

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-1-04-14

Issued at Soldotna: Thursday, February 27, 2014

Effective Date: 12:01 a.m., Thursday, May 1, 2014.

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m., Monday, July 31, 2014, unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order closes the Kenai River to sport fishing for early-run king salmon. The Kenai River will be closed to sport fishing for king salmon from the mouth upstream to the outlet of Skilak Lake and in the Moose River from its confluence with the Kenai River upstream to the northernmost edge of the Sterling Highway bridge beginning at 12:01 a.m., Thursday, May 1, through 11:59 p.m., Monday, June 30, 2014. Sport fishing for king salmon will remain closed from 12:01 a.m., Tuesday, July 1 through 11:59 p.m., Thursday, July 31, 2014 in waters of the Kenai River drainage from an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately 300 yards downstream from the mouth of Slikok Creek, upstream to the outlet of Skilak Lake, and in the Moose River from its confluence with the Kenai River upstream to the northernmost edge of the Sterling Highway bridge. This closure prohibits all sport fishing for king salmon, including catch-and-release fishing. King salmon may not be retained or possessed; king 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 AAC 57.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area (2)(A)(i) and 5 AAC 57.120 (3)(A) are superseded by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective beginning at 12:01 a.m., Thursday, May 1, 2014 through 11:59 p.m., through Thursday, July 31, 2014.

5 AAC 57.120. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Kenai River Drainage Area.

(2) king salmon 20 inches or greater in length as follows:

(A)(i) from May 1 – June 30, in the Kenai River from its mouth upstream to the outlet of Skilak Lake and in the Moose River from its confluence with the Kenai River upstream to the northernmost edge of the Sterling Highway bridge, is closed to sport fishing for king salmon; from July 1 – July 31, that portion of the Kenai River from an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately 300 yards downstream from the mouth of Slikok Creek, upstream to the outlet of Skilak Lake, and in the Moose River from its confluence with the Kenai River upstream to the northernmost edge of the Sterling Highway bridge, is closed to sport fishing for king salmon;

(3) king salmon less than 20 inches in length as follows;

(A) from May 1 – June 30, in unstocked lakes and ponds and in the Kenai River from its mouth upstream to the outlet of Skilak Lake and in the Moose River from its confluence with the Kenai River upstream to the northernmost edge of the Sterling Highway bridge, are closed to sport fishing for king salmon; from July 1 – July 31, in unstocked lakes and ponds and that portion of the Kenai River from an ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately 300 yards downstream from the mouth of Slikok Creek, upstream to the outlet of Skilak Lake, and in the Moose River from its confluence with the Kenai River upstream to the northernmost edge of the Sterling Highway bridge, are closed to sport fishing for king salmon;

Cora Campbell,
Commissioner

By delegation to:

Robert N. Begich
Area Management Biologist

JUSTIFICATION:

The purpose of 5 AAC 57.160 *Kenai River and Kasilof River Early-Run King Salmon Management Plan* (a), is to ensure adequate escapement of early-run king salmon into the Kenai River. The optimal escapement goal (OEG) for early-run Kenai River king salmon is 5,300 to 9,000 king salmon.

Kenai River king salmon and other king salmon stocks throughout Cook Inlet are experiencing a period of low productivity and, since 2009, below average run strength. That trend is anticipated to continue during the 2014 season. The 2014 preseason forecast for early-run Kenai River king salmon is for a total run of approximately 2,200 fish. If realized, the 2014 run would be similar in abundance to the 2013 run, and rank as the lowest run measured (29th out of 29 years). Since the 2014 total run forecast is less than the lower end of the optimal escapement goal, and king salmon abundance in Cook Inlet is expected to be below average, closing the fishery pre-season is warranted until data from inseason assessment projects indicate that fishing opportunity can be afforded without jeopardizing achievement of the optimal escapement goal.

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.