



**Advisory Announcement**  
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## **2024 PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND SALMON SEASON SUMMARY**

This summarizes the 2024 Prince William Sound (PWS) Area commercial salmon season. Numbers in this summary are rounded for simplicity, all data are preliminary, and 10-year averages are for 2014 through 2023. The 2024 PWS Area salmon harvest was 15.02 million fish composed of 9,700 Chinook, 3.19 million sockeye, 165,000 coho, 9.95 million pink, and 1.70 million chum salmon. The 2024 harvest included 9.19 million (61%) commercial, and 5.83 million (39%) hatchery cost recovery and broodstock fish (Table 1).

The estimated value of salmon harvest, commercial, and hatchery cost recovery was approximately \$53.00 million and 46% less than the 10-year average of \$98.41 million. This decline was largely due to hatchery pink salmon run failures. During the 2024 season, 423 drift gillnet, 25 set gillnet, and 205 (177 single and 28 dual) purse seine commercial permit holders fished in at least one fishing period. Drift gillnet exvessel harvest value was an estimated \$28.47 million (average permit earnings of \$67,300 compared to a 10-year average of \$67,600); set gillnet exvessel harvest value was an estimated \$2.54 million (average permit earnings at \$101,500 compared to a 10-year average of \$72,900); and purse seine exvessel harvest value was an estimated \$7.53 million (average permit earnings at \$42,500 compared to a 10-year average of \$203,000). Revenue generated for hatchery operations was approximately \$14.45 million.

## **GILLNET FISHERIES**

### **COPPER RIVER DISTRICT**

The 2024 Copper River sockeye salmon total run forecast was 2.00 million fish. Gulkana Hatchery represented 36,000 sockeye salmon in this total run forecast. The preseason commercial harvest forecast for the Copper River District sockeye salmon was 1.3 million fish. Overall, the 2024 Copper River sockeye salmon run was above forecast for both hatchery and wild stocks. The 2024 Chinook salmon total run forecast was 47,000 fish, and the actual run was below forecast. Early in the season, the Copper River sockeye harvest and in-river passage were significantly below average, leading to short-duration fishing periods and extended fishery closures until early June. The sockeye salmon commercial harvest of 1.37 million fish was 54% greater than the 10-year average harvest of 889,000 fish.

The sockeye salmon season was open for 960 hours compared to a 10-year average of 634 hours despite short-duration fishing periods and extended closures early in the season. Sockeye salmon average weight of 5.4 pounds was 0.4 pounds smaller than the 20-year average (2004-2023) of 5.8 pounds. The number of wild sockeye salmon in the Copper River District commercial harvest was 957,000, or 69% of the total. Gulkana Hatchery commercial harvest was the second highest in the last 10 years, contributing 250,000 sockeye salmon, or 18% of the total commercial harvest. Main Bay Hatchery (MBH) contributed 173,000 sockeye salmon or 13% of the Copper River sockeye salmon harvest. The commercial harvest of 9,200 Chinook salmon was 25% below the 10-year average

harvest of 12,200 fish. The commercial harvest of 117,000 coho salmon was 42% below the previous 10-year average of 200,000 coho salmon.

District escapement and inriver goals were met or exceeded in 2024. The 2024 preliminary Miles Lake sonar passage estimate of 948,206 salmon exceeded the inriver goal of 627,000 salmon. The Copper River sockeye salmon sustainable escapement goal (SEG) of 360,000 – 750,000 fish was achieved based on preliminary projections of inriver harvest. Preliminary Chinook salmon inriver abundance estimates suggest escapement near the lower bound of the 21,000–31,000 fish SEG. The Copper River delta sockeye salmon escapement estimate of 86,925 sockeye salmon was within the SEG range of 55,000–130,000 fish. Copper River Delta coho salmon spawning escapement monitoring is ongoing, but escapement is anticipated to be within the SEG range of 32,000–50,000 fish.

### **BERING RIVER DISTRICT**

During the initial 2024 season, the Bering River District was opened concurrent with the Copper River District only along the western edge of the district. At first, there was no directed commercial sockeye salmon harvest due to the recent trend in poor annual escapement. Inseason aerial survey escapement estimates trended near the average anticipated inseason weekly index, and the fishery remained restricted through the end of July. Starting July 22, due to improving escapement and minimal participation, the department elected to keep the Bering River District open to commercial harvest on a twice-weekly basis until the start of coho salmon season in mid-August. The sockeye salmon commercial harvest of 58,000 fish was 11 times the previous 10-year harvest average of 5,300 fish. Virtually all sockeye salmon harvest occurred on the western edge of the district in association with the Copper River District harvest near the Martin Islands. The aerial survey escapement index of 20,850 sockeye salmon was within the SEG range of 15,000–33,000 fish. The coho salmon commercial harvest of 41,600 fish was 28% below the previous 10-year harvest average of 57,700. Commercial fishing effort in the coho salmon fishery was high, coinciding with productive fishing in the eastern portion of the Copper River Delta. Bering River District coho salmon spawning escapement monitoring is ongoing, but escapement is anticipated to be within the SEG range of 13,000–33,000 fish.

### **COGHILL DISTRICT**

The 2024 sockeye salmon forecast for Coghill Lake was 273,000 fish, with 243,000 available for commercial harvest. The Coghill River weir operated from June 15 to July 27, passing 86,969 sockeye salmon, above the SEG range of 20,000–75,000 fish. The Coghill District drift gillnet sockeye salmon commercial harvest of 97,100 fish was 45% below the 10-year average. Due to cost recovery needs, conservative management was implemented in hatchery subdistricts, allowing for increased fishing time to target Coghill Lake sockeye salmon in College Fiord but reducing overall fleet participation.

The 2024 PWSAC hatchery chum salmon run was weak in 2024. The PWSAC forecast for the 2024 hatchery chum salmon run to Wally Noerenberg Hatchery (WNH) was 2.82 million fish. PWSAC projected approximately 1.60 million fish for cost recovery and broodstock, leaving 1.22 million for commercial harvest. In total, PWSAC harvested 552,000 chum salmon for cost recovery and broodstock. The drift gillnet harvest of chum in the Coghill District totaled 233,000, 81% below both the forecast and the 10-year average, with wild chum comprising 10% of this commercial catch.

Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation (PWSAC) projected a total run of 62,000 coho salmon to WNH. The commercial drift gillnet coho harvest was only 478 fish, all assumed to be WNH origin. This harvest was 99% below forecast and marked the eighth time in the last ten years that fewer than 15,000 coho salmon were harvested.

### **ESHAMY DISTRICT**

The 2024 PWSAC hatchery sockeye salmon run was strong. PWSAC projected a total run of 864,000 hatchery sockeye salmon to MBH in 2024, with 259,000 required for broodstock and cost recovery, leaving 605,000 for commercial harvest. The MBH harvested 435,000 sockeye salmon for cost recovery and broodstock, almost three

and a half times the 10-year average of 127,000. In the Eshamy District, 214 drift gillnet permit holders harvested 857,000 sockeye salmon, along with other species, while 25 set gillnet permit holders harvested 310,000 sockeye salmon. The total sockeye salmon harvest in Eshamy District was 91% above the 10-year average, while pink and chum were below. There was no 2024 Eshamy Lake sockeye salmon total run forecast due to the limited escapement monitoring in recent years. The Eshamy River weir passed 13,612 sockeye salmon, within the SEG range of 13,000–28,000 fish but 47% below the long-term average.

## **UNAKWIK DISTRICT**

The Unakwik District fishery primarily targets sockeye salmon returning to Miners Lake; commercial harvest in 2024 was 1,200 sockeye salmon, well below the 10-year average harvest of 8,300 sockeye salmon.

## **PURSE SEINE FISHERIES**

### **CHUM SALMON**

The 2024 chum salmon total forecast was 4.62 million fish, with an estimated commercial harvest of 2.85 million fish. Most of the total run, 3.98 million (86%), was from PWSAC hatchery production, with 240,000 fish returning to the Armin F. Koernig hatchery (AFK) and 920,000 fish returning to Port Chalmers. Based on the department's wild chum salmon forecast of 639,000 fish and subtracting the 10-year average escapement, 170,000, there was a potential harvestable surplus of 469,000 wild chum salmon. The department managed for each district's escapement goal, aiming for each district's long-term average, for a combined total of 135,000 chum salmon to all districts.

Chum salmon commercial harvest in PWS was 1.16 million fish, 59% below the preseason harvest forecast. The commercial purse seine fleet harvested 821,000 chum salmon in 2024. Approximately 133,000 AFK chum salmon were harvested in the PWS commercial fishery, 44% below the preseason forecast of 240,000 fish. A total of 52,000 sockeye salmon were harvested in the AFK chum salmon commercial fishery, composed of 38,200 MBH and 13,800 wild fish. Montague District chum salmon commercial harvest was 683,000 fish, comprising 608,000 Port Chalmers, 41,000 WNH, 27,300 wild, and 6,830 AFK fish.

### **PINK SALMON**

The 2024 season marked the worst pink salmon harvest since 1993 and the second worst since the late 1970s when PWS hatcheries were established. The 2024 pink salmon forecast estimated a total run of 32.18 million fish, comprised of 15.53 million VFDA, 10.20 million PWSAC, and 6.45 million wild fish. Approximately 4.45 million (29%) of VFDA's pink salmon preseason forecast was projected for cost recovery and broodstock, with the remaining 11.08 million VFDA fish expected to be available for commercial harvest. Approximately 6.42 million (63%) of PWSAC's pink salmon preseason forecast was projected for cost recovery and broodstock, with the remaining 3.78 million PWSAC fish expected to be available for commercial harvest. Based on the department's wild stock pink salmon forecast, there was a potential commercial harvest of 5.66 million fish. Considering both VFDA and PWSAC's cost recovery, broodstock needs, and a median escapement of 784,000 wild pink salmon, approximately 22.82 million pink salmon were expected to be available for commercial harvest.

The 2024 commercial harvest of 5.07 million pink salmon was 78% below the 22.82 million commercial harvest forecast. The pink salmon commercial harvest comprised an estimated 3.55 million VFDA fish, 1.42 million wild fish, and 121,800 PWSAC fish. The PWS purse seine commercial salmon harvest was 5.81 million fish composed of 4.90 million pink, 821,400 chum, 88,400 sockeye, 3,480 coho, and 202 Chinook salmon. The total pink salmon harvest was 9.95 million fish, including 4.88 million for hatchery cost recovery and broodstock (2.84 million for PWSAC and 2.04 million for VFDA). The VFDA pink salmon run of 5.59 million fish was 64% below the forecast of 15.53. The PWSAC pink salmon run of 3.08 million fish was 70% below the forecast of 10.20 million. The PWS wild pink salmon harvest of 1.42 million fish was 75% below the forecast of 5.66 million fish. The egg-take goal for VFDA was not achieved in 2024, coming up 30% short; PWSAC also came up 5% short of their goal.

The number of permits (205) reporting at least one delivery was the lowest since 2011. Of those permits, 177 were primary permits, and 28 were dual permits. The last delivery was reported on August 15, at least two weeks earlier than expected.

Aerial surveys in PWS were flown from mid-June through early September. Inseason aerial survey escapement estimates were above escapement objectives for pink salmon in all districts, and escapement goals for pink salmon were met. Wild stock pink salmon escapement indices supported minimal openings outside hatchery subdistricts starting mid-July and running through late August. Chum salmon escapement was also met in the Southeastern, Eastern, Northern, and Northwestern Districts but not in the Coghill District.

**COHO SALMON**

The 2024 Solomon Gulch Hatchery hatchery coho salmon forecast was 54,400 fish, with a projected commercial harvest of 13,000. Data for the VFDA coho salmon run is unavailable, and they are in the process of conducting their egg-take. The overall purse seine harvest of coho salmon in PWS was 3,500 fish.

Table 1.–Preliminary Area E salmon harvest, 2024.

District	Chinook	Sockeye	Coho	Pink	Chum	Total
Bering River	41	57,925	41,571	79	273	99,889
Copper River	9,240	1,373,473	117,274	4,609	31,205	1,535,801
Eastern	30	4,245	2,254	4,148,332	21,968	4,176,829
Northern	1	974	71	89,666	854	91,566
Coghill	108	99,266	481	63,139	233,140	396,134
Northwestern	1	5,027	311	142,515	2,813	150,667
Eshamy	130	1,167,234	612	115,158	74,736	1,357,870
Southwestern	9	70,460	418	252,339	110,809	434,035
Montague	154	4,332	142	140,368	683,422	828,418
Southeastern		240	280	116,138	1,070	117,728
Unakwik	7	1,218			2	1,227
<b>Commercial Total</b>	<b>9,721</b>	<b>2,784,394</b>	<b>163,414</b>	<b>5,072,343</b>	<b>1,160,292</b>	<b>9,190,164</b>
<b>Hatchery</b>						
Solomon Gulch	19	450	18	2,042,883	872	2,044,242
Cannery Creek				1,106,794		1,106,794
Wally Noerenberg			1,100	518,558	542,533	1,062,191
Main Bay		405,441			4	405,445
Armin F. Koernig				1,211,542		1,211,542
<b>Hatchery Total <sup>a</sup></b>	<b>19</b>	<b>405,891</b>	<b>1,118</b>	<b>4,879,777</b>	<b>543,409</b>	<b>5,830,214</b>
<b>PWS Total Harvest</b>	<b>9,740</b>	<b>3,190,285</b>	<b>164,532</b>	<b>9,952,120</b>	<b>1,703,701</b>	<b>15,020,378</b>

<sup>a</sup> Hatchery harvest to meet cost recovery and broodstock needs.