

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES



NEWS RELEASE

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Prince William Sound Salmon Fishery News Release #11

COPPER RIVER DISTRICT: Chinook salmon run timing is near complete in the commercial fishery. The Copper River District will open for a 12-hour commercial fishing period from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm, Monday, June 19. Waters within the Chinook salmon inside closure area will be **OPEN** during this fishing period.

Cumulative sonar count through 6/16 was 384,185 fish whereas the anticipated range for this date is 319,475–500,049. The 0600 count for 6/17 was 2,508 fish. For the week ending June 17, the actual Copper River Delta survey count was 17,304 sockeye salmon versus an anticipated range 14,273 – 33,736. Preliminary harvest estimates from the 12-hour period that occurred on Thursday, June 15 are 300 Chinook and 31,200 sockeye salmon with 346 deliveries reported. This compares to an anticipated harvest of 34,500 sockeye salmon for this period.

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. Subsistence users may obtain subsistence permits during regular business hours. The Cordova ADF&G office is open to the public Monday - Friday, 8:00 am - 12:00 pm and 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm. **Subsistence permits are not available outside of regular office hours.**

BERING RIVER DISTRICT: Bering River District, west of a longitude line at 144° 33.60' W., will open at 7:00 am Monday, June 19 for a 12-hour commercial fishing period. Bering River sockeye salmon run timing overlap has increased and open area within the district will likely remain reduced until escapement indices support additional fishing effort. For the week ending June 17, the actual Bering River District survey count was 1,475 sockeye salmon versus an anticipated range 4,048 – 8,906.

COGHILL DISTRICT: The Granite Bay Subdistrict will open to commercial drift gillnet harvest for a 24-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Monday, June 19. The Esther Subdistrict, **excluding waters west of a longitude line at 148° 00.00' W.**, will open to commercial drift gillnet harvest for a 6-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Monday, June 19. PWSAC cost recovery fishing has been expanded into the Esther Subdistrict within 1 nautical mile of Esther Island to expedite cost recovery fishing and gauge run entry. To date, 196 sockeye salmon have passed the Coghill River weir versus an anticipated range of 166–497 fish. Preliminary harvest estimates from the 24-hour period that started on Thursday, June 15 are 6,800 chum and 900 sockeye salmon with 87 deliveries reported.

ESHAMY DISTRICT: The Eshamy District, excluding the Main Bay Subdistrict, will open to commercial gillnet harvest for a 12-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Monday, June 19. The Main Bay Subdistrict, excluding waters of 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 Monday, June 19. **The reduced AGZ will open to SET GILLNET permit holders only during this fishing period.** Preliminary harvest estimates from the 24-hour period that started on Thursday, June 15 are 26,200 sockeye and 4,300 chum salmon with 213 deliveries reported.

UNAKWIK DISTRICT: The Unakwik District will open for the 2017 season to commercial drift gillnet and purse seine harvest for a 24-hour fishing period beginning at 8:00 am on Monday, June 19.

SEINE FISHERIES: There will be a commercial fishing opener on Thursday, June 22 in portions of the Eastern and Southeastern districts, with time and area to be announced on Wednesday, June 21. It is anticipated that early season fishing opportunities will be limited in frequency, with time and area being dependent upon escapement, harvest and effort.

The first aerial survey of portions of the Eastern District is anticipated to occur next week.

The department has used yellow Salmon Harvest Task Force (SHTF) markers in the past to close terminal wild stock areas, both for escapement and quality concerns. The department may use the yellow SHTF markers as a management tool for closing terminal wild stock areas to allow for early season broad area openings, and when escapements are lower than expected. These markers may also be employed as an intermediate step before area-wide closures are used. Electronic copies of these coordinates may be found at the web site provided below. When these area closures are in effect, SHTF markers will be referenced in detail in applicable news releases.

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 seine fishing for 24 hours beginning at 8:00 am on Monday, June 19. **This fishing period supersedes previously announced time and area.** Due to increasing harvest of salmon destined for other areas of Prince William Sound within the Port Chalmers Subdistrict, a time and area adjustment is necessary to focus efforts on enhanced chum salmon returning to Port Chalmers. Preliminary chum salmon contributions from the Port Chalmers Subdistrict from the 84-hour period that began on Thursday, June 8 were 76% WNH, 8% AFK, 4% Port Chalmers, and 11% wild fish. Preliminary harvest estimates from the 48-hour period that ended on Wednesday, June 14 are 83,131 chum with 56 deliveries reported.

SOUTHWESTERN DISTRICT: The AFK Hatchery THA and SHA will open for 8 hours beginning at 8:00 am on Monday, June 19, with additional 8-hour periods anticipated to begin at 8:00 am on Thursday, June 22 and Saturday, June 24. Due to increasing sockeye salmon harvest, shorter duration periods are necessary to focus efforts on enhanced chum salmon. **Anadromous stream closures within the AFK Hatchery THA and SHA will not be in effect until further notice.**

The next scheduled salmon fisheries announcement is anticipated to be at 2:00 pm Wednesday, June 21.

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 (visit http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pdfs/interactions/mmap_reporting_form.pdf for a copy).
- 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 http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pdfs/esa_factsheet.pdf 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 NMFS at 907-271-5006.