

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES



NEWS RELEASE

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Prince William Sound Salmon Fishery News Release #38

SEINE FISHERIES: It is estimated that 922,000 pink salmon were harvested in PWS on Saturday, July 20. The cumulative PWS pink salmon harvest through July 20 is estimated at 7.8 million CPF and 1.2 million VFDA cost recovery fish, for a total of 9 million fish. The 5-year odd-year average (2009–2017) cumulative PWS pink salmon harvest (cost recovery and CPF fish) through July 20 is 16.2 million fish.

VFDA currently estimates there are approximately 350,000 pink salmon within the SHA. **VFDA needs approximately 409,000 pink salmon for broodstock and is recommending a closure within Port Valdez and the Valdez Arm in order to build broodstock within the SHA.**

Aerial surveys of the Northern, Coghill, Northwestern, and Eshamy districts were flown on Saturday, July 20, and indicated that pink salmon escapements are below expected ranges for the date within the Northern, Northwestern, and Eshamy districts and within expected ranges in the Coghill District. **Based on the most recent aerial survey and harvest 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 and increased run entry of wild stocks. The next aerial survey for the Eastern, Northern, and Southeastern districts is scheduled for Monday, July 22 and Tuesday, July 23.

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.

COGHILL DISTRICT: Waters of the WNH SHA, excluding waters inside a line of corks in front of the barrier seine, will open to commercial purse seine fishing for a **12-hour fishing period, from 8:00 am until 8:00 pm, on Monday, July 22.** Regulation 5 AAC 24.368(f) states that “seine gear may be used in the Esther Subdistrict for the purpose of preventing the deterioration of fish quality of the harvestable surplus of chum salmon that is not being adequately harvested by the drift gillnet fleet”.

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. Monday, July 22.

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.