

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



*Sam Cotten, Commissioner  
Scott Kelley, Director*



Contact:  
Cordova Management and Research Staff: Jeremy Botz,  
Tommy Sheridan, Steve Moffitt, and Stormy Haught  
Phone: (907) 424-3212  
Fax: (907) 424-3235

Cordova ADF&G  
401 Railroad Avenue  
P.O. Box 669  
Cordova, AK 99574  
Date Issued: 11/4/2015

**2015 PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND SALMON SEASON SUMMARY**

The following is an overview of the 2015 Prince William Sound (PWS) Area commercial salmon season. Please note that numbers in the narrative are rounded for simplicity and all data are considered preliminary.

The 2015 PWS Area commercial salmon harvest was 104.20 million fish. Harvest was composed of 98.03 million pink, 3.40 million sockeye, 2.53 million chum, 218,000 coho, and 23,300 Chinook salmon. The 2015 harvest was composed of 95.91 million (92%) commercial common property fishery (CPF), and 8.29 million (8%) hatchery cost recovery and broodstock fish.

**GILLNET FISHERIES**

**COPPER RIVER DISTRICT**

The 2015 preseason commercial harvest forecast for the Copper River District was 5,500 Chinook, 2.24 million sockeye, and 214,000 coho salmon. Gulkana Hatchery was expected to contribute 250,000 sockeye salmon to the CPF harvest. The commercial salmon fishing season in the Copper River District began on Thursday, May 14. Through the end of July, the commercial fishery was open 840 hours, the highest number of hours fished since 1982 and 184 hours more than the recent 10-year average. The sockeye salmon harvest of 1.75 million fish was 23% more than the previous 10-year (2005–2014) harvest average of 1.42 million sockeye salmon. The average sockeye salmon weight of 5.1 lb was the smallest on record. The number of wild sockeye salmon in the Copper River District CPF harvest was 1.57 million or 89%. Gulkana Hatchery contribution to the sockeye salmon commercial harvest was 128,000 or 7% and was 51% below forecast. Main Bay Hatchery contributed 29,700 fish, or 2% of the Copper River harvest. The CPF harvest of 22,500 Chinook salmon was above the previous 10-year (2005–2014) average harvest of 18,400. The coho salmon commercial harvest of 137,000 fish was 36% below the previous 10-year (2005–2014) average harvest of 214,000 coho salmon. The inriver goal for salmon passing the Miles Lake sonar site was 759,000–1,150,000 salmon. The 2015 preliminary sonar escapement estimate was 1.35 million salmon and exceeded the upper end of the inriver goal. Spawning escapement to Copper River delta systems based on aerial survey indices was 66,200 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 41,700 and was within the SEG range of 32,000–67,000 fish. Preliminary estimates of inriver Chinook salmon abundance indicate that spawning escapement was above the lower bound sustainable escapement goal of 24,000 fish.

### **BERING RIVER DISTRICT**

The 2015 preseason commercial harvest forecast for the Bering River District was 15,000 sockeye, and 49,000 coho salmon. The sockeye salmon commercial harvest of 2,120 fish was 85% below the previous 10-year (2005–2014) harvest average of 14,000 fish. The coho salmon commercial harvest of 12,100 was 75% below the previous 10-year (2005–2014) harvest average of 48,600 fish. Commercial fishing effort in both the sockeye and coho salmon fisheries was low due to smaller run size than anticipated for both species. The aerial escapement index of 21,700 sockeye salmon was within the SEG range of 15,000–33,000 fish. Aerial surveys of coho salmon produced an escapement index of 15,600 fish that was within the SEG range of 13,000–33,000 fish.

### **COGHILL DISTRICT**

Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation (PWSAC) forecast a 2015 run of 1.30 million chum and 56,700 coho salmon to Wally Noerenberg Hatchery (WNH) and required 812,000 (61%) chum and 2,700 (5%) coho salmon for corporate cost recovery and broodstock. The CPF drift gillnet harvest of chum salmon in the Coghill District was 778,000 fish. PWSAC harvested 1.02 million chum salmon for corporate cost recovery and broodstock. The CPF drift gillnet harvest of sockeye salmon in the Coghill District was 74,400 fish. The proportion of wild sockeye salmon in the Coghill District CPF harvest was 30%. Pink salmon CPF drift gillnet harvest in the Coghill District was 655,000 fish. The proportion of wild pink salmon in the Coghill District CPF harvest was 12%. The CPF drift gillnet harvest of coho salmon in the Coghill District was 6,090 fish, the majority of which were assumed to be hatchery origin.

The sockeye salmon run forecast for Coghill River was 123,000 fish. The Coghill River weir passed 13,600 sockeye salmon, coming in below the SEG range of 20,000–60,000 fish. Additionally, 377,000 pink salmon were passed at the weir.

### **ESHAMY DISTRICT**

The department's preseason forecast for Eshamy Lake was 53,000 wild sockeye salmon and PWSAC forecast a run of 1.60 million MBH enhanced sockeye salmon. The CPF harvest of sockeye salmon in the Eshamy District was 1.13 million fish, 28% above the 812,000 fish 10-year average. The proportion of wild sockeye salmon in the Eshamy District CPF harvest was 4%. PWSAC harvested 197,000 sockeye salmon for corporate cost recovery and broodstock. No sockeye salmon escapement estimate is available for Eshamy Lake at this time.

### **UNAKWIK DISTRICT**

The department's preseason harvest forecast for the Unakwik District was 5,700 sockeye salmon. Unakwik District CPF drift gillnet harvest was 2,960 sockeye salmon, which was below the 10-year average of 4,520 sockeye salmon.

### **Montague District, Port Chalmers Subdistrict**

PWSAC forecast a run of 258,000 chum salmon to the Port Chalmers remote release site in 2015. The drift gillnet gear group had access to the Port Chalmers Subdistrict in 2015 under the

Prince William Sound Management and Salmon Enhancement Allocation Plan. The CPF drift gillnet harvest of chum salmon in the Montague District was 168,000 fish, 35% below the forecast. The proportion of wild chum salmon in the Port Chalmers Subdistrict CPF harvest 10%.

## **PURSE SEINE FISHERIES**

### **CHUM SALMON**

The 2015 chum salmon total run forecast was 2.35 million fish, with 1.87 million fish (80%) projected to be of PWSAC origin. Of these, 280,000 chum salmon were expected to be harvested by the purse seine fleet at AFK Hatchery.

Based on the department's wild chum salmon forecast of 484,000 fish, there was a preseason expectation for the potential CPF harvest of 284,000 wild chum salmon in PWS, leaving 200,000 fish for escapement. The preseason forecast for total chum salmon CPF harvest in PWS was 1.34 million fish.

Total commercial chum salmon harvest in PWS was 2.53 million fish, including 1.02 million fish for WNH broodstock and cost recovery. Chum salmon CPF harvest was 1.51 million fish, which was 13% above the CPF preseason forecast. Purse seine chum salmon harvest in PWS was predominantly from the Southwestern, Eastern, and Coghill districts. Chum salmon commercial harvest in the Southwestern District was 167,000 fish, or 40% below the 280,000 fish forecast. Purse seine harvest of sockeye salmon during the AFK chum salmon fishery was 103,000 fish, 5% of which were wild stock origin. The Eastern District harvest total was 124,000 chum salmon. From July 11 until 15, purse seine CPFs in the Coghill District harvested 115,000 chum salmon.

### **PINK SALMON**

The 2015 pink salmon total run forecast for PWS was 54.19 million fish. This estimate included 21.60 million PWSAC enhanced fish, 16.87 million wild fish, and 15.72 million Valdez Fisheries Development Association (VFDA) enhanced fish. Approximately 3.13 million (15%) of PWSAC's pink salmon forecast was projected for cost recovery and broodstock with the remaining 18.47 million PWSAC fish expected to be available for CPF harvest. Approximately 3.10 million (20%) of VFDA's pink salmon forecast were projected for cost recovery and broodstock. The remaining 12.62 million VFDA fish were expected to be available for CPF harvest. A total harvest of 15.42 million wild stock pink salmon was forecasted for CPF harvest in PWS, leaving 1.45 million fish for escapement.

The CPF harvest of 90.97 million pink salmon was the largest PWS pink salmon harvest on record, and nearly double the preseason forecast. Total pink salmon harvest was 98.03 million fish, including 7.06 million fish for hatchery cost recovery and broodstock (4.59 million for PWSAC and 2.47 million for VFDA). Preliminary PWS pink salmon otolith contribution estimates result in commercial harvest contributions of 24.46 million wild stock fish, and 33.00 million SGH fish, both of which are records.

For the 2015 season, inseason pink salmon aerial survey escapement estimates were above anticipated escapement thresholds in most districts for most of the season. This allowed for expanded time and area for fishing effort targeting surplus wild and enhanced pink salmon. The area-under-the-curve estimate of pink salmon escapement is not yet available, but considering that inseason escapement indices were above anticipated 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 105,000 fish. Total CPF harvest of coho salmon in PWS (excluding Copper River and Bering River districts) was 49,000 fish. The majority of CPF coho salmon harvested in PWS are assumed to be of enhanced stock origin.

Table 1.–Preliminary Area E salmon harvest, 2015.

<b>District</b>	<b>Chinook</b>	<b>Sockeye</b>	<b>Coho</b>	<b>Pink</b>	<b>Chum</b>	<b>Total</b>
Bering River	13	2,137	12,106	10	1	14,267
Copper River	22,506	1,750,762	136,981	84,692	15,650	2,010,630
Eastern	167	66,253	20,076	43,730,373	123,967	43,940,836
Northern	9	11,086	1,438	13,160,239	12,785	13,185,557
Coghill	93	76,563	7,309	6,256,940	899,325	7,240,203
Northwestern	0	0	0	0	0	0
Eshamy	153	1,126,084	5,450	207,406	107,506	1,446,599
Southwestern	126	113,042	8,949	23,633,933	166,823	23,922,873
Montague	149	13,178	2,043	1,661,337	172,151	1,848,858
Southeastern	70	39,063	3,722	2,238,844	10,060	2,291,759
Unakwik	8	4,952	0	401	268	5,629
<b>CPF Total</b>	<b>23,294</b>	<b>3,203,159</b>	<b>198,074</b>	<b>90,974,175</b>	<b>1,508,536</b>	<b>95,907,238</b>
<b>Hatchery</b>						
Solomon Gulch	0	0	17,126	2,471,802	0	2,488,928
Cannery Creek	0	0	0	556,835	0	556,835
Wally						
Noerenberg	0	0	2,300	2,719,258	1,018,235	3,739,793
Main Bay	0	196,820	0	0	0	196,820
Armin F.						
Koernig	0	0	0	1,309,910	0	1,309,910
<b>Hatchery total <sup>a</sup></b>	<b>0</b>	<b>196,820</b>	<b>19,426</b>	<b>7,057,805</b>	<b>1,018,235</b>	<b>8,292,286</b>
<b>PWS Total</b>						
<b>Harvest</b>	<b>23,294</b>	<b>3,399,979</b>	<b>217,500</b>	<b>98,031,980</b>	<b>2,526,771</b>	<b>104,199,524</b>

<sup>a</sup> Hatchery sales harvest for operating costs and broodstock harvest.