

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES



NEWS RELEASE



*Sam Cotten, Commissioner
Scott Kelley, Director*

Contact:

Jeremy Botz, Gillnet Area Management Biologist
Charles Russell, Seine Area Management Biologist
Stormy Haught, Area Research Biologist
Stacy Vega, Assistant Area Management/Research Biologist
Phone: (907) 424-3212 Fax: (907) 424-3235

Prince William Sound Area Office
401 Railroad Avenue, PO Box 669
Cordova, AK 99574-0669

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Prince William Sound Salmon Fishery News Release #1 **2017 Alaska Board of Fisheries Actions: Prince William Sound Area**

The Alaska Board of Fisheries (board) met in Valdez from December 1–5, 2017 to consider proposals concerning the Prince William Sound (PWS) Area. Proposals submitted to the board related to the PWS Area were heard and deliberated. The following are important changes that will be in effect beginning in 2018.

Upper Copper River Personal Use

The board passed a proposal that repealed the reduction in maximum harvest in the Chitina Subdistrict Personal Use fishery when the Copper River District commercial fishery is closed for 13 or more consecutive days. Prior to this change the personal use fishery was reduced to a maximum of 50,000 salmon harvested under this commercial fishery closure scenario. With this change, the personal use fishery will be managed on inseason abundance estimates at the Miles Lake sonar based on a target harvest level set annually within the inriver goal, which can range between 100,000 and 150,000 salmon.

PWS Subsistence Salmon

The board passed a proposal that established additional subsistence fishing opportunity in PWS salmon fisheries. After May 15, during the commercial fishing season in a salmon fishing district, salmon may be harvested on Saturdays from 6:00 am to 10:00 pm. Prior to this change, subsistence salmon fishing was only allowed during the commercial salmon season concurrent with commercial fishing periods.

PWS Subsistence Herring

Establishing subsistence herring permits in PWS was implemented at the board meeting. Starting in 2018, a subsistence herring permit will be required in PWS to harvest herring for subsistence purposes. The permit will have annual reporting requirements, but does not limit the quantity of herring harvested. In addition to the permit, gillnet gear specification was changed to limit the length of nets to 10 fathoms.

PWS Commercial Salmon

Purse seine gear length and lead mesh size were modified at the board meeting. Starting with the 2018 salmon season, commercial purse seine maximum net length will be extended to 225 fathoms. Prior to this change, purse seines were limited to 150 fathoms in length. Additionally, the aggregate length of seine and lead cannot exceed 225 fathoms and leads with mesh size between four inches and six and one quarter inches are not allowed. The lead mesh size specification was changed to allow for continued use of existing leads.

A set of proposals were adopted by the board that added the Armin F. Koernig Hatchery Terminal Harvest Area and Special Harvest Area chum salmon fishery into regulation as an allowable commercial fishery, which is an exception to the Southwestern District closure to commercial salmon fishing prior to July 18. Regulatory language was also added to limit the harvest of salmon bound for other areas of the Sound to the extent practical.

PWS Salmon Area Definitions

A proposal that sought to change the Main Bay Subdistrict line description was adopted by the board. The south end of the subdistrict line was moved to better approximate historical subdistrict markers originally placed by hatchery staff.

The board adopted a proposal defining the seaward boundary of the Copper River and Bering River districts with gps coordinates. Prior to this change the seaward boundary of these districts was described as a line three miles south of a line from Cape Suckling to the southernmost tip of Pinnacle Rock to an ADFG regulatory marker on Hook Point. Geographic place names and approximate locations were used to describe portions of the former line, leading to differing interpretations of this boundary.

The board adopted a proposal that sought to define all district and subdistrict boundary lines with gps coordinates. The proposal also fixed errors in these boundary lines.

Lastly, the board adopted a proposal that defined the eastern and western edges of the PWS Area with gps coordinates instead of imprecise geographic place names.

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.

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.