

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-SS-2-27-11

Issued at: Palmer , Thursday, August 25, 2011

Effective Date: 12:01 a.m., Saturday, August 27, 2011

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m. December 31, 2011, unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order closes all waters of the Knik Arm Management Area, excluding Eklutna Tailrace and Fish Creek, to fishing for coho salmon effective 12:01 a.m., Saturday, August 27, 2011. The closure prohibits sport fishing for coho salmon, including catch-and-release fishing. Coho salmon may not be retained or possessed; coho salmon accidentally caught while fishing for other species may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately.

REGULATION:

The provisions of 5 ACC 60.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area. (2)(A) and (2)(B) are superseded by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective beginning August 27, 2011;

5 AAC 60.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession and size limits, and methods and means for the Knik Arm Drainages Area.

(2) Salmon other than king salmon;

(A) 16 inches or greater in length may be taken from January 1-December 31; excluding Fish Creek and Eklutna Tailrace, bag and possession limit is three fish, of which none may be coho salmon; sport fishing for coho salmon is closed, coho salmon of any length may not be retained or possessed; coho salmon caught may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately; in Fish Creek, bag and possession limit is three fish, of which only two per day and two in possession may be coho salmon; in Eklutna Tailrace, bag and possession limit is three fish, of which all three may be coho salmon;

(B) salmon, other than king salmon, less than 16 inches in length may be taken from January 1-December 31; excluding Fish Creek and Eklutna Tailrace, bag and possession limit of ten fish, of which none may be coho salmon; in Fish Creek and Eklutna Tailrace, bag and possession limit of 10 fish, of which all may be coho salmon;

Cora Campbell,
Commissioner

By delegation to:

Sam Ivey,
Area Management Biologist

JUSTIFICATION:

The 2011 return of coho salmon to most of the Knik Arm Management Area streams of Northern Cook Inlet appear to be below average. Both commercial and recreational catch rates for coho salmon have been below average. The department has a weir on the Little Susitna River to evaluate coho salmon run strength. As of August 24, which represents the first quarter of the historical return, only 1,447 coho salmon had passed through the weir. Based on this year's weir count, the department is projecting a total escapement of approximately 6,000 coho salmon, well below the escapement goal range of 10,100 to 17,700 fish. Data from previous weir counts on other Knik Arm streams indicate that when there is a weak return to the Little Susitna River, returns to these systems are weak as well. It is also anticipated that closure of the Little Susitna River (only) would transfer a significant amount of sport fishing effort to other Knik Arm fisheries. Fishing reports received from guides and anglers fishing Knik Arm systems indicate below average returns, except for Fish Creek. A recent staff survey of Jim Creek indicated far fewer fish than optimal for achieving the escapement goal on the Jim Creek system. The escapement goal was not achieved on Jim Creek in 2010, or on the Little Susitna River 2009-2010. Given the poor return of coho salmon to waters of the Knik Arm area of Northern Cook Inlet (NCI), it is warranted to restrict recreational fishing activity at this time. Fish Creek and the Eklutna Tailrace are excluded from this restriction because the coho salmon escapement goal was achieved at Fish Creek prior to the sockeye salmon weir closing, and the Eklutna Tailrace is a stocked fishery.

DISTRIBUTION:

The distribution list for this emergency order is on file at the Region 2 Office of Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Sport Fish, 333 Raspberry Road, Anchorage, AK 99518, (907) 267-2218.