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Advisory Announcement

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SOUTHEAST ALASKA SALMON DRIFT GILLNET FISHERY ANNOUNCEMENT

This announcement is intended to provide information on salmon run size expectations and management actions for the 2023 Southeast Alaska (SEAK) drift gillnet fishery. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) has completed a management plan for the 2023 season, but it will likely not be published prior to the start of the season. A general overview of the management approach and objectives for the Southeast Alaska drift gillnet fishery may be referenced in the *2022 Southeast Alaska Drift Gillnet Management Plan* located on the ADF&G website at: https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareasoutheast.salmon_managementplans. The public is cautioned that the 2022 management plan may contain outdated information regarding fishery area descriptions, maps, dates, and to refer to 2023 advisory announcements for current information. For detailed information on hatchery terminal harvest area (THA) openings, refer to hatchery THA announcements released from April 18 to April 24, 2023, subsequent announcements, and hatchery organization's websites. Finally, for more detailed information on salmon runs to the Stikine and Taku Rivers and management plans for U.S. fisheries in Districts 6, 8, and 11 and Canadian inriver fisheries, refer to *Salmon Management and Enhancement Plans for the Stikine, Taku, and Alsek Rivers, 2023* posted on the Pacific Salmon Commission's (PSC) website at: https://www.psc.org/publications/technical-reports/technical-committee-reports/transboundary/

SOUTHEAST ALASKA SALMON RUN EXPECTATIONS

SEAK Chinook salmon stocks trend of low abundance continues. Over the past 5 years (2018–2022), the 11 monitored Chinook salmon index systems did not meet escapement goals 47% of the time. In 2022, 6 of the 11 monitored Chinook salmon index systems were below their escapement goal ranges. Of the 11 monitored stocks, ADF&G has more detailed stock assessment that allows for annual run forecasts for 5 of those stocks to be produced. In 2023, the ADF&G forecasted 4 of those 5 stocks total runs to be within their respective escapement goal ranges. Detailed Southeast Alaska Chinook salmon forecast information was released in an advisory announcement on December 9, 2022 (https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/applications/dcfnewsrelease/1447493979.pdf). The 2023 all-gear PST Chinook salmon allocation is 201,900 treaty Chinook salmon (non-Alaska hatchery-produced Chinook salmon that fall under the terms of the Pacific Salmon Treaty (PST). This year's all-gear harvest limit includes a 2% reduction that will serve as a buffer to avoid exceeding the all-gear limit and payback provisions within the PST.

For 2023, the preliminary forecast for the Nass River is for a total run of 459,000 sockeye salmon. The terminal run forecast for Stikine River sockeye salmon is 86,000 fish, which constitutes a below average run size (103,000 fish). The Taku River wild sockeye salmon terminal run is expected to be 169,000 fish, above the average terminal run size of 155,000 fish. The Taku River enhanced sockeye salmon run is again expected to be minimal and below the average terminal run size of approximately 11,000 fish. Chilkat and Chilkoot Lakes sockeye salmon runs are expected to be average to above average. DIPAC forecasts a Snettisham Hatchery sockeye salmon run of 151,000 fish in 2023, below the average of 160,000 fish but well above the 2021 and 2022 runs.

Excluding the Taku River coho salmon stock, wild coho salmon runs are not typically forecasted. The 2023 Taku River coho salmon terminal run forecast is 102,000 fish, above the 98,000 fish average.

The SEAK pink salmon harvest forecast for 2023 is 19 million fish, with a range of 12 to 29 million fish. The majority of the pink salmon harvest for the region is typically taken by purse seine gear.

The 2023 SEAK forecast of hatchery-produced summer chum salmon runs is 9.2 million fish. This includes 2.8 million fish to 5 Douglas Island and Pink and Chum (DIPAC) locations, 3.3 million fish to 6 Northern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association (NSRAA) locations, and 3.1 million fish to 6 Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association (SSRAA) locations. A portion of these runs will be harvested in traditional drift gillnet fisheries in Districts 1, 6, 8, 11, and 15, and in THA drift gillnet fisheries in Boat Harbor, Deep Inlet, Southeast Cove, Anita Bay, Neets Bay, and Nakat Inlet. Annual chum salmon harvests in regional drift gillnet fisheries have averaged 2.7 million fish.

DISTRICT 1–TREE POINT/PORTLAND CANAL

The District 1 drift gillnet fishery will open by regulation at 12:01 p.m., Sunday, June 18, in Section 1-B for an initial 4-day fishing period. The length of subsequent fishing periods will be based on effort levels and the strength of wild stock sockeye and chum salmon runs to Alaska and Canada waters until July 16 when the Pink Salmon Management Plan (PSMP) becomes effective.

As in recent years, the harvest of hatchery-produced summer chum salmon will not be included in the evaluation of wild stock fishery performance. The contribution of hatchery-produced salmon will be estimated by inseason analysis of otolith marked fish. Hatchery chum salmon have contributed as much as 90% of the weekly District 1 chum salmon harvest and as much as 70% of the annual chum salmon harvest in recent years. The PST requires the harvest of wild chum salmon stocks returning to Portland Canal streams be minimized to ensure adequate escapement of these stocks. As a result, no fishing should be expected in Section 1-A for Portland Canal chum salmon.

Pink salmon management will begin by regulation (5 AAC 33.360) July 16, and continue into August or early September depending on pink salmon run strength and timing. The District 1 drift gillnet fishery can anticipate fishing periods of 2, 4, and 5 days in accordance with the PSMP.

Fall management in District 1 starts after the end of the pink salmon season and varies depending on pink salmon run timing and strength. During the fall season, the District 1 drift gillnet fishery primarily targets fall coho and chum salmon. If the estimated exploitation rate of the Hugh Smith Lake coho salmon stock, which has reached 80% in some years, holds true for adjacent areas, then wild coho salmon stocks in the surrounding area may benefit from a closing date around September 18. Due to the uncertainties of escapement levels of stocks being harvested, the documented high exploitation rate of Hugh Smith Lake coho salmon in some years, and the preponderance of hatchery fish in the harvest, the department will continue to take a conservative approach to the fall season in District 1. However, fishing periods will be allowed after September 18 if fishery performance data and the Hugh Smith weir count indicates above average runs of wild coho salmon. During recent years, approximately 50% of the fall coho salmon and as much as 90% of the fall chum salmon have been hatchery fish.

The department will continue to monitor Hugh Smith Lake sockeye salmon. If escapement is below the lower bound of the escapement goal range of 8,000 fish, the department may consider the following actions:

1. In statistical weeks (SW) 29 and 30, the department may close that portion of the District 1 purse seine fishery east of a line from Quadra Point at 55°05.17′ N lat, 130°59.05′ W long, to Slate Island Light at 55°05.29′ N lat, 131°03.17′ W long, to Black Rock Light at 55°01.42′ N lat, 131°03.59′ W long, to a point on the mainland shore at 55°01.40′ N lat, 131°00.20′ W long.
2. In SWs 31, 32, and 33, the department may close that portion of the District 1 purse seine fishery east of a line from Foggy Point Light at 54°55.44′ N lat, 130°58.65′ W long, to Black Rock Light at 55°01.42′ N lat, 131°03.59′ W long, to the southernmost tip of Black Island at 55°07.85′ N lat, 131°04.78′ W long, and close the northern portion of the Section 1-B drift gillnet fishery to 1.0 nautical mile (nmi) south of the latitude of Foggy Point Light.

The Nass River sockeye salmon forecast provides an Annual Allowable Harvest (AAH) for the District 1 drift gillnet fishery of 35,190 Nass River sockeye salmon. Although the management intent shall be to harvest salmon at the AAH percentage, it is recognized that overages and underages will occur, and an accounting mechanism is required. The payback mechanism for the fishery is based on the number of fish a country is over or under its AAH. The management intent for the fishery shall be to return any overages to a neutral or negative balance as soon as possible. After 5 years of consecutive overages, a management plan must be provided to the Northern Panel of the PSC with specific management actions that will eliminate

the overage. The accrual of underages is not intended to allow either Alaska or Canada to modify its fishing behavior in any given year, nor to harvest the accrued underage.

DISTRICT 6–PRINCE OF WALES AND DISTRICT 8–STIKINE

The 2023 forecast for Stikine River sockeye salmon of 86,000 fish is well below average (103,000 fish) and includes 57,000 Tahltan Lake (66%) and 29,000 mainstem (34%) sockeye salmon. As part of a periodic review process, the Transboundary Technical Committee is tasked with reviewing, analyzing, and revising escapement goals for both Stikine River sockeye salmon stocks. As a result of this process, new escapement goals were adopted for those stocks in the spring of 2023. The Tahltan Lake escapement goal range is now 11,000 to 25,000 (old goal 18,000 to 30,000) sockeye salmon. The newly adopted mainstem escapement goal range is 13,000 to 33,000 (old goal 20,000 to 40,000) sockeye salmon. Through the end of 2023, harvest shares are 53% U.S./47% Canada. This results in a U.S. allowable catch (AC) of 22,500 Stikine River sockeye salmon, based on the forecast, and is comprised of approximately 18,250 Tahltan Lake fish and 4,250 mainstem bound sockeye salmon.

The sockeye salmon season could open by regulation as early as 12:00 noon on Sunday, June 11 (SW 24) in 2023. However, with an expected poor run of Stikine River Chinook salmon, as well as poor Chinook salmon runs throughout SEAK, conservation measures will be in place for the start of the sockeye salmon fishery. Conservation measures will include implementing a 6-inch maximum mesh size in both districts and delaying the start of the sockeye salmon fishery by 1 week in District 6 and by 2 weeks in District 8. During the first few weeks of the sockeye salmon fishery, any adjustments to fishing time will be based on the forecasts, number of participants, harvest levels, expected harvest levels, and stock proportion data. Because of recent concerns for Stikine River mainstem sockeye salmon, time and/or area may be limited starting in SW 29 in both districts. Openings in District 8 will be based on an evaluation of sockeye salmon abundance in District 6 and would likely include time and area restrictions. Beginning in SW 29, District 6 will be limited to 2 days a week through SW 31 for McDonald Lake sockeye salmon conservation.

Pink salmon normally begin entering District 6 in late July. Early portions of the pink salmon fishery will be managed primarily on CPUE and parent-year escapement. By mid-August, pink salmon destined for local systems will begin to enter the fishery in greater numbers and management will be based on observed escapements to local streams. The expected run may result in average fishing days during the pink salmon management period.

Changes were made to District 6 regulations and subsections during the 2022 BOF meeting. Section 6-D has been amended to be the area east of Section 6-C commonly referred to as the “Screen Islands” area. The remainder of Section 6-D, in Stikine Strait and south of a line drawn between Point Stanhope and Luck Point to the southern district boundary, has been designated as a new section, Section 6-E. Section 6-E is a purse seine only area. A map of this area can be viewed online at http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareasoutheast.salmon#maps.

In addition, 5 AAC 33.359 *Section 6-D Pink Salmon Management Plan* which sunset in 2017 was re-adopted into regulation. The *Section 6-D Pink Salmon Management Plan* allows drift gillnet fishing in Section 6-D during regular drift gillnet openings between the first Saturday in August through the first Sunday in September if this area has been or will be open to purse seining. During these occasions, Section 6-D will open to gillnetting after the purse seine closes and will close at 11:59 p.m. the day before the next scheduled purse seine opening, or when the regular gillnet opening closes, whichever comes first. Drift gillnetters wanting to fish in Section 6-D during the month of August will need to closely monitor purse seine and subsequent drift gillnet advisory announcements during this period. There will likely be short notice for fishing opportunities.

Management based on wild coho salmon abundance typically commences in late August or early September and can continue into early October. Forecasts are not available for wild coho salmon stocks in Districts 6 and 8 and openings will be determined based on fishery performance indicators.

DISTRICT 11–TAKU/SNETTISHAM

The 2023 terminal run of Taku River wild sockeye salmon is forecasted to be 169,000 fish, above the average of 155,000 fish. This is a new sibling model forecast that incorporates recently revised data to account for historical overestimation of run size. Improvements to the Taku River sockeye salmon stock assessment project and run size estimation, recalculation of the historical dataset, and an escapement goal analysis were completed in January of 2020 as part of the recent PST

renegotiation. In May of 2020, an S_{MSY} based escapement goal range of 40,000 to 75,000 sockeye salmon with a management objective of 58,000 wild sockeye salmon (which total AC and resulting harvest allocations are based) was adopted. The forecast will be used in conjunction with the management objective to calculate ACs until inseason estimates become available. Adult returns to date from the joint U.S./Canada Taku River sockeye salmon enhancement project at Tatsamenie Lake have been minimal. The Tatsamenie and Trapper Lakes enhanced sockeye salmon run is forecasted to be 9,000 fish in 2023 which would result in a 77% U.S./23% Canada allocation split resulting in a U.S. AC of approximately 85,000 fish.

The 2023 terminal run forecast of Taku River transboundary coho salmon is 102,000 fish, above the average of 98,000 fish. The forecast is based on a smolt estimate with a 5-year average marine survival applied. Taku River coho salmon harvest sharing provisions, which are part of the current 2019–2028 TBR Annex of the PST, do not allow for any harvest by the U.S. unless the terminal run size exceeds 75,000 fish. The terminal run forecast of Taku River coho salmon provides the U.S. with an AC of approximately 17,000 fish. DIPAC projects a run of 6,400 hatchery-produced coho salmon in 2023 from their smolt releases into Gastineau Channel.

The District 11 drift gillnet fishery will begin on June 18 (SW 25) for directed sockeye salmon fishing in Section 11-B with time, area, and mesh size restrictions. The initial opening will be for a 2-day fishing period with an area restriction closing waters in Taku Inlet north of Point Greely and west of a line of longitude running mid-inlet from the latitude of Point Greely to a point where it intersects with the shoreline south of Grand Island. A 6-inch maximum mesh size restriction and night closures will be in effect. Open area in SW 26 will likely be liberalized with waters in Taku Inlet closed north of Cooper Point and open area in SWs 27 and 28 will have increased area with the north line shifted up to Jaw Point. The maximum mesh size restriction and night closures will likely remain in place through SW 26. Taku Inlet will likely open for a maximum of 2 days through the SW 26 opening and subsequent openings will be based on inseason fishery performance and stock assessment information.

DISTRICT 15–LYNN CANAL

Chilkat and Chilkoot Lakes wild sockeye salmon runs comprise the majority of sockeye salmon harvested in District 15, with additional contribution from the Chilkat River mainstem stock. The parent-years sockeye salmon escapements contributing to the 2023 run to Chilkat Lake were 88,200 fish in 2017 and 108,000 fish in 2018. These escapements were within the escapement goal range of 70,000–150,000 fish. The parent-year escapements, brood year 2017 returns to date, and zooplankton abundance suggest an average or above average run of sockeye salmon to Chilkat Lake in 2023.

The Chilkoot Lake escapement estimates during the dominant brood year return of 2018 was 85,500 sockeye salmon, near the upper bound of the SEG range of 38,000 to 86,000 fish. Five-year old fish (age 1.3) account for an average 76% of the Chilkoot Lake sockeye salmon run, therefore, escapements from 2018 will be a major component of the 2023 run. Parent-year escapements, strong zooplankton estimates, and above average presmolt estimates suggest an average to above average run of sockeye salmon to Chilkoot Lake in 2023.

Chilkat River fall chum salmon escapements are estimated from expanded Chilkat River fish wheel catches. The total number of chum salmon counted through the Chilkat River fish wheels during the parent year was 220,000 fish, near the upper bound of the SEG of 75,000 to 250,000 fish. The Chilkat River fall chum salmon run is expected to be above average in 2023.

The Chilkat River followed by the Berners River are the largest contributors of coho salmon to the District 15 drift gillnet harvest. Parent-year escapements for the 2023 coho salmon run to the Chilkat River were 36,000 fish in 2019 and 29,400 fish in 2020, which were within and slightly below the BEG range of 30,000 to 70,000 fish. Based on parent-year escapements, the Chilkat River coho salmon run is expected to be below average in 2023. Parent-year escapements contributing to the Berners River coho salmon run in 2023 were 94,000 fish in 2019, and 3,3000 fish 2020, within and below the BEG range of 3,600 to 8,100 fish. The coho salmon run to Berners River is expected to be average to below average in 2023.

The District 15 drift gillnet fishery will open for directed sockeye salmon fishing on June 18 (SW 25), with reduced time and area, including a 6-inch maximum mesh size restriction, and night closures. Harvest opportunities will be limited during the first 5 weeks of the fishery in Section 15-A, and through the first 3 weeks in Section 15-C to conserve Chinook salmon returning to the Chilkat River.

Section 15-A will be limited to 2 days a week through July 22 in those waters south of Eldred Rock Lighthouse and east of a line from Eldred Rock Lighthouse to a point 2.0 nmi from the eastern shoreline. A 6-inch maximum mesh size restriction and night closures will be in effect and will likely remain in place through July 22. Lutak Inlet and portions of Chilkoot Inlet may open initially for 2 days prior to July 23 if catch rates, stock composition data, and escapement indicate a strong Chilkoot River sockeye salmon run.

In Section 15-C, open area will be limited to the "Postage Stamp" (waters of Section 15-C south of the latitude of Vanderbilt Reef Light and east of a line from Vanderbilt Reef Light to Little Island Light) to 2 days a week through July 8. A 6-inch maximum mesh size restriction and night closures from 10:00 p.m. through 4:00 p.m. will likely be in effect through July 15. This includes outside waters of the Boat Harbor THA. Subsequent openings will be determined through fishery performance data from the District 15 drift gillnet fishery, stock assessment data from the Chilkat River fish wheel catches, and Chilkat and Chilkoot Lakes fish weir counts. The stock compositions of the commercial harvest of wild sockeye salmon will be estimated inseason by GSI analysis.

The Chilkat River coho and fall chum salmon runs begin in late August. These runs will be monitored by evaluation of fishery performance data in the District 15 drift gillnet fishery and by Chilkat River fish wheel catches. If indications show a strong run, fishing area may be expanded to include Chilkat Inlet to provide harvest surplus to escapement needs.

TERMINAL HARVEST AREAS

During the 2023 season, drift gillnet THA fisheries can be expected in Boat Harbor, Deep Inlet, Southeast Cove, Anita Bay, Nakat Inlet, Neets Bay, and Carroll Inlet to harvest salmon returning to DIPAC, NSRAA, and SSRAA enhancement facilities. Openings in the Speel Arm THA are contingent on meeting the sockeye salmon escapement goal for Speel Lake.

WEEKLY FISHING ANNOUNCEMENTS

Management of the District 1 drift gillnet fishery is conducted by Ketchikan Area staff; Districts 6 and 8 by Petersburg Area staff; District 11 by Juneau Area staff; and District 15 by Haines Area staff. Because permit holders can move freely among all drift gillnet fisheries, weekly advisory announcements will be issued to include all areas in the region. These will normally be released by midafternoon each Thursday during the fishing season.

WEEKLY FISHING PERIODS

Weekly fishing periods in traditional fishing areas can generally be expected to begin on Sundays at 12:01 p.m. Fishing periods in hatchery THAs, including NSRAA and SSRAA terminal fisheries in Deep Inlet, Southeast Cove, Anita Bay, Carroll Inlet, and Neets Bay, will be in accordance with rotational harvest management plans for drift gillnet, seine, and troll fisheries adopted by the BOF.

Statistical week calendar for 2023 drift gillnet season.

Week	Beginning Date	Ending Date	Week	Beginning Date	Ending Date
23	4-Jun	10-Jun	32	6-Aug	12-Aug
24	11-Jun	17-Jun	33	13-Aug	19-Aug
25	18-Jun	24-Jun	34	20-Aug	26-Aug
26	25-Jun	1-Jul	35	27-Aug	2-Sep
27	2-Jul	8-Jul	36	3-Sep	9-Sep
28	9-Jul	15-Jul	37	10-Sep	16-Sep
29	16-Jul	22-Jul	38	17-Sep	23-Sep
30	23-Jul	29-Jul	39	24-Sep	30-Sep
31	30-Jul	5-Aug	40	1-Oct	7-Oct

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Advisory announcement web site: *http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.main*.

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