

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-2-20-12

Issued at: Palmer, Friday, June 22, 2012

Effective Date: 6:00 a.m., Monday, June 25, 2012

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m., Friday, July 13, 2012, unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order supersedes Emergency Order No. 2-KS-1-06-12, issued May 1, 2012, and Emergency Order No. 2-KS-1-15-12, issued June 18, 2012.

This emergency order closes the Susitna River drainage to sport fishing for king salmon and limits sport fishing gear to one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure only when fishing in Units 1 - 6 of the Susitna River drainage in those waters normally open to king salmon fishing. Single hook is defined as a hook with only one point. The closure and restrictions include the Deshka River. This emergency order is effective from 6:00 a.m., Monday, June 25, 2012, through 11:59 p.m., Friday, July 13, 2012.

Fishing for other finfish species remains open. King salmon may not be targeted and those caught while fishing for other species may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately. 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 River, 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.

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) and (B)(i), 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), (6)(A) and (B), 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) and (7)(A), 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) and (4)(A) are superseded by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective, beginning Monday, June 25, 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) sport fishing for king salmon is prohibited; king salmon that are caught must be released immediately; a person may not remove a king salmon from the water before releasing the fish;

(B) less than 20 inches in length

(i) sport fishing for king salmon is prohibited; king salmon that are caught must be released immediately; 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) in flowing waters only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used;

(6) in the Deshka River drainage, including Trapper Lake,

(A) in flowing waters upstream of the Moose/Kroto Creeks, only one, unbaited, single hook, artificial lure may be used;

(B) from its mouth upstream to ADF&G regulatory markers located 300 feet downstream of the weir (River Mile 7), and in all waters within a one-half mile radius of its confluence with the Susitna River, sport fishing for king salmon is closed; king salmon may not be retained or possessed; king salmon that are caught must be released immediately; a person may not remove a king salmon from the water before releasing the fish; from its mouth upstream to ADF&G regulatory markers near Chijuk Creek (River Mile 17), and in all waters within a one-half mile radius of its confluence with the Susitna River, only one, unbaited, single hook, artificial lure may be used; the remainder of the drainage is closed to sport fishing for king salmon;

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) beginning 6 a.m., Monday, June 25, 2012, areas normally open to king salmon fishing in Unit 2 are closed to sport fishing for king salmon;

(3) in flowing waters only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used;

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) in flowing waters only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used;

(7) in the Lake Creek drainage,

(A) from an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately 100 yards upstream of its mouth to an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately one-quarter mile upstream of Bulchitna Lake, 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) 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) in flowing waters only one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used;

(4) in the East Fork of the Chulitna River drainage, including all waters within a one-quarter mile radius of its confluence of the East Fork and West Fork and including the Middle Fork of the Chulitna and the first quarter mile of Honolulu Creek,

(A) the waters are open to sport fishing, except for king salmon; king salmon may not be retained or possessed; king salmon that are caught must be released immediately; a person may not remove a king salmon from the water before releasing the fish;

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 surveys and a weir count on the Deshka River indicate king salmon returns throughout the Susitna drainage have ranged from below average to poor since 2007. Fewer than half the escapement goals were achieved 2008 - 2010. Excluding Deshka River, for which the sustainable escapement goal (SEG) was met in 2010-2011, only 3 of 15 index streams in 2010 met escapement goals. In 2011, only 5 of 17 index streams met escapement goals despite restrictive regulations passed by the Board of Fisheries in 2011 to reduce king salmon harvest in northern Cook Inlet. Index counts on the Talachulitna, Willow, Montana, Clear, and Prairie creek were of the lowest on record in 2011.

King salmon stocks in Cook Inlet and throughout Alaska are experiencing a period of low productivity and low run strength. All indices of abundance suggest king salmon run strength in the Susitna River is comparable with poor run strength trends experienced by other king salmon stocks in lower Cook Inlet and the Kenai Peninsula.

The outlook for Deshka River king salmon at the outset of the season was for another below-average run of about 21,660 fish (15,500 in the escapement), similar to 2011. To date, weir counts combined with angler reports, and staff surveys all indicate a weaker than anticipated run of king salmon on the Deshka River. Angler and guide reports on other tributaries of the Susitna River combined with recent staff surveys also indicate a weak return of king salmon to these areas. The SEG for king salmon in the Deshka River is 13,000 to 28,000 fish, as measured at the weir located at River Mile 7. Based upon average run timing, approximately 60 percent of the escapement should have passed the weir by June 21. At this time only 6,852 fish have passed the weir and the total escapement is projected to be approximately 11,350 fish. However, projections of escapement vary between about 10,000 to 14,500 using three-day early-run to three-day late-run timing models. The anticipated sport harvest on Deshka River for a below-average run is approximately 3,500 fish with an average of 75 percent occurring prior to June 21. With fewer than 900 fish expected to be conserved through closure of the fishery, any additional mortality associated with harvest or catch-and-release cannot be justified, and all fish entering the lower Deshka River and the rest of the Susitna drainage must be conserved if escapement goals are to be attained.

It is anticipated that this area-wide Susitna River closure will reduce the total harvest by about 35-40 percent in the Lake Creek drainage, 50-60 percent in the Talachulitna drainage, and 70-75 percent in the Talkeetna drainage.

PREVIOUS EMERGENCY ORDERS AFFECTED:

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-2-06-12, which reduced the annual limit to two king salmon greater than 20 inches in length and allowed the use of one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure only in Units 1- 6 of the Susitna River drainage, is superseded by this emergency order.

Emergency order No. 2-KS-2-15-12, which prohibited the use of bait and limited sport fishing gear to one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure while sport fishing in the Deshka River, is superseded by this emergency order.

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.