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Advisory Announcement

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Prince William Sound Salmon Fishery Announcement #5

COPPER RIVER DISTRICT: The Copper River District will open at 7:00 am on Monday, May 29 for a 12-hour commercial drift gillnet fishing period. Waters within the **expanded** Chinook salmon inside closure area will be **CLOSED** during this period.

The **expanded** Chinook salmon inside closure area will be defined as waters north of a line connecting the following points:

<i>Point</i>	<i>Latitude</i>	<i>Longitude</i>
Steamboat North	60° 22.87' N.	145° 33.50' W.
Steamboat South	60° 22.31' N.	145° 33.50' W.
West side Pete Dahl Entrance	60° 18.89' N.	145° 30.99' W.
West end Grass Island	60° 18.30' N.	145° 28.42' W.
East end Grass Island	60° 15.24' N.	145° 17.89' W.
West end Kokenhenik Bar	60° 15.00' N.	145° 16.20' W.
East end Kokenhenik Bar	60° 13.65' N.	145° 09.46' W.
Western tip of Softuk Bar	60° 13.68' N.	145° 05.78' W.
Chinook Alternate #1	60° 13.79' N.	144° 59.09' W.
Chinook Alternate #2	60° 13.64' N.	144° 53.78' W.
Chinook Alternate #3	60° 12.64' N.	144° 40.21' W.

*Please note that the 'Coffee Creek West' point was replaced with 'Chinook Alternate #1'.

The grass bank marker line is defined in 5 AAC 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, excluding the expanded Chinook salmon inside closure area, will open to subsistence fishing from 6:00 am to 10:00 pm on all Saturdays from May 20 through October 28. Prince William Sound Management Area salmon subsistence permits may be obtained through any ADF&G office or online (<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/Store/>). In Cordova, 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. To assist with inseason harvest tracking, permit holders are encouraged to call the Cordova office at 907-424-3212 or report online (<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/Harvest/>) to provide preliminary harvest reports.

Miles Lake north bank sonar was deployed for a total of 7 hours yesterday and the expanded sonar count for the day was 626 salmon for a cumulative total of 626 salmon. Ice flows along the north bank are hampering sonar deployment, but increasing hours of operation are anticipated in the coming days. Shore ice and ice flows are currently preventing south bank sonar deployment. Preliminary harvest estimates from the 12-hour period that occurred on Thursday, May 25 were 760 Chinook and 41,500 sockeye salmon with 271 deliveries reported. This compares to a projected harvest of 48,300 sockeye salmon for this period. The cumulative harvest to date is 4,790 Chinook and 118,000 sockeye salmon.

BERING RIVER DISTRICT: Bering River District, west of a longitude line at 144° 28.20' W., will open at 7:00 am on Monday, May 29 for a 12-hour commercial drift gillnet fishing period. The intent of this opening is to target Copper River sockeye salmon that are traveling through the western portion of this district. No harvest was reported for the 12-hour period that occurred on Thursday, May 25.

COGHILL DISTRICT: The Coghill District, excluding the Esther Subdistrict and the Wally Noerenberg Hatchery (WNH) THA and SHA, will open to commercial drift gillnet harvest for a 36-hour fishing period starting at 8:00 am on Thursday, June 1. 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 harvest for an 84-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Thursday, June 1. A total run of 2.21 million WNH chum salmon are projected to return to the hatchery. Historical harvest timing for these chum salmon is from June 1 – July 27.

PWSAC will assess chum salmon run entry into the vicinity of WNH over the next week and make a recommendation on potential open area within the Esther Subdistrict next week. PWSAC also requests that the WNH SHA and THA remain closed for the entirety of the 36-hour commercial fishing period commencing on Thursday, June 1. Cost recovery harvests will commence at WNH as run entry and hatchery escapement warrants.

A total of 423,000 Coghill Lake sockeye salmon are projected to be available for common property harvest. The harvest timing for these sockeye salmon is from June 1 – August 1. The Coghill River weir is expected to start operations during the second week of June.

ESHAMY DISTRICT: The Eshamy District, excluding the MBH AGZ, will open to commercial gillnet harvest for a 36-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Thursday, June 1. The 2023 sockeye salmon run to MBH is forecast to be 934,000 fish. The historical harvest timing for these sockeye salmon is from June 1 – August 1.

PWSAC recommends that the MBH AGZ remain closed to allow for hatchery operations and barrier seine installation. Cost recovery harvests will commence at MBH as run entry and hatchery escapement warrants.

MONTAGUE DISTRICT: The Port Chalmers Subdistrict will open to drift gillnet fishing for an 84-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Thursday, June 1 with an additional 60-hour period beginning at 8:00 am on Monday, June 5.

5. 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.** A total of 650,000 chum salmon are anticipated to return to Port Chalmers and be available for common property harvest. The historical harvest timing for these chum salmon is from June 1 – July 27.

SEINE FISHERIES: REMINDER– for all dual permit purse seine operations “D boats” operating in PWS, salmon buyers must check the “Dual/Stacked Permit” on fish tickets, and both CFEC permit holders will have to provide their permit card and sign the fish ticket.

SOUTHWESTERN DISTRICT: The AFK Hatchery THA and SHA will open for the 2023 season to purse seine fishing for 36 hours starting at 8:00 am on Thursday, June 1 with an additional 36-hour period at 8:00 am on Saturday, June 3. **Anadromous stream closures within the AFK Hatchery THA and SHA will not be in effect until further notice.** A total of 190,000 chum salmon are forecast to return to AFK Hatchery. Historical harvest timing for these chum salmon is from June 1 – July 27.

Copies of the updated regulation booklet, *2022-2024 Commercial Salmon Fishing Regulations for Prince William Sound*, are available in the Cordova ADFG office.

ALL buyers purchasing fish in the PWS Management Area are required to complete a Processor Registration Form. Contact the Cordova office for any questions regarding registration.

The next scheduled salmon fisheries announcement is anticipated to be at 2:00 pm Wednesday, May 31.

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 907-267-2843.

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 during 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/national/marine-mammal-protection/marine-mammal-authorization-program>).
- 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.