

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-2-08-13

Issued at: Palmer, Thursday, April 18, 2013

Effective Date: 6:00 a.m., Wednesday, May 15, 2013

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m., Saturday,
July 13, 2013, unless superseded by
subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order limits sport fishing gear to one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure only when fishing in the Susitna River drainage. In addition, a person, after taking a king salmon 20 inches or greater in length, may not fish for **any species of finfish on the same day** in any waters open to sport fishing for king salmon in the Susitna River Drainage Area

This emergency order also prohibits the harvest of king salmon (any size) in Units 1 (except Deshka River), 2, 3, 5, and 6 of the Susitna River. Where harvest is prohibited, catch-and-release fishing is allowed. In the waters of Unit 2 open to king salmon fishing, fishing for trout and other species is not affected and is allowed as written in current regulation. The Deshka River is open to harvest of king salmon seven day per week; however, only one unbaited, single hook, artificial lure is allowed.

Within Unit 4 (Yentna drainage), except for the Talachulitna River, this emergency order allows harvest to occur each Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and Monday and prohibits the retention of king salmon (any size) each Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. On Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, catch-and-release fishing is allowed, king salmon may not be retained or possessed, and king salmon caught may not be removed from the water and must be released immediately. The Talachulitna River is catch-and-release only seven days per week.

This emergency order is effective from 6:00 a.m., Wednesday, May 15, 2013, through 11:59 p.m., Saturday, July 13, 2013.

REGULATION: The provisions of 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), (4), and (6)(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 61.116. Special provisions and localized additions and exceptions to the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 3 of Susitna River Drainage Area. (2), 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 (2), 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 (2), 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.

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. (9)(C) and 5 AAC 61.123 Restrictions on sport fishing after taking king salmon 20 inches or greater in length in the Susitna

River Drainage Area. (1)(M) are added by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective, beginning 6:00 a.m., Wednesday, May 15, 2013, through 11:59 p.m., Saturday, July 13, 2013:

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. Unless otherwise specified by an emergency order issued under AS 16.05.060 , the following are localized additions and exceptions to the general seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means to the general provisions specified in 5 AAC 61.110 and 5 AAC 75 for Unit 1 of the Susitna River Drainage Area:

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

(4) except in the Deshka River drainage, king salmon may not be retained or possessed; any king salmon caught must be released immediately and returned to the water unharmed;

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

(B) 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, king salmon may be taken from January 1 - July 13; from September 1 – July 13, one unbaited, single-hook, artificial lure may be used; from July 14 - August 31, bait may be used; the remainder of the drainage is closed from January 1 - December 31 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. Unless otherwise specified by an emergency order issued under AS 16.05.060 , the following are localized additions and exceptions to the general seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means to the general provisions specified in 5 AAC 61.110 and 5 AAC 75 for Unit 2 of the Susitna River Drainage Area:

(1) from January 1 through the third Monday in June, and on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday for two consecutive weeks starting on the Saturday following the third Monday in June, Unit 2 is open to sport fishing for all finfish species, including king salmon; beginning May 15, king salmon may not be retained or possessed; any king salmon caught must be released immediately and returned to the water unharmed;

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

5AAC 61.116. Special provisions and localized additions and exceptions to the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for Unit 3 of the Susitna River Drainage Area. Unless otherwise specified by an emergency order issued under AS 16.05.060 , the following are localized additions and exceptions to the general seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means to the general provisions specified in 5 AAC 61.110 and 5 AAC 75 for Unit 3 of the Susitna River Drainage Area:

(2) from May 15–July 13, king salmon may not be retained or possessed; any king salmon caught must be released immediately and returned to the water unharmed; sport fishing is not allowed from 11:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.;

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. Unless otherwise specified by an emergency order issued under AS 16.05.060 , the following are localized

additions and exceptions to the general seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means to the general provisions specified in 5 AAC 61.110 and 5 AAC 75 for Unit 4 of the Susitna River Drainage Area:

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

(2) from May 15– July 13, king salmon may be retained on Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays, and Mondays only; any king salmon caught on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays must be released immediately and returned to the water unharmed; sport fishing is not allowed from 11:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.;

(9) the Talachulitna River drainage and all waters within a three quarter mile radius of its confluence with the Skwentna River,

(C) king salmon may not be retained or possessed; any king salmon caught must be released immediately and returned to the water unharmed;

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.

Unless otherwise specified by an emergency order issued under AS 16.05.060 , the following are localized additions and exceptions to the general seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means to the general provisions specified in 5 AAC 61.110 and 5 AAC 75 for Unit 5 of the Susitna River Drainage Area:

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

(2) from May 15–July 13, king salmon may not be retained or possessed; any king salmon caught must be released immediately and returned to the water unharmed; sport fishing is not allowed from 11:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.;

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.

Unless otherwise specified by an emergency order issued under AS 16.05.060 , the following are localized additions and exceptions to the general seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means to the general provisions specified in 5 AAC 61.110 and 5 AAC 75 for Unit 6 of the Susitna River Drainage Area:

(1) from September 1–July 13, 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) from January 1 - July 13, the waters are open to sport fishing for all finfish species, including king salmon; king salmon may not be retained or possessed; any king salmon caught must be released immediately and returned to the water unharmed;

5 AAC 61.123. Restrictions on sport fishing after taking king salmon 20 inches or greater in length in the Susitna River Drainage Area. Notwithstanding any other provision in this chapter, or unless modified by an emergency order issued under AS 16.05.060 , a person, after taking a king salmon 20 inches or greater in length, may not fish for

(1) any species of finfish on the same day in the following waters open to fishing for king salmon:

(M) any waters open to sport fishing for king salmon in the Susitna River Drainage Area;

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 Dëshka River indicate king salmon returns have ranged from below average to poor since 2007. Fewer than half the escapement goals were achieved 2008 – 2012. Restrictive regulations passed by the Board of Fisheries in 2011 to reduce king salmon harvest in northern Cook Inlet and restrictive actions taken preseason by emergency order in 2012 to reduce harvest by 50% across the drainage were insufficient to achieve escapement goals in 13 of 17 systems due to a lower than expected return.

The outlook for Dëshka River king salmon is for another below average run of about 26,800 fish. Given the below average outlook for the Dëshka run, past performance of fisheries within the Susitna drainage, and uncertainty over how returns may recover, more conservative actions must be taken in the 2013 Susitna drainage fisheries than were taken in 2012. Areas within the Susitna drainage that have failed to achieve escapement goals over consecutive years warrant nonretention of king salmon, regardless of size. These areas correspond to Units 2, 3, 5, and 6 of the Susitna River. A 60 percent reduction in harvest is required within Unit 4 of the Susitna River in order to achieve the escapement goal at Lake Creek if given a similar run as in 2012. Poor runs to the Talachulitna River over the past 3 years, despite closure of the fishery in 2012, warrants nonretention for that system.

Although the Dëshka River king salmon escapement goal of 13,000 – 28,000 fish would be expected to be attained under conditions similar to 2012, it is anticipated that restrictions to other areas of the Susitna River in 2013 will transfer a significant amount of sport fishing effort to the Dëshka River. Additional harvest associated with increased angler participation will jeopardize the likelihood of the Dëshka River achieving its goal if bait is not prohibited or if not included in the annual limit reduction.

It is anticipated that these restrictions will reduce harvest by as much as 80 percent across the Susitna drainage, all units together, when combined with an annual limit reduction of five fish to two fish. This reduction is expected to provide the greatest potential for achieving escapement goals during 2013 yet continue to provide fishing opportunity throughout the season. Below average runs over recent years, a below average outlook for 2013, and uncertainty over how quickly returns may recover justify starting the 2013 season with these restrictions. Data gathered from weirs, boat surveys, and aerial surveys will be used to gauge run strength during the season.

PREVIOUS EMERGENCY ORDERS AFFECTED:

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-2-09 -13 establishes a combined annual limit of two king salmon 20 inches or greater in length for fish harvested in the Susitna River drainage and the Little Susitna River. This emergency order remains in effect from 6:00 a.m., Wednesday, May 15, 2013, through 11:59 p.m., Saturday, July 13, 2013.

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.