

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



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**2016 PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND SALMON SEASON SUMMARY**

The following is an overview of the 2016 Prince William Sound (PWS) Area commercial salmon season. Please note that numbers in this narrative are rounded for simplicity and all data are considered preliminary. This season summary is an updated version of the summary that was released in October 2016 and provides more accurate and complete fish numbers.

The 2016 PWS Area commercial salmon harvest was 19.71 million fish. Harvest was composed of 13.05 million pink, 1.99 million sockeye, 3.17 million chum, 484,000 coho, and 13,000 Chinook salmon. The 2016 harvest included 13.34 million (71.3%) commercial common property fishery (CCPF), and 5.37 million (28.7%) hatchery cost recovery and broodstock fish.

**GILLNET FISHERIES**

**COPPER RIVER DISTRICT**

The 2016 preseason commercial harvest forecast for the Copper River District was 21,000 Chinook, 1.62 million sockeye, and 201,000 coho salmon. Gulkana Hatchery was projected to contribute 169,000 sockeye salmon to the CCPF harvest. The commercial salmon fishing season in the Copper River District began on Monday, May 16. Through the end of July, the commercial fishery was open 756 hours, 96 hours more than the recent 10-year average. The sockeye salmon harvest of 1.18 million fish was 21% less than the previous 10-year (2006–2015) harvest average of 1.46 million sockeye salmon. Based on department sampling, the unweighted average sockeye salmon weight was 5.04 lbs., the smallest on record. The number of wild sockeye salmon in the Copper River District CCPF harvest was 1.0 million or 85% of the harvest. Gulkana Hatchery contribution to the sockeye salmon CCPF was 158,000 fish or 13% of the harvest. Main Bay Hatchery contributed 17,500 fish, or 1% of the Copper River District harvest. The CCPF harvest of 13,100 Chinook salmon was below the previous 10-year (2006–2015) average harvest of 18,000. The season total coho salmon commercial harvest of 369,000 fish was nearly double the previous 10-year (2006–2015) average harvest of 202,000 coho salmon. The 2016 preliminary sonar inriver estimate was 802,000 salmon and was within the 712,000–

1,100,000 salmon range of the inriver goal. Spawning escapement in Copper River delta systems based on aerial survey indices was 51,600 sockeye salmon, and was below the sustainable escapement goal (SEG) range of 55,000–130,000 fish. However, pilot availability and poor survey conditions likely contributed to the lower counts and it is likely that the goal was achieved. Coho salmon spawning escapement in the Copper River Delta based on aerial survey indices was 65,700 and was within the SEG range of 32,000–67,000 fish. The 2016 Chinook salmon inriver abundance point estimate from the mark–recapture program run by the Native Village of Eyak was 16,009 fish. After upriver fisheries harvests are subtracted, the total spawning escapement estimate will likely be close to half of the lower bound SEG of 24,000 fish.

### **BERING RIVER DISTRICT**

The 2016 preseason commercial harvest forecast for the Bering River District was 14,000 sockeye and 46,000 coho salmon. The sockeye salmon commercial harvest of 9,840 fish was 53% above the previous 10-year (2006–2015) harvest average of 6,420 fish. The coho salmon commercial harvest of 80,400 was 77% above the previous 10-year (2006–2015) harvest average of 45,500 fish. Commercial fishing effort in both sockeye and coho salmon fisheries was high due to proximity to productive fishing in the eastern portion of the Copper River District. 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 25,800 fish that was within the SEG range of 13,000–33,000 fish.

### **COGHILL DISTRICT**

Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation (PWSAC) forecast a 2016 Wally Noerenberg Hatchery (WNH) run of 2.15 million chum and 20,700 coho salmon and anticipated 1.17 million (55%) chum and 2,700 (13%) coho salmon for cost recovery and broodstock. The Coghill District CCPF drift gillnet harvest of chum salmon was 1.53 million fish. PWSAC harvested 959,000 chum salmon for cost recovery and broodstock. The Coghill District CCPF drift gillnet harvest of sockeye salmon was 63,700 fish. The proportion of wild sockeye salmon in the Coghill District CCPF harvest was 8,430 fish (13%). Coghill District CCPF drift gillnet pink salmon harvest was 8,970 fish. The proportion of wild pink salmon in the Coghill District CCPF harvest was 26%. The Coghill District CCPF drift gillnet harvest of coho salmon was 5 fish.

The Coghill River sockeye salmon run forecast was 110,000 fish. The Coghill River weir passed 8,708 sockeye salmon, coming in below the SEG range of 20,000–60,000 fish and was the second lowest escapement on record since 1974.

### **ESHAMY DISTRICT**

PWSAC forecast a Main Bay Hatchery enhanced sockeye salmon run of 1.60 million. The Eshamy District CCPF harvest of sockeye salmon was 663,000 fish, 59% below the forecast. The proportion of wild sockeye salmon in the Eshamy District CCPF harvest was 3% (21,500 fish).

### **UNAKWIK DISTRICT**

Unakwik District CCPF drift gillnet harvest was 359 sockeye salmon, which was well below the 10-year average of 3,000 sockeye salmon.

**MONTAGUE DISTRICT, PORT CHALMERS SUBDISTRICT**

PWSAC forecast a 2016 Port Chalmers remote release site run of 330,000 chum salmon. The drift gillnet gear group had access to the Port Chalmers Subdistrict in 2016 under the Prince William Sound Management and Salmon Enhancement Allocation Plan. The Montague District CCPF drift gillnet chum salmon harvest was 197,000, 40% below forecast. The proportion of wild chum salmon in the Port Chalmers Subdistrict CCPF harvest was 11% (22,000 fish).

**PURSE SEINE FISHERIES****CHUM SALMON**

The PWS 2016 chum salmon total run forecast was 3.3 million fish, with 2.87 million fish (87%) projected to be of PWSAC origin. Of these, 394,000 chum salmon were expected to be harvested by the purse seine fleet at the Armin F. Koernig Hatchery (AFK).

Based on the department's wild chum salmon forecast of 426,000 fish, there was a preseason expectation for the potential CCPF harvest of 242,000 wild chum salmon in PWS, leaving 200,000 fish for escapement.

Purse seine chum salmon harvest in PWS was predominantly from the Southwestern, Eastern, and Coghill districts. Chum salmon commercial harvest in AFK Hatchery Special Harvest Area (SHA) was 205,000 hatchery fish, or 48% below PWSAC's 394,000 preseason forecast. Despite a restrictive fishing schedule the purse seine harvest of sockeye salmon during the AFK Hatchery chum salmon fishery was 52,100 fish, 4% of which were wild stock origin (2,300 fish). Eastern District harvest total was 56,600 chum salmon. The purse seine fleet was allowed into the Coghill District on July 7 and 11, to harvest a buildup of poor quality fish in the WNH Terminal Harvest Area (THA) and harvested 101,000 chum salmon.

**PINK SALMON**

The PWS 2016 pink salmon total run forecast was 40.9 million fish. This estimate included 19.6 million PWSAC enhanced fish, 3.8 million wild fish, and 17.4 million Valdez Fisheries Development Association (VFDA) enhanced fish. Approximately 4.7 million (24%) of PWSAC's pink salmon forecast was projected for cost recovery and broodstock with the remaining 14.9 million PWSAC fish expected to be available for CCPF harvest. Approximately 3.4 million (20%) of VFDA's pink salmon forecast were projected for cost recovery and broodstock. The remaining 14.0 million VFDA fish were expected to be available for CPF harvest. A total harvest of 2.7 million wild stock pink salmon was forecasted for PWS CCPF harvest leaving 1.2 million fish for escapement.

The CCPF harvest of 8.65 million pink salmon is the lowest harvest since 2002 and the second lowest in the last 20 years, or 73% below the 31.6 million CCPF preseason forecast. Total pink salmon harvest was 13.05 million fish, including 4.40 million fish for hatchery cost recovery (2.37 million for PWSAC and 2.03 million for VFDA). Pink salmon otolith contributions for CCPF harvest were 25% wild stock fish, 69% Solomon Gulch Hatchery fish, and 6% PWSAC fish.

During the 2016 season weather and pilot availability resulted in limited aerial survey escapement data. When surveys were completed, escapement indices were above anticipated escapements in most districts for most of the season. This allowed for some opportunity to target surplus wild and enhanced pink salmon. Escapements were below anticipated within the

Northern District for most of the season and a conservative management approach was taken in Northern District migration corridors to ensure escapement goals were met. Preliminary area-under-the-curve estimates of pink salmon escapement indices were within or above SEG's for all districts except Eshamy.

### COHO SALMON

VFDA projected their coho salmon run at 101,000 fish. Total PWS CCPF coho salmon harvest (excluding Copper River and Bering River districts) was 29,700 fish. Otolith contributions indicate that 76% of PWS CCPF coho salmon harvested (excluding Copper River and Bering River districts) were of wild origin.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The department would like thank Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation (PWSAC) and the Copper River/Prince William Sound Marketing Association for providing funding assistance during the 2016 season. The department's Prince William Sound Management Area program budget has been reduced nearly 20% over the last two years and further cuts are anticipated. As such the participation of these groups in funding core management projects is invaluable.

Table 1.–Preliminary Area E salmon harvest, 2016.

<b>District</b>	<b>Chinook</b>	<b>Sockeye</b>	<b>Coho</b>	<b>Pink</b>	<b>Chum</b>	<b>Total</b>
Bering River	58	9,840	80,379	22	122	90,421
Copper River	13,075	1,184,698	368,983	35,116	5,523	1,607,395
Eastern	28	6,414	26,773	7,536,833	56,570	7,626,618
Northern	1	1,972	896	417,218	6,839	426,926
Coghill	101	63,719	11	13,556	1,632,267	1,709,654
Northwestern	4	3,069	256	172,360	4,126	179,815
Eshamy	92	662,858	376	59,894	99,249	822,469
Southwestern	22	53,085	1,251	355,888	210,621	620,867
Montague	84	3,009	13	19,360	196,688	219,154
Southeastern	1	201	121	37,970	325	38,618
Unakwik	0	359	0	0	547	906
<b>CPF Total</b>	<b>13,466</b>	<b>1,989,224</b>	<b>479,059</b>	<b>8,648,217</b>	<b>2,212,877</b>	<b>13,342,843</b>
<b>Hatchery</b>						
Solomon Gulch	0	0	4,915	2,027,834	0	2,032,749
Cannery Creek	0	0	0	507,955	0	507,955
Wally Noerenberg	0	42	0	575,221	958,888	1,534,151
Main Bay	0	0	0	0	0	0
Armin F. Koernig	0	0	0	1,291,998	0	1,291,998
<b>Hatchery total <sup>a</sup></b>	<b>0</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>4,915</b>	<b>4,403,008</b>	<b>958,888</b>	<b>5,366,853</b>
<b>PWS Total Harvest</b>	<b>13,466</b>	<b>1,989,266</b>	<b>483,974</b>	<b>13,051,225</b>	<b>3,171,765</b>	<b>18,709,696</b>

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