

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES NEWS RELEASE



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2013 PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND SALMON SEASON SUMMARY

The following is an overview of the 2013 Prince William Sound (PWS) Area commercial salmon season. Fishing is complete in all districts and preliminary harvest totals should be representative for all species. Note that numbers in the narrative are rounded for simplicity and all data are considered preliminary. In particular, pink salmon harvest total reported here underestimates the true number because of inaccurate inseason average weights. Postseason revision will increase the pink salmon total harvest number, which will be reported in the 2013 Prince William Sound Area Finfish Management Report.

The 2013 PWS Area commercial salmon harvest was 96.2 million fish. Harvest was composed of 89.3 million pink, 2.4 million sockeye, 3.9 million chum, 645,000 coho, and 10,400 Chinook salmon. The 2013 harvest was composed of 91.5 million commercial common property fishery (CPF) (95%), and 4.7 million (5%) hatchery cost recovery and broodstock fish.

GILLNET FISHERIES

COPPER RIVER DISTRICT

The 2013 preseason commercial harvest forecast for the Copper River District was 14,000 Chinook, 1.3 million sockeye, and 240,000 coho salmon. Gulkana Hatchery was expected to contribute 230,000 sockeye salmon to the CPF harvest. The commercial salmon fishing season in the Copper River District began on Thursday, May 16. The sockeye salmon harvest of 1.6 million fish was more than 1.2 times the previous 10-year (2003–2012) harvest average of 1.3 million sockeye salmon. The proportion of wild and enhanced sockeye salmon in the Copper River District CPF harvest is not available at this time. The CPF harvest of 8,700 Chinook salmon was below the previous 10-year (2003–2012) average harvest of 25,000. The coho salmon commercial harvest of 229,000 fish was below the previous 10-year (2003–2012) average harvest of 241,000 coho salmon. The inriver goal for salmon passing the Miles Lake sonar site was 728,000–1,120,000 salmon. Preliminary estimates of inriver Chinook salmon abundance indicate that escapement should be above the sustainable escapement goal threshold. The 2013 preliminary sonar escapement estimate was 1.27 million salmon. Spawning escapement to Copper River delta systems based on aerial survey indices was 74,000 sockeye salmon, and was within the sustainable escapement goal (SEG) range of 55,000–130,000 fish. Coho salmon spawning escapement to the Copper River Delta based on aerial survey indices was 38,000 and was within the SEG range of 32,000–67,000 fish.

BERING RIVER DISTRICT

The Bering River District was initially closed to commercial sockeye salmon harvest due to the recent trend in poor annual escapement. Inseason aerial survey escapement estimates above the anticipated goal for the week ending June 15 led to the opening of the district to sockeye salmon fishing on June 13. The district only opened once during the next statistical week due to higher than anticipated harvest and minimal surplus indicated by the first aerial survey. Starting with the second aerial survey, sockeye salmon escapement trended above anticipated and the district remained open for the remainder of the season concurrent with the Copper River District fishery. No fishing effort was reported in the district between the third fishing period (June 24) until the beginning of the coho salmon fishery in mid-August. The coho salmon commercial harvest of 46,000 was below the previous 10-year (2003–2012) harvest average of 50,000 coho salmon. The aerial escapement index of 22,000 sockeye salmon was within the new SEG range of 15,000–33,000 fish. Aerial surveys of coho salmon produced an escapement index of 19,000 fish that was within the SEG range of 13,000–33,000 fish.

COGHILL DISTRICT

Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation (PWSAC) forecasted a run of 2.5 million chum salmon to Wally Noerenberg Hatchery (WNH) in 2013. Approximately 380,000 chum salmon (15%) of the forecasted run were designated for corporate cost recovery and broodstock. The CPF harvest of chum salmon in the Coghill District was 2.1 million fish. PWSAC harvested 722,000 chum salmon for corporate cost recovery and broodstock. The total CPF harvest of sockeye salmon in the Coghill District was 118,000 fish. The proportion of wild sockeye salmon in the Coghill District CPF harvest is not available at this time. Pink salmon CPF harvest in the Coghill District was 9.4 million fish. The proportion of wild pink salmon in the Coghill District CPF harvest is not available at this time. The total CPF harvest of coho salmon in the Coghill District was 64,000 fish, the majority of which were likely enhanced from WNH.

The Coghill River weir passed 17,231 sockeye salmon, which was below the SEG range of 20,000–60,000 fish. High water conditions resulted in partial removal of the weir for a short period of time and high pink salmon passage rates decreased the accuracy of sockeye salmon identification at the weir. Both of these factors likely resulted in an overall sockeye salmon count that was less than what actually escaped into Coghill Lake.

ESHAMY DISTRICT

The department's preseason forecast for Eshamy Lake was 53,000 wild sockeye salmon and PWSAC forecasted a run of 1.1 million MBH enhanced sockeye salmon. The CPF harvest of sockeye salmon in the Eshamy District was 509,000 fish, which was below the 10-year average of 721,000 sockeye salmon. The proportion of wild sockeye salmon in the Eshamy District CPF harvest is not available at this time. PWSAC harvested 86,000 sockeye salmon to meet broodstock requirements, 77,000 of which were jacks culled during the egg-take process. Sockeye salmon escapement to Eshamy Lake was monitored by video camera and foot survey this past season and counts are not yet available. The sockeye salmon biological escapement goal (BEG) range for Eshamy Lake is 13,000-28,000 fish.

UNAKWIK DISTRICT

The department's preseason harvest forecast for the Unakwik District was 5,700 sockeye salmon. Unakwik District CPF harvest was 1,600 sockeye salmon, which was below the 10-year average of 6,600 sockeye salmon.

MONTAGUE DISTRICT, PORT CHALMERS SUBDISTRICT

PWSAC forecasted a run of 634,000 chum salmon to the Port Chalmers remote release site in 2013. The drift gillnet gear group had access to the Port Chalmers Subdistrict in 2013 under the Prince William Sound Management and Salmon Enhancement Allocation Plan. CPF drift gillnet harvest of chum salmon

in the Montague District was 469,000 fish. The harvest was close to the 5-year (2008–2012) CPF average of 516,000 chum salmon. The proportion of wild chum salmon in the Port Chalmers Subdistrict CPF harvest is not available at this time.

PURSE SEINE FISHERIES

CHUM SALMON

The 2013 chum salmon total run forecast for PWS was 3.6 million fish. The majority of the forecasted return, 3.2 million fish (89%), was projected to be of PWSAC hatchery origin. Of these PWSAC hatchery origin chum salmon, 306,000 fish were forecasted to return to AFK Hatchery. All other enhanced chum salmon were expected to be harvested in gillnet fisheries.

Based on the department's wild chum salmon forecast of 512,000 fish, there was a preseason expectation for the potential CPF harvest of 312,000 wild stock chum salmon in PWS, leaving 200,000 fish for escapement. The preseason forecast for total chum salmon CPF harvest in PWS was 3.1 million fish.

Chum salmon CPF harvest in PWS was 3.2 million fish, which was 100,000 fish above the CPF preseason forecast. Purse seine chum salmon harvest in PWS was predominantly from the Eastern, Coghill, Southwestern, and Southeastern districts. CPFs targeting predominately enhanced chum salmon in the Southwestern District from June 1 through July 21 resulted in purse seine harvest totals of 221,000 fish. Total chum salmon harvest in the Southwestern District in 2013 was 227,000 fish. From July 11 until July 21, CPFs targeting predominately enhanced chum salmon in the Coghill District resulted in purse seine harvest totals of approximately 92,900 fish. The proportion of wild chum salmon in the Southwestern and Coghill districts CPF harvest totals is not available at this time. CPFs targeting predominately wild pink and chum salmon in the Eastern and Southeastern districts resulted in harvest totals of 82,300 and 41,000 chum salmon, respectively. CPFs targeting predominately enhanced pink salmon in the Northern District resulted in a chum salmon harvest total of 5,900 fish.

PINK SALMON

The 2013 pink salmon total run forecast for PWS was 40.7 million fish. This estimate included 6.2 million wild fish, 13.8 million Valdez Fisheries Development Association (VFDA) hatchery fish, and 20.7 million PWSAC hatchery fish. Approximately 2.4 million (12%) of the 20.7 million pink salmon return forecast to the PWSAC hatcheries was projected for cost recovery and broodstock with the remaining 18.3 million PWSAC fish expected to be available for CPF harvest. Approximately 2.9 million (21%) of the projected 13.8 million pink salmon return forecast to VFDA's Solomon Gulch Hatchery (SGH) were projected for cost recovery and broodstock. The remaining 10.9 million VFDA fish were expected to be available for CPF harvest. A total harvest of 4.8 million wild stock pink salmon was forecasted for CPF harvest in PWS, leaving 1.45 million fish for escapement.

The CPF harvest of 85.4 million pink salmon was the largest PWS pink salmon harvest on record. Total pink salmon harvest was 89.3 million fish, including 3.9 million (1.8 million for PWSAC and 2.1 million for VFDA) fish for hatchery cost recovery and broodstock. The proportion of wild stock pink salmon in PWS CPF harvest totals is not available at this time.

For the 2013 season, inseason pink salmon aerial survey escapement estimates were above anticipated escapement thresholds in most districts for most of the season. This allowed for targeted fishing effort on wild pink salmon and expanded time and area for targeted fishing effort on enhanced pink salmon. The area-under-the-curve estimate of pink salmon escapement used for direct comparison with the SEG goals is not yet available, but considering that inseason pink salmon escapement indices were above anticipated aerial survey counts, overall escapement was likely within or above the odd-year SEG range for all districts.

COHO SALMON

The VFDA coho salmon run was anticipated to be 127,000 fish. VFDA's broodstock objective was 1,000 coho salmon. Total CPF harvest of coho salmon in PWS (excluding Copper River and Bering River districts) was 338,000 fish. The majority of CPF coho salmon harvested in the Eastern (157,000), Coghill (64,000), and Southwestern (106,000) districts are assumed to be of enhanced stock origin.

Table 1.—Preliminary Area E salmon harvest, 2013.

District	Chinook	Sockeye	Coho	Pink	Chum	Total
Bering River	16	3,282	46,349	2	16	49,665
Copper River	8,688	1,583,993	229,058	62,853	11,353	1,895,945
Eastern	240	12,803	156,676	23,614,494	82,306	23,866,519
Northern	24	3,414	6,205	16,652,319	5,906	16,667,868
Coghill	719	117,709	64,022	9,400,685	2,109,328	11,692,463
Northwestern	0	485	85	137,495	167	138,232
Eshamy	134	508,835	1,631	63,866	212,566	787,032
Southwestern	204	37,733	105,757	32,366,269	227,459	32,737,422
Montague	133	2,705	2,376	415,772	471,832	892,818
Southeastern	263	8,972	1,390	2,694,617	41,017	2,746,259
Unakwik	0	1,565	1	72	159	1,797
CPF Total	10,421	2,281,496	613,550	85,408,444	3,162,109	91,476,020
Hatchery						
Solomon Gulch	0	9	28,282 ^a	2,136,090	75	2,164,456
Cannery Creek	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wally Noerenberg	0	0	2,700 ^b	1,264,068	721,857	1,988,625
Main Bay	0	86,309	0	0	0	86,309
Armin F. Koernig	0	0	0	496,523	0	496,523
Hatchery total^c	0	86,318	30,982	3,896,681	721,932	4,735,913
PWS Total						
Harvest	10,421	2,367,814	644,532	89,305,125	3,884,041	96,211,933

^a SGH coho salmon sales harvest for operating costs and broodstock harvest through September 23.

^b Fish number estimated for WNH coho salmon broodstock.

^c Hatchery sales harvest for operating costs and broodstock harvest.