the SHA inside the barrier seine, and waters of Port Wells and College Fiord, north of 60° 55.81' N., and east of a line from Pakenham Point (61° 00.45' N., 148° 04.85' W.) to 60° 55.81' N., 148° 10.92' W., will remain open to commercial drift gillnet harvest for an additional **24 hours** starting at 8:00 pm on Tuesday, July 23. **Regulatory closed waters pertaining to the Coghill River, as specified in 5 AAC 24.350(6)(B)), will not be in effect during this fishing period. Commercial fishing will not be permitted within the bed or channel of the Coghill River at any stage of the tide.** As of July 19, 28,680 sockeye salmon had passed the Coghill River weir versus a minimum cumulative anticipated of 17,636 fish. Preliminary harvest estimate from the 60-hour period that started on Monday, July 15 was 33,718 sockeye, 109,188 chum, and 19,360 pink salmon with 436 deliveries reported.

**ESHAMY DISTRICT:** The Eshamy District, excluding waters south the latitude of Loomis Creek (60° 29.44'N.) and excluding the Main Bay Subdistrict, will open to commercial gillnet harvest for a **24-hour** period starting at 8:00 am on Monday, July 22. The Main Bay Subdistrict will open to commercial gillnet harvest for a **36-hour** period starting at 8:00 am on Monday, July 22. The AGZ will open to **DRIFT GILLNET** permit holders only during this fishing period. Preliminary harvest estimate from the 36-hour period that started on Thursday, July 18 was 19,213 sockeye, 2,388 chum, and 6,268 pink salmon with 125 deliveries reported.

**MONTAGUE DISTRICT:** The Port Chalmers Subdistrict, north of 60°12.56' N. lat. and east a line from 60° 12.56'N., 147° 20.25'W. to 60° 20.00'N., 147° 14.30'W., will open to commercial drift gillnet fishing for a **60-hour** period starting at 8:00 am on Monday, July 22 with an additional **84-hour** period beginning at 8:00 am on Thursday, July 25. **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 60-hour period that started on Monday, July 15 was 74,747 chum and 441 pink salmon with 93 deliveries reported.

**UNAKWIK DISTRICT:** The Unakwik District will remain closed to commercial drift gillnet and purse seine harvest.

**SEINE FISHERIES:** All Prince William Sound purse seine fisheries will be closed on Sunday, July 21 to allow for further evaluation of fishery performance data. VFDA currently estimates there are approximately 350,000-400,000 pink salmon within the SHA. VFDA needs approximately 409,000 pink salmon for broodstock. Preliminary contribution estimates from the 14-hour period that started on Thursday, July 18 in the Eastern District were 44% SGH and 56% wild pink salmon.

Aerial surveys of all districts are expected to be conducted as soon as possible, weather depending, to further assess the strength of wild stock returns throughout PWS, **but recent aerial survey and harvest data currently indicate a below average wild stock return.** Based on the most recent aerial survey data, the department does not anticipate that these stocks will sustain a consistent schedule of

openings at this time. **Additional wild stock fishing opportunities will be dependent on aerial survey assessments, harvest data, and continued run entry of wild stocks.**

The Coghill River weir has passed 30,500 pink salmon as of 7/20, which is well below the odd year average (2013-2017) of 209,000 pink salmon. **The Coghill District will transition to seine management once harvest is likely to be predominantly pink salmon.** Preliminary harvest estimate from the 60-hour period that started on Monday, July 15 was 109,188 chum, 33,718 sockeye, and 19,360 pink salmon with 436 deliveries reported.

**SOUTHWESTERN DISTRICT:** The AFK Hatchery THA and SHA will open to purse seine fishing for a 14-hour period at 6:00 am until 8:00 pm on Monday, July 22. A regular schedule of three fishing periods per week (Monday, Thursday, and Saturday) is anticipated to remain in effect until further notice. **Anadromous stream closures within the AFK Hatchery THA and SHA will not be in effect until further notice.**

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. Sunday, July 21.**

**The next scheduled salmon fisheries announcement is anticipated to be at 2:00 p.m. Wednesday, July 24.**

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.

