

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-2-06-12

Issued at: Palmer, Tuesday, May 1, 2012

Effective Date: 6:00 a.m., Tuesday, May 15, 2012

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m., Friday, July 13, 2012, unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order reduces the annual limit for king salmon 20 inches or longer from five fish to two fish and limits sport fishing gear to one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure only when fishing in Units 1–6 of the Susitna River drainage. Single-hook is defined as a hook with only one point. The Deshka River is included in the annual limit reduction, but is excluded from the one unbaited, single-hook only requirement. Any king salmon recorded before Tuesday, May 15, on the harvest portion of an Alaska sport fishing license or harvest record card does not count against the two king salmon annual limit after 6:00 a.m., Tuesday, May 15, 2012, but does count against the Cook Inlet annual limit of five king salmon.

This emergency order further prohibits the harvest of king salmon (any size) in Unit 2 of the Susitna River after June 11 through the remainder of the fishing season. In the waters of Unit 2 normally open to king salmon fishing, fishing for any species will be closed Tuesday – Friday beginning 12:01 a.m., Tuesday, June 12, through Friday, June 29, and seven days per week beginning 12:01 a.m., Tuesday, July 3, through 11:59 p.m. Friday, July 13.

Catch-and-release fishing for king salmon in Unit 2 will be allowed from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. during the three-day weekends (Saturday – Monday) beginning Saturday, June 16, through Monday, July 2.

The area affected by this emergency order includes all waters open to king salmon fishing in Units 1–6 of the Susitna River drainage. Some of the more popular fisheries within the Susitna drainage include Talachulitna, Lake Creek, Deshka River, Willow, Little Willow, Greys, Kashwitna, Caswell, Sheep, Montana, Goose, Sunshine, Birch, Trapper, and Rabideux creeks, Clear Creek, and the East Fork of the Chulitna River. This emergency order is effective from 6:00 a.m., Tuesday, May 15, 2012, through 11:59 p.m., Friday, July 13, 2012.

REGULATION:

The provisions of 5 AAC 61.110. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Susitna River Drainage Area. (1)(A), 5 AAC 61.112 Special provisions and localized additions and exceptions to the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 1 of Susitna River Drainage Area. (1), 5 AAC 61.114 Special provisions and localized additions and exceptions to the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 2 of Susitna River Drainage Area. (1) and (3), 5 AAC 61.118 Special provisions and localized additions and exceptions to the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 4 of Susitna River Drainage Area. (1), 5 AAC 61.120 Special provisions and localized additions and exceptions to the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 5 of Susitna River Drainage Area. (1), and 5 AAC 61.122 Special provisions and localized additions and exceptions to the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 6 of Susitna River Drainage Area. (1) are superseded by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective, beginning 6:00 a.m., Tuesday, May 15, 2012, through 11:59 p.m., Friday, July 13, 2012:

5AAC 61.110. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Susitna River Drainage Area.

(1) king salmon

(A) 20 inches or greater in length may be taken only from January 1 – July 13; bag and possession limit for king salmon is one fish; there is an annual limit of two fish and a harvest record is required as specified in 5 AAC 61.124; any king salmon recorded before Tuesday, May 15, does not count against the two king salmon annual limit after 6:00 a.m., Tuesday, May 15, but does count against the Cook Inlet annual limit of five king salmon; a king salmon 20 inches or greater in length removed from the water shall be retained and becomes a part of the bag limit of the person originally hooking it; a person may not remove a king salmon from the water before releasing the fish;

5AAC 61.112. Special provisions and localized additions and exceptions to the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 1 of the Susitna River Drainage Area.

(1) from September 1–May 14, in flowing waters only unbaited, artificial lures may be used; from May 15–July 13, in flowing waters only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used;

5AAC 61.114. Special provisions and localized additions and exceptions to the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 2 of the Susitna River Drainage Area.

(1) from January 1 through the second Monday in June, and on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday for two consecutive weeks starting on the Saturday following the second Monday in June, Unit 2 is open to sport fishing for all finfish species; beginning June 12, king salmon may not be retained or possessed; any king salmon caught must be released immediately and returned to the water unharmed;

(3) in flowing waters only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used from September 1– July 13;

5AAC 61.118. Special provisions and localized additions and exceptions to the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 4 of the Susitna River Drainage Area.

(1) from September 1–May 14, in flowing waters only unbaited, artificial lures may be used; from May 15–July 13, in flowing waters only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used;

5AAC 61.120. Special provisions and localized additions and exceptions to the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 5 of the Susitna River Drainage Area.

(1) from September 1–May 14, in flowing waters only unbaited, artificial lures may be used; from May 15–July 13, in flowing waters only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used;

5AAC 61.122. Special provisions and localized additions and exceptions to the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 6 of the Susitna River Drainage Area.

(1) from September 1–May 14, in flowing waters only unbaited, artificial lures may be used; from May 15–July 13, in flowing waters only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used;

Cora Campbell,

Commissioner

By delegation to:

Sam Ivey,
Area Management Biologist

JUSTIFICATION:

The department monitors escapement on 24 streams within the Northern Cook Inlet Area, of which 17 have established escapement goals. Aerial index counts and a weir count on the Deshka River indicate king salmon returns have ranged from below average to poor since 2007. Fewer than half the escapement goals were achieved 2008 – 2010. Restrictive regulations passed by the Board of Fisheries in 2011 to reduce king salmon harvest in northern Cook Inlet were insufficient to achieve escapement goals in 2011 in 12 of 17 systems that have established escapement goals. The outlook for Deshka River king salmon is for another below average run of about 21,660 fish (15,500 in the escapement), similar to last year. Although the Deshka River king salmon escapement goal of 13,000 – 28,000 fish is expected to be attained, it is anticipated that restrictions to other areas of the Susitna River would transfer a significant amount of sport fishing effort to the Deshka River. Additional harvest associated with increased angler participation could jeopardize the likelihood of the Deshka River achieving its goal if it is not included in the annual limit reduction. Unit 2 streams are managed as a unit because restrictions imposed on one stream are likely to transfer a significant amount of pressure to adjacent streams within the unit which might not be sustainable. It is anticipated that by additionally restricting Unit 2 fisheries to nonretention for king salmon on three consecutive, three-day weekends (Saturday–Monday) after June 11, a 90 percent harvest reduction may be achieved on these streams, providing the greatest potential for achieving the five escapement goals within this management unit. Taken together, the annual limit reduction and single-hook only requirement in combination with area-specific restrictions imposed on Unit 2 Susitna River could reduce harvest by up to 50 percent across the Susitna River drainage during the sport fishing season, which should be sufficient to attain escapement goals in 2012. Below average runs over recent years, a below average outlook for 2012, and uncertainty over how quickly returns may recover justify starting the 2012 season with these restrictions.

DISTRIBUTION:

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