

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-HC-7-04-12

Issued at: Homer, Monday, April 2, 2012

Effective Date: 12:01 a.m., Wednesday, April 4, 2012

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m., Monday,
December 31, 2012, unless superseded by
subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order reduces the combined bag and possession limits of littleneck and butter clams in the Cook Inlet – Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area, including Kachemak Bay, to 80 clams per person beginning 12:01 a.m., Wednesday, April 4, 2012, through 11:59 p.m., Monday, December 31, 2012.

REGULATION:

The provisions of 5 AAC 58.022 Waters; seasons; bag, possession, and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet – Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area. (a)(12) and (13) are superseded by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective, beginning 12:01 a.m., Wednesday, April 4, 2012, through 11:59 p.m., Monday, December 31, 2012:

5 AAC 58.022 Waters; seasons; bag, possession, and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet – Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area.

(a)(12) littleneck clams: may be taken from January 1 - December 31; bag and possession limit of 80 littleneck and butter clams combined; minimum size is one and one-half inches in length across the widest part of the shell;

(a)(13) butter clams: may be taken from January 1 - December 31; bag and possession limit of 80 butter and littleneck clams combined; minimum size is two and one-half inches in length across the widest part of the shell;

Cora Campbell,
Commissioner

By delegation to:

Carol Kerkvliet
Fisheries Biologist II

JUSTIFICATION:

Department survey data for Jakolof Bay show littleneck clam density declined from 21 clams per square meter in 2001 to three clams per square meter in 2010. Similarly, Jakolof Bay butter clam density declined from three clams per square meter to one clam per square meter over the same time period. Survey data for the upper and lower islands in China Poot Bay show littleneck clam density declined from 44 and 27 clams per square meter in 2000 to three clams and one clam in 2009. Butter clam abundance at China Poot Bay remains stable. A shorter time series of data from other surveyed sites within Kachemak Bay also indicate declines. The cause of these declines in clam abundance is unknown.

At its March 2012 shellfish meeting, the Alaska Board of Fisheries adopted regulations to reduce the current littleneck and butter clam bag and possession limits for subsistence, sport, and personal use fisheries to 80 hardshell clams per day. However, those regulations will not go into effect immediately, necessitating the issuance of this emergency order.

It is necessary to reduce the current bag limits of 1,000 littleneck and 700 butter clams to reflect current levels of abundance; current limits were established when abundance was high and were intended to allow enforcement to discern commercial from noncommercial harvesters. A bag limit of 80 clams of both species combined still provides reasonable opportunity for recreational use to harvest clams.

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.